



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 152 No. 087
Monday, February 23, 2026

Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 23, 2026

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

VACANCY

TERREBONNE

The Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to subsection 532(4) of the Canada Elections Act to inform the House that a communication has been received from the Registrar of the Supreme Court of Canada regarding the contestation of the election in the riding of Terrebonne in the province of Quebec.

I am therefore tabling in the House, in both official languages, the decision of the court in this matter. The Chair has taken note of the court's decision annulling the election of Ms. Auguste.

Therefore, pursuant to subsection 28(1) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed a warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

FISHERIES ACT

The House resumed from November 5, 2025, consideration of the motion that C-237, An Act to amend the Fisheries Act (Atlantic groundfish fisheries), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak to Bill C-237, a questionable bill that would have devastating impacts on fisheries in all of Atlantic Canada and Quebec. This bill does not aim to amend a policy or regulation at DFO; instead, it seeks to amend the Fisheries Act, which is the law that governs every fishery in Canadian waters.

Let me be clear: Changing the Fisheries Act is consequential. This bill would hurt all fisheries classified as groundfish, not just cod and certainly not just the food fishery in Newfoundland. The bill would eliminate regional fish stocks and treat them all as one species. That means that whether someone is fishing cod in P.E.I. or

Newfoundland, it would all be treated the exact same way. All openings and closures would be the same, which means that no matter the weather or migration of fish in a region, that would be the season.

All fisheries should be based on local stock health. Once the local stock is assessed, the commercial total allowable catch, the bycatch limit and the recreational quota are divided based on the health of the stock. By changing to species-based management, this bill would throw that all out. By treating different stocks all as one species, this risks the bycatch and the commercial TAC for commercial fisheries, the lifeblood of many of our communities. Since the bill is directed at all of Atlantic, not just Newfoundland and Labrador, it would threaten every commercial fishery in Atlantic Canada and Quebec.

I cannot accept that this poorly written bill would threaten the livelihoods of harvesters and their families in my community. When the bill was first debated, I asked the member for Terra Nova—The Peninsulas which fishing associations he had consulted. His response was that he had only spoken with people in his riding about the food fishery. Since this bill would impact all of Atlantic Canada and Quebec, it is not good enough that he did not do any proper consultation before putting forward this piece of significant legislation.

Consultation requires that all parties that would be impacted by a change to a law be heard before moving forward, which includes all fleets that fish groundfish or have groundfish as part of their catch. These are fisheries that bring hundreds of millions of dollars to coastal communities across Atlantic Canada and eastern Quebec, which would be impacted without having their say on these changes.

When government proposes changes to an industry, especially an industry as essential as the fishery, it needs to be done with clarity and transparency. With this bill, the Conservative Party has done neither. We know this for several reasons. First, the member for Terra Nova—The Peninsulas told the House that he did not engage with anyone beyond his community. Second, the member for Central Newfoundland tried to stop me from asking industry representatives at the fishery committee about this bill and the proposed changes. Third, we heard nothing but opposition and concern on this bill from industry representatives when we heard from them.

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At the fishery committee, I asked industry representatives whether they had been consulted by the member for Terra Nova—The Peninsulas on this bill. Representatives from the Canadian Independent Fish Harvesters' Federation, the Maritime Fishermen's Union, the Canadian Association of Prawn Producers and the Unified Fisheries Conservation Alliance all told the committee that they had not been consulted. Some of these industry representatives also shared concerns with what the bill intended to do. The member for Central Newfoundland tried to stop me from asking these key industry representatives about the bill. I would like to also note that the committee has since concluded its meetings on the Fisheries Act review, and the member for Terra Nova—The Peninsulas did not join to bring up his bill, nor did any other Conservative member, nor did they invite any witnesses to testify in support of the bill.

Industry has been reaching out to the Minister of Fisheries directly to share its opposition to this bill. The Atlantic Groundfish Council, the Atlantic Fixed-Gear Council, the Groundfish ITQ Association and the Atlantic Halibut Council wrote a joint letter expressing their opposition to this bill. It includes representatives from the off-shore fleet in all Atlantic provinces, including the member's home province. Victoria Co-operative Fisheries Limited, the Association of Seafood Producers, and fisheries processors from Nova Scotia and, importantly, Newfoundland and Labrador are also against this bill.

At the inshore level, the Grand Manan Fishermen's Association, the Fundy North Fishermen's Association, the Cape Breton Fish Harvesters Association, the Maritime Fishermen's Union, the Coopérative des Capitaines Propriétaires de la Gaspésie and the PEIFA from my home province have all written to the Minister of Fisheries, opposing this bill. These organizations represent thousands of independent harvesters from across Quebec and the Maritimes.

Lastly, for the member in particular, most importantly, the Fish, Food and Allied Workers, the FFAW, the union that represents inshore independent harvesters and many plant workers in Newfoundland and Labrador, has also written to the minister, sharing its concern for this bill. For those listening at home today, in that member's own province, the inshore fleet, the offshore fleet, the processors and ENGOs are all against this bill. Harvesters in Quebec are against this bill. Harvesters and processors in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador are also against this bill. They are against it because it is reckless. The bill ignores science, it ignores consultation, and it ignores the thousands of people, including in the member's own province, who depend on the fishery. The member has made no effort to engage with the sector that is vital not just to his own province but to the provinces of his colleagues and the entire region we both call home.

It will be no surprise to anybody in the House that, given the fact that I represent a province and a region that depend heavily on the fishery, I must vote no on Bill C-237. I call on all members who care about our fisheries to do the same. With that, I conclude my comments.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):
Madam Speaker, I am rising today at second reading of Bill C-237.

At first reading last October, the Bloc Québécois indicated that we were open to this bill. At that time, we had already found some problems with the bill, but we were willing to analyze it, hear the arguments and look at the actual impacts it would have.

Since then, we have worked hard to do just that. We have listened to Quebeckers. We have heard from the community. We have spoken to local fishers. We have heard from regional associations and departmental representatives. Whether it be in the Gaspé, Quebec's maritime regions, the Lower St. Lawrence or the north shore, the response on the ground is clear. People are opposed to this bill.

The Coopérative des capitaines-propriétaires de la Gaspésie has warned that this approach could lead to a significant reduction in activity and have a domino effect on the region's entire maritime supply chain. When those who make a living from the sea tell us that a bill could weaken their sector, we need to listen to them.

In light of this, our position has changed. The Bloc Québécois will therefore be voting against Bill C-237, and I will explain why.

Modern management uses a stock-based approach. Migrations differ, spawning periods vary and environmental conditions are not the same everywhere. Standardization for the sake of simplification may seem appealing to Ottawa, but it removes flexibility for those on the water. Given that climate change is already altering species dynamics, that flexibility is essential.

There is also the issue of scientific data. Take cod for example, where recreational catches in 2024 were estimated at approximately 2,700 tonnes, but actual landings were not directly measured. These figures are based on models. Before tightening regulations across the Atlantic, lawmakers must ensure that the data is complete and robust enough to justify such a reform. We believe in science, but science requires a solid foundation.

It is also important to remember the economic importance of this sector. In some regions of maritime Quebec, fishing and processing account for up to 30% of jobs. These are not abstract statistics; entire communities depend on this industry.

I want to talk about the issue of mandatory registration for recreational fishing. Currently, recreational groundfish fishing is regulated by daily limits restricted to open fishing seasons, as managed by fisheries officers. The bill would impose a system to record the number of fish caught, the location and the time of capture. In practical terms, this means that recreational fishers would have to fill out a logbook every time they go out. No one in Quebec is asking for that. Regulations must be proportionate to the problem they seek to solve. We are not opposed to collecting data. We are opposed to imposing poorly targeted regulations that are not backed by clear necessity, especially since data collection tools, such as electronic logbooks, already exist in the commercial sector. Before creating a new regime for recreational fishing, we should first optimize those already in place.

Next comes the issue of seasonal uniformity. The bill calls for the harmonization of open and close times across the entire Atlantic area. Fisheries management, however, cannot be limited to a one-size-fits-all calendar covering every corner of the territory. Beyond the issue of recreational seasons, the real strategic issue facing the fisheries exceeds the scope of this bill. We export the bulk of our catch and we import the bulk of the seafood products we consume. That deserves a broader debate than the one being proposed now.

We understand that this bill addresses genuine frustrations felt in Newfoundland and Labrador. However, without minimizing that reality, a regional demand should not automatically result in a change that applies to the entire Atlantic area. The Quebec fishing community is not calling for this kind of reform and it has concerns about its consequences. Essentially, our decision should be guided by three questions. Is it proportionate? Is it scientifically justified? Is it economically responsible? At this stage, the answers are not persuasive. A one-size-fits-all calendar is not the right way to manage the fisheries. Such management has to be based on the locality, on fish stocks and on the communities that depend on them.

• (1115)

Although the bill may streamline federal administration, it complicates regional realities. The Bloc Québécois will therefore vote against Bill C-237 at second reading.

[English]

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-237, an act to amend the Fisheries Act as it relates to Atlantic groundfish fisheries.

I would like to begin by thanking my colleagues from Newfoundland and Labrador, the member for Central Newfoundland and the member for Terra Nova—The Peninsulas, for showing leadership on the issue, and by acknowledging the work in bringing the bill forward.

The bill speaks to an issue rooted in the communities of Newfoundland and Labrador, and it reflects the voices of coastal and rural communities across the province that rely on fair and reasonable access to the sea, which is why I really hope the other members from Newfoundland and Labrador will vote in favour of the bill. In coastal communities across Newfoundland and Labrador, including throughout my riding of Long Range Mountains, the fishery is a part of our history and our local economy, and decisions made in

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the House on the issue are especially important to the people I represent. I hear about the issue consistently.

Let me begin by saying that the bill speaks first and foremost to fairness in how recreational fisheries are managed, specifically as it relates to when people can fish and how rules are applied right across Atlantic Canada. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians deserve the same access as the rest of Atlantic Canada. For many people in Newfoundland and Labrador, there is a clear sense of inequity in how access to the recreational groundfish fishery is managed. They see different rules applied to different Atlantic provinces, despite shared waters and shared stocks, and they question why fairness is not applied consistently.

This concern has been raised repeatedly by residents across my riding and across the province, and it is reflected in the strong public response that we have seen. A petition our office circulated locally received 1,053 responses, highlighting how deeply this matters to families and communities across Long Range Mountains.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the fishery is personal. It is cultural. It has deep historical roots. It is economic, but it is also deeply emotional. For decades, families have fought to keep that heritage alive. The cod moratorium of 1992 remains one of the most painful chapters in our province's history, a time that I will certainly never forget. It was a national tragedy that displaced more than 30,000 people and left a lasting mark on communities across Newfoundland and Labrador. Entire communities were hollowed out, and that loss is still felt today, not just in economic terms but also in identity and trust.

I reflect on a conversation with a community member who remembers their parents' carpet business shutting down overnight because of the moratorium. The impact of that decision was felt far beyond the industry directly and into every corner of community life. When the recreational food fishery reopened, it was about a return to tradition, about passing skills and values from one generation to the next.

In recent years, access has remained limited. In 2025, the recreational groundfish food fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador operated for roughly 45 days, with most openings limited to weekends and only a short, continuous window later in the season. In the rest of Atlantic Canada, however, the public can fish seven days a week throughout the open season. Ottawa's weekend-only rule for Newfoundland and Labrador makes no biological sense, as cod stocks swim across these borders.

Weather and safety must also be considered, because 45 open days on paper does not mean 45 days safe on the water. Fog, wind and sea conditions regularly cancel out opportunities, particularly for seniors and families, who rely on calm windows to fish safely. I hear this consistently in places like Hampden, Cox's Cove, Isle aux Morts and Englee.

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Someone really has to experience this tradition to truly understand what it means to a community. While visiting Englee this past summer, my family and I went cod jigging with a local family. It is a day I will not forget. Our children took part, and we enjoyed the experience as a family, wondering who would have the biggest catch. At the end of our time on the water, we all gathered at the fishing stage with other community members, helping to gut and fillet the fish. We talked about the best parts to eat, from cod tongues and cheeks to pan fried fillets and fish cakes. We stood there breathing in the sharp scent of the salt water as the sun sank down towards the horizon.

● (1120)

The kids skipped rocks across the water and asked questions about the fishery, the boats tied up along the wharf and the lobster traps stacked nearby. In that moment, more than anything, I realized how this was about the children truly connecting with what it means to be a Newfoundlander and Labradorian. That connection to place, water, tradition, history and community is something common among people from our province. It is a part of who we are. That is why proposals that aim to strengthen the recreational fishery must be grounded in care.

The legislation would emphasize the importance of stability and predictability for individuals engaged in recreational groundfish fishing. It would mandate the harmonization of close times for groundfish across the Atlantic provinces, ensuring that seasonal closures would be determined based on species-specific spawning periods. This measure aims to create a more uniform and science-based regulatory environment for coastal communities that are dependent on recreational and small-scale fisheries.

Bill C-237 would also enhance reporting requirements, compelling the Minister of Fisheries to table an annual report to Parliament on the administration and enforcement of the Fisheries Act. Additionally, it would require the public disclosure of any new close times or fishing quotas on the website of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans at least two months prior to their implementation, improving public access to regulatory changes.

It is also important to note that recreational removals represent only a small fraction of overall harvest levels. In recent seasons, recreational food fisheries have accounted for only a few thousand tonnes annually compared to commercial quotas, which have reached tens of thousands of tonnes as stocks have rebuilt. This is not to mention the seals, which are estimated to be eating 9.7 billion tonnes of fish a year, but that is for another day.

At the same time, the recreational groundfish fishery contributes millions of dollars to the local economy each year through bait, fuel, gear, tourism and community events. In many rural outports, the fishery is the only meaningful link left between young families and the ocean.

The members opposite have criticized us for lack of consultation with stakeholders. I would like to paraphrase the sentiment of a group from my riding that has been active on this issue for many years, as well its feedback on the government's attempt to gain insight on the issue. The people remind us that for many in Newfoundland and Labrador, this is not a recreational fishery; it is a cod

food fishery, rooted in history, culture and the long-standing right to harvest from the land and water to feed one's family.

The people in the group are now concerned that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' survey appears designed to advance a tags and licensing program. In particular, they point to the question that asks whether respondents support the current season with no tags, or a season with tags extended. There is no option to extend the season without tags, including for safety reasons. They argue that limiting the food fishery to weekends does not reflect the realities of Newfoundland and Labrador weather and may push people to take unnecessary risks.

A healthy fishery depends on getting the balance right between access and conservation, and between science and lived experience. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians understand conservation because we have lived through the consequences of the devastating impacts of a collapsed cod fishery. We also believe in fairness and expect it from our federal institutions.

We must also be careful not to frame this debate as one group versus another. Recreational fishers and commercial harvesters are not opponents; they are neighbours, family members and often the same people at different times of the year. This cannot be an us or them conversation.

As the bill moves forward, our work should be guided by the principles of fairness, stability, predictability and clear communication, but most importantly, respect for the people whose lives, history, pride of place and heritage are tied to the sea.

● (1125)

Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to once again rise here in the people's House, this time in support of the member for Terra Nova—The Peninsulas's bill, Bill C-237, which brings to the floor of the House a concern that originated in a local community. The rural parts of this country are the often overlooked regions that far too often get neglected when it comes to policy considerations, including the formation of policies around fisheries.

Too many times decisions have been made that have had devastating consequences for local communities and those communities where livelihoods depend upon access to stable resources and fisheries. They have been willing to make sacrifices to conserve the species that were at risk, and they have proven that. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have proven that time and time again. They have paid a huge personal price to protect the species that are risk, including, and namely, cod.

Private Members' Business

We are in a circumstance where this is coming from those very communities that are very much connected to the waters. Many that are connected to the commercial fishery are on those waters, and they recognize when stocks are rebounding. They know when stock quotas are improving, when the health of a certain stock of fish is coming into a better zone and when there are more plentiful resources available to people.

They want to be able to enjoy that resource again. It is a part of their way of life. It is a part of what they have done as families for years. Not only have they made their livings off the water, but it has also become a means of food security for many families. They want to be able to gain meaningful access again.

What they are asking for is not something that is unreasonable. They want to be put on par with other Atlantic Canadian provinces. There is a huge disparity. When Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island have different sets of rules than Newfoundland and Labrador, that is an inequity that needs to be addressed, and it should be addressed expeditiously. This bill goes toward that. It is to restore fairness when it comes to the recreational fishery and obtaining access to the cod that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians so love and are most acquainted with.

If there is a group of Canadians that is fully invested in the health of the stocks of cod, it would be Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. If those who are most affected by this are feeling that this is something important to them and would be good because it would put more people on the water and allow them to regularly monitor the health of those stocks and how they are doing, that would be a good thing. It could unify the region. It would cause a ceasing of the disparity between one Atlantic province and another.

This bill would go a long way to levelling that playing field, and we should pursue it. I commend my colleague, the member for Terra Nova—The Peninsulas for his hard work on this. He worked with his colleagues, the members for Long Range Mountains and Central Nova, to make sure that this is a reflection of what Newfoundlanders and Labradorians want. It would behoove those who represent Canadians from all parts of the country, from coast to coast, to do our due diligence and listen to those voices that would be most affected by this bill.

Those who would be most impacted are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and they are saying that they would love to see this bill enacted. They want it brought in. They want fairness restored. They want access to a fishery that was a tremendously overwhelming part of their lives and heritage for a long time.

It is only right that we, as the people's representatives here in the House, listen to those in Newfoundland and Labrador who are saying, "Pass this bill. Allow us to gain access to this fishery. Let us do what we enjoy doing." They are, trust me, more invested in the health of the cod stocks than any of us in this room. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are passionate about making sure that the cod fishery is sustainable and endures for as long as Canada does. We want this to be not only a part of Canadian heritage but also a part of Canada's future. That happens by taking this step, bringing this bill to committee, letting us study it and getting to the bottom of it.

• (1130)

It does get a bit rich when I hear the opponents of this bill stand up to talk about how we have to protect the resource and how these families going out to fish five cod a day would be detrimental to the health of the cod stocks. It gets really rich when, for the last 11 years, the government has done absolutely nothing about the biggest predator, the overwhelming risk to the health of the cod stocks for years, which is the explosion of the pinniped population in that part of our country.

There has been study after study. I have been on the fisheries committee, and I have heard the fish harvesters who have come in. They have given testimony about what is quite literally the elephant in the waters, and that needs to be addressed if we want to protect all kinds of fish stocks and their futures. The government has not done anything about that for 11 years, but it would single out recreational fishers who want to recapture part of their way of life. I think it is a misplaced priority. In fact, I know it is a misplaced priority.

Let us get back to common sense. Let us allow this bill to get to committee to have that discussion. Let us talk about the future of the cod fishery. Let us talk about the health of the cod stocks, and let us hear from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, those who live in our coastal and rural communities who are most affected by these types of decisions.

Let us give this bill a chance and get it to committee. That way, we would bring cohesion to Atlantic provinces, so we would not be pitting one province against another, having one set of rules for Prince Edward Islanders, another set for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, another set for Nova Scotians and another one for New Brunswickers. No, let us make sure that they come into the equation and that there is consistency. This bill would go a long way to establishing that.

I want to commend my colleagues from Newfoundland and Labrador for listening to their people, those who are most impacted by this decision. It takes a member of Parliament who is connected to his or her region to make sure that those concerns get brought to this floor and are debated.

I know these colleagues well. This young man would not have brought this bill forward if he did not feel this was important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Let us listen to what they are saying, hear their concerns, support this bill and get it to committee. I appreciate the members' time and attention.

[*Translation*]

Marilène Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from New Brunswick who just spoke, as well as my colleague from Terra Nova—The Peninsulas, who introduced this bill on recreational fishing. The bill is very limited in scope. It specifically concerns Newfoundland. I thank my colleague, however, because this is a topic that almost never gets talked about in the House of Commons.

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My riding is right next door to Labrador. Our ridings are connected by a ferry. The issue of recreational fishing in general comes up every time I go out and talk to the public. My riding has 1,300 or 1,400 kilometres of coastline. All of my constituents, or almost all, have access to the sea. We often have the impression that the sea does not belong to us. The sea is a border, a boundary that cannot be crossed, except perhaps by commercial fishing, which is extremely important in my riding as well. However, I believe it is also vital to discuss recreational fishing. There is the whole issue of commercial fishing, but as my colleague mentioned earlier, people live on the coast.

There used to be no borders at sea. Over 60 years ago, back in the 19th century, in fact, when certain communities of fishers from the island of Jersey settled in the area where I now live, there were no borders. People lived off the sea. They could also fish recreationally. Now, I am not talking about sport fishing, because those two concepts are sometimes confused. I am really talking about recreational fishing for personal purposes, simply catching enough to eat. In some respects, it could be called subsistence fishing.

This is a topic that is extremely important to me, especially since, as someone mentioned earlier, the rules are different out west, in British Columbia, than in Atlantic Canada. I know Quebec was not mentioned earlier, but we do share the same territory, namely the Gulf of St. Lawrence. No one is talking about that. The rules are different, and the species fished in western and eastern Canada are not the same. We cannot have the exact same rules, but we would like there to be fairness for the public, who say that the cost of groceries is high, as is often mentioned in the House.

There are people in my riding who cannot afford to eat the very crab and lobster that they catch. Take a club sandwich for example. It would cost \$60 to take the family out for a lobster or crab dinner, so what do we do? We export them, even though they are right there at our feet. Climate change is causing lobster stocks to rise in my region, the north shore. There is an abundance of lobster in our waters, enough for the north shore fishery, of course. However, the locals do not have access to it. I am talking about a commercial species here, but earlier I mentioned opening up fishing to other non-commercial species. Halibut and cod were mentioned.

Traditionally, people living on the north shore did not think about whether they were fishing a certain commercial fish stock versus one that was not commercial. It did not work like that. People had access to the land and access to the river. The river provided whatever people wanted. I will give a very specific example, one that gives an idea of how things were. People eat what is known as a periwinkle, a type of mollusk commonly used to make soup. It is not a commercial species. It is not an endangered species. That is not at all the case. People do not have access to it. I believe that certain things need to be done that obviously go beyond the scope of my colleague's bill. As I said earlier, I find it very interesting that he is raising this issue.

I will give another example. I talked about the 1,400 kilometres of coastline in my region. Some places are very sparsely populated. There are no sewers and there is no pollution, but people are not allowed to harvest clams. People think, come on, we have 1,400 kilometres of coastline right at our feet, and we have virtually free access to this organic, healthy food, and yet we are not allowed to

harvest it, simply because it is not on people's radar and not part of the plan. The government is saying there are not enough fisheries officers and that pollution is a problem.

● (1135)

I know that all of the mayors and reeves in my riding would be willing to contribute from their own budgets so that this option was available to people. We are not even talking about the federal level here. There are people at the municipal level who really want to discuss this issue and provide resources and funding so that we can use what we have in the river, the estuary and the gulf. This is something that is very important in my riding and it is set up differently depending on the area. For me, and perhaps for my colleague as well, the real question is, who does this resource belong to?

We do not want to do anything to harm the commercial fisheries or the local fishers who support communities and villages. The fishery is a pillar of my riding. Over 25% of Quebec's landings occur in my region, so the fishery is very important. However, we know that there are other options, such as opening recreational fishing up a bit more than it is now, for example by issuing more licences and licences for other species. That could be good for scientists because we would be able to gather more data and more accurate data than what we have now. We would have people on the ground who would make this possible. It is the same thing for water, for example. This could also be good from an economic standpoint because we are trying to expand the tourism industry.

Many small coastal fishing communities are trying to diversify by creating recreational fishing opportunities, including for tourists, similar to what is being done in northern Europe. I am talking about the north because I live in a northern region. This is being done elsewhere, in smaller jurisdictions, such as in coastal communities in countries like Norway or Iceland. In my riding, we have 1,400 km of coastline, yet we cannot do this. Other places are making this happen and bringing in tourists. Something really needs to be done, but we need to think outside the box. Unfortunately, that is not the mandate of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. DFO is focused on stock management. That is their mandate, among other things, and recreational fishing is something else entirely.

Before my colleague arrived in the House, I had been hoping to raise this issue at the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans so that we could study it, or at least so that the matter would be on the record and a plan could be developed that would be broader than a local plan. In his bill, the member talks about inequity. I agree with him entirely. As far as the wishes of his constituents go, I also agree with him. However, the issue demands broader consideration. These waters belong to Quebecers, to Newfoundlanders and to Canadians. Are they entitled to access their own waters and their own resources?

Private Members' Business

I would like us to discuss the question of recreational fishing even more broadly. I have noticed that this conversation can be a little disconcerting for the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, not because of my colleagues, but because of a taboo that does not necessarily exist in our communities. Both indigenous communities and other north shore communities know full well that my purpose in talking about recreational fishing is not to destroy commercial fishing. That is not it at all. The point is not that everyone should get to catch a lobster and leave nothing behind for the fishing companies and then everyone will be happy. The point is that we want access to the water too, for different reasons. I also mentioned economic development.

I have spoken on this issue at length, but I believe that if my constituents were here in the House of Commons, they would continue to speak about it, because this is something they have been calling for repeatedly for several years now. These folks believe they are being treated unjustly and unfairly when they have food right in front of them that is accessible and has been available to them for decades. However, their rights have been slowly and gradually eroded. I wish members were more open to having a broader discussion than what is provided for in my colleague's bill, although I understand why it is as it is.

I know that I am running out of time, but this is all to say that we in the Bloc Québécois have some serious concerns about the bill at this time, for reasons based on science. However, we do want to start a conversation on the issue of recreational fishing, in a respectful way and getting everyone involved. I represent individuals and a riding that are simply asking for access to their own resources.

• (1140)

[*English*]

John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to get up and speak to my colleague's private member's bill, Bill C-237, an act to amend the Fisheries Act.

It is probably a little surprising to some of my colleagues that a member of Parliament from southern Alberta would get up to speak to a bill on Canada's Fisheries Act. Many people in the House may be surprised to learn that my riding, in southwest Alberta, is one of the top destinations in North America for fly fishing. I want to compare the issues we are facing in southern Alberta to what my colleague is trying to raise here in the House with his private member's bill.

In fact, southern Alberta is one of the top destinations in North America for fly fishing. Whether it is the Bow River, the Highwood, the Sheep or the Oldman River in the very southern part of my riding, tens of thousands of people come from all over the world to experience fly fishing in southern Alberta. I know how important this industry has become to my constituency and the businesses in my riding. More than 4,000 people are employed in the fishing industry in southern Alberta.

A number of very successful businesses rely on the tourists who come to southern Alberta as part of the fishing industry. I think of Flays Etc. in High River and Oldman guiding down in Crowsnest Pass. Many of these businesses have become successful by attracting fishermen from across North America to come and experience western Canadian hospitality. That is why it is important to talk

about the impact that the recreational fishing industry has on small rural communities like mine and certainly like those in Newfoundland and Labrador that my great colleague represents as well.

I was doing a bit of research on some updated numbers about the impact that the fishing industry has had in Alberta. We are talking about more than \$250 million in revenue just from the fly fishing industry in Alberta. I know that is very similar to Newfoundland and Labrador. There are almost 6,000 businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador that are reliant on recreational and commercial fishing. That is a huge part of their economics and certainly of their rural community economy as well. All my colleague is asking for is to expand the opportunities for the growth of recreational fishing in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I found it interesting that my colleague from Prince Edward Island talked about the importance of enforcement. The Liberal government has had more than a decade to follow through on enforcement on fisheries right across this country. In fact, a previous Liberal fisheries minister lost her job because she failed so miserably in enforcing the laws around the Fisheries Act.

I will just briefly touch on the elver fishery issue in Nova Scotia, which has ripped communities apart. All that has been asked for is that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and the Liberal government, stand up and enforce the rules that are in place, something it has failed to do for more than a decade.

In contrast, my colleague has gone from one community to another in his riding, consulting with commercial and recreational fishers, asking them what they need to grow this industry. All he is asking for in this bill is some flexibility. I have travelled across Alberta and into Saskatchewan and B.C. to do some fishing, which I enjoy. I know I would be extremely disappointed if I had travelled all the way to Newfoundland and Labrador to go fishing on one of the designated days as a recreational fisher when I can go out onto the water, to find out that the water was too rough, or there was a storm blowing in, and it was just unsafe. However, I would not have been able to postpone my trip until the next day because of some arbitrary rules around opening the recreational fishing industry in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The amount that we are talking about here is, in the larger scheme of things, really quite insignificant. We are not asking for those recreational fishers to be able to take more fish out of the water. We are just asking for more flexibility around the days they could go out on the water. We would still have accountability and transparency, while enforcing the rules. There is some enforcement as part of this bill. That is something the Liberals have failed to do in the more than a decade they have been in government, despite the engagement and cries for action from fishers from coast to coast to coast.

Private Members' Business

Overall, Bill C-237 would just expand and strengthen the overall management framework for Atlantic fisheries in Canada. Some great points were made by my colleague from New Brunswick, the member for Tobique—Mactaquac, and my other colleague from Newfoundland and Labrador has talked about this extensively as well. We talk about the amount of fish that the seal herds in Atlantic Canada are consuming compared with what we are asking for as part of this bill.

● (1145)

The seal population has grown so out of control that it is consuming more fish than the entire Atlantic commercial and recreational fishing industries combined. When we compare some of these things, we really have to look at what the source of the fish population concerns may be. It is certainly not a handful of recreational fishers who are looking to fish only on a Tuesday or a Wednesday rather than adhering to these very arbitrary numbers. I find the Liberals' inability to enforce the rules that are already in place frustrating.

I am going to compare that to something we are dealing with. I talked about the seal population being out of control. We are dealing with something very similar in western Canada, in the Prairies, with the Richardson's ground squirrel. The population has grown so out of control that many farmers in Alberta and Saskatchewan are seeing upward of a 20% yield loss in their crops and, even more so, damage being done to native grazing land and grassland where cattle are being raised and finished. We have asked the Liberal government to support an emergency application for the use of strychnine that was brought forward by Alberta and Saskatchewan. The agriculture minister promised he would support those applications that came in early October, but now we are told that the agriculture minister has changed his mind. He has broken yet another promise to Canadian prairie farmers with the government not supporting the emergency use of strychnine to deal with the overpopulation of Richardson's ground squirrels. There are no other options, and the consequences of that are putting our food security and the economic viability of many prairie farmers at risk.

I compare that to a similar situation with this private member's bill. Instead of dealing with the root cause of the problems, which would be an overpopulation of seals, or enforcing the rules that are in place, whether that is in commercial fishing in Newfoundland Labrador or the elvers fishery in Nova Scotia, the Liberal government seems to put its head in the sand and hope that it will all take care of itself. We have seen that is certainly not the case, and these things do not take care of themselves. They require a stiff spine and tough decisions by the government, and certainly a minister, whether that is the Minister of Agriculture or the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, to show some intestinal fortitude and ensure that the rules are being followed. That is what we are asking the government to do on many of these types of issues, and certainly this one is no different. What my colleague from Newfoundland and Labrador is asking for is some stability and predictability for individuals who would come to Newfoundland and Labrador to participate in the recreational fishing industry.

I want to conclude with this. We cannot underestimate the value of this industry to provinces and territories right across this country. As I highlighted, many people would be surprised by the impact the

fly fishing industry has in southern Alberta. It is probably one of my riding's most critical industries. The same can be said, if not more, for Newfoundland and Labrador. All we are asking for is some flexibility to grow what could be an impactful industry, which would have a very low impact on the environment and climate but a very high impact on the local economy in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is why I would encourage my colleagues in the House to at least send Bill C-237 to committee so it can be studied further.

● (1150)

Tom Osborne (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is an important bill. I know the importance of the cod fishery to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, in particular the food fishery and the commercial fishery. Balancing those two is challenging, and my colleague, the Minister of Fisheries, is doing a good job in this very challenging portfolio. The food fishery and the economy is an important balance.

We have seen, because of the scientific-based management of our cod fishery, our commercial fishery reopen this past year. This was significant. There are communities in my riding with fishers who rely on this income. They rely on the commercial fishery to make a living and to sustain their families and communities.

One of the biggest challenges with this bill, as I see it, is the fees that it would put on the people in our province taking part in the food fishery. I want to remind individuals that last year there was no licence requirement, no licensing fee and no reporting requirement for the food fishery. The individuals were to follow the rules, be safe and fish for food.

Under this Conservative tax-on-food bill, we would see a forced mandatory licence. It is written right into the bill. Individuals would have to pay a fee to cover the cost of this bill and to report every fish they catch. We hear Conservatives talking about the boogeyman, the unseen tax on food. This would put a tax on food by the requirements outlined in the bill itself.

Meanwhile, our government is providing tax relief for individuals across the country while looking to grow our economy. The commercial fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador is vital to the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I hear my constituents talk about changes in the food fishery and how they would like to see greater access. They would like to see real consultation, because this bill had no consultation. I have not heard anybody in my riding talk about wanting this bill. In fact, it is quite the opposite. People in my riding, commercial fishers, have said they are very concerned about this bill.

Real consultation is what the Minister of Fisheries has done in opening up a consultation process on what the future of the food fishery looks like. She has heard from almost 10,000 people and received submissions from people in Newfoundland and Labrador, who put forward their thoughts and recommendations for what the food fishery should look like. That is consultation. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador were not consulted about this bill. Commercial fishers are very concerned about this.

Instead of looking at cod as a species, this bill would treat the fishery differently and as a one-size-fits-all, which is dangerous. We finally have our commercial fishery reopened, and it is because of sound management of the fishery and of our fish stocks. We cannot go backward. We cannot risk the commercial fishery for the generations of the future.

• (1155)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Terra Nova—The Peninsulas has the floor for his right of reply.

Jonathan Rowe (Terra Nova—The Peninsulas, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is so uplifting to have the support of my Conservative colleagues on the bill, especially my colleagues from Newfoundland and Labrador.

We understand that this is something that all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians want, and we are hoping that our Liberal colleagues will recognize that and vote for the bill, so it can go to committee. That is what Newfoundlanders want. They want us, Liberals and Conservatives, to work together, not to pit commercial fishermen against recreational fishermen but to work together to make our province better, to feed our families and to be able to fish seven days a week.

Fish stocks are rising, but unfortunately food insecurity is rising even faster. I have a good solution for food insecurity in our province. We can fill our boats to fill our bellies. For hundreds of years, we have turned to the ocean to feed our families. As my colleague from Long Range Mountains said today, being limited to fishing on weekends results in a massive safety barrier due to high winds and stormy conditions.

If we could fish seven days a week, there would be days with better weather, allowing more Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, seniors and families with smaller boats to be able to access this fishery, feeding the families who need it the most. I am sure this is something that all MPs from Newfoundland and Labrador will support and understand.

Let us talk about the cod stocks. During the last debate on the bill, I sat in the House and heard a Liberal MP talk about how different parts of Atlantic Canada have different schools of fish and that populations may vary. He then went on to talk about how cod stocks in some parts of Atlantic Canada are not as strong as the cod stocks in Newfoundland. That only proves my point. If cod stocks in the Maritimes are low and they can fish seven days a week, why on earth, or perhaps why on the ocean, can Newfoundlanders and Labradorians not fish seven days a week like the rest of Atlantic Canada, when our stocks are much healthier?

Private Members' Business

Additionally, every fisherman and fisherwoman knows that the biggest factor in the country affecting fish stocks is the massive overpopulation of seals. It is estimated that seals eat more fish than all of Atlantic Canada catches in the commercial fishery.

My colleagues spoke about tourism. They understand how essential it is to our economy. With the new opportunities to go deep-sea fishing throughout the week, come from away and people coming back home will spend thousands of dollars on hotels, meals, gas and other tourism activities. The economic benefit to the province will be in the millions.

I have no doubt that the fisheries minister from Newfoundland and Labrador knows that opening the recreational food fishery seven days a week would significantly boost tourism in rural Newfoundland, an industry that so many people are dependent on. I hope that the minister and all my Newfoundland and Labrador colleagues do the right thing and vote for the bill.

The member for Long Range Mountains spoke about her beautiful family. She talked about how some of her family's greatest memories are the times they spent together participating in the recreational food fishery. That is what it is all about. It is not about the money. It is not about the jobs. It is not about the rat race. Life is about spending time with family, doing the things we love and making memories. This is what the recreational food fishery does for our province. It brings families and friends together. This is why all parties, especially the members from Newfoundland and Labrador, should vote for the bill: to allow people, families and friends to fish together seven days a week.

I would like to talk about consultation. Some of our critics and members from the other side of the aisle wrongfully state that we never did any consultation. To that I will say this. In addition to the hard work of our shadow minister and the member for Central Newfoundland, I spent months travelling from wharf to wharf in my district. I spoke with hundreds of recreational food fishers. The verdict was clear: They want to be able to fish seven days a week.

I even went to commercial fishermen and fisherwomen with small enterprises in my riding. I asked them what their concerns were. Their concern was with enforcement, enforcement that the Liberal government has never done over the past decade. Their only issue, which I heard repeatedly, is that they do not want the few bad apples, the very few, to go out, fill their boats and sell it on the black market. That is enforcement that should have already been done and that needed to continue to be done over the past 10 years.

There is another thing. There was a crazy statement that happened in the House today, one I could not understand, saying that the bill would create fees and a tax on food. It is not in the bill anywhere. There are no fees. That is only an imaginary tax. It is not in there. There are no fees. That is all there is.

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The bill is not partisan. It is practical. It respects science. It respects enforcement. I would like to request a vote in the House so we can have a formal vote.

• (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the motion.

[Translation]

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 invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[English]

Jonathan Rowe: Madam Speaker, I would like to request a recorded vote on the bill.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 25, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUILD CANADA HOMES ACT

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.) moved that Bill C-20, An Act respecting the establishment of Build Canada Homes, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, the Build Canada Homes act would establish Canada as an affordable housing builder. The Build Canada Homes act is landmark legislation that would establish Build Canada Homes as a Crown corporation with a mandate to deliver affordable housing at scale. The work Build Canada Homes would do is essential to the federal government's ability to build the affordable homes Canadians need and would initiate a new phase of transformative growth in Canada's economy.

The legislation would provide Build Canada Homes with operational independence and flexibility. As a Crown corporation, Build Canada Homes would have the powers, functions and new tools it needs to deliver on its mandate. Equipped with these new tools, it would be able to act nimbly as a developer, financier, convener and innovation driver in the housing sector. As I said, with this legislation Build Canada Homes would become a Crown corporation focused on building affordable housing in communities right across the country. This is important, essential and meaningful work, and it would tackle something even bigger than just the crisis that is facing our housing sector, because investing in building the affordable housing that Canada needs would in turn help grow our country's economy and strengthen our industries.

We know that housing is not simply about having a roof over one's head. The stability that a home provides builds the foundation for mental and physical health, for community involvement and for

personal success. Everyone in Canada deserves a safe home, a place where stability takes root so opportunity can blossom.

I will put the housing crisis in context.

• (1205)

[Translation]

Even though some progress has been made, many Canadians still struggle to find affordable housing. The pandemic complicated things by disrupting the supply chain, and tensions with the United States have added further challenges.

This pressure is being felt across the country, in big cities and small communities alike. Canadians are experiencing rising prices, a lack of supply, and greater inequality. That is why our new government is working to make housing more affordable, to offer more options and to help every Canadian have a place to call home.

[English]

Budget 2025 includes generational investments of \$25 billion over five years for housing. This strategic investment will build homes and create lasting prosperity, empowering Canadians to get ahead.

Solving Canada's housing crisis requires immediate action to build homes that meet Canadians' needs: homes they can afford, built as soon as possible. That is why, in September 2025, our government launched Build Canada Homes as a special operating agency within the Department of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada, with an initial investment of \$13 billion. Build Canada Homes is part of a broader set of measures by our government to accelerate housing construction, restore housing affordability and reduce homelessness.

As a lean, purpose-built entity, Build Canada Homes would leverage public lands, deploy flexible financial tools and promote modern methods of construction, like factory-built housing components. These new approaches would allow us to accelerate construction timelines, improve productivity and support a more productive homebuilding sector.

Build Canada Homes would fund multi-year agreements, providing increased certainty for housing providers, builders and manufacturers. In the immediate term, Build Canada Homes is prioritizing shovel-ready projects. Over time, Build Canada Homes would shift to funding large-scale, portfolio-based projects, delivering measurable impacts to Canada's supply of affordable housing, which brings us here today.

This legislation would provide Build Canada Homes with the tools and authorities of a Crown corporation to deploy capital at scale, partner in greater capacity and make investments in new and more productive approaches to housing construction. This is how we would expedite the delivery of more affordable homes on public lands and in communities across Canada.

As a special operating agency, Build Canada Homes has already launched the initial phase of work to build thousands of homes on federal lands in six communities across Canada, and we are getting shovels in the ground this year on those projects. In Ottawa, we would build approximately 1,100 homes just 20 minutes from the downtown core. We would deploy the same rapid approach across the country, in Dartmouth, Edmonton, Longueuil, Toronto and Winnipeg, to get homes built for Canadians as quickly as possible on these lands.

[*Translation*]

The bill authorizes the transfer of just over \$1.5 billion from the Canada Lands Company to Build Canada Homes, once the agency is established, to ensure that this capital is ready to unlock construction on these sites. This is just the beginning. The Build Canada Homes act represents a major step forward in strengthening the federal government's ability to respond to Canada's housing crisis.

● (1210)

[*English*]

This legislation makes it clear that Build Canada Homes would be Canada's affordable housing builder going forward. As such, as a Crown corporation, Build Canada Homes' mandate would be to build affordable housing across Canada while modernizing the homebuilding sector.

[*Translation*]

By focusing on modern construction methods like prefabricated housing and the use of lumber, Build Canada Homes will stimulate a homebuilding industry that is more innovative, resilient and productive. Off-site construction will extend the construction season year-round, creating a steady supply of factory-produced housing components and quality year-round jobs. Over time, this will speed up project delivery, reduce costs and improve sustainability.

[*English*]

With manufactured panels and prefabricated components produced off-site, construction teams can work faster while minimizing waste, noise and required labour.

With the trade tensions hitting our industries such as steel and softwood, we have to be our own best customer. Mass timber, as an example, has tremendous potential for supporting greater densification. Mass-timber designs, especially those incorporating prefabrication and modular components, can accelerate the construction of multi-unit residential structures. The wood construction also provides natural insulation that reduces heat loss, increasing energy efficiency.

The carbon capture by mass timber can also be significant, especially in taller wood buildings. When used as a substitute for or complement to concrete and steel, mass timber delivers significant climate benefits, cutting embodied emissions in buildings by as much as 25%.

Canada has the third-most extensive forested area on earth. If we manage our forests sustainably, our country has a significant supply of timber available to meet the growing demand for building with wood and mass timber. Greater demand can strengthen Canada's softwood lumber industry while helping to reduce reliance on our

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southern neighbour and reducing the climate pollution caused by the embodied carbon and building materials.

I want to talk about core partnerships next. Build Canada Homes has already formed key partnerships with provinces, territories, indigenous partners and local governments. Notably, we are forging commitments to ensure that supportive and transitional housing is matched with the wraparound services residents need.

For example, these partnerships would support the creation of 30 supportive and transitional homes announced in Nova Scotia and 54 at Dunn House phase 2 in the member for Taiiako'n—Parkdale—High Park's riding in Toronto, with further negotiations under way to ensure critical services to the most vulnerable Canadians. Just last week, we announced a partnership with the B.C. government in Victoria to build 700 supportive and transitional homes, setting a new bar for the scale of the supportive and transitional homes that are needed to tackle homelessness.

Build Canada Homes is also committed to building indigenous partnerships that further self-determination and contribute meaningfully to meeting the needs of indigenous communities. Through Build Canada Homes, the governments of Canada, Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated reached an agreement in principle to support the development of 750 homes for non-market housing in Nunavut. These homes will be designed and delivered in collaboration with Inuit, for Inuit.

The Build Canada Homes act would establish a Crown corporation with a legislative mandate to engage with partners and deliver on projects that meet the needs of the communities they serve. As with Inuit, we look forward to strong partnerships with first nations and with Métis as well. The act would unlock the tools for Build Canada Homes to forge these new strategic relationships that would drive coordinated action and establish modern development models that could scale affordable housing like never before. This is how we move from the incremental progress we have seen in recent years to transformative progress.

By changing how Canada builds, Build Canada Homes would be delivering speed, scale and innovation. Communities across Canada are ready to work with us. Since releasing our investment policy framework and launching our national submission portal in late November, we have seen very strong interest nationwide. Proposals have come in from every province and territory. Many are under review, and hundreds more are in progress right now, building a robust pipeline of projects ready to break ground this year. These partnerships are central to Build Canada Homes' strategy to grow community housing and ensure long-term affordability. We will do this while growing our economy and making it more resilient and stronger.

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Build Canada Homes would implement the Government of Canada's buy Canadian policy by prioritizing projects that use Canadian materials, strengthen our domestic supply chains and create good jobs. From softwood lumber in B.C. and New Brunswick to steel in Ontario and aluminum in Quebec, homebuilding connects Canadian materials to Canadian jobs. This is exactly why the government's approach to buy Canadian is exactly what it is about: becoming our own best customer.

It is also about shockproofing our economy. Buying and building domestically strengthens Canadian industries, supports Canadian workers and creates a stronger and more dynamic economy. The buy Canadian policy announced in December 2025 fundamentally changes how the federal government purchases goods and services. It prioritizes Canadian suppliers and requires the use of Canadian-produced steel, aluminum and wood in large federal projects so the dollars we invest drive demand here at home, strengthen our supply chains and support our workers and communities. That is how we move from reliance to resilience in a world where trade uncertainty is real.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

This bill is about more than just building more housing. It focuses on something even more important. It is a key element of how we are retooling Canada's economy. When we invest in Canada, we are not just creating jobs. We are also strengthening domestic supply chains, reducing our dependence on foreign markets and ensuring that Canada remains competitive in a global economy where instability in international trade has become the new normal.

[*English*]

For workers, this would mean increasing economic security and opportunity. For businesses, it would mean demand and predictability. For our country, it would be another step in a nation-building strategy that invests in Canadian industries and communities. We are prioritizing Canadian content in major procurements, building with Canadian materials and partnering across the country to strengthen our supply chains and keep people working.

Build Canada Homes would finance and build housing, which would drive demand for Canadian lumber and steel, encourage innovation in the construction sector and make investments that directly support Canadian workers and businesses. It is a model for how we build homes, infrastructure and prosperity using Canadian materials, creating jobs today and laying down the foundation for long-term economic growth.

As for measurable results, since its launch, Build Canada Homes has moved quickly to get housing projects off the ground. I identified public lands that are being converted into housing right now. We have partnered with local governments to cut red tape, waive fees and fast-track approvals as well. This means up to 3,000 new homes right here in Ottawa and up to 1,430 homes in Nova Scotia, and recently we signed a partnership with Quebec to accelerate approvals and identify even more housing projects in the province. In total, nine Build Canada Homes deals are now in place and are expected to deliver nearly 9,000 new homes. There are many more projects coming in the months ahead. With private, public and government partners all showing up, we are ready to build.

There is lots more work to do, but the progress we have seen in just a few short months gives me confidence that we are moving in the right direction. Build Canada Homes has already demonstrated what is possible when we combine speed, innovation and collaboration to get homes built for Canadians. With the passage of the Build Canada Homes act, we would have the flexibility, autonomy and accountability we need to deliver more affordable homes. We would have the tools and authorities of a Crown corporation to scale our progress even further, move faster, partner more effectively and deliver more affordable homes on federal lands and in communities across the country. This is a pivotal step that would transform our early momentum into long-term capacity.

That is exactly what the Build Canada Homes act is designed to deliver. The act is a major milestone in the government's plan to build more homes faster and help ensure that every Canadian has an affordable place to live. It is about building more homes now, but it is also about reshaping the future for Canadians, making sure the next generation can make choices about the communities they want to live in. It is about giving families stability and supporting Canadian manufacturers and supply chains to grow Canada's economy strong. It is about creating new careers and giving communities the tools to grow sustainably.

In conclusion, with this legislation, we are marking a new chapter in Canada's history. We are transforming the housing system with intent. We are building the right partnerships and innovative financing models by design. We are shaping Canada's future to create communities that are stronger, fairer and leave no one behind. Much like the Major Projects Office, Build Canada Homes would enable nation-building housing projects that would help make our country's economy the fastest-growing in the G7. We are investing in Canadian workers, Canadian jobs and Canadian industries.

The Build Canada Homes act is a milestone step that would strengthen Canada's self-reliance and resilience. It would empower Canadians with more opportunities to get ahead and build the life they want, where they want, in a home they can afford.

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• (1220)

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I can confirm that housing affordability is a major concern for young people. I have spent a lot of time over the last eight months speaking to young people on university campuses, many of whom fear that their life will be worse than that of their parents, owing largely to concerns about accessing homes and jobs.

One of the big issues, we know, in housing construction over the last 10 years under the Liberals, when housing prices have more than doubled, has been the proliferation of bureaucracy. The high cost of government is getting in the way of the construction that needs to happen in order to keep up with the needs of Canadians. The approach of the government is to create more bureaucracy: to add another arm to the federal government, yet another Crown corporation. It is proposing to continually expand bureaucracy, when actually we need a plan to reduce bureaucracy.

I wonder if the member can explain why, under 10 years of Liberal government, there has been such dramatic growth in the price of housing and why, rather than address the problem of out-of-control bureaucracy preventing housing construction, the Liberals are proposing to add to housing bureaucracy rather than reduce it.

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his concerns. First and foremost, to speak to the challenge that young Canadians face with housing, that is clearly a focus of Build Canada Homes: to ensure we are building affordable homes for the next generation. Many of us who sit in the House have children or grandchildren and have great concerns about the escalation of homebuilding costs and the price of housing across Canada.

We have seen the focus of the investments over the last few years into housing and affordable housing starting to bear fruit as the market pressures are easing. We have seen prices come down for several quarters in a row. We have seen rents come down. That does not mean we slow down. In fact, it means we need to step up efforts. The Build Canada Homes act is all about stepping up those efforts to build more affordable housing and to make sure housing is suitable for the next generation, including student housing and housing for young people who are looking for their first homes. It is complementary to the tax break for first-time homebuyers that the House is bringing forward.

We need to have a number of tools. Build Canada Homes is streamlining the process of moving affordable housing forward for Canada with a lean and nimble agency that will deliver that.

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. minister for laying out exactly what Canadians have been talking about for quite some time. He talked about the wraparound services and cities like London, Ontario, where we have benefited from funding through the national housing strategy. I was recently at a location where we had funded wraparound services. I want to share with the minister the dignity I saw in the people who lived there. An event had been created and I was invited to speak to them. I am thinking about where they were five years ago and where they are today, with the dignity and the humanity to now be able to think past their problems.

I think about cities like Vancouver and London, where we see a lot of homelessness and people experiencing addiction because they do not have wraparound services. Could the minister talk a bit more about the wraparound services in the Build Canada Homes act?

• (1225)

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her concern for those most vulnerable. The importance of supportive and transitional housing cannot be understated. It is a best practice, as part of a housing-first initiative, to make sure that people who are at risk of homelessness or are currently homeless have an opportunity to get into housing that has wraparound health and social supports so they can find stability in their lives and then transition to other housing opportunities successfully.

We have seen great examples of this. I mentioned that Dunn House, in the member for Taiaiaako'n—Parkdale—High Park's riding, is really a social medicine example that is proving to save taxpayer dollars. We had people who were spending a lot of time in hospitals and emergency rooms or in jail within the justice system. The cost of all that has been reduced. Those people are rebuilding their lives with great success. We have seen that success in B.C. with the supportive housing I was involved with when I was the mayor of Vancouver.

It is a best practice. We have a billion dollars dedicated toward that. We are looking for the operating funding from the provinces and territories to go forward and build thousands of supportive transitional homes. We will need that support from the leadership at the provincial level in particular. We have had early examples of that in Nova Scotia, Ontario and B.C. We need to scale that up. It is a big part of our work.

David Bexte (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for introducing the bill. I really appreciate it.

I have spent a lot of time since I came to Parliament visiting my riding and speaking with constituents about their circumstances. The cost of living is palpable across the country, and not just in my home province. A big part of the cost of living crisis is related to the affordability of homes. I do not hear much in the bill's introduction related to affordability, except for the title. There is little substance, other than maybe the monopolization of entry-level housing construction across the country.

I understand this is transformation with intent, as the member has spoken to directly. I wonder if he could comment on how the government intends to eliminate or bring down the cost of housing with respect to municipal fees, taxes, delays, the time it takes to acquire a permit and all the stuff related to building new construction. I do not see any of those benefits in this legislation. I just see additional bureaucracy.

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Hon. Gregor Robertson: Madam Speaker, I spoke briefly to the impact we have already had in terms of reducing approval times, red tape and the costs related to both of those with the City of Ottawa. We have an agreement in place with the City of Ottawa to build about 3,000 homes. The homes will be expedited through the city's system and that is a good example of how Build Canada Homes, by bringing new tools to the table, which this act would enable, has the opportunity to leverage that acceleration with city governments, which are responsible for those approvals and for reducing those costs.

There will be other approaches with infrastructure investments that reduce development cost charges, which we will be bringing forward in the weeks and months ahead. With Build Canada Homes in particular, we have that leverage point. What will be really critical for us going forward is also having the tools to crank up the supply of more affordable housing. We can invest, at Build Canada Homes, in affordable housing projects that leverage a range of deeper affordability right to the middle market, like housing for young people that is lower rent. There are opportunities for attainable home ownership as well.

We look forward, at Build Canada Homes, to being able to focus on scaling those opportunities.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

Marilène Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister a question, one that I often hear when I travel around my riding. There is concern that some smaller communities, which do not have the resources of cities like Toronto or Longueuil, may not be able to access the opportunities provided by this program. Not every town needs 400 housing units. Some communities may need only four or six. The mayors and reeves in my riding are concerned about this.

I would like to hear the minister tell us whether all communities, regardless of size, will have access to the program. They do not have the same resources as larger cities. At the press conference announcing the agreement with Quebec City, there was some talk of competition. It feels a bit like David versus Goliath, so I hope they will also have access to it.

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for her question.

[*English*]

We are focused on communities of all shapes and sizes. That is part of Build Canada Homes. The act would enable this new, lean, efficient agency to deliver both large-scale projects with larger communities and cities, and smaller projects in smaller and rural communities. We anticipate it being a measure of the impact within the community. In a small community, a small project would have a significant impact. We need to be able to fund and advance those projects in all sizes of communities.

Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Madam Speaker, just before my formal remarks, I would like to take one moment to mention that two weeks ago today, I was able to stand in the House and congratulate Megan Oldham from Parry Sound on a bronze medal win at the Olympics in Milan.

I am excited to report that, a week ago today, I had the immense privilege of standing at the bottom of the hill and watching her win gold in the big air event. I had never been to the Olympics before, and I have to say that watching a constituent and family friend win gold is a pretty exciting experience. I just want to report that we are obviously immensely proud of Megan in Parry Sound—Muskoka and all across Canada. The town of Parry Sound is actually planning a fairly large community celebration this Saturday, and I will be there. Singing *O Canada* as a constituent wins gold at the Olympics is something I will never forget.

I will move on to the debate today:

For the great enemy of truth is very often not the lie—deliberate, contrived and dishonest—but the myth—persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic.

The warning President John F. Kennedy delivered at the Yale commencement in 1962 is the warning that we need to hear today. President Kennedy knew that nations could drift because of the comfort of assumptions, systems and myths.

Today, Canada is living a myth. The myth is that we can solve a housing crisis by expanding bureaucracy, that another agency will compensate for a system that is designed to delay, and that process is the same as decision. The truth is much harder. The problem in this country is not a shortage of process. It is a shortage of permission. Until we confront that truth honestly, housing affordability will not return.

Canada's housing crisis did not appear suddenly overnight. It was constructed, layer by layer, over years, over decades, with one additional approval, one new study, one longer consultation, one more appeal mechanism and one more condition layered onto an already complex process. Each individual decision seemed reasonable and each safeguard seemed maybe defensible, yet layered together they produced delay.

Delay is not neutral. Delay is a decision and it has a cost. When approvals stretch from months into years, capital sits idle, risk increases and projects that once made economic sense no longer do. As time expands, costs explode, and either those costs are embedded into the final price or the homes are just simply never built. That is not ideological rhetoric. It is simple math. This paralysis by process is measurable in months, in dollars and in lost opportunity.

The CMHC estimates that Canada must build between 430,000 and 500,000 homes per year for a sustained period to restore affordability. We are nowhere near that pace. In recent years, housing starts have fallen well below that level. Meanwhile, population growth accelerated. Between 2019 and 2024, for every 100-person increase in the adult population, only a small fraction of ownership housing was added. That imbalance compounds annually. Home ownership among Canadians aged 30 to 34 has declined sharply, rents have risen and carrying costs have increased dramatically. Now, nearly nine in 10 Canadians express concern about housing affordability. This is not some cyclical downturn that will just reset itself. It is structural and it is pervasive.

That is not just my diagnosis. I am not just griping as a partisan here. The warnings are everywhere. The OECD has repeatedly identified restrictive zoning, prolonged permitting and fragmented approval systems across levels of government as principal constraints on housing supply in Canada. It has called for as-of-right zoning, predictable and shortened approval timelines, reduced regulatory overlap and alignment between infrastructure funding and housing approvals. Its conclusion is clear: Canada's housing challenge is not primarily a financing issue; it is a supply and regulatory issue.

• (1235)

The International Monetary Fund has gone even further. In its article IV consultation, it has warned that housing supply constraints in Canada now represent a macroeconomic risk. They are not simply a social issue, but a macroeconomic risk.

Housing shortages fuel inflation, restrict labour mobility, suppress productivity growth and elevate financial vulnerability. When workers cannot move to opportunity, productivity declines. When productivity declines, growth slows, and when growth slows, fiscal capacity weakens. This paralysis by process in housing becomes paralysis in economic growth, so when international institutions flag housing supply as a growth constraint, it is wise for us to listen. Canada does not lack capital, talent or expertise; what Canada lacks is permission.

Prime Minister Lester Pearson believed that governments reveal their priorities not through their rhetoric but through what they make it easy to do and what they make it hard to do. In Canada today, it is easier to create a new program than to reform a process, it is easier to announce than to approve, and it is easier to expand bureaucracy than to shorten timelines. That imbalance is not limited to housing, although housing is where its consequences are most visible, which brings us to Bill C-20.

Bill C-20 would create the Build Canada Homes corporation, the fourth federal housing bureaucracy and another governance framework and layer of administration. Let us apply the Pearson test. Would it shorten municipal timelines or eliminate duplication or endless review? Would it impose service standards or reduce the tax burden on housing? The answer is quite simply no, it would not. It would reorganize, but it would not reform, and that matters because the crisis we face is not a shortage of institutions; it is an accumulation of delay.

Build Canada Homes would not change zoning law, eliminate discretionary rezoning, impose firm timelines on reviews, reduce

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development or remove environmental duplication charges. It would add a new entity; it would not remove a barrier. If we do not fix time, we do not fix cost; if we do not fix cost, we do not fix affordability.

The minister said that we do not need to predict how this new agency is going to work; we already have some evidence. Those first six housing projects on federal lands announced by Build Canada Homes were presented as proof of momentum. They were proof that the new Crown corporation was hitting the ground running and already delivering, yet we know that those lands were already well under development through the Canada Lands Company, an existing federal Crown corporation. The sites had already been identified, transferred and prepared; planning work was already under way; municipal engagement had already begun, and in some cases, approvals were already advancing. Build Canada Homes did not unlock those sites; it inherited them.

We all know that rebranding does not increase supply, shorten approvals or break the chains of our process. If greater authority was required, it could have granted that to Canada Lands Company. Instead, the government has layered on another structure, while the underlying approvals system, with all its delays and costs, remains unchanged.

We have seen this pattern before from the Liberal government. The housing accelerator fund was introduced with similar language, such as urgency, speed and transformation. Billions were allocated, planning studies were funded, consultants were hired and zoning frameworks were reviewed, but did it eliminate discretionary rezonings, impose binding approval timelines or remove duplication? In many cases, it simply funded more planning. It did not remove process. Money was layered on top of delay and actually subsidized the paralysis.

Even the CMHC is not immune. Developers across the country report prolonged underwriting reviews, repeated revisions and changing requirements mid-process. The financing designed to accelerate housing is slowed by administration.

With every new agency or program, the signal from the government is very clear: The system is not optimized for speed; it is optimized for review. Review without discipline becomes delay, and delay without reform feeds the paralysis.

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● (1240)

I find it interesting that when the government seeks to assist the auto sector, as an example, it works directly with the producers. It tries to strengthen their competitiveness; it secures investment for them and works to improve their supply chains. When the government wants to support farmers, it does not create some federal body that plants crops and raises cows. It backs producers, reduces risk and tries to expand markets. However, in housing, instead of empowering builders by reducing delays and costs, the government has created a new bureaucracy. Homes are built by builders, not by boards.

At the end of the Second World War, Canada faced a severe housing emergency as well. Nearly one million veterans returned home. Ten years of depression and six years of war had nearly halted construction. By 1946, the country was short more than 200,000 homes. Families were living in temporary huts and converted barracks. The crisis was immediate, yet Canada mobilized. Financing expanded, land was serviced, approvals were streamlined and authority was clear. Housing production increased dramatically through the late 1940s and early 1950s, and within a decade, that shortage was largely overcome. That is not nostalgia; it is a very clear example of urgency a time when the government treated time as the enemy.

It is easy for us today to frame this housing crisis as only about young Canadians. It is about young Canadians, but it is important to point out that scarcity affects every generation, because housing supply affects retirement security. When young families cannot afford homes, household formation slows. When household formation slows, economic growth slows. When that growth slows, pension sustainability weakens. When housing markets become distorted by undersupply, volatility increases, and volatility affects home equity. Home equity affects retirement planning. Reduced labour mobility reduces productivity, and that reduced productivity affects tax revenues, those same tax revenues that fund health care and pensions.

Housing supply is not a generational wedge issue; it is an issue of national stability. Boomers should care, mid-career Canadians should care and young Canadians already do care. Housing supply is tied to our nation's fiscal health. It is tied to productivity, and that scarcity harms us all. We know this is true because residential construction represents roughly 7% of Canada's GDP. With related industries included, nearly one-fifth of economic activity is connected to housing. When housing slows, construction employment declines, material production declines, mortgage lending slows, and retail contracts and government revenues shrink. Housing anchors fiscal health at every level, so when supply fails, the economic ripple is national.

We know that real reform is not about announcing new funds or new agencies. It is about removing friction: expanding as-of-right zoning, imposing building review timelines, aligning infrastructure funding with housing results, reducing the onerous tax burden, co-ordination across jurisdictions and holding departments accountable for time. None of that requires yet another Crown corporation. It requires government reforming itself at all levels. Following the same playbook of the last 10 years simply will not work.

President Kennedy warned about myths: the myth that comfort can replace courage, that process can replace decision and that more administration equals more results. Canada is living that myth right now. As we are trapped in that myth, prices rise, supply continues to fall, opportunity continues to narrow, growth continues to weaken and confidence continues to erode.

Prime Minister Pearson believed governments are judged by what they make easy and what they make hard. By that measure, we are failing. It is easy to announce, reorganize and create new agencies, yet it remains hard to approve housing, shorten timelines and remove duplication. It is hard to say "yes", and Canadians are paying the price for that imbalance.

They see it in the cost of every home, the rent paid each month, delayed family plans and slower growth that affects retirement security and public finances alike. That is not abstract. It is absolutely measurable and absolutely reversible. We have built at scale before. We have mobilized nationally before. We have delivered transformative projects before, but the question before this House is not whether Canada can build; it is whether we are prepared to do it again, because when government makes it too hard to build homes, it weakens economic security across all generations for all Canadians. Canada does not lack builders, Canada does not lack capital and Canada does not lack the skill. Canada lacks permission.

● (1245)

We must restore urgency. We must restore accountability for time and restore clarity of purpose, and then supply will follow. Canada can build again, but not if we continue pretending that more bureaucracy is actual reform, and not if we continue layering announcements on top of delay.

For 10 years, Canadians have been promised strategies, funds, frameworks and agencies, and for 10 long years, affordability has moved further and further out of reach for every Canadian. Home ownership has fallen, rents have risen and starts have slowed. The crisis has deepened. This is not a failure of messaging or announcements; it is a failure of government. Repeating the same formula, another agency, another announcement, another layer, will not produce a different result; it will produce more of the same.

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If we are serious about restoring affordability, then we must confront the truth. The obstacle is not a lack of government; it is too much government standing in the way. The answer is not a fourth housing bureaucracy; it is the courage to reform the system that created the delays in the first place.

Let us choose reform over reorganization. Let us choose timelines over talking points. Let us choose permission over paralysis. Canada can build again, but only if we stop repeating the costly errors of the past and start removing the barriers that caused this crisis and continue to make it worse.

Canadians deserve this level of urgency, this level of honesty. This nation has done it before, and we can do it again, but Canadians are running out of time. We must do it now.

Jennifer McKelvie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree that we need better timelines. I agree that we need reform, but the way to do that is through partnership, including with municipalities. As a former municipal leader, I think that our colleague across the floor would believe in that as well.

The statement from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities welcomes the federal government's Build Canada Homes initiative as a strong signal of leadership on the housing crisis. This announcement shows a clear commitment to working in partnership with municipalities as well as provinces, territories, indigenous governments, housing providers, non-profits and developers to deliver practical, results-driven solutions that meet the urgent housing needs of Canadians.

I truly believe in partnership. I believe in partnership with municipal and provincial governments. I wonder how the member feels we should move forward in that spirit of partnership, because many of his comments were really talking about overriding the powers and responsibilities of municipal government.

Scott Aitchison: Madam Speaker, I suppose the FCM can be forgiven for thinking that there may be some results coming from this government after 10 years, but the fact of the matter remains that the Liberals have created a fourth federal housing bureaucracy. There is the department; there is CMHC, a Crown corporation that has existed since just after the war; there is the Canada Lands Company, which is already developing these projects they announced; and now we have Build Canada Homes, which, by the way, is now responsible for one of the other Crown corporations.

My question for the hon. parliamentary secretary is this: How many bureaucracies will we need to solve this crisis? Is it maybe one more? What if this one does not achieve what we want it to do? Will we build another one?

The solution is not more bureaucracy; it is about getting the bureaucracy out of the way. I wish this government would simply understand that and help us get the bureaucracy out of the way.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, we completely agree that this just adds more bureaucracy, that it adds a new structure. They already had the

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, but now they are adding Build Canada Homes instead of optimizing what is already in place.

I would like to know if we can agree that this is another attempt by the federal government to interfere in Quebec's jurisdictions, including in housing. In Quebec, we already have the Société d'habitation du Québec.

I would like to know if my colleague agrees that Quebec should ask for the right to opt out with full compensation for anything having to do with federal housing projects.

[*English*]

Scott Aitchison: Madam Speaker, I will tell the member right now that, in fact, Quebec is one of the provinces that actually has done fairly well on housing.

There is no question that partnerships between the federal level and the provincial level are important. I would simply argue that those partnerships should focus on getting provinces to reduce the burden of endless reviews and consultants' reports. We have to speed up the process required to get things approved in this country. All that time adds cost, and until we reduce that time, we are not going to reduce the cost. This government could do that in partnership with Quebec, as with every other province.

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Madam Speaker, that was one of the best speeches I have heard in my time here. Another piece to this conversation is home ownership, and I wonder if the member would like to expand on the Conservative approach to home ownership versus the piece of legislation in front of us and how it would not really address or further expand the dream of home ownership for Canadians.

Scott Aitchison: Madam Speaker, that is a very important point, and I probably should have spoken about it more in my speech. I listened to the minister, and I heard all about these new projects. They are all focused on rentals, and there is clearly no question that there is a need for rentals in Canada. It was the first Trudeau prime minister who cancelled the incentivization of building purpose-built rentals, and we see the implications of that today. However, what the government seems to forget is that home ownership is still, in fact, the dream of young people in this country, and until we reduce the cost of new homes, we are just not going to make that a reality.

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The Liberals will talk about how they have removed the GST on new homes, but only for first-time homebuyers. The problem with that, particularly in the markets where housing is really in crisis, the largest markets in the country, is that the first-time homebuyers do not make up enough of the market of new homes for builders to break ground. As such, it is not enough to actually stimulate the market. Builders are laying people off as we speak, and they are not starting any new projects.

We have to reduce the cost overall so that we can get builders building again, and the government is not doing that. This is putting home ownership further and further out of reach. The Conservatives have a plan to actually make home ownership a reality again for Canadians by reducing the cost overall, which includes fees and time.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is a fundamental flaw in the member's argument, and all one needs to do is take a look at the contrast and compare today's minister to the leader of the Conservative Party when he was the minister responsible for housing, which reflects the Conservative Party's policy. He constructed six houses while he was the minister of housing. The fundamental difference is that a Liberal government, under this Prime Minister and this minister, recognizes that the Government of Canada has a role to play. That is what the legislation would do. It would reinforce that role.

We can complement that, with our working with provincial and municipal governments and our recognizing that housing is something in which the federal government has an important role to play, and the Conservative right, not the red Tories, disagrees fundamentally with the federal government in housing. Why is that?

• (1255)

Scott Aitchison: Madam Speaker, as usual, there is a fundamental flaw with that member's line of argument. I honestly do not understand what he is talking about. There is no question that the federal government has a role. I think I have talked about that many times. He is just not paying attention. That is fine. I do not really expect him to pay attention.

The fact of the matter is that, as Conservatives, we would much prefer that Canadians have the opportunity to own their own home rather than rent from the government. It is great that the member wants to build lots of government homes, but Canadians do not want to live in those homes; they want to live in one they own. That is the promise that we would restore.

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question is very simple. Why would the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure think it responsible to develop a new government agency, with the use of taxpayer dollars, without set targets and timelines to outline to Canadians how many homes would actually be built?

Scott Aitchison: Madam Speaker, I do not know whether the new Crown corporations talk to the other Crown corporations, but the CMHC, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, is the first housing Crown corporation of the government, and it is talking about making sure we build between 430,000 and 500,000 homes a year for the next several years to restore affordability. However, in-

stead of engaging CMHC to help with this project, and instead of engaging Canada Lands Company, the other federal Crown corporation responsible for housing, the government is creating a third one, and it does not have any targets.

The government has let the first corporation talk about targets, and it let the newest one take over one of them. Honestly, it makes zero sense to create yet another corporation. The first one has told us what its targets are, and the government would create a new one without targets. It would just be more bureaucracy, and I do not foresee any results coming out of it.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his excellent work on this important issue.

I will go to the people affected by these policies. I speak often to young people, and I know the member does as well. Comparing their concerns today with where we were 10 years ago, many young people fear they will be worse off than their parents, and their top concerns are access to jobs and access to homes. Those are pretty fundamental things in life for starting a family, having kids and pursuing a positive future. Can they afford a place to live and find a job, and is that job going to allow them to pay for basics, including, most essentially, a home? Many young people, after 10 years of the Liberal government, have started to lose hope that that is even possible.

I wonder if the member could share a bit about the conversations he is having with young people, but also offer them a sense that something is possible if we change direction in terms of public policy.

Scott Aitchison: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his work with young people. He focuses a lot on youth employment and unemployment, as it were, and he is quite correct. I have talked to young people all across the country and in my own community, even before I came to this place. Young people hope to own a home. This is something my generation and previous generations simply took for granted. The reality is that we have done it before. It is only over the last 40 years that we have made it so expensive and so hard to get permission to build a home. The way to fix that is to make it easier, and Conservatives would do that.

[*Translation*]

Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ): Madam Speaker, today, we are discussing Bill C-20, which seeks to establish Build Canada Homes as a Crown corporation to build affordable housing. Obviously, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of that.

The budget, which is currently being debated as part of Bill C-15, provides for \$13 billion over the next four years, until 2030, and gives the government and the Crown corporation the power to build so-called affordable homes.

For several years now, we have been experiencing a major housing crisis. The Bloc Québécois is pleased that the government and the minister, whom I commend, are taking steps to expedite efforts to build affordable housing, but why are we in the midst of a housing crisis to begin with? Why are young people no longer able to buy a home, since prices have skyrocketed in recent years? Why are people who are struggling to make ends meet no longer able to find a place to rent? Why are they no longer able to move, to find a new place to live at a price that does not force them to make sacrifices when it comes to putting food on the table or buying other basic necessities?

That is the housing crisis we are facing today. I must remind the House that the housing crisis was caused, in part, by Justin Trudeau's government, in other words, by the Liberals sitting here today, through the Century Initiative, which planned to increase Canada's population to 100 million people by the end of the century. The immigration floodgates were opened. The Bloc Québécois supports immigration, but the government must ensure it can meet its ambitious goals. Increasing immigration to such a level, which no other OECD country has done in terms of immigration, was very risky. Neither McKinsey nor the government even thought about implementing measures to support this sudden spike in immigration. Such support would include schools and hospitals and, of course, housing. That played a major part in the situation we are now in.

Of course, one of the problems related to the housing crisis concerns the financialization of housing. Rather than investing in shares in companies that produce goods and services and then receiving a portion of the profits, some people are relying on the housing market's tendency to rise in value and buying a condo or house without necessarily intending to reside there, but rather to put it back on the market in a few years and make a profit. This is another major problem. Justin Trudeau's government and his finance minister Chrystia Freeland put a few measures in place to mitigate that. For example, there was the anti-flipping measure, which required a certain amount of time to pass before someone who bought a house could resell it. There was that too. There is also the fact that a lot of people are living in increasingly larger spaces, which leaves less space available, in terms of housing stock, for people who need it.

Now the government is putting its shoulder to the wheel and finally making a major effort, which we applaud. It is going to invest \$13 billion over the next four years, with the possibility of more to come later on.

Housing essentially falls under the jurisdiction of the provinces and Quebec. We in the Bloc Québécois are concerned when we see that Ottawa wants to bypass the provinces and Quebec to tackle the housing issue. Yes, we are happy that the government is putting money on the table. Why is the government putting money on the table? It is because it can afford to do so. Why can it afford to do so? It is because of the fiscal imbalance, which is thoroughly documented in the Parliamentary Budget Officer's annual reports. These reports point out that, when taxpayers pay their taxes, about half of the revenue goes to the federal government while the other half stays in the provinces. However, the expenses that the provinces have to cover in order to deliver services in areas under their juris-

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diction, such as education, health care, roads and so on, are much higher than those incurred by the federal government in meeting its responsibilities, which essentially consist of transferring funds to either the provinces or to individuals. Examples include EI and OAS. The federal government has fewer exclusive jurisdictions. National defence is one, although the government made a significant shift in this area in its most recent budget. The fiscal imbalance means that Ottawa does have some flexibility, as documented every year by the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

• (1300)

The government sees the crisis that it helped to create, and it is saying that it will do its part and take decisive action. We welcome this gesture, but we are concerned about jurisdiction. Why? Up until the late 1980s, there used to be many partnerships between Quebec and Ottawa in the area of social housing, such as low-income housing, for example. Then, all of a sudden, the federal government decided that it was no longer interested and was abandoning the whole thing. All of a sudden, Ottawa, which had been involved in an area of provincial jurisdiction, changed its policy and left people in poverty. In other parts of Canada, this was a real disaster, a real dismantling of social and affordable housing. In Quebec, because we care, we decided that we could not let that happen. The Government of Quebec came to the rescue and saved the day by taking over the federal government's share. Then a few decades went by without Ottawa putting any money back into social housing, and that was a serious problem.

Over the past 10 years, under Justin Trudeau, there has been a renewed focus on affordable housing, and even some social housing programs, which we welcomed. However, it has been a pittance given the housing shortage and skyrocketing housing costs. That is our concern.

Now, all of a sudden, Ottawa is getting on board and creating a Crown corporation. It is putting money in the budget that will be transferred to the new Crown corporation. Yes, but what will happen in four years, six years, eight years, ten years? Will organizations and people who want to submit projects then have to go to the federal government, continue to work with the SHQ or turn to the Quebec government? We shall see, and I will come back to that since it is not specified in Bill C-20, which establishes the Crown corporation.

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However, an agreement, a memorandum of understanding, was signed between Quebec and Ottawa in that regard. We need access to that document, but we do not have it. Why? This is not unusual. Ottawa waits until it has signed agreements with all of the provinces before disclosing the content of those agreements. Why? The reason is that, often, Quebec manages to negotiate a little more autonomy than the other provinces, and Ottawa does not want the other provinces to follow Quebec's lead. That is why Ottawa generally tends to sign agreements with Quebec last. However, in this case, it seems that the federal government was in a rush to reach an agreement. The agreement was signed and my riding neighbour, Caroline Proulx, the Quebec housing minister, praised this agreement and said that the MOU respected Quebec's areas of jurisdiction. We find that reassuring and it encourages us to support the principle of this bill, but, obviously, we will have to look at the specifics of the MOU.

Bill C-20, however, leaves much to be desired. The bill establishes the Crown corporation and gives it a plethora of possible tools. The corporation can do great things, but the House has no control over it. The Crown corporation and the government have a great deal of power to develop affordable housing, but, after that, there is no accountability.

For example, the government's definition of affordable housing can be found on the website for Build Canada Homes, which was initially mistranslated in French as "Bâtir Maisons Canada". That definition states that affordable housing should cost 30% of the median income of the neighbourhood or region, so we are not talking about an individual's ability to pay. A person living in poverty has an income below the median income of their neighbourhood. This is completely different from social housing, which is based on ability to pay and is set at 30% of the income of the person or household living in the dwelling, rather than on the median income of the neighbourhood. Meanwhile, this definition is nowhere to be found in Bill C-20. It is only found on the Build Canada Homes website, not in the legislation.

If we can trust the government when it says that it will build affordable housing, then that is great. However, the bill provides no guarantee that the housing will actually be affordable. We have no guarantee that any of the funding will go to social housing. That is really worrying.

Social housing, whether it is co-operatives, low-income housing or housing from other organizations, is based on the ability of households, as I was saying, of individuals, to pay based on their income. That is what we need to focus on. Bill C-20, the Build Canada Homes act, allows for that. However, if Build Canada Homes did not build any social housing at all, it would still be within its framework or mission. That is a serious concern.

• (1305)

The same is true for energy efficiency standards, for example. The government says it needs to make an effort to fight climate change and set higher standards. That is set out in a document online stating that, yes, efforts must be made in that direction, but it is not in the bill and it is not in the mission. Build Canada Homes is not required to ensure that environmental standards are in place for the projects it will support.

Once again, we are supposed to just trust the government. Once Bill C-15, the budget implementation bill, is passed, the government and the Crown corporation will no longer be accountable to the House. We are being asked to trust the government, and this raises concerns.

It is the same thing with local materials. Obviously, when people buy two-by-fours or two-by-sixes, they do not import them from the U.S. or Europe. We make enough of those products here in Canada. However, the government has said that people need to maximize local benefits, make efforts to ensure that the materials purchased are produced locally and drive Canada's economy. That is all well and good, and we welcome that. However, that is also in a schedule that is neither on the website, nor in the bill. The government has made a commitment, but what kind of accountability mechanisms will there be? Once again, it is not within the Crown corporation's mission, and it is not in the bill. We have to trust the government, which will not be required to keep its commitments afterwards.

I was a member of the Standing Committee on Finance prior to the last election. The committee heard from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC. In fact, the committee heard from a great CMHC economist who had done the study the committee was discussing. He told the committee that at the rate things were going with the Century Initiative, which was a major factor, rents and home prices were going to double between 2019, the base year he was using, and 2030. That is deeply concerning.

When CMHC officials appeared before the committee, they presented some tables that the committee had requested showing the various CMHC affordable housing programs. The committee found that standardizing programs, such as the rapid housing initiative, ensured each province and each territory received its fair share on a per capita basis. Quebec would receive its share. As for the rest of the programs that were not standardized, Quebec did not receive its fair share.

Again, the Build Canada Homes website states that the government would aim for regional fairness, but this is not in the bill. What does regional fairness mean? There are no standards or obligations. Build Canada Homes will not be required to say that each province will have its share. What we have learned over the past years is that when this standard is not included, Quebec does not get its share. This is a matter of great concern for us. It is a question of fairness. When there is no standard, Quebec does not get its share. There is no standard here. I will say it again: We have some real concerns.

As I said a few moments ago, Build Canada Homes is structurally very flexible. It allows for partnerships, it allows for funding to be transferred directly to the provinces, and so on. Build Canada Homes has considerable latitude to do great things. However, depending on the government's goodwill, it also makes it possible for housing projects intended for social housing or transitional housing to be converted into housing projects that would not really be affordable. There are no restrictions in this regard. That is obviously a serious concern.

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Yes, the government said so. Yes, it was in the presentations last fall. Yes, the Build Canada Homes website says there will be money for transitional housing for people trying to get out of homelessness. The government says that funds will be allocated and that there will be partnerships with the provinces. That is what we want, so we welcome that. There will be opportunities to fund co-ops, social housing and low-income housing. We welcome that, too. However, there are no guarantees in this bill, so that is a concern.

● (1310)

I would like to mention a tenant advocacy organization in Quebec, the Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain, or FRAPRU, which is located in Montreal. After reading an interview published by The Canadian Press on February 7, members of FRAPRU publicly expressed their concern that Build Canada Homes could be used to financialize housing. They said, and I quote, "The cat is out of the bag. After promising to build affordable housing through Build Canada Homes, the...government's new strategy is becoming clear. Build Canada Homes will be nothing more than an investment bank".

These people, who are on the ground fighting for tenants' rights so that we have social housing and so that people can live with dignity, had a lot more to say. Given what the minister has said in media interviews, FRAPRU is now concerned because the Build Canada Homes tool box comes with financial levers that the government can use to have the private sector develop housing. Some of that housing could be considered affordable, but there are no guarantees. Organizations like FRAPRU believe that this will undermine the mission of Build Canada Homes.

Are we talking about projects where support or subsidies will be granted to construction companies or real estate developers to build more housing, or will the spirit of the bill truly prevail, meaning that more affordable housing will be built? Supply and demand dictates that if there is more housing overall, prices will tend to fall. However, the members of the Bloc Québécois are asking for more than that, as is FRAPRU.

We do not just want more housing. We want more truly affordable housing, which ideally means more social housing. We would have liked to see a guarantees regarding social housing in this bill. We would have liked to see guarantees for local purchasing in construction and for environmental standards. We would have liked to see guarantees for transitional housing to lift people out of homelessness. We would have liked to see a standard that ensures fairness between the provinces to make sure that Quebec gets its fair share.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, Ottawa has a record of doing some great things on social housing, but overnight, the government changed priorities and left things in a state of ruin. Quebec had to step in to clean things up, and I am genuinely concerned that with the latest intrusion into an area that falls under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces, the same thing will happen in a few years' time. When this issue is no longer fashionable, when it is no longer in vogue, the government will slash the whole program, and Quebec will once again have to pick up the pieces and go back to the drawing board.

If my party has to vote on the bill as it stands, we would have some reservations. We support the principle of social housing, but the bill falls far short of the government's commitments. There are far fewer guarantees. We are not prepared to sign a blank cheque for the government and say we trust it and we know it will do a great job. We will not do that because we want the government to be held accountable. We want guarantees to ensure that taxpayer dollars, money from the people we represent, is invested properly and is not diverted. In the meantime, we remain extremely concerned.

However, Ottawa has signed a memorandum of understanding with Quebec. As I said, Quebec was the first province to sign on, which is quite rare and exceptional. Caroline Proulx, the minister in Quebec City, and my friend, whom I wish to acknowledge, noted in a press release that "the agreement announced today is a major step forward in housing. It is significant and fully respects Quebec's jurisdiction, priorities, and legislative framework." This gives us enough assurance, even though we have not yet seen the document, to say that we will support the bill at this stage. I have no doubt the committee will find ways to improve it. We will work on that. We also really need to have access to the text of the agreement to make sure Ottawa fully complies with all of the Quebec government's priorities.

In closing, I would just like to remind the House that the bill gives the Crown corporation Build Canada Homes the status of agent of the Crown, which gives it the powers of the government, including the power to expropriate land, the power to avoid paying municipal taxes and the power to get around Quebec's laws and municipal bylaws. We were told that this was not the government's intention and that the issue will be corrected in the agreement, but we are keeping an eye on that.

● (1315)

Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always appreciate hearing what my colleague from Joliette—Manawan has to say. His speeches are always insightful and well thought out.

I wanted to start with a question, but I will just make a comment instead because I think my friend has clearly explained the connection between the bill, which has a specific objective, and his desire for the wording of the bill to be more precise. In my opinion, the agreement that he described at the end of his speech between the Canadian government and the Government of Quebec shows that federalism works. It shows the link between a bill and a good agreement, as he was the first to point out.

I would therefore like to better understand how this agreement can promote the interests of Quebec and my colleague's riding.

● (1320)

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, it is not complicated. We have been in a housing crisis for several years now. Housing prices have skyrocketed, and people no longer have access to home ownership. There are not enough condos, apartments or houses. More importantly, there is a huge shortage of social housing. The most vulnerable people are making immense sacrifices to find housing, often in unacceptable conditions.

Government Orders

Ottawa is providing \$13 billion over four years, and everyone welcomes that. Finally, Ottawa is fully acknowledging the current crisis, and the government is introducing a bill and allocating \$13 billion in the budget to address it. We are very pleased about that.

However, as I was saying, this falls under Quebec's jurisdiction. Ottawa has been known to bring in projects and then pull out of them overnight, leaving a mess. That is what worries us here. If there is good co-operation between Ottawa and Quebec on this issue, then that is perfect. However, we would like the bill to be more detailed and include more guarantees to ensure that the government continues to report on the appropriate use of funds.

We would also like to have access to the memorandum of understanding in order to confirm that that is the case, but we have been told that we cannot currently read it. The bill makes the Crown corporation an agent of the Crown. As such, it is given full powers and would not have to comply with any municipal bylaw. Again, we are being asked to blindly trust the government, but we are not prepared to do that.

[*English*]

David Bexte (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's statement and thoughtful words.

Could the member comment on the notion that, just like the magic of compound interest, we have what seems to be compound bureaucracy, where we get bureaucracy upon bureaucracy that just gums up the works and makes matters worse? Could the member also comment on how the system could become more efficient to reduce the bureaucratic, administrative and regulatory loads to get homes built faster and more affordably for Canadians?

[*Translation*]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comment and question. In the most recent budget, the government committed to keep the deficit at just \$78 billion this year. That is double Justin Trudeau's deficits and makes him look positively frugal. The government is saying that it is going to make cuts to the public service, that it is going to cut 40,000 jobs, which is huge. We are still waiting and we are interested to see that. We have been told that those jobs may be replaced by AI. We will see.

What we do know is that the government is putting a new program in place to try to simplify the task for organizations and stakeholders. We will see if it succeeds. In our opinion, the simplest solution would be to pay out the \$13 billion, to transfer Quebec's share to the Government of Quebec and entrust it to build social and affordable housing. That would eliminate an administrative level and a ton of red tape and paperwork for everyone. The money could be sent directly to where it is needed and housing could be built a lot faster. That is what we want and that is what we are calling for.

Natilien Joseph (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we agree that this is not a matter of jurisdiction or an ideological fight. When Quebec families are struggling to put a roof over their heads, our duty is to take action, not to debate about jurisdictions. We just need to house Quebecers. People want solutions, not jurisdictional bickering.

Can my colleague provide more clarity for Quebecers?

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, the need is great. There is a crisis, so yes, urgent action is needed. We are asking the federal government and the Quebec government to come to an agreement. They signed an MOU. They seem to be in agreement. I want to make sure that the areas of jurisdiction are respected.

Why? It is because we want the federal government to do a good job in its own areas of jurisdiction, which it is not currently doing. Take the Cûram software, for example. The government is unable to properly pay out OAS benefits. Development costs for this software have skyrocketed. In terms of EI, the government is unable to make reforms because the software is faulty. It is unable to care for veterans or fund health care. The federal government is having a hard time carrying out its core missions, and yet it is always sticking its nose into the areas of jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces to get some some visibility.

There is a housing crisis. We applaud the fact that funds are being allocated to address it. Ideally, we would have preferred that the money be transferred. As I was saying, my fear and the fear of the Bloc Québécois is that this is a priority for the government now, but will it still be a priority in four years?

In recent decades, we have witnessed the federal government in Ottawa disengage from social housing and low-income housing overnight, leaving a path of destruction in its wake, and yet, social housing is not its jurisdiction. It skipped town, dropped everything and left families and people in need of low-cost housing to cope with the disaster. We do not want that to happen again. That is why respecting jurisdictions is important.

• (1325)

Marilène Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a question about urgency. People talk about the urgent need for housing and social housing. The Fédération québécoise des municipalités, or FQM, and the Union des municipalités du Québec, or UMQ, have levelled some criticism at the government for causing housing construction delays.

I would like to hear my colleague briefly address that issue.

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend for her question. This is an ongoing issue. We have seen it. In this case, we are talking about Build Canada Homes. What will the delays be? The government must take quick action, in collaboration with Quebec through a memorandum of understanding, so that every dollar voted in the budget gets out the door as quickly as possible.

Government Orders

We know that the cost of building housing is skyrocketing. A one-year delay represents a very significant percentage increase, and it is even worse for a two- or three-year delay. What we have seen in recent years is that, for Quebec, federal programs administered through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation take years to make an impact. A dollar voted in year one could end up only getting out the door in year three, four or even five.

However, the same dollar that was invested in year one will buy much less lumber and fewer doors and windows in years three, four or five. That money will therefore build far fewer homes, all because an agreement had to be reached, details needed to be negotiated and so on. Plus, there is the issue of red tape. That is why the Bloc Québécois has always said that areas of jurisdiction must be respected. When a dollar is earmarked for something, it must be sent directly to the provinces so that it can be put to use as quickly as possible.

The need is there. With prices rising sharply due to inflation, the faster the dollar is spent, the more we get for our money. I would like to thank my colleague once again for her insightful remarks highlighting the needs of the FQM and the UMQ.

[*English*]

Roman Baber (York Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I ask colleagues to look at what, essentially, this bill is doing. It would create a fourth housing bureaucracy. We already have a ministry of housing, the CMHC and the Canada Lands Company, which is based in the great riding of York Centre. Now the Liberal government is saying that we need another layer, a fourth layer of bureaucracy, to build homes in Canada, which is the primary purpose of the legislation we are debating.

I am wondering where the Bloc stands on that. Will the Bloc support the Conservative suggestion that we do not need a fourth housing bureaucracy to build homes?

[*Translation*]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his insightful comments. The government's intention is to create a new structure to reduce red tape and bureaucracy and to consolidate services that were scattered across various departments and agencies. Like my colleague, I am cautious. Will the government really succeed in simplifying the process and reducing bureaucracy? That remains to be seen.

Given that housing and affordable housing are provincial responsibilities, what we are asking is that the funds be transferred directly to the provincial governments so that the money gets out the door faster and more housing can be built more quickly, as I have said several times.

[*English*]

Jennifer McKelvie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member of Parliament for Taiaiaokōānui—Parkdale—High Park.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear here today to speak in support of the Build Canada Homes act. This landmark legislation would establish Build Canada Homes as a Crown corporation dedi-

cated to building and expanding access to more affordable homes in Canada.

Over time, Canada's housing needs have evolved. While federal efforts have been delivered through a range of departments, agencies and programs, there is an opportunity to strengthen coordination and impact. Traditional construction and funding approaches alone are not meeting the scale and speed Canadians need, which is why we are moving forward with a new and innovative approach. All Canadians deserve an affordable place to call home. Housing is a fundamental need and growing demand for housing across the country requires urgent action.

Build Canada Homes was created to act quickly and efficiently. This legislation would give Build Canada Homes the flexibility and operational autonomy to deliver on its mandate. It would streamline federal housing efforts by bringing these roles under one umbrella. At the same time, it would maintain a clear accountability framework to government and would strengthen collaboration across the housing sector to deliver the affordable housing at a scale and pace that Canadians need. Build Canada Homes would act as a developer, a financier, a coordinator and a catalyst for innovation in the housing sector.

I would like to use my time today to speak about the importance of partnerships. Build Canada Homes has a central position in forging strong partnerships across all levels of government and with indigenous communities. It works with non-profit agencies, as well as key stakeholders in the housing industry, to drive the development of affordable housing across Canada. This includes private developers and community organizations.

Build Canada Homes cannot act alone. The success of its achievements lies in its partnerships. Stronger collaboration across all levels of government and with key partners is essential to tackling the housing challenges facing Canadians.

Build Canada Homes streamlines and accelerates the launch of affordable housing projects. The agency attracts public, private and philanthropic investment, maximizing impact. The Build Canada Homes act would make it easier to develop partnerships across the entire housing ecosystem to bring together the right financing and the right projects. As a Crown corporation, Build Canada Homes would combine access to federal lands, development expertise and flexible financial tools under one roof. It would accelerate the delivery of affordable housing, working with non-profits, indigenous organizations and all orders of government. This approach would reduce risk, address barriers and guide projects through the development process.

Government Orders

Build Canada Homes would also work in close partnership with developers, investors and manufacturers to get housing financed and built. It would work directly with builders and housing providers who are focused on long-term affordability. This includes non-profits, co-operatives, community housing providers or organizations that promote a variety of housing options for Canadians. These strategic partnerships would create homes that are affordable for a range of households across the income spectrum.

Build Canada Homes would be well equipped to collaborate with all levels of government and community partners through agreements, financial support, joint ventures and shared development initiatives. It would look for strong collaboration and coordination with provinces and territories who would help advance priority projects. This could include providing land, accelerating the approval process and waiving applicable fees.

Indigenous peoples face unique housing challenges. Build Canada Homes would collaborate on proposals that would deliver shared housing outcomes with first nations, Inuit and Métis governments, indigenous housing providers, and urban indigenous organizations. The housing needs of indigenous communities would be met in the spirit of collaboration. The Government of Canada respects indigenous sovereignty and supports self-determined housing solutions that are designed and delivered with an indigenous-led perspective. Our indigenous partners know how to incorporate indigenous knowledge and culture and adopt housing solutions in a way that enables their communities to thrive. Build Canada Homes is committed to building in full partnership with indigenous peoples and advancing indigenous housing priorities.

• (1330)

We are also working very closely with our provincial partners. Since its launch, Build Canada Homes has moved quickly to get housing projects off the ground. The Government of Canada has identified public lands that can be converted into housing. We have partnered with local governments to cut the red tape and to fast-track approvals.

In January alone, we moved forward with two major points of progress through Build Canada Homes. The Government of Canada, the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated have signed an agreement in principle. It would deliver up to 750 much-needed homes across the territory, including public, affordable and supportive housing. Through the agreement, Build Canada Homes would provide up to \$250 million towards this investment.

Importantly, as part of this new partnership, up to 30% of units would be built using innovative, factory-built components. Using off-site, factory-built components would help reduce delays and deliver homes faster. The first units are expected to be completed in the very near future.

As well, the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec have signed a memorandum of agreement to guide their collaboration on Build Canada Homes projects. This partnership would accelerate approvals and help to identify additional housing projects across Quebec. It would also be critical for unlocking funding for affordable housing to be invested in communities across the province.

Through Build Canada Homes, all levels of government are coming together to address the housing crisis. We would increase the supply of affordable housing and reduce the barriers to construction through a structured and collaborative approach. With private, public and government partners showing up at the table, we would get housing built. Growing and strengthening partnerships is an integral aspect of building homes for Canadians. By combining resources and finding innovative solutions alongside its partners, Build Canada Homes is laying the groundwork for lasting solutions.

The Build Canada Homes act would formally establish Build Canada Homes as a Crown corporation with a clear mandate. As a Crown corporation, Build Canada Homes would have the operational independence, governance and flexibility needed to deliver affordable housing at scale. The legislation would allow Build Canada Homes to operate at arm's length from government, manage assets and innovative financial tools, and make long-term investment decisions more efficiently. This structure would also enable Build Canada Homes to enter into partnerships that would expand housing supply. This would include partnerships with non-profits, private developers and all orders of government, including indigenous communities.

It would reinforce Build Canada Homes's role as a permanent, delivery-focused institution rather than a time-limited program. The Build Canada Homes act would strengthen Build Canada Homes' ability to establish and maintain strong relationships across the housing ecosystem. This is the power of partnership: implementing lasting change. We are working together to build a strong and more unified approach to housing across the country.

• (1335)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's sense of commitment, realizing that the federal government does have a role to play. I am wondering if she could provide her thoughts and the government's perspective in terms of the importance of working with other levels of government. I think of Winnipeg's mayor and the Province of Manitoba's premier, all of whom seem to be very supportive of our Prime Minister and the federal government's approach to dealing with the housing situation.

Can the member provide her thoughts in regard to how important it is that the federal government work with our partners?

Government Orders

Jennifer McKelvie: Madam Speaker, importantly, we realize that municipalities are our partners and that we need to work together to advance housing in municipalities from coast to coast to coast. We have exciting partnerships under way, including right here in Ottawa. Canada's new government has secured a new partnership with the City of Ottawa to build 3,000 mixed income and affordable housing units across the city beginning this year. We have innovative partnerships under way with Nova Scotia and with Quebec.

We are working from coast to coast to coast to find those partners that are committed to building housing at a pace and scale that has never been seen before. I will give an example of how it can be done. For supportive housing, municipal partners can bring forward the land, we can bring forward the capital and the provinces can bring forward that important operational funding.

Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague is a former deputy mayor of the city of Toronto, which is one of the most expensive cities in the country to build a home in. I am sure she is quite familiar with how much cost the local government and the city add to the cost of every new home. I am wondering if she might be able to speak to the cost of government, particularly at the local level, and if she sees a way for the government to do things like reducing the cost of government on the cost of a new home.

• (1340)

Jennifer McKelvie: Madam Speaker, I am delighted to speak to my previous role as deputy mayor in the city of Toronto. Working alongside partners, we passed an ambitious plan for affordable housing in the city of Toronto. We also passed rules to allow multiplexes across the city and multitenant homes. We cut down on red tape. We improved zoning so that it made it easier to build. We also transformed the way we do processes so permits and approvals can be done faster.

We have shown what can be possible. We are rolling that out in agreements from municipality to municipality from coast to coast to coast, and I look forward to working with all our municipal partners in that regard.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are experiencing the worst housing crisis in decades, and the government is boasting that it is going to create a new entity called Build Canada Homes.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer says that Build Canada Homes will create a mere 26,000 new homes, when 690,000 are needed. Does anyone on that side of the House know how to count? I thought the Prime Minister was supposed to be a financial expert.

The government is not even addressing 5% of the crisis. Is there any plan to even pretend that the government is working on the crisis, or is the plan more to manipulate public opinion into believing that the Liberals are really good?

Jennifer McKelvie: Madam Speaker, establishing Build Canada Homes as a Crown corporation provides the legal and operational flexibility and autonomy needed to deliver on its mandate while maintaining a clear accountability framework to government. It al-

lows Build Canada Homes to hold assets independently, to invest and to engage in complex financial transactions.

Build Canada Homes is designed to do more than just fund individual projects; it is a new way of doing business. Its goal is to unlock opportunities across the country by partnering with the market to identify and develop high-impact housing solutions.

[*English*]

Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know the Liberal government is talking about Build Canada Homes, but one of the problems with the program is that there is actually no allocation for funding reserved for housing that has rent geared to income. On one hand the Liberals complain about encampments, but then they leave the most marginalized people, the ones who are in the most need of housing and who are the most housing-insecure, out of the program.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague can explain why the government made that omission.

Jennifer McKelvie: Madam Speaker, we are very much committed to transitional and supportive housing. There is a \$1-billion allocation through Build Canada Homes in that regard. We look forward to partners bringing forward land. We will bring forward capital, and we need to rely on the provinces for that much-needed operational support.

Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to speak on behalf of and in support of the bill, which is already delivering results in my riding of Taiaiko'n—Parkdale—High Park. I want to speak specifically about the Parkdale neighbourhood in my riding, an area that has welcomed newcomers, including people fleeing persecution and violence, and people who have mental health challenges, for decades. It is a place that used to host the more wealthy residents of downtown Toronto when it was a country retreat, and then it became a place to welcome people from around the world. Parkdale is a little corner of the community, bordered by Dufferin Street, Roncesvalles, Queen Street and King Street.

The population of the Parkdale neighbourhood of our community actually went down between 2016 and 2021. This is because we had areas of the neighbourhood in particular, such as larger mansions that had been multiresident residences, that were being turned into single-family homes. That, combined with the health needs, the needs of immigrants and refugees, and the needs of artists in our community, really created a challenge for the people in our riding, including the people in Parkdale. Government working side by side with the social sector in the kind of partnership my colleague mentioned has delivered and is delivering results.

Government Orders

I just want to mention a few projects that are happening right now and are funded right now thanks to Build Canada Homes and the other programs that are in place thanks to the current government. Dunn House, which my colleague, the Minister of Housing, already mentioned, has 51 rent-geared-to-income units; there is \$14 million through the rapid housing initiative, with Fred Victor and University Health Network as partners. It is changing the lives of 51 residents who have health needs and complex needs, delivering wraparound housing supports and health care supports.

We are already building another project right around the corner at 11 Brock Avenue, which has 42 rent-geared-to-income units and \$21.6 million with the Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre as the delivery partner through federal government funding. There is Green Phoenix II, also in Parkdale, with 92 new affordable units, with \$14.6 million and Parkdale United Church Foundation as a partner. I announced just last month with my colleagues the second edition of Dunn House in the same neighbourhood in Parkdale as Dunn House phase one, with 54 rent-geared-to-income units focused on seniors who have complex health needs, at \$21.6 million, with the University Health Network.

These are projects that are happening through a multiplicity of funds and a number of initiatives. Dunn House phase two is a project of Build Canada Homes. When I hear from the other side that there is too much bureaucracy, I say come to Parkdale and see the progress we are making right now with these institutions and with these different kinds of funds. When I hear from the other side that we are not going fast enough, I say come to Parkdale and see the housing that is being built now, is under construction, as well as the housing that is being promised.

When I hear that this kind of format is about bureaucracy, I say come to Parkdale. Come and learn from the residents of Dunn House, who have experienced a 52% reduction in emergency department visits and a 79% drop in hospital bed days. There is \$2.1 million in projected annual cost savings. Come to Parkdale; come and meet the residents of these facilities, of these dignified housing opportunities, which bring housing, health care and food, with the whole community in support.

Build Canada Homes is building Parkdale strong. Parkdale is an integral part of our community. I am very much looking forward to the new projects that are being proposed within my community all along Queen West and the Queensway, such as the Parkdale People's Place project, the Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre project and the Swansea Mews project. All these housing projects are being developed right now to provide the kind of housing we need in our community, in Parkdale, to bring a dignified life, economic opportunity and jobs.

When I hear that there is something wrong about this approach of a new institution, I say come to Parkdale; come see how the funds are flowing right now in our community and are building housing, bringing jobs, bringing dignity and connecting people to the services they need. Come see how the whole community, inspired by and being able to access these funds, is using the funds and the opportunities to build housing, to help people build new lives for each other, and to bring the kind of safety and security that all of us in our neighbourhoods and communities need.

• (1345)

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, the government is saying that it wants to solve crises. However, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the crisis will not be solved because the government's actions are inadequate.

The government wants to build 26,000 new housing units although we need 690,000. Allow me to explain it to my colleagues who are good at math on the other side. This means that it is addressing only 5% of the crisis. The Parliamentary Budget Officer says that the contribution of Build Canada Homes will be modest.

Is my colleague really interested in solving the crisis, or is he just doing PR?

Karim Bardeesy: Madam Speaker, this will change lives. For instance, there will be 51 homes that are part of the Dunn House project, 42 homes at 11 Brock Avenue and 92 homes that are part of the Green Phoenix II project. That is not a story. It is not PR. Lives are being changed.

I think that every member of the House has a duty to stand up for their community and to ensure that the funds allocated to Build Canada Homes in the budget go to their community.

• (1350)

[*English*]

Jennifer McKelvie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the member could speak to the importance of partnership. Dunn House is a beautiful example of partnership, with different governments and agencies coming together. We heard comments earlier from the opposition that talked about overriding the rights and responsibilities of municipalities.

I am wondering if the member can speak to the importance of partnership.

Karim Bardeesy: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent work in setting up the partnership that we have with the City of Toronto. Because we had Dunn House, the second edition of Dunn House, which had Build Canada Homes funding announced in our community just nine months after the election, has been able to attract provincial government funding for the health care supports we need.

A last piece of partnership that is really important, which we sometimes take a bit for granted, is the partnership of the community, of the neighbours. We build housing in a context of neighbourhoods, histories and people who have different connections to the neighbourhood, sometimes long-established and sometimes as newcomers. The community came together with the residents of Dunn House and its partners, the University Health Network, Fred Victor Centre, West Neighbourhood House, United Way and others, which is the kind of thing that allows this housing to successfully land in communities. It is really the partnership of those institutions and neighbours working together with health care workers and residents that makes these institutions and these housing opportunities possible.

Government Orders

Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague said that if we want to see how it is working, we should go to his riding. I would like him to come to my riding of Winnipeg Centre on Selkirk Avenue, ground zero for missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, where we are trying to get support for the North End Women's Centre. Funding this would save lives. The Liberal government has not committed to funding this. What does it mean? It means it will continue to be ground zero, where indigenous women will continue to go missing and be murdered.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague can tell me if he is really serious about his housing plan, if the Liberals will do anything to change the fact that their government put zero dollars toward addressing the ongoing genocide of indigenous women and girls, and if they will get serious and fund the North End Women's Centre.

Karim Bardeesy: Madam Speaker, I know the Winnipeg members on this side of the House are very active in their support of projects, especially housing projects in Winnipeg. The next time I am in the area, I would be delighted to have a conversation with my colleague and the Winnipeg MPs on this side of the aisle about some of the needs that exist.

I know that in my riding of Taiaiaako'n—Parkdale—High Park, in particular, in the Parkdale neighbourhood, the kinds of needs that the hon. member mentioned are being attended to, in part, through the housing projects I described.

Jonathan Rowe (Terra Nova—The Peninsulas, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have been here for almost nine months now, and this is at least the third time I have risen in the chamber to speak about housing.

I cannot believe how much hot air the Liberals put up in this place. It is almost enough to launch the Remax hot air balloon, yet availability and affordability of housing are going down across the country. The talking points are endless. The press conferences are polished. The announcements are flashy movie sets that are quickly deconstructed afterwards.

Back home in Newfoundland and Labrador, the tents are real, the wait-lists are real and homelessness is real. Hundreds of men, women and even children are experiencing homelessness in my province. Hundreds of youth are on the waiting list for emergency shelters, and the emergency shelters are full. That is not just a statistic. That is a failure, and that failure belongs to this government. After eight years, after billions announced, after strategy upon strategy, housing is less affordable, less attainable and less available than when the Liberals took office.

In my province, young families are not asking for luxury condos. They are asking for a modest starter home, a place to raise their kids and a place to build a life. Instead, they are competing against inflation, bureaucracy, gatekeeping and federal policies that drive up the cost of living and the cost of building at every single stage. The Liberals say they are investing, but if we invest billions and the homelessness rises, it is not investment. It is incompetence.

I have learned in my last nine months here in Ottawa that the Liberals love picking winners and losers. Their favourite movie

must be *Pinocchio*, because all they want to do is to pull the strings in almost every aspect of Canadians' daily lives.

In my riding, we have business owners applying for federal funding to build low-income housing. That may sound great, but it creates so much bureaucracy, red tape and inequality. For example, two businessmen in neighbouring communities both apply for funding for, say, 10 units at nearly \$50,000 a unit. Talk about an awesome gift from the feds. I am starting to think the Liberals like the colour red, because it reminds them that they can put on their coats and pretend to be Santa Claus.

However, here is the problem: One of those businessmen did not get funding, and now all 10 of those units are going to a neighbouring community, leaving none for that businessman and his community. Why did both applicants not get five units each? The transparency of these application processes is so low. Perhaps the only way to be accepted is to be a Liberal insider or a Liberal donor.

We Conservatives, time after time, have fought for transparency and fairness, one of the biggest being the Federal Accountability Act of 2006. We fight for policies and platforms that incentivize everybody equally, instead of picking winners and losers and only choosing a select few to get incentives. We want to work with provinces to reduce the GST on all new homes under \$1.3 million. These are policies that benefit all Canadians: no applications, no selection processes and no favouritism.

● (1355)

We have lots of land in Canada. We have high unemployment and a huge demand for housing. When we ask home builders what the problem is, they always say that there is too much red tape and bureaucracy. Developers spend years and thousands of dollars trying to acquire land, permits, developmental fees and approvals, oftentimes having to deal with three levels of government. They want government and the bureaucracies to simply get out of the way, but the Liberal government wants to do the opposite. Every solution it proposes adds to the problem by creating more bureaucracy.

Justin Trudeau's government implemented the national housing strategy. It did not work. Home prices continued to soar at rates much higher than our neighbouring economy, the United States. The Liberals came back to the House, after campaigning in the election that they would be a completely different government, and decided they wanted to continue to do the same. This led to the creation of private member's bill, Bill C-227, which would create more red tape.

Statements by Members

That was not enough. Now we are here today discussing Bill C-20, which once again builds more bureaucracy. If the Liberals are going to come into the House with their smoke and mirrors and repackage the same bills over and over again, I have no choice but to give the same speech, but just in a different font.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue my speech, but I will be splitting my time with another member afterward.

The Liberals are introducing this new bill to give the illusion that they are directly involved in trying to put out the fire they started. In 2017, the Liberals launched the national housing strategy, administered by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. If they already have the solution, why do they need to repackage the same old plan? They spent \$150 billion to build only 170,000 homes. That works out to \$676,000 per home. The money was wasted on bureaucracy. Now they want to create a new Crown corporation to physically build the homes, creating even more involvement and more strings for them to pull. Here is the kicker: They already have a Crown corporation that does this.

All the bill does is merge the failed national housing strategy and the failed Canada Lands Company into one corporation. That is Liberal math: Take two failing things, put them together and pretend it works. In reality, it is like they are trying to build a motorcycle with two flat tires. Can members imagine how many homes could have been built if the Liberals had worked with the Conservatives to remove the GST on new home builds?

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

TRIBUTE TO A FATHER

Tom Osborne (Cape Spear, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hero I want to recognize today would look to most like an ordinary person with success in his professional life. He was instrumental in bringing the real estate association and the multiple listing service to St. John's. He served as president of the board and was its longest-serving member at 56 years.

He also served as a director for the Canadian Real Estate Association and as a city councillor in St. John's, and he was sworn in and served as a Canadian citizenship judge. He was the recipient of an organ donation and survived cancer, although that is back. However, these things are not what makes him a hero.

He has been the soulmate to his wife of 64 years and a loving father and grandfather. His cape has been wrapped around his family. He is our hero. My dad's journey with his family is meaningful, and even though he has health challenges, he has the strength and smile of a hero.

* * *

THE POWER OF WORDS

Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, words travel farther and faster than ever, allowing them to outlive the moment. What comes out of a person's mouth

has immediate impact, and those words are not harmless, but we all have said something we regret.

Our words create momentum for good or destruction. We think strength is proven by being blunt, direct or unfiltered. Proverbs 18 tells us, "The tongue has the power of life and death," to build up or tear down. Angry words are sharp, prideful words are dismissive, and fearful words are defensive.

Wisdom produces measured, purposeful, helpful words, and understands that restraint or silence is not weakness. Deliberate words carry authority because they are chosen, not impulsive. Leadership is not volume; it is direction. A wise person uses their tongue to bring clarity, courage, correction and hope. They understand that speaking truth requires both conviction and care.

In this place and always, may our words express life.

* * *

QUANTUM TECHNOLOGIES

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Kanata, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to attend the Quantum Days conference, where researchers, entrepreneurs and industry leaders from across Canada came together to showcase the very best of Canadian innovation.

Canada is a global leader in quantum research, and that leadership matters. Quantum technologies will shape the future of secure communications, advanced computing, sensing and materials. They are critical to our economic growth, our defence industrial strategy and the protection of our national security.

By investing in Canadian talent, supporting homegrown companies and strengthening partnerships between academia, industry and government, we are ensuring that Canada develops and retains the capabilities needed to protect our data, secure our infrastructure and remain competitive.

Canada's quantum future is bright, and we will continue working to ensure that it is built here at home.

* * *

RECOGNITION OF A HOME BUILDER

Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook—Brant North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to salute Peter Turkstra, a leader, builder and community philanthropist. Last week, I attended the industry luncheon of the West End Home Builders Association in Hamilton, where Peter Turkstra was inducted into its hall of fame for his decades of leadership and service.

Turkstra Lumber is an institution in the construction industry. This honour was very well deserved. However, Peter's acceptance speech raised loud and clear alarm bells of an industry in crisis. He called out the excessive taxes and bureaucracy from the federal Liberals, as well as the provinces and municipalities, that are decimating homebuilding in Canada.

It hurts Peter's soul to lay off experienced and loyal tradespeople because of this crisis. This is at a time when young people have given up on the dream of home ownership in record numbers. How sad. This is not a demand problem; this is an overtaxation problem.

Let us heed Peter's call, cut the HST on all new homes, reduce development charges and cut the red tape.

I congratulate and thank Peter.

* * *

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Karim Bardeesy (Taiaiaiko'n—Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to honour a few of the Black and African-Canadian cultural trailblazers of Taiaiaiko'n—Parkdale—High Park.

Dr. Rita Cox served as the head of the Parkdale branch of the Toronto Public Library for decades, and created the Black and Caribbean Heritage Collection there with more than 16,000 items. She continues to connect us to literature and learning, including as the namesake for a school on Jameson Avenue.

Black visual art will soon be on display at the new home of the BAND gallery on Brock Avenue in Parkdale, Canada's only Black-run, Black-focused art gallery. I toured it last week. With funding from this government's cultural spaces fund, it will become a community-focused, fully accessible, museum-grade space.

The project is the brainchild of a powerful group of women, including Karen Carter, Claudia Pensa Bowen and Joséphine Denis. During renovations, people can check out *A Kind of Order*, curated by Joséphine Denis, at Toronto's Union Station, which includes work by Timothy Yanick Hunter, a member of our riding's community.

On this 30th Black History Month in Canada, it is Black storytelling that brings Black culture to life.

* * *

● (1405)

COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR WALK

John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Saturday is the annual Coldest Night of the Year fundraising walk. In communities across Canada, participants will be walking in the cold and the snow to support those experiencing hurt, hunger and homelessness.

This year, I look forward to walking in St. Marys in support of the St. Marys Nourish Market and community outreach worker. In Stratford, funds will be raised to support Shelterlink Youth Services and the Stratford Connection Centre. In North Perth, they are supporting North Perth Housing/Homelessness Action through the United Way. Finally, in Minto-Mapleton, they will be supporting the work of the Community Resource Centre of North Wellington

Statements by Members

and Centre Wellington. Across these four events, over 850 participants have already raised over \$250,000.

With the national housing crisis preventing so many Canadians from finding a safe, affordable place to live, the need is greater than ever. We thank all who have signed up and donated. I look forward to seeing everyone this Saturday, wearing their warm toques.

* * *

MICHAEL KIERAN

Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Michael Kieran was a man of faith and a man of science, brilliant and yet humble.

Educated in nuclear physics, he devoted his professional life to dealing in the complexities of large transportation systems, first as a partner in KPMG, then for many years at Canadian Pacific Railway, and later as a consultant on special transportation projects.

A man for others, Michael was a stalwart of Montreal's English-speaking Catholic community, serving on the board of directors of the Pillars Trust for 19 years, including nine years as its president. Michael's community engagement also extended to politics.

He was active in party politics and twice served in the crucial role of official agent for the member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

Michael's kind manner and life and business experience drew others to him in search of wise counsel.

To his wife Shirley, daughter Melissa and son Philip, and to the grandchildren of whom he was so very proud, we offer our deepest condolences.

* * *

MEXICO

Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every winter, tens of thousands of Canadians travel to Mexico to escape from the cold and make lifelong memories with their loved ones. Yesterday, in Jalisco state, including in and around Guadalajara and Puerto Vallarta, the normal beach-filled activities of Canadians travelling in Mexico turned to fear and anxiety as violence erupted throughout the region.

The House is holding all Canadians in Mexico in our thoughts and prayers, and we will all work for their safe return home. As a former diplomat, I know the hard work our local consular officers are doing right now, and I ask the government to continue to provide the necessary resources and assistance required on the ground.

Statements by Members

To Canadians in Mexico, please register with the registration of Canadians abroad and follow the advice of local authorities. I pray for peace, stability and safety for all in Mexico.

[Member spoke in Spanish]

* * *

[Translation]

SITUATION IN MEXICO

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are all concerned about the attacks being perpetrated by a drug cartel in Puerto Vallarta and the Jalisco region. Our hearts go out to the people of Mexico, who once again find themselves caught in the crossfire.

However, we are obviously concerned for the thousands of Quebeckers and Canadians who are being forced to shelter in place in their hotels or homes to escape violence. With roads blocked and airspace closed, the Bloc Québécois also urges tourists and citizens to exercise the utmost caution and follow the instructions of local authorities.

However, that is not enough for these people and their families. They want to know when they will be able to return home, and they want to know what their government is doing to make sure that that happens. It is not enough to hope that the situation will calm down in the coming days. We have no control over that. We need an action plan in collaboration with Mexico to bring our people home as soon as possible. To that end, the minister can count on our full cooperation.

* * *

● (1410)

[English]

ONTARIO STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, students in Mississauga—Erin Mills are clear: Doug Ford's decision to slash OSAP grants and increase student loans is devastating. This change will affect hundreds of thousands of students who rely on OSAP for post-secondary education and equality of opportunity.

Yesterday, a health sciences student, not a so-called basket weaver, from my Mississauga—Erin Mills youth council shared how she now expects over \$10,000 in additional debt, forcing her to delay her graduate studies and rethink her path. These policies push students deeper into debt and make it harder for them to build the skills that our economy needs.

The federal government puts in 60% for OSAP loans, and that part is not impacted, but the Ontario government needs to understand that supporting youth means supporting our economy. Students deserve opportunity, not obstacles.

Today, I call on Doug Ford to do the right thing and reverse the proposed measures so our youth can have that equality of opportunity.

PAROLE

Matt Strauss (Kitchener South—Hespeler, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 21 years ago, residents of Kitchener, Ontario, were shocked to hear of a mass murder in our community. Self-described Satanist Michael Sirois rang the doorbell of 87-year-old Verna, whom he once knew from church. He stabbed her and 47-year-old Randy 27 times, including through both eyes.

Danny Penner is the brother of Randy. He shared with me the incredible trauma these murders continue to cause in his family to this day. Out of respect for his brother's memory, he has resolved time and again to speak at Michael Sirois's parole hearings. Last week, Danny had flights booked to attend the scheduled hearing, only for it to be cancelled at the last minute out of respect for the psychotic mass murderer's mental health.

The justice system is not delivering justice. Parole should not even be a question for this crime. Why will the Liberals not reform the parole system to respect the bereaved family's trauma rather than the so-called mental health of a psychotic killer?

* * *

[Translation]

SCOUT WEEK 2026

Natilien Joseph (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw attention to Scout Week 2026, which was celebrated across the country from February 16 to 22. This year's theme was "Scouting, a source of unifying pride".

For generations, the movement has helped shape committed, responsible and caring young people through outdoor activities, volunteerism and community projects. It develops leadership, resilience and teamwork, qualities that are essential to building the Canada of tomorrow. The end of this week coincides with Founder's Day, which pays tribute to Robert and Olave Baden-Powell, who played a key role in the development of the Girl Guides and in bringing young girls into the movement.

I want to thank the volunteers and leaders who support our young people with such dedication. Together, let us continue to build a strong Canada.

* * *

[English]

FOOD AFFORDABILITY

Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Prime Minister, food prices have skyrocketed by 7.3%. Canada is now the food inflation capital of the G7.

This is a made-in-Canada problem. Seventy per cent of all food is produced domestically. We produce 80% of our processed foods.

Conservatives have a food affordability plan to remove hidden Liberal taxes on food, such as the industrial carbon tax on farm equipment, fertilizer and food processors. Let us get rid of the fuel standard tax on farmers, truckers and those who bring our food. Let us dump the food packaging tax, which costs Canadians \$1.3 billion annually. Our plan reduces taxes affecting the price of food. It restores nutritious, affordable meals for Canadians.

Will the Prime Minister work with us to achieve this goal? Canadians want to know.

* * *

ARNOLD SYLLIBOY

Jaime Battiste (Cape Breton—Canso—Antigonish, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, a community gathered to pay tribute to the life and legacy of Arnold Sylliboy, who passed away a year ago.

Arnold enjoyed bringing people together for a good cause and good times. He competed with determination in any sport or contest, and at the same time, had the ability to bring joy and laughter to every situation. Arnold was a caring leader, a natural athlete and a committed volunteer, who will be fondly remembered for his great empathy and ability to listen to others. This naturally made him great at his work as a youth worker, a social worker, a barber and a staff member for this MP. A more loyal wingman in life one will not find.

His loved ones held a bowling tournament in his honour to raise money for his community and a local high school scholarship to honour his legacy.

There are no words for goodbye in the Mi'kmaq language, only "we will see you again".

[Member spoke in Mi'kmaq and provided the following text:]

N'multisnen ap Nitap. Kesalulek.

[Member provided the following translation:]

We will see you again, friend. We love you.

[English]

* * *

● (1415)

HEALTH SERVICES FOR ASYLUM CLAIMANTS

Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls—Niagara-on-the-Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, rejected asylum claimants should not be receiving better health care than Canadians who have paid into a system their entire lives. It makes common sense.

At a time when six million Canadians cannot afford a family doctor and are waiting for care, it is unacceptable that bogus asylum seekers are receiving better health care than Canadians. When over 13,000 residents in Niagara Falls are forced to use a food bank, and when our homeless shelter, the Coronation Centre, is bursting at the seams, why is the government providing better health care services to non-Canadians than to citizens who are desperately in need?

Oral Questions

Conservatives discovered this health care mess, and we proposed solutions, including removing federal benefits from ineligible claimants, except for emergency health care. Conservatives will make sure that there are enough jobs, houses and health care for Canadians before bringing in new immigrants, and we will restore compassion and fairness to Canada's broken and abused asylum system.

* * *

RECOGNITION OF BRAVERY

Chris Malette (Bay of Quinte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour and recognize an extraordinary act of courage and compassion by a private citizen in the face of grave danger on Highway 401 near Trenton in my riding of the Bay of Quinte, a gentleman I welcomed here in Ottawa today, Isik.

During a recent snowstorm, in a multivehicle crash on one of Canada's busiest highways, this individual did not hesitate to put others before himself. Amidst whiteout conditions, he stopped his own car and raced from vehicle to vehicle, checking on motorists, urging them to remain safe and calm. Witnesses say he returned repeatedly to harm's way to carry out trapped and injured passengers, including pulling a woman from a burning vehicle and helping another man to safety, acts that emergency officials say undoubtedly saved lives on that day. Isik himself has humbly downplayed his actions, saying he does not consider himself a hero, but a hero he is indeed.

I invite all members to join me in thanking Isik for his courage and his bravery on that day.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the last decade, the Liberals have enabled hundreds of thousands of bogus refugee claims. Liberals' failures on immigration like this one mean billions of tax dollars have been spent on hotels and social welfare for false refugee claimants, all while Canadians struggle to access health care and while legitimate refugees languish. This has to stop.

Will the Liberals support our constructive motion to restore fairness and prioritize Canadians who pay for the health care system over fake refugees?

Oral Questions

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member to this important discussion. We have already introduced and made changes to the interim federal health program that will considerably reduce the costs. We are also making significant changes and have introduced Bill C-12, which would curb the misuse of asylum. We will control costs and we will truly protect those who are vulnerable, in line with our international and humanitarian obligations.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have not been able to get hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of pandemic scam fraud returned to them, so I highly doubt they will be able to get fake refugees on deportation orders to pay back their health care. This is something that needs to end.

I will ask the minister again. This is a common-sense motion. Literally everybody agrees with it. Will the minister support our constructive motion to ensure that Canadians who pay for our health system are given better access than fake refugees?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to keep our program sustainable, we have made and are making measured changes to the health coverage. We have already introduced copay to the system. We are already curbing the misuse. We have introduced a lot of integrity measures. Bill C-12 is currently in front of us, and I thank the Conservatives for supporting that. That would also reduce misuse of the system. We also have international obligations that Canada will continue to honour, particularly for those who are in need, and most of them are children.

• (1420)

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer revealed that the interim federal health program will cost taxpayers over \$1.5 billion a year. The Liberals expanded this program to provide deluxe health benefits like physiotherapy and home care to bogus asylum claimants whose phony claims have been rejected. Canadians are not entitled to them, but rejected asylum claimants are.

Why are the Liberals giving bogus asylum seekers better health care than Canadians who fund the system?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to speak to the PBO report, those are projections in that report. They do not take into account the changes that would come in Bill C-12, nor do they take into account the interim health measures that we have introduced, including copay and other provisions, so I look forward to that.

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Liberals defend deluxe health benefits for bogus asylum claimants, millions of Canadians are waiting in line for care. There are Canadians in this country who cannot get health care they need because the wait-list is too long. Ahead of them on that wait-list are people who filed fake refugee claims that were rejected by the government's own refugee board.

Will the minister explain to Canadians why bogus asylum seekers are ahead of them in line?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to point this out to the

member, who I respect quite a bit; last session we were on the same committee. In 2014, it was a Conservative government, and the Supreme Court ruled that its changes were unconstitutional. It took away health care coverage for the most vulnerable, including children. This is not something we will do on this side of the House. Again, we are curbing misuse. We have introduced changes by introducing copay. Asylum claims are down by a third under the current government—

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

[*Translation*]

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after 10 years of this Liberal government, our once exemplary immigration system is now in shambles. At the Standing Committee on Health, we found out that health care providers are charging taxpayers up to five times the provincial rates for illegal asylum seekers. Meanwhile, six million Canadians do not have a family doctor. It is an insult to Canadians who have paid taxes their whole lives. A bogus asylum claimant receives better health benefits than a Canadian citizen.

Will the government finally support our motion to restore fairness and put Canadians' health first?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we are working hard to ensure that our system integrates asylum seekers. We have reduced asylum claims by a third. We also introduced Bill C-12. I want to thank my colleagues for helping us with this bill.

The good news is that asylum claims are down by a third and we are making adjustments to our program to keep it sustainable. We will continue to work hard.

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report is scathing. The soaring costs of the interim federal health program prove that the Liberals have lost control. The system is broken.

We will have no choice but to cut federal benefits for ineligible asylum seekers, except in cases of emergency. Furthermore, we must ensure that Canada has the housing and health care capacity to welcome newcomers before they arrive. Will you finally guarantee that non-residents will not receive better health care than our own citizens?

The Speaker: I am not in a position to give any guarantees. However, the hon. minister may respond.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the figures cited by the member are projections. They are not actual figures. They are projections that do not take into account the changes made to the program or the significant improvements we are making to the asylum system in Bill C-12. This work is already well under way. We are reducing costs and we will protect vulnerable people.

* * *

● (1425)

PENSIONS

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Cúram fiasco has been costly.

We were wondering where Quebeckers' money was going, and then we got our answer when we learned that the cost of the software had risen from \$1.75 billion to \$6.6 billion, a cost overrun of nearly \$5 billion. Quebeckers' money is going into the pockets of private companies. Of the total bill of \$6.6 billion, \$3.4 billion, or more than half, is going to the private sector. Worse still, we do not even really know what this money is being used for because the government refuses to disclose its contracts to either the media or elected officials.

When will there be a public and independent investigation?

[English]

Hon. Stephanie McLean (Secretary of State (Seniors), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bloc members say they do not know what the money is being used for, but they were on the committees that approved the spending. They know that this money has been used to complete the transformation of a 60-year-old system. If we had let that system stand, people would not be getting their benefits. This program is not costed in a cost-overrun situation, as they would assert. This has cost just over \$1.4 billion, and the OAS conversion is now complete. The amount they are talking about is a theoretical approval for a possible four-system transformation. This OAS system is now complete, people are being transitioned, and there are no cost overruns.

[Translation]

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are so few cost overruns that when asked about Cúram, the government's response is that cost overruns are "common practice". That is the problem.

There were problems with ArriveCan and there were problems with Phoenix, but that is okay. It happens all the time. In fact, as early as 2023, the Auditor General warned the government about the risks of "[taking] shortcuts...as happened with the Phoenix pay system." Clearly, no one listened to her because we are now looking at \$5 billion in cost overruns for software that is causing problems for 85,000 pensioners.

Again, when will there be a public and independent investigation?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, funding for a project of this magnitude involves incremental allocations, not a lump sum

Oral Questions

payment. The program's initial \$1.7 billion in funding was to launch the first phase of the project; it was never intended to cover the complete restructuring of multiple benefits systems. This investment is going to generate efficiency and reliability gains for years to come.

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 85,000 pensioners are having problems with their OAS pension because of the Cúram software, which has chalked up \$5 billion in cost overruns to date.

What are the people responsible doing? They are paying themselves bonuses. In 2024-25, senior officials at Employment and Social Development Canada received bonuses amounting to more than \$15 million. When 85,000 pensioners are having problems because of the federal government and when taxpayers are on the hook for more than \$5 billion in cost overruns, why in the world should the people responsible be rewarded for their "good" work?

[English]

Hon. Stephanie McLean (Secretary of State (Seniors), Lib.): Again, Mr. Speaker, my friends across the aisle know there are no cost overruns. This was a planned, phased project. Just over \$1.4 billion has been spent and the OAS project is completed. If there are individuals who are having problems getting payments on time, we invite them to contact us, and we would like them to do so. Those numbers will go down as Canadians transition to an online system. We would really like them to transition to the online system, and this will speed things up.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, six million Canadians do not have access to a family doctor, and it takes 30 weeks for the average Canadian to see a specialist. However, the Liberals use Canadian taxpayer dollars to fund a Cadillac health care system for asylum claimants, including free access to glasses and contact lenses, physiotherapy, nursing homes and hearing aids. These are free benefits that regular citizens do not get and this does not come cheap. It cost nearly \$1 billion this year.

Will the Liberals support our motion and ensure that asylum claimants do not get better health care than regular Canadians?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first thing I would say is that the Conservatives call them "bogus" asylum claimants. There are actually a great number, in fact millions, of legitimate asylum claimants all over the world. Our country has distinguished itself over its history as being a welcoming place for legitimate asylum claimants, and we will always be a welcoming place. When people arrive here from war-torn areas or children are in need of health services, every single Canadian I know would insist that we provide those health services to that person. That is what we are going to continue to do. Enough of the—

● (1430)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saskatoon West.

Oral Questions

Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it does not change the fact that the Liberals have created a two-tier health care system that disadvantages ordinary Canadians. The Liberals continue to betray Canadians, putting bogus asylum claimants first by giving them access to health care benefits that regular citizens do not get. We just learned that the government automatically gives residency to refugees from North Korea, Afghanistan and Yemen without even talking to them. Instead of an in-person interview, these Liberals are blindly granting residency, all while giving generous health care benefits.

Therefore, I ask again: Will the Liberals support our motion and ensure that asylum claimants do not get better health care than regular Canadians?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in addition to our humanitarian obligations, in many cases treaty obligations, as Mr. Harper found out when the Supreme Court ordered him to restore health benefits to asylum claimants for their well-being, in our case, we have managed the number of asylum claimants down. We have passed a law in the House to move that number down, and we are about to pass a law to take benefits down for this category of person. We will continue to manage this carefully.

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thousands of people in B.C. cannot see a family doctor, yet the Liberals now provide deluxe health care benefits to rejected asylum claimants at taxpayers' expense. The PBO has shown that the interim federal health program has skyrocketed in costs to almost \$1 billion.

Will the Liberals support our motion and ensure that rejected asylum claimants do not get better health care than Canadians?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, asylum seekers who come to this country who are legitimate ones, those who are found to be—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. There is a certain ambient noise in question period that is totally acceptable in the atmosphere of debate, but when it gets a little past a certain threshold, I have to ask the respondent to start again.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure all Canadians that asylum seekers who come to this country are judged for their legitimacy. If they are found to be legitimate refugees and asylum seekers, as in all compassionate countries and all signatories to international agreements, they are permitted to stay. Those who are not found to have respected those criteria are asked to leave.

The government has made very tough measures in Bill C-12, currently before the Senate, to make sure that we can continue to get that number down.

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the member did not mention is that Liberals at the health committee are currently filibustering

any attempt to even study this program. That does not sound like they are trying to fix anything. They want a cover-up.

Conservatives are clear on the solution: no more physio or vision care for rejected asylum claimants. Will the Liberals support our motion and ensure that rejected asylum claimants do not get health care benefits that are superior to those of Canadians?

Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really unfortunate that we have this kind of conversation, where we are talking about the health of Canadians and asylum seekers. The reality is that those people are in the country. We have an agreement, and the health system is a compassionate system. What we are saying is that those people need to have access to health. We are also working closely with provinces and territories to get more access for Canadian people.

• (1435)

Burton Bailey (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer reports that the interim federal health program will cost nearly \$1.5 billion a year to cover health care for fraudulent asylum claimants. This program gives anyone claiming asylum better health care than the Canadians who pay for it. Even if these claims are denied, as wait times grow and health care access shrinks for citizens, the Liberals prioritize a growing list of bogus refugees over Canadians.

Will the government support our Conservative motion to stop criminal claimants from receiving superior health benefits at Canadian taxpayers' expense?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would put more credence in my hon. colleague's argument if he or his party actually had a record of defending better health care for Canadians. Think about the record they have demonstrated over the time I have been a member of Parliament. They have opposed the largest transfer to provincial health care systems. They have opposed dental coverage for Canadians. They have opposed birth care and other essential medicines that Canadians need. This is not about the quality of health care that Canadians need. The only solution they are putting forward is to deny the children of refugees dental care. Frankly, this is disgusting, un-Canadian and beneath the House.

Oral Questions

Fred Davies (Niagara South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, too many people in Niagara cannot find a family doctor. Right now, taxpayers are being charged up to five times the provincial rates to provide health care to rejected asylum claimants. Families have waited long enough and our failed asylum system is making them wait even longer. Conservatives have proposed common-sense solutions to address this horrible situation. It is time for the government to remove benefits for bogus claimants.

Will the government support our motion and ensure that non-citizens and non-permanent residents do not get health care superior to that of Canadians?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, do we know what happens to failed asylum seekers? They are removed. Last year, we removed over 22,000 individuals who were inadmissible. We as a government are ensuring—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I need to hear the questions and answers so I can tell if any rules are being broken.

The hon. Minister of Public Safety, from the top, please.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, do we know what happens to failed asylum seekers? They are removed.

Last year, we removed over 22,000 inadmissible individuals from Canada. This year, through the strengthening Canada's immigration system act, Bill C-12, which is now going through the Senate, we will be removing more individuals. More will be ineligible to seek asylum. We are hiring 1,000 new CBSA officers, the first cohort of which is graduating this Friday. We are strengthening our border and ensuring that those who are inadmissible do not remain here.

Matt Strauss (Kitchener South—Hespeler, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that minister knows very well that he has lost 32,000 people who have been ordered deported.

As a physician, as the son of a refugee to Canada, this issue is very close to my heart. I wish we were speaking about health care today, but instead we must speak about health care fraud. We are talking about people who claim refugee status only after they are investigated or arrested for crimes like terrorism or extortion. We need to talk about such people because they are receiving better health benefits than ordinary tax-paying Canadians. When seniors in Kitchener cannot find family doctors and cannot afford their medicines, how on earth does the Liberal government—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Jobs and Families.

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think that member was around when the opposition party voted time and again against the investments that provinces and territories had been asking us to make in strengthening our universal health care system. That is how we build a health care system that everybody is proud of. It is something we built on the foundations of our forefathers and mothers in this place, to ensure that people can access quality, affordable health care across this country. It is not by tearing down different groups of people.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government's loss of control during the Roxham Road crisis is worse than we feared. According to the C.D. Howe Institute, when the federal government was overwhelmed by too many refugee claims, it scaled back its assessments.

Between 2019 and 2023, 25,000 people were accepted as refugees without being interviewed. These are 25,000 refugees who were accepted, many of them in Quebec, and nobody even met with them to double-check their statements. We learned in committee this morning that this approach is still being used today.

When will the government take action?

● (1440)

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the safety of Canadians and Quebecers is our priority. Officers carefully review each refugee claim before referring it to the Immigration and Refugee Board. Ineligible claims are not referred.

Under our government, the number of refugee claims has dropped by a third. With Bill C-12, we will be able to do even more to prevent sudden surges.

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the federal government was swamped with asylum claims at Roxham Road, its solution was to accept refugees indiscriminately in order to speed up the process. Ottawa drew up a list of countries whose applicants were automatically accepted without any questions asked. Those countries included Russia, Afghanistan, Iran and many others that are currently problematic. As a result, at the height of the Roxham Road crisis, the acceptance rate for asylum claims rose from 65% to 80%.

Why did the government agree to accept refugees without meeting them?

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. Canada has one of the most robust immigration refugee protection systems in the world. The Immigration and Refugee Board is the gold standard by which adjudications are made towards refugee protection. As a country that is a signatory to the refugee convention of 1951, it is important that we have full faith in our system. The IRB adjudicates and ensures that those who are inadmissible and those who are ineligible to seek asylum do not go forward, and that those who are deemed to be clear refugees do get asylum.

*Oral Questions***AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are shutting down agricultural research, and now their red tape is literally choking the life out of agri-food businesses. A survey said that 90% of agri-food business owners believe that Liberal policies are putting the future of Canadian agriculture at risk. Red tape and regulations have already increased Canadian food inflation to 7.3%, by far more than double the rate in the United States. Experts are clear: Red tape, inflationary spending and the industrial carbon tax are increasing the cost of food production.

How expensive do groceries have to get before the Liberals stop strangling Canadian farmers?

Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is going to continue to invest in our farmers and ranchers right across this country. We will continue to make sure that they lead the world in science, as we talked about.

I also want to come back to the industrial carbon tax. We know that it is negligible to the cost of food in this country. However, one thing I want to say to everyone is that it is not the farmers who are making the money.

John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister is right: It is not the farmers who are making the money. This is why 90% of agri-food business owners say that Liberal policy is restricting their ability to be productive and grow, and 70% of Canadian farmers are telling their kids not to take over the family farm. This is devastating for the future of Canadian food production and food security. It is making Canada less productive, less competitive and less food-secure.

Canadians are already paying among the highest grocery prices in the G7. Why is the Liberal government so determined to drown farmers in red tape and taxes and make food unaffordable for Canadians?

Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I travel around the world, and our farmers are the envy of the world for what they do here at home. They are some of the best farmers in the world, and we will continue to ensure that they continue to be that.

Blaming farmers for the cost of food is not appropriate. We are talking about many different types of issues that defuse some of the costs around groceries and items. We will continue to support them as best we can.

Lianne Rood (Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I keep hearing from farmers and producers that Liberal red tape and taxes are choking the life out of them and threatening our food sovereignty. Nearly 90% of food businesses believe that the future of Canadian agriculture is at risk. Liberal red tape means punishing regulations, and the industrial carbon and fuel taxes are driving up the cost of production across the entire food supply chain.

How high will grocery prices have to skyrocket before the Liberals stop strangling Canadian farmers with taxes and red tape?

• (1445)

Hon. Maninder Sidhu (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives refuse to acknowledge

the success of Canadian agriculture and the work of farmers, the facts speak for themselves. Our agri-food exports have reached over \$100 billion. The sector supports over 2.3 million Canadians, or one in nine jobs.

We will continue standing with our farmers as they export to countries around the world.

Lianne Rood (Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that 10 years of bad Liberal policies and hidden taxes have driven Canadian food inflation to 7.3%, which is the highest in the G7 and far more than double the rate in the U.S. This is a Liberal-led, made-in-Canada problem that is driving up food prices and driving Canadian producers right out of business.

With 70% of all food produced domestically, including 80% of our processed foods, when will the Liberals actually take this seriously and start cutting taxes and red tape for our farmers?

Hon. Maninder Sidhu (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, speaking of farmers, we are listening to our farmers. In fact, in our last trip to China, we got them over \$7 billion of agriculture access in canola, seafood and beef. That means good jobs for our farmers: over 200,000 jobs in the canola sector; over 250,000 jobs in the beef sector and 35,000 jobs in our seafood sector.

That is what we are doing. We are standing with our farmers and opening new markets around the world.

Ned Kuruc (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in December, the Stoney Creek food bank saw a record 1,694 total visits, the largest number since 2022. Also in December, the Fare Share Food Bank in Oakville saw the largest number of people they have ever served, over 913 families.

Canadians rely on food banks because food prices have skyrocketed by 7.3%. How many Canadians need to visit a food bank before the Liberals stop strangling Canadian food production with red tape and punishing taxes?

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 works to support families in need, the Conservatives vote against it. They obstruct our budget bill in the House, money that Canadian families need for all kinds of things, including the jobs that many of our union workers are relying on. Do members know what helps with food insecurity? It is good-paying jobs.

Here is a newsflash: The Conservatives vote against every measure that actually creates good-paying jobs. Whether it is helping hungry people or helping hard-working Canadians, they are opposed. What is it going to take?

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians elected a new government with a mandate to build Canada strong. This means investing in our workers, our industries and our supply chains by unlocking new opportunities and investing in our sovereignty. This also means investing in the brave men and women who are members of our Canadian Armed Forces.

Can the Minister of National Defence provide an update on what we are doing to build Canada's defence industry while supporting our Canadian Armed Forces?

Hon. David McGuinty (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, we launched Canada's first-ever defence industrial strategy. It is a plan that provides a signal to industry, allies, partners, the Canadian Armed Forces and Canadians alike that we are moving forward quickly and with purpose.

We are building. We are partnering. We are buying Canadian. We are strengthening our relationship with our partners. We are transforming procurement. We are investing in results. That is what our new strategy is all about.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PENSIONS

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to turn to page 54 of the Liberal election platform, where it says, “The federal government has been spending too much.”

When the Liberals came to power, the debt was \$700 billion. After 10 years of Liberal management, it is \$1.4 trillion, including \$78 billion for this year alone. Next, in their platform, they talk to us about “efficiency” and “performance”. Those are the words the Liberals use in their platform.

A Cúram computer system that goes from \$1.6 billion to \$6.6 billion and 85,000 seniors waiting for their benefits, is that what Liberal efficiency looks like?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that it is Monday and my colleague wanted some good news. Well, I have some for him. Canada has the second-fastest-growing economy in the G7.

That is the Liberal plan. That is the Prime Minister's plan. It is to grow the Canadian economy.

Instead of speaking against the economy, my colleague should be proud. We are attracting talent. We are building ships. We are building automobiles. We are building aircraft. We have critical minerals. We have energy. We are the only G7 country to have a free trade agreement with every G7 country. We are building Canada strong together.

• (1450)

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is this how the minister shows respect for our seniors? I am talking about 85,000 seniors who are waiting for their cheques, and he is talking to me about Canada's economic development. There are 85,000 seniors waiting.

Is that his answer to our seniors, the people who built our country?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is political grandstanding, plain and simple.

We made the transition from an outdated system dating back to the 1970s and modernized it. There were no cost overruns. The computer system was updated. Yes, there have been a few cases, cases that the member opposite has been slow to bring up. If the member knows of people who are affected by this situation, he should let us know and we will resolve these cases. However, until then, this is good news for Canada.

The Speaker: I would like to make a brief reminder to everyone. Even though members can sometimes get passionate, please avoid banging too hard on the podium because it can be dangerous for the interpreters.

The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, following the Phoenix disaster, now we have Cúram ruining the lives of our seniors. It was initially expected to cost \$1.75 billion, but the price tag has now ballooned to \$6.6 billion. That is four times more. While the Liberals waste taxpayers' money, our seniors have been waiting for their pension cheques for nine months.

My questions are very simple. The first is this: Why do the Liberals' programs always go way over budget? The second is this: Why should seniors have to pay the price for the federal Liberals' incompetence with yet another failed software program?

Hon. Stephanie McLean (Secretary of State (Seniors), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the conversion to the new OAS payment system is complete. It came in under budget. More than seven million seniors are currently receiving their benefits on time thanks to a modern system. The total cost of Cúram is meant to cover separate projects. The \$6.6 billion is the amount planned and approved for the lifespan of the project.

Oral Questions

Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, same government, same old Liberal habits: Once again, consulting firms are getting rich. Since the Liberals took office, they have awarded \$26 billion in outside contracts. With Cúram—a project that is totalling \$6.6 billion, half of which is going to private companies—history is repeating itself. In the meantime, 85,000 pensioners are suffering due to late pension payments or endless administrative errors.

Why do seniors have to pay the price for Liberal incompetence?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over seven million Canadians benefit from the OAS and have never had any problem with the new, modernized system.

Obviously, a few glitches are to be expected when transitioning from 60-year-old software to a modern system. There are glitches and we are fixing them. The number of glitches is going down every day. When glitches happen, we encourage people to contact Service Canada or even their MP, and we will fix them.

Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, \$5 billion is appalling. That is how much more Cúram is going to cost taxpayers. For the Liberals, that is perfectly normal. Worse still, it is impossible to get information on the private external consultants to whom most of this money is being paid. This lack of transparency has become the norm over the past 10 years. This is the federal version of the SAAQclie fiasco, except that it is costing five times more.

Why should seniors and taxpayers pay the price for this catastrophic mismanagement?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not true what the opposition is saying. The initial program authority of \$1.7 billion was intended to be used to kick-start the first phase. In fact, the program is under budget. The great news is that 7 million Canadians have transitioned to this new system. The previous system was 60 years old. Can members imagine the paper applications that were being filed, with lots of mistakes? This is going to make life easier for all seniors going forward.

If the member opposite has some urgent cases that they know of, I ask him to please send them our way. We are able to process those in 24 hours.

• (1455)

[Translation]

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is yet another scandal. Following the Phoenix fiasco, Liberal incompetence has reached new heights with the Cúram software, a federal version of SAAQclie. The price tag for this IT project has risen to \$6.6 billion, and more than half of that money will go to consultants who are racking up delays, failures and cost overruns with impunity. While Canadians are struggling, public money is being thrown out the window.

Why are cost overruns in the Liberals' DNA?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, aside from being entertaining, this question has been asked and answered many times. It is about modernizing the system, and there are no cost overruns. More than seven million Canadians are benefiting from it. It is a success story.

Bernard Généreux (Côte-du-Sud—Rivière-du-Loup—Kataskomiq—Témiscouata, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we thought we had seen it all with Phoenix and ArriveCAN, but then Cúram came along and surpassed even Quebec's infamous SAAQclie fiasco. That says a lot.

The Liberals said they would be responsible with taxpayers' money. Instead, we are at \$6.6 billion and seniors are still waiting for their pension benefits. The worst part is that half of that money is going into the pockets of consultants.

How can the Liberals justify this mess? Why are the Liberals continuing to make seniors pay the price for glitchy software?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this question has been asked many times and answered many times, but I will answer it once again. Why are they getting so worked up?

The transformation of information technology in government is indeed complicated. However, this is a success story. We were able to replace an outdated system with an updated system that will modernize services and benefits for more than seven million Canadians.

That is cause for celebration.

[English]

Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government was forewarned in 2023 that its new system, intended to enhance OAS and GIS payments, was already going over budget. This project has ballooned to \$6.6 billion. The taxpayer is now responsible for the failure of a system that was supposed to guarantee better access for our seniors.

At a time when seniors are struggling to make ends meet, how does the government justify billions of wasteful spending on a broken system?

Hon. Stephanie McLean (Secretary of State (Seniors), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really happy to answer this question and remind the member opposite that years ago the Auditor General warned Harper's Conservatives that the old benefit payment system was outdated and at risk. That means that, under those Conservatives, people would not get their money at all. What did the Conservatives do? They did nothing. That is just their way. They get out of the way and do nothing.

We have invested. We are modernizing the system to ensure that it serves seniors for years to come. If a problem arises, we will fix it.

Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is just another excuse from the Liberal government. Seniors are already struggling with the cost of living, and delayed payments are causing seniors to fall behind on rent, skip groceries and worry about how they will pay for their medication.

It is unacceptable that this project went from \$1.7 billion to \$6.6 billion. Who is accountable for this massive cost overrun? Who will be fired, and when will the government take responsibility for another overpriced, failed system?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, transitioning 7 million Canadians to a system without a hitch would not be my definition of failure. Do members know what would be? It would be not investing in the modernization of systems when there was a chance to and voting against bringing all our systems up to date. Not only are we modernizing OAS, but we are also modernizing EI and CPP for all Canadians.

Canadians ought to have systems they can use digitally. That is what we are doing. We are making sure that Canadians have state-of-the-art benefit payments.

* * *

• (1500)

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the world is changing rapidly. The world order has been disrupted, and fast-paced technological advances are changing the way that Canada has to respond to threats. The new Government of Canada has to respond by reinvesting in the Canadian Armed Forces, by rearming them and by rebuilding them. We are already seeing results. There has been a 13% increase in CAF enlistment, and Canada is on track to meet its 2% target.

Can the Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade explain to the House how Canada's defence industrial strategy will enhance security and drive economic growth?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs, Internal Trade, and One Canadian Economy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is focusing on what we can control: building here at home, working with allies and buying what is needed. Canada's new defence industrial strategy consists of a \$500-billion investment in Canadian industry, security and prosperity.

This is just as much an employment strategy as it is a defence strategy. It represents 125,000 new careers and strengthened supply chains. In Canada, that is how we stand strong.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, food prices have skyrocketed 7.3%, rising more than twice as fast as the

price of other goods. This is not an imported problem; 70% of the food Canadians consume is produced domestically, including 80% of processed foods, yet nearly 90% of agribusinesses now say the future of Canadian ag is at risk. Why are food prices rising? Punishing regulations, inflationary spending and Liberal taxes continue to force Canadians to pay more at the store.

How expensive does food have to get before the Liberals stop strangling farmers and get serious about bringing back affordable food?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are getting very serious. It is called ensuring food security for Canadians. I am happy to share that with the member. He may want to explain it to his constituents.

The great thing with the Canada groceries and essentials benefit is that we are helping 12 million Canadians. In addition, and I am sure he is going to tell his constituents, we are putting \$500 million to help Canada have a more resilient supply chain.

We need to grow more food in Canada. We need to have a better supply chain. We need to focus on food security. This is exactly what we are doing, and I hope the Conservative will vote in favour of the bill, because this is helping farmers.

Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook—Brant North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Prime Minister, food prices have jumped 7.3% and are rising twice as fast as those of other goods, making Canada the food inflation capital of the G7. This is a made-in-Canada problem; 70% of our food production is right here at home, yet nearly 90% of agribusinesses say Liberal red tape is putting them at risk. Punishing regulations and the industrial carbon tax are driving up costs.

Just how much higher must grocery bills climb before the Liberals stop strangling Canadian food production with red tape and punishing taxes?

Hon. Kody Blois (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a bit rich to listen to the Conservatives talk about Canadian farmers and agri-food businesses, when they had their chance in April 2025 and had absolutely nothing in their platform for Canadian farmers or agri-food businesses.

Oral Questions

We know the price of food is a major issue in this country. That is why we have introduced the groceries and essentials rebate; 12.6 million Canadians will benefit, with up to \$1,900 a year. We are also introducing the national food security strategy. This is an opportunity to look at the systemic aspects of food: what we can do to help support farmers and agri-food businesses. It will not be cutting the industrial carbon price; that is not a real plan.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

John Williamson (Saint John—St. Croix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, costs keep going up, but Liberals keep doing the same thing.

This year in New Brunswick, families will spend \$1,000 more on grocery bills than last year. With 70% of food produced domestically, this is a made-in-Canada problem caused by the Liberals. Food is expensive because Canadian taxes on farming, trucking and packaging keep going up. It is all paid by Canadian consumers, and rising taxes on energy means more pain is on the way. Experts are clear that punishing regulations, inflationary spending and the Liberal industrial carbon tax are the cause.

How expensive does food have to get before the Liberals do something?

• (1505)

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to fighting affordability, the member and his leader are missing in action.

We have cut taxes for 22 million Canadians, we have cut the consumer carbon tax, we have cut the GST for first-time homebuyers, and just recently we announced a groceries and essentials benefit that will put up to \$1,900 in the pockets of New Brunswick's working families.

It is time for the member and his leader to stand up, stop the obstruction, and fight for Canadian families.

* * *

HOUSING

Wade Chang (Burnaby Central, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Build Canada Homes is Canada's affordable housing builder, and it is already delivering real results. It continues to support projects that provide Canadians with safe, stable and affordable homes, including homes coming to British Columbia through a recently announced partnership.

Can the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure update the House on how this new partnership will help deliver much-needed housing for residents in British Columbia?

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have very exciting news in B.C. The Build Canada Homes partnership is set to deliver 1,100 new affordable homes. Many of these priority projects are set to break ground this year, including 700 supportive and transitional homes for people who need them the most.

I hope that the members opposite will support the Build Canada Homes legislation rather than obstructing and preventing Canadians from getting access to affordable housing.

* * *

JUSTICE

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a British Columbia school board trustee was fined \$750,000 for the egregious crime of saying there are two genders. These are the same kangaroo courts that the Liberals' online harms act would empower. It is the same regulation of emotion that Liberal Bill C-9 would supercharge.

The Liberals claim they will uphold freedom of expression, but they still have not said whether they will acknowledge and accept the Federal Court of Appeal ruling that they violated the constitutional rights of Canadians by invoking the Emergencies Act.

Will the Liberals commit now to giving up on their censorship agenda and letting Canadians live their lives and speak their minds?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of points.

There is no censorship agenda. We will keep our kids safe, including safe from child pornographers.

The convoy was an illegal occupation of the downtown of our capital that people wanted gone. The member supported it with his leader. Shame on them, bringing donuts to people occupying our nation's capital.

* * *

PHARMACARE

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we keep asking the Liberal government when pharmacare will expand, and we cannot get a straight answer from the Minister of Health.

British Columbia's pharmacare agreement starts next week, because New Democrats pushed for it and because the B.C. NDP moved quickly. Families in other provinces are still waiting because the Liberal government is not negotiating. This means access to life-saving medicine depends on someone's postal code.

When will the Minister of Health finally start negotiating so Canadians can access life-saving medicine no matter where they live?

Business of Supply

Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows, I am having conversations with each of the health ministers in the provinces and territories about pharmacare. We will let him know as soon as we are ready to move forward.

Bruce Fanjoy: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We heard some very unparliamentary language today. It was probably spoken by accident.

I would like you to ask the member for Lakeland to withdraw the comment.

The Speaker: I did not hear the language in question. I do not know if the hon. member wants to address this one way or the other. I did not hear the comment.

The hon. member for Lakeland.

Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my comment telling the truth, which was that the answer was bovine excrement.

• (1510)

The Speaker: The first time, nobody heard it. The second time, unfortunately, we had to hear it.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques Cartier.

Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, I believe that you have a responsibility to protect the rights of all MPs here in the House of Commons.

During question period, I saw my colleague, the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, make gestures to one of my colleagues that I will not repeat.

I invite you to watch the video, or I would ask my colleague to apologize right now.

The Speaker: I did not see the gestures in question, and I do not think that I would see them if I watched the video because the camera is focused on the person asking the question and the person answering it. However, it has been noted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—AUTOMOTIVE STRATEGY

The House resumed from February 12 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: It being 3:11 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the motion of the member for Kildonan—St. Paul relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Speaker: The question is as follows. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of motion to House*]

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 70*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Anderson	Anstey
Arnold	Au
Baber	Bailey
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Berthold
Bexte	Bezan
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Block	Bonin
Bonk	Borrelli
Boulerice	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Caputo	Chambers
Champoux	Cobena
Cooper	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Niagara South)
Dawson	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	DeRidder
Deschênes	Diotte
Doherty	Dowdall
Duncan	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake)	Falk (Provencher)
Fortin	Gallant
Garon	Gaudreau
Gazan	Généreux
Genuis	Gill (Calgary McKnight)
Gill (Windsor West)	Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan)
Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley)	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Groleau
Guglielmin	Gunn
Hallan	Hardy
Ho	Hoback
Holman	Idlout
Jackson	Jivani
Johns	Kelly
Khanna	Kibble
Kirkland	Kmiec
Konanz	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kronis
Kuruc	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Larouche	Lawrence
Lawton	Lefebvre
Lemire	Leslie
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd	Lobb
Mahal	Majumdar
Malette (Kapuskasing—Timmins—Mushkegowuk)	Martel
Mazier	McCauley
McKenzie	McLean (Calgary Centre)
McPherson	Melillo
Menegakis	Moore
Morin	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Normandin

Business of Supply

Patzer
Perron
Poilievre
Reid
Reynolds
Roberts
Ross
Ruff
Scheer
Seeback
Simard
Steinley
Stevenson
Strauss
Thériault
Tochor
Van Popta
Viersen
Wagantall
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Paul-Hus
Plamondon
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Richards
Rood
Rowe
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shiple
Small
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Stubbs
Thomas
Tolmie
Vien
Vis
Warkentin
Williamson

Lavack
LeBlanc
Lightbound
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLean (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke)
Mendès
Miedema
Mingarelli
Myles
Nathan
Noormohamed
Oliphant
O'Rourke
Petitpas Taylor
Provost
Rana
Rochefort
Royer
Saini
Sari
Schieffe
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Solomon
St-Pierre
Tesser Derksen
Turnbull
van Koevreden
Villeneuve
Weiler
Yip
Zerucelli

Lavoie
Leitão
Long
Ma
MacDonald (Cardigan)
Malette (Bay of Quinte)
May
McKelvie
McKnight
Ménard
Michel
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
Nguyen
Ntumba
Olszewski
Osborne
Powlowski
Ramsay
Robertson
Romanado
Sahota
Sarai
Sawatzky
Sgro
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sodhi
Sousa
Sudds
Thompson
Valdez
Vandenbeld
Watchorn
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NAYS

Members

Acan
Ali
Anand
Bains
Bardeesy
Beech

Bendayan
Blois
Carney
Casey
Champagne
Chartrand
Chen
Chi
Clark
Cormier
Dabrusin
Danko
Deschênes-Thériault
Dhaliwal
Diab
Duguid
Earle
El-Khoury
Eyolfson
Fanjoy
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Fuhr
Gaine
Gerretsen
Grant
Guay
Gull-Masty
Hanley
Hepfner
Hodgson
Housefather
Iacono
Jeneroux
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Lambropoulos
Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)
Lattanzio

Al Soud
Alty
Anandasangaree
Baker
Battiste
Belanger (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River)
Bittle
Brière
Carr
Chagger
Chang
Chatel
Chenette
Church
Connors
Coteau
Dandurand
d'Entremont
Desrochers
Dhillon
Duclos
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fancy
Fergus
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fry
Gaheer
Gasparro
Gould
Greaves
Guilbeault
Hajdu
Harrison
Hirtle
Hogan
Hussen
Jaczek
Joseph
Kelloway
Klassen
Lalonde
Lamoureux
Lapointe (Sudbury)
Lauzon

PAIRED

Members

Jansen

Joly— 2

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

[*English*]

The next question is on the main motion.

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

[*Translation*]

Hon. Élisabeth Brière: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find unanimous consent to apply the result of the previous vote to this one, with all Liberal members voting no.

[*English*]

Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives agree to apply the vote, with the Conservatives voting in favour.

[*Translation*]

Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees to apply the vote and will be voting against the motion.

[*English*]

Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, the NDP agrees with applying the vote, and we vote yea.

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Greens agree with the application of the results of the last vote to this vote, with Greens voting no.

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

(Division No. 71)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Anderson	Anstey
Arnold	Au
Baber	Bailey
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Berthold
Bexte	Bezan
Block	Bonk
Borrelli	Boulerice
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Calkins
Caputo	Chambers
Cobena	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Niagara South)	Dawson
Deltell	DeRidder
Diotte	Doherty
Dowdall	Duncan
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake)
Falk (Provencher)	Gallant
Gazan	Généreux
Genuis	Gill (Calgary McKnight)
Gill (Windsor West)	Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley)
Glada	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Grolean	Guglielmin
Gunn	Hallan
Hardy	Ho
Hoback	Holman
Idlout	Jackson
Jivani	Johns
Kelly	Khanna
Kibble	Kirkland
Kmiec	Konanz
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kronis	Kuruc
Kusie	Lake
Lantsman	Lawrence
Lawton	Lefebvre
Leslie	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Lloyd
Lobb	Mahal
Majumdar	Malette (Kapusasing—Timmins—Mushkegowuk)
Martel	Mazier
McCauley	McKenzie
McLean (Calgary Centre)	McPherson
Melillo	Menegakis
Moore	Morin
Morrison	Motz
Muys	Nater
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Poillievre	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Reynolds	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Ross	Rowe
Ruff	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback

Shiple
Steinley
Strahl
Stubbs
Tochor
Van Popta
Viersen
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Waugh
Zimmer — 139

Business of Supply

Small
Stevenson
Strauss
Thomas
Tolmie
Vien
Vis
Warkentin
Williamson

NAYS

Members

Al Soud
Alty
Anandasangaree
Baker
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Belanger (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River)
Bittle
Blanchette-Joncas
Bonin
Brunelle-Duceppe
Carr
Chagger
Champoux
Chartrand
Chen
Chi
Clark
Cormier
Dabrusin
Danko
d'Entremont
Deschênes-Thériault
Dhaliwal
Diab
Duguid
Earle
El-Khoury
Eyolfson
Fanjoy
Fisher
Fortier
Fragiskatos
Fry
Gaheer
Garon
Gaudreau
Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan)
Grant
Guay
Gull-Masty
Hanley
Hepfner
Hodgson
Housefather
Iacono
Jeneroux
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Lambropoulos
Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)
Larouche
Lauzon
Lavoie
Leitão
Lightbound
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)

Routine Proceedings

Ma	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacDonald (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Malette (Bay of Quinte)	Maloney
May	McGuinty
McKelvie	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McKnight	McLean (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke)
Ménard	Mendès
Michel	Miedema
Miller	Mingarelli
Morrissey	Myles
Naqvi	Nathan
Nguyen	Noormohamed
Normandin	Ntumba
Oliphant	Olzewski
O'Rourke	Osborne
Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Plamondon	Powlowski
Provost	Ramsay
Rana	Robertson
Rocheport	Romanado
Royer	Sahota
Saini	Sarai
Sari	Savard-Tremblay
Sawatzky	Schieffe
Sgro	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simard	Sodhi
Solomon	Sousa
Ste-Marie	St-Pierre
Sudds	Tesser Derksen
Thériault	Thompson
Turnbull	Valdez
van Koevorden	Vandenbeld
Villeneuve	Watchorn
Weiler	Wilkinson
Yip	Zahid
Zerucelli	Zuberi— 190

PAIRED

Members

Jansen

Joly— 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

[*Translation*]

I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded divisions, the time provided for Government Orders will be extended by 15 minutes.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 15th report later this day.

While I am on my feet, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(a) (viii) and section 30 of the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Pro-

cedure and House Affairs, entitled “Forms and Procedural and Interpretative Guidelines from the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner”.

It being later this day, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented in the House earlier this day be concurred in.

● (1530)

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay. It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, in accordance with subsection 49(1) of the Official Languages Act, R.S.C., 1985, c. 31, and pursuant to Standing Order 111.1(2), the House approve the appointment of Kelly Burke as Commissioner of Official Languages, for a term of seven years.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay. It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

UKRAINE

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions amongst the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House:

(a) at the conclusion of Oral Questions on Tuesday, February 24, 2026, the House observe a moment of silence for Ukraine and the victims of Russian aggression;

(b) a member of the governing party, a member of the official opposition, a member of the Bloc Québécois, a member of the New Democratic Party and the member of the Green Party each be permitted to make a statement; and

(c) the time taken for these proceedings shall be added to the time provided for Government Orders.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

There being no dissenting voice, it is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

PETITIONS

NATIONAL FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table petition e-6623, calling on the House of Commons to create a national food assistance program.

The petitioners say this program is more essential than ever, especially among low-income people, people with disabilities, seniors and single adults with children. Access to food is one of the most basic human rights recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, of which Canada is a signatory. Canada currently has no national food assistance program, leaving countless people hungry at a time when food costs are soaring across the country. Nobody should have to choose between basic necessities like food, medication, housing or health care—

The Speaker: Is the hon. member reading a statement or summarizing the petition?

Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, I was just finishing. Can I start from the top?

The Speaker: No. Is the hon. member simply summarizing the petition or reading a statement about the petition?

Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, I was summarizing my petition. I was almost done.

The Speaker: The hon. member may continue.

Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, our leaders must ensure that everyone has access to the resources they need to live healthy lives. I fully reiterate the petitioners' call on the Liberal government to respect this fact and create a national food assistance program without delay.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my first petition is in support of the member for Cloverdale—Langley City's private member's bill, Bill C-218, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding medical assistance in dying.

These individuals say that the Government of Canada intends to expand medical assistance in dying to individuals whose only medical condition is a mental illness. The petitioners say mental illness is treatable, recovery is possible and experts agree that it is currently impossible to predict when a mental illness is truly irremediable. They have brought forward other issues as well. All this supports the request that the Government of Canada pass Bill C-218 to stop the expansion of MAID to those whose sole underlying medical condition is a mental illness.

• (1535)

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are a number of petitions that I want to present this morning, and there are so many coming in that I cannot do them one by one. They are all in regard to Bill C-9.

These citizens and residents of Canada draw the attention of the House of Commons to the following issue. Canadians are concerned about the Liberal-Bloc amendments to Bill C-9, which could

Routine Proceedings

be used to criminalize passages from the Bible, the Quran, the Torah and other sacred texts. The state has no place, the petitioners say, 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, the petitioners call on the Liberal Government of Canada to protect religious freedom, uphold the right to read and share sacred texts, and prevent government overreach in matters of faith.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a petition on behalf of constituents in Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford who are deeply concerned about the proposed expansion of medical assistance in dying to individuals whose sole underlying condition is a mental illness. My constituents fear that expanding MAID in this way risks normalizing suicide as a response to mental illness. They believe instead that Canada should prioritize and strengthen mental health supports for those who are suffering. They therefore call on the government to support Bill C-218 and halt the expansion of MAID to those with a mental illness.

CANADA PENSION PLAN

John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition on behalf of more than 600 of my constituents who signed this petition about the Canada pension plan. They are concerned by amendments that the Liberal government made to the pension plan in 2018. They are worried about the security of their pensions, especially those with disabilities. The news that the Liberal government may be dipping into the Canada pension plan to pay for some of its overspending is a concern to my constituents. I would table this petition on behalf of the residents of Foothills.

RECREATION FACILITIES

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to table a petition on behalf of residents from Tofino, Ucluelet, Port Alberni and the Oceanside region in my riding of Courtenay—Alberni who are deeply concerned about the shortage of community recreation facilities in our region and across Canada.

Petitioners stress that recreation centres are vital spaces for people of all ages to gather, stay healthy and build strong communities. They note that recreation promotes physical and mental health, supports rehabilitation, reduces antisocial behaviours and lowers long-term health and social costs. Facilities also help retain families, seniors and youth in rural areas while driving economic and volunteer activity. These petitioners point out that the federal government has previously partnered with British Columbia through the investing in Canada infrastructure program's community, culture and recreation infrastructure stream and call for its renewal and expansion.

Government Orders

Petitioners urge the federal government to ensure rural and coastal communities have equitable access to the recreation infrastructure needed for a healthy and sustainable community and country.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN INDIA

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to present a petition today on behalf of Canadians from across the country who are concerned about human rights protections in India. The petitioners are stating that according to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, various actors are supporting and enforcing sectarian policies to establish India as a Hindu state, and they are concerned about the treatment of Christians in India. They are concerned about the targeting of churches, attacks on church workers and the threatening and humiliation of congregations. Petitioners are also concerned about the crimes against the Dalit groups, including Dalit women and girls. They say that crimes are increasing in that respect. They are also concerned about the treatment of Indian Muslims and say that they are at risk of genocide, assault and sexual violence.

The petitioners are asking the government to ensure that all trade deals with India are premised on mandatory human rights provisions, that extremists are sanctioned and that the government promotes a respectful human rights dialogue between Canada and India.

PANCREATIC CANCER

Tom Osborne (Cape Spear, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting petition e-6492 on behalf of the over 1,000 Canadians who have signed the petition. They are asking that we ensure Canadians suffering from pancreatic cancer, especially those in smaller provinces, get the care they need. The petition was first authorized by my predecessor, Seamus O'Regan, but fell short by about 100 signatures. The focus of the petition is to ensure equity across provinces, access to molecular testing and clinical trials, and the creation of a national guideline for pancreatic cancer.

* * *

● (1540)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUILD CANADA HOMES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-20, An Act respecting the establishment of Build Canada Homes, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Jonathan Rowe (Terra Nova—The Peninsulas, CPC): Mr. Speaker, imagine taking the GST off of all new homes under \$1.3 million. That would instantly save 5%. With a 5% savings, that would have encouraged thousands of Canadians right across the country to build new homes. By partnering with Canadians, we could have stretched our dollar by 95%, by having that 5% incentive.

Instead of letting Canadians keep their own money, the Liberals keep taxing things like housing, things they often call a human right. They then give that money to corporations and landlords to build homes, not for young people to actually own but for them to rent. Own nothing and be happy: that is the slogan of the Liberals' plan for their new world order. Young people do not want to rent for their whole lives. They want to own a home, a place where they can paint their kids' bedroom, a place that gives them pride and hope for the future, a place where they can build a fence for their dog.

Housing is not just about shelter. It is about economic stability. It is about mental health. It is about whether young people can make a wooden box a home. In my province, we face the highest unemployment rate in the country. We add that to rising rents and rising prices and limited supply, and young people are being forced to make unfavourable choices. Some are staying with their parents. Some are even staying with their grandparents. These are young men and women, oftentimes older than myself, working full time, yet they still have to face these unfavourable choices.

Unfortunately, we are seeing even greater consequences of the lost Liberal decade. Homelessness, once unthinkable at this scale, especially in my province, is now a reality in communities right across my province and the whole country. Over the summer, I was able to have a tour of a Salvation Army homeless shelter in St. John's. I began to ask the workers at the facility what had led to people being there.

I remember one young lady looked at me and said that all those men had just hit their breaking point. The shelter sees these kinds of surges when the economy goes bad. They lose their jobs and that causes stress. They oftentimes lose their wives and their family because of that stress, and they end up there. Her statement stuck with me because of the simple fact that what we do here in Ottawa does not just affect our economy; it affects real people. It does not just affect housing stats and unemployment. It affects real people, real Canadians, people who are hurting and looking for hope.

Government Orders

How long will these Liberals keep hiding in their haunted house of smoke and mirrors before they admit that more bureaucracy will not build a single home? Canadians do not need another illusion. They need a real home.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is great contrast on this particular issue. On the one hand, we have a government that understands that the federal government has to play an important role in housing, by working with municipalities and provinces. That will, in fact, make a difference.

Contrast that to the Conservatives and their whole theme, which is to get out of the way, just like their leader. When he was the minister responsible, years ago, for housing, he built less than six houses. I still do not know where they are.

I wonder if the member would not recognize that the federal government does and can have a role to play, which we are playing, as the legislation clearly shows.

Will they vote for the legislation? If they are going to vote against it, will they allow it to at least go to committee?

Jonathan Rowe: Mr. Speaker, having a housing crisis and having Canadians forcing Liberals to step in to try to do something does not show success. It shows failure. The Conservatives have never had to build more than six homes because we were out of the way, and private industry was building homes.

In 2017, the Liberals launched a strategy, an agency. Nothing got built, and problems got worse. The more they do, and the evidence shows this, the more problems we have. They should just get out of the way. That is it.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the federal government, and especially this Liberal government, sticks its nose into something that is working relatively well, usually something managed by municipalities in Quebec and in the provinces or by the provincial governments or the Quebec government, it always creates a terrible disaster involving mismanagement, cost overruns and money not getting where it needs to go.

Creating the giant beast that is Build Canada Homes may have been a great idea with the best intentions, but the fact is that mechanisms are already in place. Experts are already on the ground. The municipalities know better than anyone the needs they are facing.

Does my colleague not think that the federal government and the Liberals should get out of the way and simply transfer the money to Quebec and the provinces so that the programs can be implemented quickly?

[*English*]

Jonathan Rowe: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I have ever agreed with the Bloc as much as I do now.

One hundred per cent, the federal government needs to step out of the way and let people on the ground, the people who build homes and communities, do the work. Let them build the homes they want to build. The federal government needs to just get out of

the way, get policies in place or get policies removed so that they can build homes.

Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could comment a little more on the notion of building bureaucracy.

There are now four federal housing agencies. Build Canada Homes is the third federal Crown corporation focused on housing. I wonder if the member might be able to predict how many Crown corporations it will take to build a home.

Jonathan Rowe: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals lost my seat by 12 votes, so maybe 12 will do the trick and get it done.

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, nowhere in the world has the free market solved an affordable housing crisis.

Let us look at the Netherlands, with 34% non-market housing; Denmark, 21%; Britain, 16%; and France, 17%. Here in Canada, we are now at 3.4% non-market housing. Nothing in this bill sets targets on non-market housing. My colleague had a good idea around removing the GST on housing. Instead, why do we not take that GST, invest it back into the communities where homes were sold and use it for building non-market housing?

We know we need a mix of market and non-market housing. They go hand in hand. Do the Conservatives support any form of non-market housing? Do they understand its critical importance for the most vulnerable, for people who are trying to make ends meet, especially housing that is geared to income?

Jonathan Rowe: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's dedication to thinking outside the box. We definitely need to try something new rather than just repackaging the same bureaucracy.

However, what the Conservatives are very adamant on is creating policies that everyone across this country can benefit from. Removing the GST would not pick winners and losers. Anybody could go out, build a new home and benefit from that. It would be incentivizing everybody.

Tako Van Popta (Langley Township—Fraser Heights, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-20, a bill from the Liberal government to establish yet another federal Crown corporation, called Build Canada Homes, which would apparently finally find the solution to the economic woes in our housing sector that have stubbornly evaded solutions provided by existing federal bureaucracies. The stated purpose of Build Canada Homes is to “promote, support and develop the supply of affordable housing in Canada and to promote innovative and efficient building techniques in the housing construction sector in Canada”. I know that sounds optimistic. Let us test that claim, that aspirational statement, against reality.

Government Orders

For 10 years, we have had a Liberal government that thinks it is smarter than the free market. We hear it again today, that the government has all the solutions to all the problems and that with enough central planning, it can make the market behave the way it thinks it should behave. In my years in Parliament, I have observed time and again that the Liberal government's politics are performative in nature. It wants to appear to be doing something about whatever the problem is that is being debated that day. If major projects are being held up because of federal bureaucracy, well, let it create a major projects office. If military procurement is a mess, let it set up a commission to look at why all the other commissions have not been doing their job. Now, in a situation of housing unaffordability and new houses not being built to keep up with demand, we have a new bureaucracy for that too: a new Crown corporation, in fact. Build Canada Homes, it will be called.

Here is what Canadians will get out of this new corporation. First of all, it will create its own bureaucracy, a board of directors comprising eight to 10 people, a chairperson, a full-time CEO, all of whom will be on the federal payroll. Secondly, it will get into the business of building affordable homes, apparently. It is good timing, I say somewhat facetiously, just as the B.C. government is getting out of that line of business. The headline in the Vancouver Sun over the weekend, screaming on the front page, is “A massive step back’ for housing”, while David Eby is grappling with a stunning \$13.8-billion operating deficit just three years after he inherited a surplus of \$5 billion from the previous government. Another headline on the same topic reads, “Loss of provincial fund upends many affordable rental projects”. People are up in arms about this. They want to know what is going on. The provincial government has made all these promises, and now it is abandoning ship because it does not have the money to do it.

Thirdly, this new, highly paid bureaucracy will analyze what is wrong with the current state of affairs in the housing sector and advise government as to what to do, how to tweak things. One of the first reports coming out of this agency, this Crown corporation, no doubt, will analyze the current housing market in Canada and why it is in such a state of imbalance, despite the existence of federal government bureaucracies and best intentions that were supposed to make things better. This is the fourth bureaucracy, now. We already have the Canada Lands Company. We have the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. We have Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada. I would just point this out: If creating bureaucracies could solve the problem, we would not have a problem.

Let us take a look at the track record of the current bureaucracies. According to CMHC's own recent housing market outlook for 2026, housing starts are heading in the wrong direction, despite all the announcements from the Liberals, below the target necessary to restore housing affordability. A quote from the report sums it up very nicely. It says, “New home construction is set to decline through 2028 as developers face high costs, weaker demand and more unsold homes.” Can members imagine this, in an economy where there are not enough homes? This is especially true in B.C, where, the report predicts, “Housing starts will continue to slow down in 2026, with a more significant decline...in 2027-2028.” We are headed in the wrong direction.

• (1550)

The Canadian Home Builders' Association had this to say in its Q4 report from last year: “Setting new record lows in builder sentiment was the unfortunate theme for the [housing market index] in 2025.” Builders are losing faith in their ability to build homes in the current sector, the environment that the Liberals have created. Ontario and British Columbia unfortunately will “lead the way in terms of broad pessimism among single- and multi-family builders.”

Yes, it is pessimistic. People want to buy or rent homes but lack the financial resources to buy. Builders are being pessimistic about their ability to meet the demand in face of high costs that drive sale prices beyond what the market can bear. There is a serious imbalance in our economy, in other words.

As I was preparing my notes, I thought of the famous economist Friedrich Hayek, the free-market economist who spoke about this in his famous 1945 essay, “The Use of Knowledge in Society”. I will paraphrase it. I just want to highlight that Friedrich Hayek was of the classical liberal tradition of economics, the tradition that the Liberal Party of Canada used to follow until it abandoned all that and Liberals became central planning socialists. That is what they are today.

I will go back to Friedrich Hayek, who had this to say: “The beauty of the market lies in its ability to coordinate actions without requiring omniscience.” He also said, “The fatal flaw of central planning is the assumption that someone knows enough to direct the use of resources efficiently.” Here is another quote, a third from Professor Hayek: “No single mind can comprehend the complexity of modern economic activity—only a decentralized process can manage it.”

The Liberals do not believe that. They used to believe it, but they do not believe it anymore. They have now abandoned classical liberal tradition to adopt central planning socialism. Today they think they are the omniscience, the single mind that can comprehend the complexity of modern economic activity.

That is all we need to know to understand why the Liberals are always so optimistic that their next government central planning agency is finally going to solve the problem. If it does not, then the next one will, and the next one after that. They are always optimistic and always dreaming, always with wishful thinking. If Liberal wishful thinking would build homes, Canada would have the most affordable, the most successful and the most balanced housing market in the world, but that is unfortunately not the case.

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People who expect that the bill would actually accelerate affordable housing construction in Canada will be disappointed. The bill is simply about setting up a new bureaucracy to keep an eye on the existing bureaucracies that have failed time and time again to solve our housing affordability crisis and our housing availability crisis. Young people particularly are paying the price for all this mismanagement.

In closing, here is some free advice for the Liberals from the free-market Conservatives. We continue to adopt and follow free-market economics because that is the solution to our economic goals: Just get out of the way. What the Liberals have been doing for the last 10 years has not been working, and the newly repackaged commission, the newly repackaged and restructured bureaucracy, would not solve the problem either. We wish the Liberals would just get out of the way and let smart Canadians build homes to meet market demand.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba (Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will take no advice from the Conservatives. Their leader built only six homes when he was in charge of this file. We have built homes for Canadians. What does my colleague have to say about that?

[*English*]

Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, the question just underlines what I was saying: Governments do not build homes. People build homes. Home builders build homes. Electricians, drywallers, carpenters and land developers are the ones who build homes. The government just needs to get out of the way and create the environment that welcomes investment so people will actually build homes and so the market meets the demand.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Listuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I think that we share his concerns about the centralist nature of the bill. Let us not forget that the Liberal government's last good idea on housing was the Canada housing infrastructure fund, which was announced in April 2024. It took almost two years before an agreement was finally reached with Quebec for the money to come through.

I would like my colleague's thoughts on a concern of mine. I come from a rural area. There are small villages where I live, and there is a significant need for housing. However, these projects often involve 12 or 24 housing units, while the federal government usually focuses on large projects in cities. Does my colleague share my concern that rural areas are once again being forgotten?

[*English*]

Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, the question from my colleague from the Bloc Québécois was a thoughtful one. I live in a community that is highly urbanized, but parts of it are still rural, so I sympathize with the question.

I will revert back to what I had said earlier, which is that the market generally sorts things out. If there is a demand in smaller communities, it will be filled if the government gets out of the way.

Is there a role for government? Provincial and federal governments own a lot of land. Maybe they should put that out into the marketplace. I know there are areas in British Columbia that would benefit greatly from the release of federal lands from federal control. Put it into private enterprise and let us build.

• (1600)

Roman Baber (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's speech was thoughtful. I certainly agree on the fact that choices and the free economy, not government, are what builds homes.

However, what I do not really understand about the bill is why we need a fourth bureaucracy. We already have the ministry of housing, which can do what the new agency would seek to do. We have CMHC. We have the Canada Lands Company, headquartered in the great riding of York Centre. Therefore, I do not understand, but perhaps the hon. member has an idea, why the Liberals require yet a fourth bureaucracy to do what any of the three previous bureaucracies can do.

Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, that is an important question, but I am really the wrong person to be asking it to. Trying to get into the minds of the Liberals is hard to do, but what I have observed time and again is that the Liberal politics of the Liberal Party of the 2020s is all performative politics. It just wants it to seem that it is doing something. If there is a problem, it has a solution: another organization, photo op or ribbon cutting, and the problem is solved. That is its problem.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very interested in whether the Conservatives are taking the position that they are going to oppose the legislation. They do not support Bill C-20. Having said that, will they recognize, at the very least, that we should allow it to go to committee, or does the member believe they are going to continue to filibuster the legislation too?

Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that every time the member for Winnipeg North stands up, he is accusing us of filibustering. This is an important topic. It is very important for Canadians, certainly in my home province of British Columbia, where housing affordability really is a crisis for young people. These are important issues. We need to be debating them in the House of Commons, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today to speak to the Build Canada Homes act, the legislation that would address one of the most urgent and deeply felt challenges facing Canadians, particularly young Canadians: housing. I would like to address the impact the legislation would have on Canada Lands Company Limited.

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As we know, Canada is in a housing crisis. The cost of housing is up, supply is not keeping pace with demand, and productivity in the construction sector is low. We need to build more homes, and we need to build them fast. This is exactly what we ran on in April 2025. It is what Canadians wanted us to do.

Consistently for the last couple of years, we have heard from Canadians that they need more homes. The dream of being a homeowner for young Canadians has not died; it is still alive and well. It is the onus of every single level of government to make sure we can meet that dream.

The legislation would define the mandate, governance structure, powers and funding of Build Canada Homes. It would also provide the transitional provisions necessary to move it from an existing special operating agency to a Crown corporation. I want to clarify that this is something we ran on, and Canadians, on April 28, 2025, gave this side of the House the mandate to meet their most important and most dire needs across the country.

We are not doing something that we were hiding from Canadians; we have talked about it. We talked about Build Canada Homes, and now we finally see the life of Build Canada Homes as a Crown corporation. Once Build Canada Homes becomes a Crown corporation, it would also have access to a broader set of authorities and to greater operational flexibility. This would also allow it to move faster and more effectively in delivering housing at scale.

Housing insecurity is rarely a stand-alone issue. We know that for many Canadians, it intersects with mental health, health care access, income stability and community supports. This is the reality that underscores the importance of wraparound services, an approach that recognizes that stable housing and personal well-being are deeply interconnected.

The Build Canada Homes act would allow us to think about housing in a more holistic way. Yes, Canada must build more homes, must accelerate approvals and remove barriers, and it must also ensure that housing systems promote long-term stability, particularly with people who have complex needs.

If I may, let me reflect briefly on the experiences of London, Ontario, which offers a compelling example of how federal partnerships and wraparound thinking can produce meaningful outcomes. London has been a national leader in leveraging federal housing dollars and investments, thanks to the many partners in the sector, along with the leadership of the City of London and the many builders across the city who have come together and are responding to the need for housing for every single person in our community.

We are, one day at a time, curving homelessness across the city of London. Our community has received among the highest levels of housing funding in the country, reflecting both scale of local need and the city's readiness to respond to that need. London was the first municipality to secure the housing accelerator fund, and through demonstrated performance and ambition, it has received additional funding to further accelerate progress.

These investments have translated into tangible results. London has significantly expanded its housing supply, including a substantial increase in supportive housing projects that combine stable accommodation with integrated health and social services that contin-

ue to address homelessness and housing vulnerability in a durable and more sustainable way because it is done at a community level.

I would like to share a story. This past week in my riding, I visited an Indwell housing project, a partnership with many partners in the city of London, including the City of London, where residents celebrated Black History Month with the support of staff.

I was invited as the speaker by one of the residents who has been there for, I think, about a year, named Este. I saw the joy it brought her to invite me to speak at this Black History Month event. I enjoyed having a conversation with her and getting to know a little about her story, where she started, where she is at today and how far she has come, as well as about the dignity with which Indwell treats its residents.

● (1605)

This is a project we funded. I was there for the groundbreaking. I was there for the opening. I was there when the first person moved in, and I returned to have a conversation with a resident who was excited to celebrate Black History Month. It really brought warmth to my heart to see that behind all the jargon that politicians use, behind all the numbers we talk about and behind the dollars, there are real people.

I was talking about wraparound services and what Build Canada Homes would do to provide more of these opportunities. The minister shared a story earlier about the Dunn project, which is in Toronto, and I am sharing the story about Thompson Road and many others in the city of London, where we see partners come together and get federal dollars to provide units for people who need them the most, the most vulnerable people in our community.

I had an opportunity to chat with a couple of residents there, but more importantly with Ese, who invited me to be the keynote speaker, engaging on Black History Month. The joy she had and the life in the room really brought life to me as well. I was actually not feeling well that day, but it brought so much light and joy to see that, to see the advocacy that went into it, all the partners that went into it and all the hard work of people who want to see the most vulnerable people in our community housed. That is exactly her success and what Ese embodies. As the staff on site said, she has come so far from where she was to where she is now. I am so glad to see that there are tangible people behind these dollars.

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The work that Build Canada Homes wants to do and will continue to build on is like the project on Thompson Road. This progress matters, not only for those directly served, but for the broader housing ecosystem. Expanding supply across the housing continuum, including supportive and affordable housing, has a system-wide effect. We already know that when more housing units come online, pressure on rental markets begin to ease. When rental pressures ease, affordability improves across the board. The hope is that Build Canada Homes will do that, so we can see a spike in home builds across the city and across Canada.

The reality is that young Canadians, as I said earlier, desire to own a home, and that desire has not wavered, which is why we are going to continue to do everything in our power. We are going to work with the provinces, we are going to work with municipalities, we are going to work with everyone to make sure we can provide homes for Canadians across the board.

Being able to afford a home is a human right; it is not a luxury. It is what all Canadians need and deserve, and that is what we are going to continue to do. For young families, for first-time homebuyers, for those seeking to put down roots, housing supply becomes the difference between aspiration and reality. Every home built expands the possibility.

Strategic federal investments paired with local leadership and wraparound approaches produce compounding benefits. They will address immediate needs while strengthening long-term market stability. They support the most vulnerable population while improving affordability dynamics for the broader community.

● (1610)

[*Translation*]

The global economy has recently undergone a shift that has profoundly transformed the traditional world order. Canada can no longer count on its most important trading relationship. Because of that, we are building our capacity here at home. We are going to build stronger relationships across all levels of government, including municipal, provincial and territorial governments and with our indigenous partners. We are making strategic investments to build a stronger, more sustainable and more resilient economy. We are working to cut red tape, eliminate internal trade barriers and sign new agreements that will stimulate the local economy. As a Crown corporation, Build Canada Homes will be funded by the initial \$13-billion envelope announced in budget 2025.

[*English*]

The Build Canada Homes act proposes to establish Build Canada Homes as a Crown corporation. The legislation would provide the transitional provisions necessary to move from the existing special operating agency to a Crown corporation. This will allow it to move faster and more efficiently in providing and delivering housing across the board, whether it be in the province of Ontario or across Canada.

We would also streamline and strengthen federal efforts and help scale up the supply of affordable housing across the country. The transfer of key elements from Canada Lands Company Limited to Build Canada Homes is an important step in developing and building housing on public lands.

This means Build Canada Homes would be equipped with the tools and the authorities to take a leading role in the planning, development and construction of housing on public lands. This would also include the land holdings of Canada Lands Company Limited. It would position Build Canada Homes to streamline construction on public lands.

Budget 2025 already announced an initial investment of \$13 billion over five years. Of this amount, there is a capital contribution of \$1.5 billion to Canada Lands Company Limited. This funding will support the direct construction of up to 4,000 new homes that will remain publicly owned over the long term. This marks a strategic shift in how public lands and development expertise are mobilized to accelerate the supply of affordable housing across the country.

Build Canada Homes will develop parcels at six Canada Lands Company Limited sites in Dartmouth, Longueuil, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg and Edmonton. A direct build approach will be used for the construction of these affordable, mixed-income communities. This is one example of how Build Canada Homes will work to improve the availability of affordable housing for those who have been priced out of the market.

Build Canada Homes will also look for ways to maximize affordability as much as possible. We will leverage a mixed-market approach. Build Canada Homes will also help unlock new sources of private capital and create more housing supply across the board. It will ensure that housing remains financially viable and affordable for the long term. The homes will enable long-term affordability through continued public ownership, and the newbuilds will leverage modern methods of construction. This includes prefabrication, modular building and mass timber to speed up construction and take advantage of Canadian technology and materials.

Earlier, the minister also talked about how construction will go on all year long. Last year, during the summer, my colleagues and I had our caucus retreat in Edmonton. We were able to visit many start-ups that are doing modular work using AI. They are working with people who are in the sector, in apprenticeships, and they are using AI as a tool that can also build homes in a very fast way.

We are doing work around removing barriers across Canada. If we think about a modular home that has to move from one area to another, maybe more start-ups will be interested in modular work. Also, with the barriers that we are removing, there is the possibility of much money to be made across the board and much expertise to be shared among the different provinces.

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I also had a chance to visit one of these companies in my backyard of southwestern Ontario, near Windsor. I saw how the technology is already there, and it is prepared. As the minister said, we want to build all year long. This is some of the technology and innovation that we could be using to make sure that Canadians are still employed and are able to build homes and get the homes they need, at scale and fast.

The Build Canada Homes act would be a major milestone in the government's plan to build more homes in a fast way and to help ensure that every Canadian can have a place to call home that they can afford. Build Canada Homes is becoming a Crown corporation to give it the operational independence, the governance and the flexibility needed to deliver affordable housing while remaining accountable to Parliament.

The legislation would also enable Build Canada Homes to leverage Canada Lands Company Limited's land holdings and development expertise, along with its own flexible financial tools. It would provide a streamlined approach to building on public lands. The Build Canada Homes act and the transfer of the land holdings and development experience from Canada Lands Company Limited to Build Canada Homes would accelerate the delivery of affordable housing across the country, contrary to what many colleagues have been commenting here.

Moving forward with this legislation means that the Government of Canada would be better positioned to use all the tools that it has at its disposal to ensure that Canadians can have the homes they need. The federal government would implement new ideas and take an innovative approach to building housing across the country.

Through this act, the federal government would put public lands to good use by building thousands of new affordable homes. Supportive housing, in particular, reflects this dual benefit. It provides stability and dignity for individuals facing complex challenges, reduces strain on emergency systems, improves community outcomes and contributes to the overall housing supply, which helps moderate market pressures.

• (1615)

The Build Canada Homes act would build precisely on this model of coordinated, enabling leadership. By strengthening financing tools, it would allow more projects to proceed with certainty. Every Canadian deserves a place to call home, and the Build Canada Homes act would help to build a strong Canada. It would do exactly what we promised on the campaign trail in April 2025.

I look forward to taking questions from my colleagues.

Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I noted that my hon. colleague mentioned some great things going on in the city of London. It is important for us to congratulate Mayor Morgan and his council for some of the things they have done to get housing built faster in that city. What they have focused on is streamlining the process, speeding up approvals and zoning as of right, so people do not have to go through the rezoning process. Interestingly enough, the Liberals did not need Build Canada Homes to do that. They did it already and are getting the job done.

I am wondering if the member can explain to the House specifically why Build Canada Homes is required and why the things that

they wanted to do could not have been done by the Canada Lands Company, which is a federal Crown corporation; the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which was the first Crown corporation; or maybe even the department. What specifically about the fourth federal housing agency is so crucially important, if London can get it right?

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I do not think the member is aware that I sat on council with Mayor Morgan. In 2018, when the City of London, for the first time, had the opportunity to partner with the federal government to work through the national housing strategy, we worked directly with the federal government. As a member of Parliament, I have had the chance to work directly with the municipality of London to ensure that housing can be built fast.

Yes, the City of London has leveraged many federal dollars to be able to provide affordable housing across the board, and it will continue to do so. I do not think the member has had a conversation with Mayor Morgan about this, because he would not have made the same comments he made today.

Scott Aitchison: I know him very well. I talk to him all the time.

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga: Mr. Speaker, the member would not have made the same comments, because the mayor was here last week, talking about the needs in London and the need for us to continue to invest, especially in wraparound services that are needed in our city and that leaders across the board have identified as an issue that they want to work together with all levels of government to address. I am not sure—

• (1620)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Questions and comments, the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, housing is under Quebec's jurisdiction. Local governments, like the Quebec National Assembly or the municipalities, are in the best position to know the housing needs of their population.

Now, the government is going to create a new, centralizing entity that will complicate new agreements. This was apparent in the last one that we received in January. There were delays of two to three years. In the end, Quebec received less than its share, a situation that was condemned by the municipalities.

Would my colleague be willing to allow at least one exemption for Quebec, to respect its jurisdictions, such as a right to opt out with full compensation?

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Hon. Arielle Kayabaga: Mr. Speaker, I already answered that question to some extent in my speech. We are drawing on federal leadership to build houses as quickly as possible and remove all these obstacles. I did mention that we are working with municipalities and provinces. No province will be excluded from our discussions or our work.

We campaigned on this issue and Canadians gave us a mandate to implement this program. The program we are implementing will help increase construction, not only across the country, but also in Quebec.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as with my colleague's riding, Moncton—Dieppe continues to see the issue of housing affordability and availability as a top priority.

I wonder if my hon. colleague could elaborate on the importance of ensuring that the Build Canada Homes program provides very affordable housing for people who are less well off.

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question was well put.

As I said before, with Build Canada Homes, we will be able to build like never before. In his speech earlier, the minister said that we would even be able to build year-round. The only way to do that in a country like Canada, where it is winter half the year, is to innovate and use the tools at our disposal to build homes like never before.

To answer her question, yes, absolutely, I do think it is important. Both of our communities need this housing, as do all communities across Canada. It is important to say that we are going to use all the tools at our disposal, including Canadian innovation.

[*English*]

Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did a bit of a deep dive on Build Canada Homes. It seems like a noble idea to build homes. The people across the way say they are going to build at a speed that we have never seen before.

Build Canada Homes was launched in September of 2025. Six months later, according to Build Canada Homes, not one home has been completed. Why is that?

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the Conservatives truly believe in building homes for Canadians. One minute they are blaming the Government of Canada for homes that are not being built, and in another minute, they are blaming the Government of Canada for helping Canadians to build homes.

Earlier, we talked about the number of homes that are already on the go. Shovels are in the ground. I am not sure if the member has been able to see how homes are built and what the procedures are. I would invite him to come to my riding to see some of the shovels that are in the ground and how the process goes, to the point where people can actually move in.

[*Translation*]

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba (Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so happy to have heard my colleague's speech clearly explaining why she supports Build Canada Homes. Can my colleague tell us specifically how Build Canada Homes

will improve access to housing for families? What impact will that have on our communities?

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's question.

Earlier, I shared an example of a project that I have seen firsthand, from the start, from the time the first shovels hit the ground. I was recently invited by the residents who live in that building to their Black History Month celebration. When I saw the dignity that long-term housing gave these people, it really made me forget about all the discussions and arguments that we have in the House. It made me forget all the numbers we discuss, whether we are talking about dollars or using other jargon to talk about people who need a home. That is what Build Canada Homes aims to do, and that is what Build Canada Homes will continue to do.

● (1625)

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to say something in connection with Build Canada Homes.

The program's implementation was somewhat chaotic. The government wanted to simply sweep away what was there, but in my home region of Abitibi—Témiscamingue, that could have had serious consequences. A women's shelter with confirmed funding was put on hold for months. The very survival of this project was hanging in the balance. What is more, when it was approved, we had to fight for it, I had to call on my colleagues, and we had to push for it.

There were so many contradictory responses from the minister's office and various other sources. Is all this confusion normal, considering women's safety could be jeopardized while we try to secure political will for Build Canada Homes? I have a lot of questions. Where are we headed with this?

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

I am not very familiar with the issue he is talking about. If that is the case and they went through all that, it is absolutely unacceptable, of course. I would ask my colleague to send us more information about this case so that we can help him and put him in touch with our teams so that they can resolve this issue.

[*English*]

Jonathan Rowe (Terra Nova—The Peninsulas, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when our Prime Minister was its chair, Brookfield Asset Management acquired a company called Modulaire.

I am curious if the member across the way could commit to whether the Liberal government plans on using Modulaire or will pledge to not use Modulaire to avoid a conflict of interest.

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga: Mr. Speaker, I am left with the same feeling as I am not sure if Conservatives want to build homes for Canadians. We are putting legislation forward.

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Instead of constantly focusing on character assassination, maybe Conservatives could just vote for the legislation so we can build homes for Canadians.

[*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 Stormont—Dundas—Glengarry, Automotive Industry; the hon. member for Yellowhead, The Economy.

[*English*]

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for London—Fanshawe.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-20, an act respecting the establishment of Build Canada Homes.

Before entering the House, I worked in real estate as a sales agent, a broker and a coach to other brokers across the country. In those roles, I worked directly with builders, real estate developers and municipalities, while also working with first-time homebuyers, seniors who are downsizing, families living through different stages of life, buyers and sellers navigating changing and challenging market conditions, and agents and brokers working in changing markets. I have studied markets, watched trends, analyzed statistics and translated that information for real estate professionals as they have practised in their professions. As a result, I intimately understand how the supply of housing, regulatory costs and policy decisions shape the market in very tangible ways.

Housing policy at all levels of government is extremely important, and the results of these policies determine the success of our communities, whether families can build stability and grow net worth and whether young people can see a future in the areas where they live.

Let me start by saying that Conservatives support building more homes, and we support increasing supply because, most importantly, we support helping Canadians achieve home ownership and restoring their hope for home ownership. We know that home ownership lays a foundation for long-term stability and growth. Building equity through home ownership increases people's net worth while gaining a tangible asset that can appreciate over time. Beyond the financial benefits, owning a home also creates a sense of security, pride, freedom and control over one's future.

While we support building more homes as currently drafted, we cannot support Bill C-20. Canadians want urgency and ambition in housing policy. We share that urgency, but it must be matched with measurable outcomes. It must also reduce barriers to construction while also increasing more supply that is attached to ownership. In addition, builders across the country are asking for less government in the building process, not more, and we recognize that the only way we can build affordable housing to scale in this country is by limiting the role of government in the homebuilding process, not adding more. Canadians, rightfully, have a strong desire for home ownership, but that dream is slipping further out of reach.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Realtors states, "Homeownership is the cornerstone of community stability, eco-

nomie prosperity, and personal security. In Newfoundland and Labrador, this aspiration has long been within reach, with our province consistently reporting some of the highest rates of homeownership in Canada. It's a reflection of our deep-rooted values: self-reliance, pride of place, and long-term investment in our families and neighbourhoods. But today, that dream is under growing threat. Challenges around housing supply, rising costs, and affordability are eroding access to ownership for many hardworking residents. If we wish to preserve this legacy and ensure future generations can share in the security and opportunity of owning a home, decisive action is needed from all levels of government."

Across the country, 88% of Canadians under 45 say they would like to own a home one day, yet only 29% believe that they will be able to, while 66% of Canadians say that affordability in their community has worsened, and 62% of Canadians believe current plans will have little or no impact. When people lose confidence that their country can solve basic affordability, they lose hope for their future.

To restore that hope and to bring balance to housing supply, we know that housing starts must increase substantially, and current projections suggest housing starts could fall to roughly 212,000 annually within the next few years, far below what CMHC says is required to restore affordability. Most important, CMHC has also indicated that approximately 75% of the additional housing needed over the next decade must be intended for ownership, and if policy tools do not address that reality, the gap will persist.

Across Newfoundland and Labrador, we are experiencing record low inventory levels, which we have not witnessed since the post-World War II era. The supply of housing on NLAR's MLS system has been chronically low for four years. NLAR states that supply and demand are completely out of balance and, as a result, housing values have climbed by over 45%. In January 2020, the MLS home price index benchmark single-family home price in St. John's was \$276,000. That has risen to \$411,000 today, an increase of 48.9%, and the cost of new construction continues to grow. Inventory levels are at multidecade lows, and active listings have declined sharply. In many cases they are the lowest we have seen in more than 15 to 20 years, leaving far fewer homes available relative to demand.

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• (1630)

In 2025, active listings in the province fell by nearly 22% compared to the previous year, and months-of-inventory figures remain well below long-term averages, signalling an exceptionally tight market. This lack of supply not only fuels upward price pressures, but also makes it harder for first-time homebuyers and young families in the province to put down roots and stay in the province. Addressing this supply imbalance must be a priority.

This is why the federal government's focus matters. CREA points out that governments must use existing levers to unlock supply where it is blocked. That means aligning infrastructure funding and federal housing programs with zoning modernization, reducing development charges, having faster permitting and measurable delivery expectations, and focusing on the barriers that stop builders from building and families from buying. That is not another housing bureaucracy. It is also a collaborative approach because it respects the roles of provinces and municipalities while insisting that federal dollars deliver real results.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, residential construction is closely tied to our economy, which is vital to the survival of our communities. According to the Canadian Home Builders Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, residential construction supports nearly 9,700 jobs in our province and generates approximately \$712 million in wages each year. It represents roughly \$1.9 billion in total investment.

In Corner Brook and surrounding areas, residential construction supports 481 jobs and represents approximately \$93 million in total investment. Housing is one of the most important economic drivers in our region. When homebuilding slows, the impact is not confined to one sector; it affects trades people, suppliers, transport, small businesses and local communities.

Vacancy rates remain tight in parts of Newfoundland and Labrador, and rental costs have risen significantly since 2020. Employers in western Newfoundland tell me that housing shortages are limiting recruitment.

Rent is directly tied to housing costs. When development charges and construction costs rise, rents follow. Even in Newfoundland and Labrador, families are being priced out of rental housing, and that pressure spreads into every part of daily life.

This is why Conservatives are so focused on outcomes and accountability. Instead of a plan to build homes, Build Canada Homes would be a fourth housing bureaucracy delivering paycheques to bureaucrats. It is far from building at generational speeds, as it took nearly a year to introduce legislation that would still build no homes.

Let us not soon forget that the government promised 500,000 homes per year and to double the pace of home construction. Those are their words, not ours. The latest Statistics Canada numbers show that we are not just building fewer homes; we are permitting fewer too. The Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates that this program will deliver roughly 5,000 homes, which is about 1% of the promise. There are no binding build targets written into the law, no enforceable timelines and no accountability if these targets are

missed. Bill C-20 would expand administration without guaranteeing delivery.

When Canadians are struggling to afford a home, they cannot afford more layers of process. The Build Canada Homes plan to build social housing on federal lands is fine and important, but it will only create a fraction of the supply Canada needs, and it would not meaningfully address ownership supply. If the ownership market remains constrained, prices will remain high, and the pressure will push down on renters and first-time homebuyers alike. That is why policy focused on the ownership share of new supply matters and why results matter.

In Newfoundland and Labrador and across Canada, home ownership remains the primary wealth-building tool for most families. It represents stability, opportunity and intergenerational security. Canadians deserve housing policy that is focused on results and prices that they can afford to restore the hope of home ownership and the promise of a bright future. This is why Conservatives are serious about restoring affordability.

We must focus on meaningful measures to increase the supply of homes for ownership. We can do that by tying infrastructure funding to measurable housing completion, reducing unnecessary regulatory costs that add thousands of dollars to the price of a home and ending the capital gains tax on reinvestment in new housing in Canada to unlock billions of dollars of investment in the country's homebuilding sector.

Conservatives are opposed to introducing further bureaucratic red tape in the housing sector, as it would further block development, increase the cost of government and not help solve the slow approval process. Builders across the country are asking for less government in the homebuilding process, not more, and we need more overall supply, which will bring prices down and make homes affordable for all Canadians.

Points of Order

• (1635)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed in the Conservative approach, which has been consistent since the days when the leader of the Conservative Party was the minister responsible for housing in Canada, and he did virtually nothing. The record would likely show that he was the biggest disaster when it comes to housing in Canada. It may even be part of why we are in this situation today, and nothing has changed. The far right of the Conservative Party says, “Get out of the way. The Government of Canada has no role to play in housing.”

Does the member not recognize that provinces, territories, municipalities, indigenous communities and many other stakeholders want the national government to be more proactive on housing? Why is the Conservative Party so far to the right in ignoring the needs of Canadians?

Carol Anstey: Mr. Speaker, it never ceases to amaze me that whenever we bring forward real, tangible solutions that Canadians and stakeholder groups are bringing forward to us, the member opposite hurls insults about the last Conservative government from 10 years ago. Canadians want us to be serious. They want us to act like adults and have a real conversation about this crisis within the country. They do not want to look in the rear-view mirror; they want to look forward. They believe we can solve this issue, and I do not want to play partisan politics with the member opposite. I would rather have an adult conversation and provide real solutions for Canadians, because that is what they expect of us.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we in the Bloc Québécois share my colleague's concerns about the centralizing and bureaucratic nature of Build Canada Homes. Of course we want housing to be built and we want the federal government to invest.

I will give an example. There is a program from the Quebec government in my riding, but the situation is somewhat similar. The cost of modular homes was calculated, and the same rule was applied all across Quebec. However, the government did not take into account the fact that, in the Gaspé, house parts need to be delivered. As a result, everyone who was accepted for the program is now short on funds to finance the construction.

Could my colleague comment on the fact that the bill seeks to give Build Canada Homes the power to carry out construction work? Is there not once again a risk that Ottawa will impose a one-size-fits-all solution and think it can oversee housing construction?

• (1640)

[*English*]

Carol Anstey: Mr. Speaker, I feel like we see this in a lot of the Liberals' policy, their standing in the ivory tower and wanting to take credit for all kinds of things that they never have anything to do with. We need to respect municipalities and provinces and the solutions they bring forward. I think that is the best approach. These overarching, large federal policies oftentimes do not make sense, and I definitely feel that in my part of the country, where I

come from. I do not believe that is effective policy that manages the diverse country we live in.

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could comment a little more on this adding of bureaucracy. We already have the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, we have the Canada Lands Company, and we have the first-time homebuyers' programs. We have a number of federal government programs in place already.

What we said during the election was that it was oftentimes municipalities that were standing in the way. I am wondering if the member has heard anything from the government on what it is going to do to incentivize municipalities to get out of the way so we can build more homes in this country.

Carol Anstey: Mr. Speaker, that is a great point, and I think that is consistently what we have been saying about Bill C-20. It never ceases to amaze me that more bureaucracy is, somehow, going to get solved by another housing bureaucracy. In Newfoundland and Labrador, we need modernization at the provincial level and at many of the municipal levels. I think if we tied federal infrastructure dollars, those conversations could start to happen. There could be collaboration without adding all kinds of expenditure to the taxpayer. I think that would be a much better approach.

Even CMHC says we should use existing levers. It is not just us but people who understand this issue intimately. I absolutely agree with the comments that my colleague has made on that issue.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN BILL C-2 AND BILL C-12

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to respond to two points of order raised in the previous sitting week by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands and the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes with respect to the consideration of Bill C-2, the strong borders act, in the context of Bill C-12, the strengthening Canada's immigration system and borders act.

Both members allege that Bill C-2 cannot proceed, on the basis that Bill C-12, which has been passed by the House, represents a similar question.

As the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes stated in his intervention, with respect to the rule governing a similar question:

This rule is dependent upon the principle which forbids the same question from being decided in the House twice within the same session. Although two similar or identical motions or bills may appear in the Notice Paper, only one motion or one bill may be proceeded with. Thus, if a decision is taken by the House on the first bill [or motion]...then the other similar or identical...[motion] may not be proceeded with.

However, this does not address what constitutes a substantially similar question.

On February 18, 2021, the Speaker ruled on this matter in the case of Bill C-13 and Bill C-218. He stated:

This makes clear that if...[both] bills are similar, without being substantially... [similar], both may be placed on notice, introduced and given first reading, and both could even be debated at second reading, provided that the House has not taken a decision with respect to either of them.

He went on to state:

In adopting Bill C-218 at second reading, the House has agreed to the principle of the bill and consequently has agreed to repealing the portion of the Criminal Code that deals with sports betting.... In fact, the Chair notes that other avenues would be open to the House to achieve those same ends, such as through amendments proposed to Bill C-218 during the committee's study. As a consequence, the Chair has difficulty seeing how the House could now move forward with Bill C-13 after it has adopted the larger principle of repealing the very portion of the Criminal Code that Bill C-13 seeks to amend.

This is the clearest ruling that identifies what constitutes a substantially similar question. The precedent just mentioned, however, is not in any way analogous to the situation with Bill C-12 and Bill C-2. Bill C-12 has a much narrower scope than Bill C-2.

In fact, of the parts contained in Bill C-2, the following parts were not included in Bill C-12.

Part 4 amends the Canada Post Corporation Act to permit the demand, seizure, detention or retention of anything in the course of post only in accordance with an act of Parliament. It also amends the act to expand the Canada Post Corporation's authority to open mail in certain circumstances to include the authority to open letters.

Part 11 amends the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act to prohibit certain entities from accepting cash deposits from third parties and certain persons or entities from accepting cash payments, donations or deposits of \$10,000 or more.

Part 14 modernizes certain provisions respecting the timely gathering and production of data and information during an investigation. It amends the Criminal Code to, among other things, facilitate access to basic information that will assist in the investigation of federal offences through an information demand or a judicial production order to persons who provide services to the public. It also amends the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act to facilitate access to basic information that will assist the Canadian Security Intelligence Service in the performance of its duties and functions under section 12 or 16 of that act through information demands given to persons or entities that provide services to the public.

Part 15 of Bill C-2 enacts the Supporting Authorized Access to Information Act, which establishes a framework for ensuring that electronic service providers can facilitate the exercise, by authorized persons, of authorities to access information conferred under the Criminal Code or the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act.

• (1645)

Part 16 amends the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act to permit a person or entity referred to in section 5 of that act to collect and use an individual's personal information where the information is disclosed to the person or entity

Points of Order

by a government department, institution or agency or law enforcement agency, and the collection and use are for the purpose of detecting or deterring money laundering, terrorist activity financing or sanctions evasion or for a consistent purpose.

Members, and the Speaker, will note that there are many more elements and, by virtue of these additional measures, a much broader scope in Bill C-2. Since Bill C-2 has not come to a vote at second reading, there is no procedural obstacle to the progression of Bill C-12 in the House. I will return to this issue in a few moments.

Moreover, the rule that governs what constitutes a substantially similar bill or motion is that the motion or bill must seek to accomplish the same objective by the same means. This is the basis of the Speaker's ruling on February 18, 2021, on sports betting.

Since Bill C-2 and Bill C-12 do not seek to accomplish the same objectives by the same means, the rule governing substantially similar bills does not apply. If this rule was as strict as the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands and the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes allege, then it would have been impossible for the House to consider 15 opposition day motions from the Conservative Party on the carbon tax in the previous Parliament. Alas, the rule is not interpreted in the manner they suggest.

Bill C-2 and Bill C-12 do contain some similar elements, but there is a great deal of difference in their composition. Therefore, the question on either of these two bills would be a substantially different question upon which the House would make decisions.

There have been points of order in the past that the same question rule applied where it clearly did not. For example, some budget implementation bills contained items of Private Members' Business that had been voted on at second reading. This did not prevent the budget bills from advancing.

In conclusion, the substantially similar question rule has been applied by Speakers with restraint and has only been invoked in specific situations where the two items were substantially similar in the objectives they sought to achieve in a very similar, if not identical, manner.

• (1650)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his intervention. The Chair will take it under advisement.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

*Government Orders***BUILD CANADA HOMES ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-20, An Act respecting the establishment of Build Canada Homes, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a couple in their thirties here in London both work hard. They did what they were told to do. They saved. They planned. They imagined buying a home and starting a family in the city where they grew up. However, over the past several years, home prices surged far beyond what they could realistically keep up with. The down payment required moved further and further out of reach. The life they pictured for themselves, a home, stability and children growing up near grandparents, began to feel uncertain. They are not asking for special treatment. They are asking for a fair shot.

The government's own housing agency, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, in its latest housing market outlook, projects that prices are expected to continue rising in the years ahead because we are not building enough homes to meet demand. That is the reality facing families in London, and that is what this bill must address. The housing crisis did not happen because the Liberal government failed to expand its role in housing enough. It happened because housing supply did not keep pace with the surge in demand created by government policy.

Over the last decade, the government dramatically increased immigration levels without ensuring that the housing supply could keep up. The result was predictable: Demand surged, supply lagged and prices were pushed beyond the reach of young Canadians. Housing capacity was never aligned with immigration policy. This is a supply and demand problem driven by inadequate housing construction and immigration levels that were never aligned with housing capacity. Any economist will tell us that what happens when demand rises while supply lags behind is that prices go up.

On top of that, the cost of building has risen sharply across the country. According to the Canadian Home Builders' Association, government taxes and regulatory costs now make up nearly one-third of the price of a new home. That was not always the case. Over the last 25 years, those taxes and regulatory costs have increased by more than 700%. Development charges, fees and regulatory levies are not marginal add-ons. In many communities, they represent a substantial portion of the final sale price before a family ever receives the keys.

Layer upon layer of government-imposed costs and approval delays are built directly into what buyers are forced to pay. Builders are telling us clearly that current cost pressures and regulatory burdens are making it harder, not easier, to bring new homes to market. Housing starts are projected to decline in the coming years, and the share of homes intended for ownership has fallen.

For years, Conservatives warned that the housing market was heading in the wrong direction. When the Liberals finally acknowledged that there was a housing crisis, their default response, under the previous prime minister and with the support of the NDP, was the same response we have seen time and again when challenges arise. It was to expand the role of government, with more programs, more spending and more federal control. However, affordability de-

clined, home ownership fell and confidence was eroded. Canadians do not need more announcements; they need more homes.

Now we are presented with Bill C-20. At its core, this legislation would significantly expand the role of the federal government by turning it into a direct participant in the housing market, acting much like a national developer with broad authority to finance, acquire and manage housing projects. Instead of focusing on removing barriers so that builders can build, it places the government deeper into the business of building itself. This approach is not unique. We are hearing similar arguments from voices within the NDP leadership race, suggesting that government should enter other sectors as well, whether that is grocery stores, banking or telecommunications. It reflects a growing faith that whenever a market struggles, the answer is for government to take over.

After seeing first-hand how overwhelmed and inefficient parts of the federal system can be, I can tell members that this faith is misplaced. Since I took office, our constituency office has helped thousands of residents navigate basic federal services, many of whom come to us as a last resort after being unable to get timely answers or assistance through the system itself.

That experience has made one thing clear: Expanding the size of government does not improve its performance. Canadians do not need government-run grocery chains, and they certainly do not need government acting as a national housing developer. Canadians need conditions that allow supply to increase, competition to work and costs to come down.

The central question is this: Will expanding the federal government's role as a developer lower the cost of building homes in London and increase supply at the scale we need?

• (1655)

The Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates that Build Canada Homes will add roughly 5,000 homes per year. The minister has confirmed there are no top-line production targets set. Meanwhile, the government's own outlook projects that housing starts will decline over the next several years.

There is a gap between rhetoric and results. When something is not working, adding another layer does not fix the underlying problem. After nearly three decades working in information technology, something I learned first-hand is that when a system fails, it is not solved by adding more complexity. One needs to troubleshoot what is broken, remove the bottlenecks, correct the misalignment and then rebuild it so that it works. That mindset is why I entered public service. What fixes the problem starts with identifying what is actually broken and then fixing it. Conservatives want to work with anyone in the House to restore affordability, but that has to start with an honest look into why young Canadians have been priced out of home ownership.

That begins with first principles. If housing is unaffordable because supply is constrained and costs are inflated by policy, then the solution must be to remove those constraints and reduce those costs. Federal tools should be used to align incentives with results. Infrastructure funding can be tied to measurable increases in housing approval so that municipalities are encouraged to speed up permitting and reduce unnecessary obstacles. Development charges and other local levies that are driving up final sale prices must be addressed. That goal should be simple. When more houses are approved and barriers come down, communities see tangible benefits.

At the federal level, tax policy also matters. Reducing the GST on new homes would directly lower the cost to buyers and improve project viability for builders. Unlocking private capital and removing disincentives to reinvest in housing would allow the market to respond at scale. Affordability is not only about the price of a home but also about the ability to save for one. When families face rising daily expenses driven by punishing policies such as the industrial carbon tax, it becomes harder and harder to put money aside for a down payment. High energy, transportation and input costs ripple through the economy and the cost of building as well. Restoring affordability means tackling both sides of the equation, increasing supply and lowering the policy-driven costs that make homes and everyday life more expensive.

Housing is too important for structural experiments that do not confront the underlying drivers of unaffordability. The young couple in London does not care which department holds the file. They care about whether they can put down roots, plan for the future and raise their children in the city they love. Let us fix what is actually broken. Let us remove the barriers holding back supply. Let us deliver results, not just rhetoric, because families in London deserve more than another expansion of federal control over housing. They deserve a home.

Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think we are talking about two different things here. The member opposite mentioned the need to speed up housing writ large and to address a lot of the barriers that are at the municipal level. In fact, we have programs that are doing just that. One called the housing accelerator fund is helping municipalities speed up their permitting systems, and I have seen its impact across my riding.

Today, we are talking about Build Canada Homes, which is an agency to build below-market units. We have a major need for this right across the country. I know the leader of the official opposition has called this Soviet-style housing, which he does not support, but

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this agency is meant for things like supportive or transitional housing for low-income folks.

I am wondering if the member agrees that this is a need across the country and something that the federal government should be involved in supporting.

• (1700)

Kurt Holman: Mr. Speaker, what is interesting is that I feel that wanting housing built and supporting this bill are also two different things. This bill would expand the federal government into the role of a national developer. It would not reduce development charges. It would not speed up approvals. It would not align immigration with housing capacity. It would not lower the tax burden on new homes.

If the problem is cost and supply, expanding government control does not fix what is broken. We are ready to work with real supply reforms. This bill is not that.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to take a moment to congratulate the Citadelles de Rouyn-Noranda on making it to the finals of the Quebec International Pee-Wee Hockey Tournament. It was a remarkable achievement. Indeed, my nephew Renaud was among those who participated in the tournament. I want to tell everyone that I am very proud. It was a heartbreaking overtime loss, just like Team Canada. Still, it is an experience that makes us proud and that will inspire the youth of Rouyn-Noranda.

As for Build Canada Homes, there is something that still baffles me. It is the federal government's stubborn determination to build only in already populated areas where housing already exists. These programs are not going out to the regions. There is nothing in the bill that gives me the sense that there is a desire to decentralize and move closer to rural regions. Build Canada Homes has so many criteria that, at the end of the day, decision-making is still centralized. The government is not connecting with people's needs, particularly in rural areas.

Is my colleague concerned about that too?

[*English*]

Kurt Holman: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member opposite's family celebrating the win in Quebec.

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With regard to the bill, the government absolutely has a role. The government sets tax policy, controls immigration levels, transfers infrastructure funding and sets regulatory frameworks. The question is not whether the government acts. It is whether the government acts in ways that remove barriers or add new layers. We believe a government should remove obstacles to building, not compete with builders.

Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to draw to the attention of my colleague that Build Canada Homes is a big bureaucratic program. It has been around for six months and, according to its own website, it has not finished one single home.

I am wondering what my colleague would suggest as the Conservative solution to building houses without this huge bureaucracy surrounding it.

Kurt Holman: Mr. Speaker, when nearly one-third of the cost of a new home now comes from government taxes and regulatory costs and those costs have increased by more than 700% over 25 years, we cannot ignore the structural drivers of unaffordability. Reducing the GST on new homes, aligning infrastructure funding with approvals and removing policy-driven barriers would allow builders to build at scale. We want more homes. We want to make it easier and more affordable to build them. That is how we restore affordability for young families in London and across Canada.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to what I believe is a really important issue. One of the things I really like about this issue is that it clearly demonstrates the contrast between the Conservative Party of Canada and where it is on the political spectrum today, and the Government of Canada, the Liberal caucus, as we develop, promote and encourage good, sound public policy.

That is what Bill C-20 is all about. It is sound public policy. Canadians would benefit from the passage of Bill C-20. Listening to today's Conservative Party, a party that, as I have articulated in the past, is pretty far to the right, it is hard to imagine what Canada would look like today.

We have had Progressive Conservative prime ministers, from Diefenbaker to Brian Mulroney, who actually contributed to the building up of non-profit housing. There are literally tens of thousands of non-profit, affordable housing units across Canada that exist today because of the government, whether it was the federal government, provincial government or municipal government, and the efforts of indigenous communities. If it were not for that direct involvement, we would not have many aspects of affordable housing today.

If we were to follow the leader of the Conservative Party, I suspect we would have very few housing co-ops in Canada today. People need to listen to what the Conservative members of today are actually saying. They like the slogan "Just get out of the way." They talk about it a lot.

I was criticized a bit earlier because I was reflecting too far in the past. The leader of the Conservative Party previously sat in the government caucus and was the minister responsible for housing in Canada. That is when the leader of the Conservative Party had his

hands on the public purse. He was the one responsible for building non-profit housing and supporting it.

Six houses were built in total. It was amazingly deficient, if I can put it that way. He was arguably the worst minister responsible for housing in Canadian history. Now he is the leader of the Conservative Party and has convinced the far right that the best way the Conservatives can help Canadians on the housing file is to just tell the Liberals to get out of the way.

I have talked to mayors, including the mayor of Winnipeg. I have talked to the premier of the province of Manitoba and to many others stakeholders and indigenous leaders. I can say that they want the federal government to be involved in housing. This should be of no surprise to anyone who is following the debate today with regard to Bill C-20. This is something that has been important from day one.

On April 28, 2025, Canadians elected a new Prime Minister and a new government. I believe we had over 70 new Liberal members of Parliament, more than any other political party. Our new Prime Minister, along with the cabinet, brought forward a throne speech. Less than a month after the election, a throne speech was delivered to Parliament by the King of Canada, because there was a great deal of concern in regard to Canadian sovereignty, members will recall. I will not get into that aspect of the debate, but the King was here, and he delivered a historical throne speech.

• (1705)

I would like to quote part of the throne speech just to remind all members exactly what was said within a month of our new Prime Minister's assuming his role after the election:

...the Government will undertake a series of measures to help double the rate of home building while creating an entirely new housing industry – using Canadian technology, Canadian skilled workers, and Canadian lumber. The Government will introduce measures to deliver affordable homes by creating Build Canada Homes. This mission-driven organization will act to accelerate the development of new affordable housing. It will invest in the growth of the prefabricated and modular housing industry. And it will provide significant financing to affordable home builders.

Members should really listen to this part here. This is what the King had to say: "The Government will introduce measures to deliver affordable homes by creating Build Canada Homes."

What are we talking about today? We are actually talking about Bill C-20, which is the build Canada homes act. We have a Prime Minister who is fulfilling an election platform campaign promise that was put into the throne speech delivered by the King, and today we have the legislation.

The Conservatives, true to form, according to the guru, the leader of the Conservative Party, do not believe there is any need for the federal government to get directly involved in housing. As a direct result, I would suggest that the Conservatives are wrong in the biggest way.

Where are the progressive or red Conservative Party members, the individuals who, I suggest, understand and appreciate that there is a role for the federal government? Surely to goodness they would recognize that Bill C-20 is a bill that would help Canadians in every region of our great nation, yet the far right continues to dominate the Conservative Party today. That is why Conservatives are opposing this legislation. I find that unfortunate, because the legislation itself has demonstrated very clearly that it can and would be effective.

We are talking about the establishment of a Crown corporation that, upon royal assent, has already been budgeted, I believe, at \$13 billion, which is already in the 2025 budget, so the money is there. Many of the stakeholders are very much aware of it and are eager to see Build Canada Homes fully up and running as a Crown corporation. A Crown corporation is good. It would then be at arm's length and would be more permanent. Members of the Bloc ask, "Well, is it going to be there into the future?" Having it be a Crown corporation, I think, would make a very powerful statement. I think it would have a greater ability to deliver on the needs of housing in Canada.

The Conservative Party, on the other hand, has made the determination that there is no need for the government to get engaged or involved. How does that compare to what we hear from the different stakeholders? I wonder, if we were to talk to some of the mayors, premiers, municipality leaders, rural communities, indigenous community leaders, or some of the purpose-driven, non-profit organizations that are looking for partners that want to develop plans to be able to provide low-income housing, what kind of consensus we would find.

• (1710)

I believe that the Prime Minister and the government got it right, because the stakeholders I just referenced, as a whole, understand and appreciate the impact that a Crown corporation could actually have on providing homes and making them more affordable. That is the reason, I would suggest, that today's Conservatives really need to revisit their positioning.

I have asked questions to the members opposite in terms of the issue of filibuster.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Someone said, "Why are you bringing up filibuster?" Mr. Speaker, I can tell the House that significant legislation has been held up by the Conservative Party because its members just do not want legislation to pass, even legislation they support. We passed bail reform legislation just a week ago, and they apparently supported that legislation. Bill C-20 is now before us, the Build Canada Homes act, and we are getting a very clear indication that the Conservatives are not going to support it. If they are not going to support it, I will pose this question to members opposite: Does that mean we can anticipate that they are going to filibuster this legislation too?

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, a member across the way said, "apparently". We will have to wait and see. Hopefully the

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Conservatives will recognize and allow legislation of this nature to, at the very least, get to the committee stage.

I am very interested in what my colleagues in the Bloc have to say about the legislation. With the legislation and some of the basic debate that has taken place already on it, the Bloc appears to at least be somewhat open to it, recognizing that the best way we can deliver the type of results that Canadians need today is to have the different levels of government and stakeholders working together in order to advance and deliver in a stronger and healthier way.

I would argue that provinces play an absolutely critical role, in many ways a leading role. We would no doubt see this through the creation of the new corporation. I suspect there is going to be a great deal of dialogue on the new corporation. I would like to think that organizations that are really strong on missions will say that they want to establish, for example, a housing co-op and look at how the Build Canada Homes corporation would actually be able to assist in facilitating, making dreams come true for some of the non-profit organizations that want to deliver affordable housing. I have always been a strong advocate of housing co-ops, because a housing co-op in a non-profit setting makes housing affordable, and one is not a tenant but a resident.

It is interesting that the Conservatives say, "Well, we already have CMHC, so just allow CMHC to do it." However, I do not think they fully understand what CMHC does. There is a focus, in regard to the free-market system, on providing insurance for back-up. Most people who are homeowners or are going to be homeowners need to get that insurance, which CMHC provides. There are other areas in which CMHC has done quite well over the years, such as providing stats and monitoring the industry as a whole.

Saying that we can just add something that is being proposed within the legislation tells me that the Conservatives do not necessarily want to see the type of success that the Prime Minister and the government are talking about when we talk about increasing the number of homes being built.

• (1715)

Taking a look at Canadian technology, how often do we hear about supporting modern manufacturing, factory-built homes, prefabrication and the potential growth within that industry? I think of it in terms of Canadian technology, as was mentioned in the throne speech. I think in terms of the workers who are working at plants rather than on site, building prefabricated homes.

These are the types of things that can make a tangible difference. These are the types of things that Build Canada Homes would be there to support and encourage, and they would turn dreams into reality. That would have a positive impact in terms of the issue of affordability, even in the open market system.

Build Canada Homes has an important role in terms of low-income housing and affordable housing; in providing supports for municipalities, provinces and indigenous communities; in looking at ways in which we have literally hundreds of non-profit organizations that have a key concern in regard to housing; and in bringing it all together and working so that Canada can continue to build on our non-profit housing stock.

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The lead on this, from the nation's perspective, is going to be taken by Build Canada Homes, the corporation that would be created by this legislation. Where do members think it is going to take place, if not there? If we really and truly believe that we need to look at ways we can dramatically increase the housing supply in certain sectors, encourage further growth, see more jobs created, take advantage of the Canadian technology that is there and use Canadian lumber and Canadian steel, these are all the types of things that are best handled through an arm's-length corporation, which this legislation would provide.

It is not just talk. A substantial amount of money has been allocated from the 2025 budget. A newly elected Prime Minister, a cabinet, a throne speech and 170 Liberal members of Parliament have recognized that this is a commitment that we have to make good on. Part of that infrastructure, in terms of the corporation, is already in place to a certain degree in different ways, so we will be able to make things happen quickly.

Someone might ask the question, "How many houses?" There have been thousands of homes, and that is in a relatively short period of time. I can encourage the Conservatives on the other side who are maybe a little more progressive than the far right, and maybe some of those red Tories, to think that the government can have good social public policy that would make a positive difference for all Canadians. Bill C-20 is one of those policies that would be good for Canada, and I would encourage the Conservatives to consider allowing it to pass into committee, so we can get it to the next stage as soon as possible.

• (1720)

David Bexte (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where to start. There are so many elements to what the hon. member across the way has discussed. I would like to just begin with the preamble that he recognizes again that I am right, and in fact probably far right, and more right than him.

I would ask the member opposite, if the government is so interested in collaborating and so interested in collaborative results and progress at speed, that its members actually consider talking to us ahead of time, before they start the drafting process, to get prior approval. They are fully in charge of the legislative agenda and the calendar. If they wanted to get more done, they could have had more sitting days.

I implore them to recognize that they are the guardians of the public purse. With the Parliamentary Budget Officer estimating that \$5.4 billion more is needed, where is the money going to come from?

• (1725)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my far right friend. I would go back to May 27. It was no secret. It was a throne speech. Every one of us heard what the government had to say. I quote right from the throne speech. They are talking about Bill C-20 here, but we did not know the bill number then. It reads, "The Government will introduce measures to deliver affordable homes by creating Build Canada Homes."

What is the name of the legislation? If we look on the screen, it says Bill C-20, second reading, Build Canada Homes act. All we

are doing is that we are fulfilling it. The member has had lots of time since the last federal election, almost a year, to provide all the input he wanted in terms of what he would have liked to see in the bill.

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague to tell me in what way this is not going to be a new entity that centralizes power and overrides Quebec's jurisdictions. It is always the same old story. Whenever a federal entity is involved, the government always tries to impose its requirements, which only draws out the process. Instead of speeding up housing construction, the government announces it.

We saw this before with the Canada housing infrastructure fund. An agreement was reached last January, after a two-year delay. Even the Fédération québécoise des municipalités called out the federal government for its determination to interfere and impose its will.

Quebec and the municipalities are the levels of government that know the population's real needs. The government had a different vision. Quebec is much more inclined toward the collective. There is nothing in this bill about social housing or co-operatives. At the very least, I think that warrants a "Quebec clause" so that Quebec—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I must interrupt the member to give the parliamentary secretary a chance to answer the question.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I really do believe that as a Crown corporation, Build Canada Homes will be not only something on paper as a resource tool, but it will have the financial means, and it will have individuals who make up the corporation with just the type of experience that is necessary in order to ensure that we are building more affordable homes.

Among many other things, I mentioned the issue of technology. There are stakeholders in literally every region of the country, whether it is Manitoba, Quebec, B.C. or wherever. I believe that, as a whole, those regional interests will see this Crown corporation as a valuable asset. I would not look at it as competing interests; I would see it as complementary, whether it is provinces, federal government or municipalities. All three levels of government play some role.

Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague often waxes lyrical on this iteration of the Conservative Party of Canada. The current Conservative Party of Canada seems to always want to be able to fit something on a bumper sticker. It is not big on nuance or depth. We saw an example of that not long ago, when the member for Sackville—Bedford—Preston put forward a bill to develop a national strategy for housing for young Canadians and the Conservatives voted against it.

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What does that say about the interest of the Conservative Party of Canada in making housing more affordable for young people through something that does not fit on a bumper sticker?

• (1730)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, my friend and colleague brings up a wonderful point, and it reinforces what I said about how far the Conservatives have gone. Their bumper-sticker answer is to get out of the way, but look at the cost of that. I will stay away from the bill we are talking about today, but rather look at the bill that was brought forward to the House for a vote. It was on a national strategy for housing for young people, and the Conservatives voted against it.

It is hard to imagine how far right the Conservatives have become that they are using “get out of the way” as a bumper sticker. I genuinely believe there are a lot of progressive-minded individuals within that caucus, red Tories or whatever it is we want to call them, who have to be feeling uncomfortable because the dominant right is winning the day.

David McKenzie (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite was commenting about the need for a new Crown corporation. I want to quote some helpful information I found on the Internet, which reads, “Helping deliver the Government of Canada’s commitment to make housing more affordable”. It sounds right in the neighbourhood. This organization “supports housing programs for people whose housing needs aren’t being met by the market.” This is right on the button again. Under “Housing programs”, it reads, “We deliver housing programs to increase housing supply, preserve stock and...contribute to affordable housing.” That is from the website of CMHC.

It seems to me that exactly what we are talking about here is another agency that would duplicate efforts already being made by this federal government agency. Perhaps the member could tell me—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I get it that the far right Conservative Party does not support Bill C-20. I will not have a hissy fit, to quote a member from across the way. There will be no hissy fit here.

My very first assignment, when I was first elected to the Manitoba legislature back in 1988, was as housing critic, and I argued even back then that housing was important. We met with individuals like Doug Martindale at the time and talked about it. We talked about how the federal government needed to play a role.

This new corporation, under this legislation, would make a positive difference in every region of our country. I would ask the Conservative Party members, even if you do not want to vote for it, to at the very least allow it to get to committee. Let us not filibuster some—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Order, please.

Again, I remind members to go through the Chair.

[*Translation*]

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Winnipeg North for yet another brief, but interesting, speech.

Earlier, my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île mentioned that it took the federal government two years to negotiate agreements with the Quebec government under the Canada housing infrastructure fund. By the time the agreement was finally signed, there was not enough money left in the fund to meet Quebec’s needs and give it its fair share.

This time, could the government get a head start, think ahead, be proactive and agree to set aside a certain amount for Quebec and to sign agreements more quickly? All it would take is a “Quebec clause” or a formal commitment by the government to negotiate an agreement with Quebec in good faith and quickly.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has demonstrated very well how quickly we want to move forward as a government in co-operation with and working with provinces, territories, indigenous communities and the different stakeholders on this particular file.

I was saddened when there was a provincial government in the province of Manitoba that did not act quickly enough on a lot of infrastructure, and I argued that we lost out. We need to have a team Canada approach to dealing with housing too, and I think it is quite possible.

Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

I am going to start by making sure that everybody is aware that I was a home builder in my previous life. I was a small home builder, but I still believe that I built more houses in 10 years than the government has built in 10 years.

Conservatives want to build homes. We do not want to build bureaucracy, whereas Bill C-20 would build bureaucracy and not homes. I think that is pretty clear. The government is great at building bureaucracies. I do not know how many bills have come to the House that have been all about bureaucracy, and this is just another one of them. This bill would establish a new Crown corporation on top of the existing ones. We already have the department, for one, and then there is CMHC and Canada Lands Company. Now there is this fourth organization called Build Canada Homes.

This would be an opportunity to give patronage appointments to good Liberal supporters and to funnel a lot of money into the pockets of good Liberal supporters. There would be an advisory council, and I am sure there would be lots of money funnelled to certain people through that. Of course, it would also allow a lot of money to be spent, which is the whole point of these bureaucracies. As we all know, the Liberals are very good at spending money, no matter what.

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The one thing missing from this act is an actual requirement to build homes. There is nothing in here about that; it is just about establishing the bureaucracy. We need somewhere around 500,000 homes a year to be built. Unfortunately, right now we are building about half that, and that number has been coming down. It was about 300,000 in 2021, and it just keeps getting lower. In my view, this bill would only reshuffle the chairs on the Liberal housing bureaucracy Titanic. It would not achieve any good result.

Why do new homes matter so much? We get a lot of economic prosperity through building houses, the labour put into houses and all the materials that are there. The other interesting thing about building new houses is that it creates more flexibility and more housing in the country. It does not matter if someone is building a house on the smaller scale or the affordable side, where somebody can move into that house. Someone can build on the expensive side as well, and people just keep moving up. Someone will move into that house, which will free up another house. No matter where a house is built, it adds capacity, and it is another house built in our country.

I want to talk today about the federal building code because it is an alternative plan. There are a lot of reasons why we are not building as many houses as we need to be and why houses are as expensive as they are in our country. The bill before us is a possible solution, which we all know is not going to work as it is a bureaucratic solution. I want to raise a real, practical solution, which is the building codes.

Right now, the codes update every five years, and they dictate how housing has to be built in our country. There is one consistency in building codes, which is that they always get more complicated, and with complexity comes cost. Every time a new building code rolls around, costs go up. That is just the reality of building codes. Some things are good, but many things are not, and it creates uncertainty for builders and consumers.

There is a government agency called the National Research Council that controls building codes. Once it creates a building code, the provinces have to adopt and use it. Cities also have the ability to modify codes and add things to them, which they are notoriously known for doing, and this creates even more complexity. It also creates a discontinuous set of rules across the country, even within a province. Even cities that are side by side can have different building requirements, making it extremely complicated for builders, and these add costs.

Right now we are working on the 2025 code. It has not yet been adopted, to my knowledge, anywhere in Canada, but it is being worked on. Codes used to be done based on common sense, but now activists have gotten involved. Whether it is somebody who is an activist for energy, weather or health, there are all kinds of activists getting involved in building codes, and the changes being made are not necessarily based on common sense anymore. Right now there is a fight between cities, provinces and the federal NRC on adopting the new building code because there are some issues.

The Canadian Home Builders' Association put out a policy position recently, and I want to read a bit from it:

When a code system becomes overloaded or unbalanced, it can however reduce sector productivity, undermine housing affordability, increase risk for builders and limit the ability of builders and renovators to deliver needed housing.

● (1735)

CHBA has observed that Canada's recently renewed building code development system is showing significant gaps and is advocating for a pause on all building code changes (as has been done in Australia for the same reasons) to restore the system, resolve outstanding issues, and ensure future code development supports safe homes, climate goals, affordability and housing objectives.

It goes on to say:

The high volume of new compliance areas and the high pace at which these significant subjects are being developed without national training or industry capacity support is not only impeding the federal priority to build 500,000 homes per year, it also leaves unfinished and often unclear provisions to builders and officials to solve in the field further reducing current levels of productivity.

It also makes a very important point that “building code changes have been driven by political mandates rather than technical evidence.” It goes on, stating, “Examples include operational [green-house gas] requirements, which were approved without any stated benefits and without recognition of known zero-emission technologies such as rooftop solar.”

CHBA is calling for a pause on implementing these building code changes until these unresolved issues are dealt with. That is pretty significant because it represents the ones who actually have to implement the housing we are trying to do in Canada, and they are the ones calling for a pause.

I will give members a couple of examples of this.

We all understand air conditioning. It is mandatory in the new building code. That means one cannot build a house in Canada if it does not have air conditioning at some level in a house. I can understand the reason for that, because we do not want to live in hot houses, but that is going to add \$3,000 to \$5,000 to the cost of every house. There are places in my province where one does not really need air conditioning. One can survive quite well without it.

That brings up the imbalance across our country. Trying to have a uniform set of standards across the country is difficult. Mandating this is not a good idea, in my opinion. A lot of customers will pay for it if they want it, and that is great. That is the way it should be. If one does not want air conditioning, one should not be forced to have it because some activists said we need to have it.

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Another one is something that is a little more complicated. It is lateral load. When the wind blows on a house, it needs to stand up. The requirements are getting very complicated and difficult, to the point where one has to, for any house, get it engineered so that the engineer says it is good enough. If not, one needs to add more lumber to make it stronger, which, again, we do not need in lots of places in our country.

As for windows, this is a good one. The codes do not want too much sunlight coming into the house, which make the house hotter inside, and this makes sense on a hot summer day. Once again, in a place like Saskatchewan, what is the opposite of a hot summer day? It is a cold January day. On a cold January day, I want the sun to come in through my windows.

Here we have a conflict, again, where it does not really make sense to mandate this. It would be good to have the information and have standards that people can work to, but having it mandated does not make a lot of sense.

The other issue I want to speak briefly to is accessibility, for example, wheelchair accessibility. It is a good thing to have accessibility in houses that need it, but to mandate it into all houses, which is what the 2025 codes are moving toward, where all houses will need accessible washrooms, wide hallways and wide doorways, does not make sense for 100% of the houses. It does make sense for some houses, but it does not make sense for 100% of the houses.

These are the kinds of changes that are being forced onto home builders through the activist methods being used today.

Of course, energy efficiency is something we need to focus on, but I think we are seeing the conflict between what we truly need for energy efficiency and the Trudeau-era activism that has been going on. These things are colliding in our building codes. Building codes are based on electricity, of course, and that does not help a province such as Saskatchewan, which relies on natural gas to create electricity. Again, there are inconsistencies across our land.

Finally, I just want to say what Conservatives want to do. We would like to recognize that builders are frustrated and that bureaucracy is not the solution to the problem we face.

We need to work on things like building codes, as I talked about, as well as municipal government development charges and delays. This is another huge issue. There has been 10 years of inaction from our federal government with regard to municipalities. We could take the money that we would put into this bureaucracy and instead use it to find a way to help local governments reduce their development charges and reduce the cost of new houses.

The bill is just adding more bureaucracy, and that is what we do not need to do. Conservatives will reduce costs. We will get Ottawa out of the way, and we will allow housing to be built.

● (1740)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to talk about the contrast between the government and the official opposition, or the Conservative far right. I have found that it is a good example to show that contrast. The leader of the Conservative Party, when he was the

minister responsible for housing, did not actually do anything as a minister of housing.

This is consistent with what the Conservative Party is espousing today, which is that we do not need to do anything, that we need to just get out of the way and leave it up to the private sector, whereas the government, today's government, and today's Prime Minister are working with premiers, mayors of municipalities of all sizes and indigenous communities, all of which are saying that there is room for us to be doing things in that field.

Would the member not agree that we should be listening to what others, beyond the leader of the Conservative Party, are saying?

● (1745)

Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, the member is not a very good student of history. The Conservatives built lots of houses. That is clear.

The member also was not listening to what I was saying. What I said, especially right at the end of my speech, and he could have recalled that, is that is exactly what we need to do. We need to go to municipalities. We need to go directly to them with the bureaucracies that we have, with the minister's department, CMHC and Canada Lands Company. These all exist today.

Instead of spending billions of dollars more on a new bureaucracy, we could take that money, talk to municipalities and provinces, find out what needs to be done and get it done. Building a new bureaucracy does nothing. It does nothing for the real problem, which is creating more houses in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saskatoon West for his intervention and for understanding the power that should be exercised at the level closest to the people, that is to say, at the municipal level. Municipalities are the ones that know the reality in our regions.

I would like to point out that back home in Rouyn-Noranda, the housing shortage has been going on for more than 20 years, and the situation is critical. Federal programs were never implemented in Abitibi—Témiscamingue, and it is a catastrophe. Nothing has improved in 20 or so years. When agreements were signed in 2017, we expected them to produce results in Quebec. Three or four years later, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and costs soared. In the end, more housing was not built. That was the Liberal government's fault.

Now, the government has come up with a new gimmick, under the misnomer "Build Canada Homes". The government thinks that will solve everything. However, it is just another layer of bureaucracy. Should we place unquestioning trust in Build Canada Homes?

*Government Orders**[English]*

Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, of course we should not trust Build Canada Homes. It is like anything else with the Liberals. The bureaucracies that they create are inefficient. They do not work, and ultimately, there are no results.

My colleague is right to talk about working together with municipalities, and he mentioned an example where there has not been a lot of progress. I also want to caution that this is not just a federal government issue. It is a provincial issue and a municipal issue. Sometimes our municipalities need a little help. They need a little kick in the pants, if I might say that. We need to make sure that we are relying on all of our partners to work together.

Sometimes the federal government needs to provide some carrots. I think that is something that we could be doing with the billions of dollars that would be spent on this bureaucracy. We need to be doing some things and working with the municipalities to help them get pointed in the right direction so that we can actually make a difference for Canadians.

Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Cassidy deVeer and Krista Paine from the Central Okanagan Canadian Home Builder's Association expressed many of the same concerns to me when they visited about the national building code and increased costs. I give the member that point.

In the bill, it talks about developing land and constructing housing in Canada. That is better than what the Canada Infrastructure Bank has done with funding Chinese vessels outside of Canada. It is nice to see that the Liberals have actually put some limitations in the bill.

As I read through the entire bill, there is no designation to say that it must use Canadian products, such as wood. I would simply ask if this member believes the government has made a mistake. It says it is going to use Canadian wood, but that is not in the bill.

Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, I guess I will give credit where credit is due. The Liberals finally figured out that they should restrict this to building in Canada. I congratulate them for realizing that.

Now the Liberals need to move on to the inputs, as my colleague identified. Of course, we should be focusing on Canadian inputs where we can, and there are many opportunities for that. This industry is great for creating jobs, and great for creating business and value in Canada. Let us get on it. Let us get houses built.

Ned Kuruc (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-20, legislation that would transform Build Canada Homes into a Crown corporation and expand yet another layer of federal bureaucracy in the housing file.

At a time when Canadians are facing the worst housing affordability crisis in a generation, what they need is action that lowers costs and unleashes supply. What this bill offers instead is more bureaucracy expanding its administrative authority, and \$13 billion in new spending without a credible plan to actually build the homes that Canada was promised. That could not have been more evident than in the speech from the member across, in which he spent 10 minutes calling us “far right” and slandering us. I am a little more

dumbfounded now than I was before I walked in, but hopefully we will get some answers.

Let us be clear that what Bill C-20 does is that it converts Build Canada Homes, which exists as a special operating agency, into a full Crown corporation. It establishes a corporate structure, a board and expanded powers, and folds the Canada Lands Company into its portfolio. It grants this new entity the power to provide advice to ministers, departments, agencies and other Crown corporations. However, Canadians are not short on advice; they are short on homes.

During the 2025 election campaign, the Liberal government promised that Build Canada Homes would fulfill three core functions: first, building affordable housing at scale; second, catalyzing a new housing industry; and third, providing financing to affordable home builders. Those are lofty promises, and we must measure legislation not by theory but by its results and evidence.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has reviewed this initiative. What did the PBO conclude? The Liberals promised 500,000 homes per year, half a million homes annually, yet the PBO reported that there is no plan to achieve that goal and that Build Canada Homes would build approximately 5,200 homes per year. These 5,000 homes will not restore affordability in this country, which needs hundreds of thousands more units annually just to keep pace with demand.

What will this cost Canadians? Bill C-20 represents \$13 billion over five years, \$11.5 billion for Build Canada Homes and \$1.5 billion for the Canada Lands Company transfer, yet after spending \$219 million just on bureaucrats to run the new office, the PBO stated that Build Canada Homes will fund the same types of projects that were already funded under CMHC's affordable housing fund, with the same unit costs and the same distribution and affordability. In other words, we are spending billions of dollars to duplicate what already exists. This would be the government's third housing agency and fourth housing bureaucracy.

Builders across this country, from Vancouver to Halifax, from rural communities to our largest cities, are pleading for less government in the building process, not more. They are asking for streamlined approvals, predictable permitting, reduced developmental charges, lower taxes and faster timelines. The Liberal government believes that if something is not working, the solution is to create another agency. However, housing is not built by bureaucrats; it is built by builders.

In order to build, we need prices to be cut. For prices to be cut, we need to build. Bill C-20 does not meaningfully cut the costs that builders face. It does not eliminate the GST on new homes. It does not mandate municipalities to increase supply. It does not cut developmental charges. It does not address capital flows leaving Canada due to punitive tax policies. Bill C-20 is not what future homeowners need.

Do not take my word for it. Take the word of the Ontario Home Builders' Association, who had this to say:

The Ontario Home Builders' Association...is deeply disappointed with the lack of support for Ontario's home builders and buyers in the 2025 Federal Budget....

The budget presented no new measures to unlock supply and restore affordability....

The government's continued inaction has put [100,000] jobs...at risk—from architects and engineers, to trades and sub trades across the residential construction sector.

They also said that the budget remains “vague regarding the Liberal platform's commitment to work with municipalities to reduce development charges...by 50 percent.”

If our own home builders do not support the Liberal platform's housing plan, how can we expect the rest of Canada, who are paying this enormous price tag, to support it?

● (1750)

Now let us address the supposed affordability claims. The Prime Minister has suggested that Canadians could expect affordable rents in a range of \$600 to \$800 per month under this initiative, yet the PBO found that so-called affordable rents under Build Canada Homes could actually exceed current market rents. Applying the government's own affordability criteria, a two-bedroom unit would cost about \$2,168 per month for the median household. That is nearly double the \$1,100 national median for market rent.

An hon. member: Liberal math.

Ned Kuruc: Mr. Speaker, yes it is. Conservatives believe that the only way to restore the dream of home ownership in stable rental markets is to unleash supply at scale.

Our approach is clear. First, we would cut the GST on all new homes under \$1.3 million. That would save families up to \$65,000 and immediately stimulate construction activity across the country. Second, we would tie federal infrastructure dollars to homebuilding performance. Municipalities must permit at least 15% more homebuilding each year in order to receive full federal funding. If cities want transit dollars, they would have to approve homes near transit. If they want infrastructure dollars, they would have to permit growth.

Third, we would cut development charges by 50%. These charges can add hundreds of thousands of dollars to the cost of a home before a shovel has even hit the ground. The Liberals promised to address development charges during the last election campaign, but they have failed to deliver. Last, we would end the capital gains tax on reinvestment in new housing in Canada. This would unlock billions of dollars in private capital, directing investments into Canada homebuilding instead of watching it flee to foreign markets like America.

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These are measures that would address the underlying economics of supply. Bill C-20 would not; instead, it would grow the footprint of government in a sector that is already burdened by regulation, taxation and delay. It would further centralize authority in Ottawa, when what we need is to cut red tape and accelerate approvals.

Every year of delay means higher rents, higher mortgages and fewer opportunities for young Canadians to own a home. Every new layer of bureaucracy adds time. Time adds cost, cost adds price, and price erodes affordability. Throwing billions more dollars at redundant bureaucracies would not fix our supply crisis.

The government argues that converting Build Canada Homes into a Crown corporation would provide flexibility and independence, but independence without a plan is meaningless. Governance reform without cost reform does not lower prices. The central question is simple: Would the bill dramatically increase the number of homes built at a lower cost? The PBO says it would not; it would duplicate existing CMHC programs, produce a fraction of the promised homes and spend millions of dollars to underachieve. That is not what the Prime Minister promised Canadians when he took office.

Conservatives recognize that housing affordability is not merely a line item in a budget. It is about generational equity and whether young Canadians can start families, seniors can downsize with dignity, workers can live near their jobs, and communities can grow sustainably. When the private sector is ready and willing to build, the government's rule should be to remove obstacles, not to create them. Canadians deserve results, not rebranding. They deserve homes, not headlines.

Bill C-20 would expand bureaucracy, duplicate existing programs and fall dramatically short of the government's own promises. Instead, I ask for support of our Conservative plan for homebuilding: to focus on letting builders build, on cutting costs and on restoring the dream of home ownership for the next generation of Canadians.

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• (1755)

Braedon Clark (Sackville—Bedford—Preston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have listened to my Conservative colleagues talk about this bill and other bills many times, and quite often they bring up issues of young Canadians. That is fair, because we know that young Canadians have had the most trouble dealing with the housing crisis. To help solve that problem, I put forward a private member's bill, Bill C-227, that will be going towards committee report stage soon. When that bill came before the House, every member of the Conservative Party voted against it. It is not bureaucracy. It is not addition. It is actually a plan.

An hon. member: A study.

Braedon Clark: Mr. Speaker, no, it is a plan. If someone were to go to any successful private sector company in this country and ask them to show their strategic plan, they would do it, because it is a road map for how to succeed.

My question for my colleague is, why did his party vote against Bill C-227?

Ned Kuruc: Mr. Speaker, simply put, Canadians want action. I knocked on 120,000 doors and I met a lot of young adults who lived in basements. While the government wants to do more research on what is happening, on this side of the aisle, we actually talk to young Canadians. We actually hear their wants and needs. We actually listen to Canadians. We formulate our thoughts and we try to execute.

Some members on that side will call us obstructionists. I beg to differ. I believe the cornerstone to our democracy is a very good and reliable opposition, and we cannot discount that. When they trample all over us and call us obstructionists, I call that freedom and I call that democracy.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lestiguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is concerned that Build Canada Homes will create a new point of federal-provincial friction and make things more complicated. I agree with my colleague on that.

I would like to hear my colleague's opinion. What does he think of our proposal, which is simply for the federal government to redistribute the billions of dollars to the provinces so that the provinces can manage the construction of new homes themselves?

[*English*]

Ned Kuruc: Mr. Speaker, I would like to possibly explore it and we could talk about it. I have not seen anything cross my desk, but we on this side are open to many different decisions and collaborations. Maybe we could talk about that further.

Steven Bonk (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we already have three bureaucracies for housing in this country, and now the Liberals are wanting to add another one. We had my colleague from Calgary Nose Hill point out very clearly what exactly was on the CMHC website, which is exactly what the Liberals are trying to do with this new bill.

Is it not an admission of failure when they have three bureaucracies already in place to do a job but cannot do the job, and now they are trying to create another one? I was just wondering if my hon. colleague could comment further on that.

Ned Kuruc: Mr. Speaker, there have been more examples of admissions of failure. We have heard them in the House. I have heard many 10-minute speeches that do not actually speak to Bill C-20. It is much like when I hold stakeholder meetings back in Hamilton, which I do regularly with the housing sector. I ask them whether they understand Build Canada Homes, and not one of our experts in the Hamilton-Wentworth and Niagara region can actually say what Build Canada Homes does.

We heard it about 20 minutes ago when the member across the way did not talk about Bill C-20. He blamed everything on the Conservatives and the right wing. I do not even know what it was. Like I said, I am more dumbfounded now, after listening to him, than I was before. There were no solutions coming from that. They do not even understand their own bill.

The rest of Canada and Canadians watching this want to know what Build Canada Homes would do because the stakeholders have no clue what it would do or how it would better Canadians. I do know that they have hired some bureaucrats north of \$700,000 to start filling it out with employees. That is what we do know. However, there are no shovels in the ground. There are no homes built, and it will fail just like all the other ones did. As someone on the public accounts committee, I cannot wait to dig my teeth into this one when it comes across our plate.

Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here. I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak about the importance of the Build Canada Homes act, which is truly a holistic approach to housing. Access to safe, affordable housing is the cornerstone of healthy, growing communities and economic opportunity. It provides people with stability and a place to raise their families.

Housing costs continue to rise, which is something we heard about on all sides of the House. It is consistent with what we heard while knocking on doors.

Government Orders

At the same time, I think it was the member for Sackville—Bedford—Preston who got up and talked about his private member's bill and having a plan for housing, and he was mocked by members of the Conservative Party: How dare he have a plan? How dare he bring something forward? He was laughed at and mocked. It was his first time being elected as a member of Parliament, and he was right at the top of the private members' list, but all he got was mockery from the Conservatives. When the Conservatives get up for their speeches, they say, "Well, there is no plan. The Liberals have no plan," and then they mock someone who is stepping forward to lower housing prices for young people in his riding.

The Conservatives do not have a plan. All they have is obstruction. The last Conservative speaker, the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, said something to the effect that they're not obstructionists and this is freedom.

I cannot believe it. I do not know if they hear themselves. All they do is delay. They talk about the government's plans and say that what the Liberals put forward in their platform has not come forward. Well, it is not just in the bill before us, but in the budget, which was tabled in the fall and I understand has finally gone through committee. There are other bills that have been delayed, such as affordability measures. However, this bill is not the entirety of the plan.

It is great for the Conservatives to cherry-pick and say that they are on the side of freedom, but all they are doing is standing here in the House of Commons, preventing people from moving forward. They can shout and say, "This is democracy," but there is a difference between being the opposition and just being obstructionists.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, they say that we are the government, but they know how the math works. They know it is a minority government. They know they can talk out the bill, and that is what they do on all the bills.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, I am hitting too close to home, because all they want to do is chirp.

Let us go to the actual housing experts, because they see themselves as housing experts over there, but not many of them are, as I look across. However, let us talk about the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada on Bill C-20. It said this:

Canada's housing co-operatives welcome the federal government's continued focus on housing in Budget 2025. As Canadians continue to face an unprecedented affordability crisis, today's commitments are a positive signal; building more homes that people can afford is an essential part of remedying the crisis.

In particular, we are pleased to see the government recognize the value of growing non-market housing, including housing co-ops, through Build Canada Homes. With its robust pipeline of cross-country projects, the co-operative housing sector is ready and able to partner with Build Canada Homes to continue to build co-op housing at scale, as we have been doing through the Co-operative Housing Development Program and beyond.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, again, the Conservatives are just heckling me through this speech, and they laugh.

This is an organization that provides co-operative housing throughout this country. I bet the members over there have not visited a co-op in their riding. This is fundamental housing that was built, but successive governments, both Liberal and Conservative, stopped building that housing.

The hon. member has a smug look on his face. He thinks it is so funny. Would the constituents back in Alberta find it amusing that he would stand up here and mock co-operative housing? It is unbelievable. I should not say that it is unbelievable, because it is truly believable. That is all we are seeing here today as legislation, again, is stalled.

● (1805)

The previous speaker said that there were no experts that side with this. The Canadian Housing and Renewal Association is an organization that provides affordable housing across the country. It said:

The Canadian Housing and Renewal Association congratulates [the Minister] and the Government of Canada on the creation of Build Canada Homes.

This new agency is an important step toward addressing the housing crisis—building homes at speed and scale, ensuring affordability, and listening to the community housing sector.

We also congratulate Ana Bailão on her nomination as Chief Executive Officer of the BCH agency. We look forward to working with Ana and the Build Canada Homes team to deliver the homes communities need most.

Together, we can build a stronger, fairer, and more resilient housing system for all Canadians.

The organization that wants to build more affordable housing in this country, true affordable housing, is saying this legislation is a great step forward.

The Conservatives laugh. The Conservatives delay, and the Conservatives obstruct. They talk about there potentially being problems with this bill. Let us send it to committee and end the debate right now. Let us send it to committee and see what the next step is. If these experts are wrong, because the Conservatives are saying that the people who want to build affordable housing in this country are wrong, then they are right and their leader, who built six homes when he was the minister responsible, is the person we should be listening to.

At the same time as they are stalling this legislation, they are going to stall affordability measures. They are going to stall funding for these particular programs. They are going to stall the billions of dollars through budgetary measures to ensure that there is meat on these bones. This is an agency that is going to be created.

Government Orders

The consistency throughout the speeches today is that we have heard from our constituents. We have heard there is a housing crisis and we have a government that's willing to step up and take action. It is the opposition's job to oppose and to hold the government to account, but what we have seen, not just in this Parliament but in previous Parliaments, is the opposition knowing that in a minority Parliament, they can just talk out the clock. They can keep talking and prevent these measures from seeing the light of day and getting to committee.

The Conservatives sit there amused at the notion that it is not them, that we should not look at them as being responsible for legislation not getting through. They say, as they have heckled to me before, that it is the government's fault.

The last time I was up on my feet, the member for Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations said the government is stalling its own legislation, which is impressive. It is impressive that they could even come up with something so ridiculous, saying the government is responsible for stalling its own legislation. The government wants to see the legislation get through. I would love to see this legislation get to committee, but the opposition does not want that.

We can read the experts who have said that they would like to see the bill go to the next step, but the Conservatives do not care. They offer no plan and nothing of substance to Canadians to take that step. They say it is a housing crisis, and it is a crisis. However, there is a government that is willing to step up and act, to work with the municipalities and the provinces, but at the end of the day, all the Conservatives have are their stall tactics. All they have is their obstruction. They get mad when we say that, and I can understand why. They do not like the spotlight on that.

All Canadians deserve a place to call home. Housing is a fundamental need, and the growing demand for housing across the country requires urgent action. The Government of Canada is implementing a new and innovative solution to bring down costs, cut red tape and build homes more quickly. I just wish the Conservatives cared enough to get outside.

• (1810)

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always amusing listening to the speeches by the member for St. Catharines.

In 2015, in the Niagara Region, the average cost of a home was about \$270,000. Today, it is about \$600,000. The same experts that the member referenced, and I will acknowledge they are experts and do a lot of great work in our community, also endorsed the plan in 2015 that was supposed to make housing affordable across Canada. The reality is that after 10 years of Liberal government, every viable metric on housing has only gotten worse.

Why should we give the Liberals any more confidence to address this crisis, which has hurt hundreds of thousands of young people and destroyed what their concept of Canada was because of the Liberals' bad policies?

Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member can cherry-pick the statistics that he knows are much deeper. He talks about young people, but the hon. member for Sackville—Bedford—Preston just

talked about his bill on housing for young people, and the Conservative member voted against it.

An hon. member: Proudly.

Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, the member said that he proudly voted against housing for young people. Shame on him.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are laughing about voting against housing for young people.

This legislation is about getting housing that is more affordable for Canadians. That is what this legislation would do.

The hon. member talked about how the experts are wrong. I guess that is his right, but at the end of the day, the Conservatives have nothing on this file and do not care about young people. It is time to put their money where their mouth is.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my entertaining friend from St. Catharines for his speech and his enthusiasm. It is always enjoyable to listen to what he has to say and to ask him questions. I look forward to hearing his answer to my question.

At the beginning of his speech he talked about the holistic approach of Build Canada Homes. However, the words “holistic” and “Liberal government” do not go together at all. This approach seems more like a kind of computer virus. It is a bit like those old computer viruses that got into the system, slowed everything down and made it take hours to download something that is less than 10 megabytes. It reminds me more of that than of a holistic approach. There are plenty of examples in Bill C-20. Earlier, we talked about the fact that the bill infringes on the jurisdictions of municipalities and provinces, including Quebec, which is particularly well equipped to deal with this crisis. Quebec just needs funding from the federal government.

There is another point that caught my attention. I look forward to hearing my colleague's thoughts on this. Build Canada Homes would be designated as an agent of the Crown. For municipalities, this could mean that they would be deprived of property tax revenues. This is a real and entirely legitimate concern. I would like to know what my colleague thinks about that.

[*English*]

Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, I miss my time on the heritage committee with the hon. member for Drummond. At the same time, he is right; we do need to work with the provinces. That is part of the holistic plan. As I said, not everything is in this bill.

Government Orders

The member talked about municipalities. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities says that it “welcomes the federal government's Build Canada Homes...initiative as a strong signal of leadership on the housing crisis.” I am sure the Conservatives will mock and laugh again at the experts and getting houses built. Let us not care what the mayors and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities say.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, again the Conservatives are laughing about the mayors. They called them gatekeepers. That is why they are on the other side of the House rather than working to build homes for Canadians and young people who need them.

Braedon Clark (Sackville—Bedford—Preston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I want to thank my colleague from St. Catharines for the shout-outs and plugs for my private member's bill. I appreciate it very much.

I want to say that the member really distilled the essence of what the bill is about. Bill C-20 is about affordable housing.

One of our colleagues across the way mentioned earlier that he was a home builder, and I respect that. Any home builder who is building private sector housing is in it to build homes but also to make a profit. That is fine and absolutely their prerogative. However, private sector builders will not build affordable housing unless they have some level of support from some level of government in order to make it economically viable.

I wonder if my colleague could touch a bit on the importance of the federal government in providing the scale of affordable housing that we need—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for St. Catharines has the floor.

Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, the market will build market housing. It is important for the federal government to step up. It is unfortunate the Conservatives will block it every step of the way.

[*Translation*]

Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to get a chance to speak about Build Canada Homes. To begin with, I would like to say hello to voters in my riding of Acadie—Bathurst, who have probably tuned in to watch me this evening.

I think that the Build Canada Homes bill we are discussing today is an outstanding initiative. However, before I get to what we want to do with Build Canada Homes, I would like to talk about various programs that have been extremely beneficial to my riding of Acadie—Bathurst, in collaboration with the Department of Housing and Infrastructure. My colleague spoke earlier about mayors and municipalities.

Let us begin with the program known as the housing accelerator fund. It provides dedicated funds directly to municipalities. My New Brunswick riding was fortunate enough to have six such agreements. The funds go directly to the municipalities. Developers then contact them to inquire about construction projects, whether for affordable housing or for other types of housing. These municipalities far surpassed their objectives, and it shows on the ground,

because there is construction going on everywhere. People can watch the housing be built from the ground up. Some of it is ready. Some people have moved in. The program has been extremely beneficial to municipalities in my region. As my colleague said earlier, the Leader of the Opposition called the mayors of some municipalities incompetent. I hope that people will remember that the mayors in my region were not incompetent. They created a tremendous amount of housing, including affordable housing, housing for young people and housing for young families. The program has been a huge boon to my region.

The other program I want to talk about is the Canada housing infrastructure fund. This fund still exists, and the federal government has signed agreements through it with the provinces, including my province, New Brunswick. Once again, we had great programs to ensure that municipalities could move forward with water and sewer projects, for example, to connect new housing developments to that infrastructure.

I recently had the opportunity to make an announcement with my colleague, the member for the provincial riding of Bathurst West-Beresford and New Brunswick's finance minister. To develop the former site of a mill that had been closed since the 2000s, we managed to secure funding through the Canada housing infrastructure fund, which enabled us to build more than 300 housing units there. Just recently, an announcement was made about housing for homeless people that has begun to be built on that land. This shows that these programs are working. There are also several other programs for which we want to partner with New Brunswick. In the coming weeks or months, we hope to increase our collaboration with New Brunswick to be able to build more housing.

Regarding Build Canada Homes, as members are aware, we want to make sure that we build affordable housing. I know opposition members often say that we create more bureaucracy. I disagree. We are going to make things easier for developers, whether they are private developers, community associations or housing co-ops. There are many of them in our regions, especially in rural areas. Every stakeholder I have talked to about what Build Canada Homes will look like is very excited. They hope that this will spark interest among developers.

In addition, we often forget about modular home developers and companies. There are two such companies in my riding: Supreme Homes and Trusko Inc. They are currently building modular housing and, once again, this type of housing is affordable. We see these homes going up day after day. People can feel it in the air, it is tangible. People are waiting for these units. Some of them have already been able to get into a home.

Government Orders

• (1820)

However, as we know, too many Canadians are still having a hard time finding affordable housing. Housing costs are rising, and unfortunately, supply is not keeping up with demand. By consolidating functions that were previously scattered across several departments, agencies and programs, we will strengthen the government's ability to deliver meaningful results. As my colleagues said earlier, traditional approaches need to be reviewed. We must accelerate housing construction. For example, under other programs, municipalities have amended their zoning bylaws to speed up housing construction. That will continue.

Build Canada Homes will be a developer, a funder, a facilitator and a catalyst for innovation in the housing sector. Canadians need more housing, and Bill C-20, the Build Canada Homes act, will make it possible to build faster and more efficiently at scale.

The global economy has recently undergone a shift that has profoundly transformed the traditional world order. Canada can no longer count on its most important trading relationship. Because of that, we are building our capacity here at home by building stronger relationships across all levels of government, including municipal, territorial and provincial governments, as well as with our indigenous partners.

We are making strategic investments to build a stronger, more sustainable and more resilient economy. We are working to cut red tape, eliminate internal trade barriers and sign new agreements that will stimulate local economies.

In these uncertain times, the Government of Canada is taking decisive action now to transform our nation and make it more resilient so that it can shift from reliance to resilience. The goal is to make Canada one of the fastest-growing and most competitive economies in the world and to usher in a new era of economic security and prosperity for Canadians.

The Government of Canada will achieve its goals by building on the strength of our industries and by implementing measures such as Build Canada Homes and the buy Canadian policy, which will enable it to invest in the future and stimulate economic growth.

The buy Canadian policy will have an impact on our softwood lumber industry, for example. There are several companies in my region, including two major plants, that process softwood lumber. They are delighted with the amounts being invested in Build Canada Homes. It will help them diversify their markets a bit if their wood is used to build the homes we need in Canada. During my meetings with these companies, it was very clear that they were about to go through a period of uncertainty because of what is happening with the markets, mainly in the United States. If we help them through Build Canada Homes, they will be able to sell their wood, and we will be able to build homes faster in Canada.

As a Crown corporation, Build Canada Homes will be funded by an initial \$13-billion envelope announced in budget 2025. Build Canada Homes was created to centralize federal support for affordable housing in coordination with other departments and agencies. It will act quickly and leverage federal land, support innovative construction approaches and form partnerships across all sectors to build more housing.

Build Canada Homes is a key part of Canada's new industrial strategy. It will stimulate the residential construction sector and make it more productive. Build Canada Homes will revitalize the housing industry by enabling the construction of thousands of new homes. As construction ramps up, we will ensure the growth, training and support of Canada's skilled workforce, while creating well-paying jobs. In addition to building new homes, we will also support the development of essential housing infrastructure such as water and sewer systems.

With existing programs and with the creation of Build Canada Homes, I think Canadians will see that we believe in them. Canadians will see that we understand their concerns and that we understand that they need affordable housing. That is exactly why we are moving forward with a bill like this one while maintaining our existing programs. We are moving forward to build as many homes as possible for Canadians.

• (1825)

[*English*]

Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls—Niagara-on-the-Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I recently met with the Niagara Home Builders' Association, and its members indicated to us that bureaucracy will not build homes.

One builder has laid off 60% of their staff. They used to build 300 homes but are now building only 30. Their one solution to the housing crisis, and they told us this, was to adopt the Conservative plan of removing the GST on all new homes, not just for first-time homebuyers.

Can the member explain to us why the Liberal government will not simply adopt that idea?

[*Translation*]

Serge Cormier: Mr. Speaker, if we adopt the Conservatives' plan, we would probably end up with six housing units, which is what was built when the Leader of the Opposition was the minister responsible for housing.

The Conservatives like to talk about bureaucracy. We like to talk about building homes, and building homes by the thousands. The current programs we put in place are already getting it done, but with Build Canada Homes, we will do even more.

The Conservatives like to talk about bureaucracy but fail to see what is good about this strategy. Their strategy is always to delay the process and delay the construction of these homes. We see things differently.

We want to move forward to ensure that there are more affordable housing units for Canadians, and that is what we are going to do.

Government Orders

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think things would move faster if the government acted like a minority government instead of always trying to impose its solutions.

I would like to know something. All of this is going to result in a very centralized entity that impedes on Quebec's area of jurisdiction. However, not everyone shares the same vision.

Quebec and the municipalities are the ones who are most up to speed on housing needs. The federal government's idea of affordability differs wildly from Quebec's. I went to a building inauguration a few years ago. I was very pleased because we need more housing. However, it was deemed affordable housing when it was not affordable at all. Members can imagine the reactions I got when I posted it on social media.

Why not create a program that would allow Quebec to, first of all, have an envelope allocated—

• (1830)

The Deputy Speaker: I will give the member the opportunity to respond.

The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

Serge Cormier: Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague knows that we have always been able to collaborate with Quebec on plenty of files, including housing.

Ultimately, what we want to do is build as much affordable housing as possible for as many Canadians as possible. I think that residents of the province of Quebec will continue to benefit from these programs. It will always be a pleasure for us to work with the Government of Quebec. I even think that some discussions have led to agreements with the Government of Quebec. We look forward to continuing in this vein.

Our goal is to build as much housing as possible for all Canadians.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows, this was a very important issue for our new Prime Minister and the government as a whole. In fact, it was incorporated into the throne speech that was delivered back in May of last year. It is good to see the legislation before us.

Could the member provide his thoughts in regard to how important this issue is for the government of the day, in particular the Prime Minister and the Liberal caucus?

[*Translation*]

Serge Cormier: Mr. Speaker, once again, I think my colleague is well aware that it is very important to our government to ensure that we build as much affordable housing as possible for as many Canadians as possible.

As we all know, young families and young people want access to housing. With programs like Build Canada Homes and other existing programs, we will provide families and young Canadians with the housing they need.

I think the Prime Minister has been clear. We want to see massive housing construction. That is what Build Canada Homes is all about.

[*English*]

Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise on behalf of the good people of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. When I get the chance to talk about housing, as a former mayor for the township of North Dundas and warden in SDG, it is an issue that is near and dear to my heart, and not only because of my previous municipal experience. As we go out and talk to residents in our ridings, and I know it is the same for each and every member in this House, housing is probably one of the top national concerns in every single part of this country.

I am going to be splitting my time with the hon. member for Richmond Hill South, and I know he will have some comments as well about the latest piece of Liberal legislation before us.

What is important, as we begin this conversation on the latest Liberal attempts to address affordable housing, is that we look at where we are after 10 years. After 10 years of the Liberals in office, not just in Cornwall and SDG with the data from the Cornwall and District Real Estate Board, but right across this country, housing prices and rent have doubled. At a time when we need to build more homes and get more shovels in the ground, we are actually seeing red tape and taxes as a key part of the burden. We are actually seeing housing starts projected to fall in the coming years, which is going to make affordability and demand that much more challenging.

When we look at this, according to the government's own data, we need to build about 450,000 to 480,000 homes per year, just to meet demand and keep up with affordability, every year until 2035. Right now we build about half of that.

The Liberals have put this piece of legislation before us. Their solution is that one bureaucracy for housing was not enough, a second bureaucracy did not solve the problem, and neither did a third, so, as I guess they say in Liberal land, the fourth time will be the charm. We have the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the Canada Lands Company and the department of infrastructure and housing, and now we would have Build Canada Homes, which would apparently be the bureaucratic solution to the problems we face in this country.

When I went door-knocking in the last election, and when I go out and about and talk in our community, whether it is in the united counties, Cornwall or Akwesasne, and people talk about housing, not a single person suggests to me that the thing that would make the difference, make housing more affordable and get more shovels in the ground would be one more new housing agency or bureaucracy in this country. I did not hear that anywhere, but we did hear the stories of young people living in their parents' basements, wanting to have the dream of home ownership like their parents and grandparents did.

Government Orders

It was the common consensus for young people in this country for decades that if they worked hard and saved up, home ownership would be achievable. They cannot even save now, because rent is so high and the cost of living is so high, but that dream of home ownership has eroded bit by bit, and here we are now with the government claiming that it is going to come in with billions of new dollars to try to address the problem.

Here is the thing with this piece of legislation that we have before us with Build Canada Homes: The Liberals claim that it is going to help bridge the gap and get more shovels in the ground and homes built. However, their own data from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation show that after this plan is taken into calculation, we are not going to see that. The government said it is going to build 5,200 homes per year. That was from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, but the CMHC numbers say that housing starts are actually going to go down.

The Liberals spend billions and billions on bureaucracy, programs, photo-ops, announcements and claims that it is going to get better, but we are actually going to see a decrease in the number of homes being built. I would say it is surprising, but it is not surprising, because the Liberals just do not learn after 10 years. They are relying on the same failed approaches to get us out of this crisis in housing that we face.

There is a way that we can do better on this. I am often asked what we do as a Conservative opposition. We are a loyal opposition. We look at the legislation, we scrutinize it, we support it where we can, we amend it where we can, and we vote either for or against it. That is what a loyal opposition does. We highlight the shortcomings of the government and propose our own solutions. I am often asked what Conservatives would do that could change the game when it comes to housing and getting more homes built in this country.

● (1835)

There are four things I want to highlight. The first is that we could cut the GST on all new homes under \$1.3 million. That is something that the industry says would spark an extra 35,000 to 40,000 new homes in this country every year. The most expensive part of buying a new home is not the labour and not the materials; it is actually government taxes and fees. Therefore, if we could take the GST off and work with provinces to take the HST off, in the province of Ontario that is 13% on a million-dollar home or on a home that is half a million dollars. It is hard to build one for half a million dollars today, but people could be looking at savings anywhere from \$65,000 to \$130,000 if we were able to take all the HST off.

There is also the ripple effect. If, on a \$1.3-million home, GST alone comes off, that is a \$65,000 savings up front, but it also would save on the mortgage. There would be less to be mortgaged, less to be made in payments and less to be paid in interest. That would make home ownership instantly more affordable for Canadians, whether they are a first-time homebuyer or someone who is looking to build their dream home for which they have saved and worked so hard their entire life.

The second thing we could do is tie federal infrastructure dollars to homebuilding. We would say to municipalities that they need to

permit 15% more houses year over year, each and every year, so we can get the tide going in the right direction. We could tie federal funding, the billions of dollars from the federal government to support infrastructure, to actual results. We could say to municipalities that it would not be when they have a plan or an aspiration, or have done a study and intend to do something, but rather when building permits are actually permitted that the municipalities get paid. That is a huge incentive for municipalities.

Further, if municipalities exceed that goal, Conservatives have said that we would bonus them. We could tie it to homebuilding, tie it to results and get municipalities on the right track, leading by example and permitting more homes that we need, to actually go up, in the right direction.

The third thing is what the Conservatives have said and what the Liberals promised in the last election, but they have broken their promise. They said they would be cutting development charges by 50%. We said the same thing. The reality is that they have not done that. They have had a budget and a Speech from the Throne, and now they have this legislation, Bill C-20, before us which would mandate municipalities to do so. The Liberals have refused to take that step.

Again, not only is it the GST and the HST on a new home build; there are development charges as well. These add up to the biggest cost: taxes and fees. Conservatives are saying to the Liberals, "Just keep the promise made during the election campaign. Agree with us, and let us cut development charges by 50%." They have refused multiple times, at every opportunity in the last year, to keep their word and their promise with respect to housing. If this is a signature, cornerstone piece of legislation that they claim is part of their backbone to housing, that promise should have been in there, but it is not.

The fourth thing we could do is end the capital gains tax on reinvestment in new housing in Canada, which would unlock billions of dollars in investment in our country's homebuilding sector. Here is an example of what we could do. If somebody builds a 10-unit apartment building and sells that building, as opposed to paying capital gains taxes on it, if they reinvest that money in another apartment building, reinvestment could happen, and the federal government could defer that tax. We would have more units, and more building would take place. We would get more results. It would be a rocket ship of an opportunity to get our housing and our homebuilding sector fired up and going in the right direction.

We have before us another piece of Liberal legislation for a fourth bureaucracy: more bureaucracy, more plans, more studies, more photo ops and more good-intention announcements. It would lead to the same result we have had for the last year.

The Conservatives will stand with the action plan I presented, and that would be the true way we could make homes more affordable in this country. After 10 years, the Liberals are recycling the same old ideas. It is time for a new approach under the Conservative plan.

• (1840)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no surprise in the member's comments. That is what we have been hearing all day from the Conservative Party. The Conservatives do not support Bill C-20. They do not support the federal government's having a stronger, healthier role in working with provinces, territories, indigenous communities and the many different stakeholders. They want to just get out of the way, as they always like to say.

We know you are voting against the legislation. It was in the throne speech. It was a commitment by the Prime Minister and every Liberal member of Parliament. Will you at the very least not filibuster the legislation so we can actually see it proceed through the process?

The Deputy Speaker: I want to remind the parliamentary secretary to speak to the member through the Speaker.

The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—Glengarry.

Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I want to apologize for that member. He does not get up and speak too much in the House too often. He needs to be reminded of the rules a little bit.

The comment was interesting that the legislation would be giving the federal government and the Liberals a stronger, healthier relationship with provinces and municipalities. I am pretty sure they said the same thing regarding the national housing strategy that they had 10 years ago, which saw housing prices double. We had the housing accelerator fund that was going to be stronger and healthier. What happened? We are not seeing shovels get in the ground. We are seeing fewer shovels in the ground. We are seeing housing prices that have doubled. We are seeing rent that has doubled. That is their record.

If we just give them the fourth chance in 10 years to get it right by using the same recycled approach, they say they will get a different result. That is the definition of insanity. We are not going with it.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1845)

[English]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise to follow up on the question I raised a couple of weeks ago in question period about the serious strain that our auto sector is under and the serious threat we are under.

Donald Trump has made it very clear that he wants to shutter the auto sector in this country. He wants to bring all the jobs that are here in Canada, the tens of thousands of direct and indirect jobs, down to the United States. We have seen, sadly, over the course of the last year, 5,000 job losses. It has been devastating for Brampton, for Oshawa and for Ingersoll. The list goes on. Parts manufacturers have laid employees off and have taken their jobs and moved them to the United States.

Here is an alarming number as to where the auto sector is today: In 2016, Canada built 2.3 million cars. Last year, that number dropped to 1.2 million. The number of cars being built in the country has been halved in the last decade. That is an alarming number and very dangerous when it comes to the threats that we face. What frustrates me very much is the latest Liberal plan, which they call their national auto strategy, that includes the EV rebates for vehicles under \$50,000.

Donald Trump, in the midst of this unjustified, illegal and wrong tariff war that we are under right now, is tariffing every single Canadian vehicle made here and brought into the United States. That is wrong. It is unacceptable, and we are fighting back against that.

What is the Liberal strategy on this now? If we have an American-made EV that qualifies under that \$50,000 threshold, that American EV, which is made in the United States, can get a subsidy to be built there and brought into Canada. That is absolutely ridiculous.

We are in the midst of a trade war. I do not accept for a second the industry minister's Liberal talking point that we are in an integrated North American auto sector. We are not now, when we have a President in the United States who is unjustifiably tariffing every single Canadian vehicle going into the United States. It requires forceful push-back against that, and that should not include giving subsidies to American-made EVs being moved into Canada.

Here is the reality. There is only one car made in Canada today that will qualify, the Dodge Charger. The last time the Liberals had the EV rebate, 99% of the EV rebates given were for foreign-made cars, including 31% from the United States.

My question to the Liberal government continues to be this: Why are we giving a penny of Canadian taxpayer money for any vehicle, any vehicle at all, being made in the United States and being brought into Canada when the President of the United States is tariffing every vehicle coming from Canada into the U.S.?

It makes no sense. It is the opposite of elbows up, and it needs to be scrapped. Will they do it?

Adjournment Proceedings

Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport and Internal Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak about the government's new electric vehicle affordability program.

Canada has already made significant progress toward increased electric vehicle adoption. For example, the incentives for zero-emission vehicles, or iZEV, program, which ended last January, provided incentives for over 560,000 vehicles between 2019 and 2025. Combined with other federal, provincial and territorial measures, the iZEV program helped Canada reach a market share of 5.4% for new light-duty electric vehicles in 2024, and that is up from 3.1% in 2019.

We know that there is more work to be done and that EV affordability remains one of the top barriers to greater adoption. That is why Canada's auto strategy includes a new \$2.3-billion electric vehicle affordability program. This program is expected to incentivize over 840,000 new electric vehicles over the next five years.

The program has already garnered significant attention and interest from Canadians as well as automakers. As of today, there are almost 20 EV models listed on Transport Canada's website that consumers can choose from, and we expect this list to grow as manufacturers and dealerships adjust their pricing in the coming years. This program will drive down EV prices across the country and bring affordability to a larger segment of the Canadian population, and Canadians can stand to benefit from these incentives right away, as they are applied directly at the dealership.

To strengthen our domestic industry, Canadian-made EVs will be exempt from the price cap, supporting good jobs, Canadian workers and, indeed, Canadian innovation. The electric vehicle affordability program is an element of Canada's auto strategy, which, when coupled with plans to develop a national charging infrastructure strategy, will strengthen domestic demand by making EVs more affordable and reliable for Canadians.

The strategy will also help our auto industry navigate both the challenges and opportunities stemming from the rupture and reshaping of global trade relationships, and it will position Canada well to attract new investment and diversify export markets by leveraging free trade agreements.

We know Canada's EV manufacturing is in the early stages of development, and that is why this automotive strategy is focused not just on supporting EV manufacturing but also on building new strategic partnerships with global EV leaders in manufacturing, such as China. This will further diversify the trade and be a catalyst to new investment in the automotive sector. This, coupled with the announcement that we will be entering into a new joint venture with Chinese investment in Canada, will allow for Chinese EV imports into the Canadian market.

I raise this to highlight how Canada is adjusting to the new realities of global trade relationships to ensure that Canada's automotive sector remains robust and competitive in years to come. In practical terms, this means that for the foreseeable future, Canada will see fewer EV imports from the United States in favour of EVs imported from other, more reliable trading partners.

I will conclude with this. Canada is demonstrating to the world that it will be charting a new course on electric vehicles. We will do so by continuing to invest in the auto sector to ensure that we are building the cars of tomorrow, and we will do so in a way that reflects the new market realities while sending strong signals of where we want to go in the future.

• (1850)

Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, Canadians can see for themselves how clear the contrast is between the Liberal plan and the Conservative plan. The Liberals want to provide subsidies and give the opportunity for American-made EVs to be subsidized, built in the United States and shipped into Canada, but all while Donald Trump is tariffing every single Canadian vehicle going from Canada to the United States.

Conservatives are proposing to scrap that part of the plan and take the GST off all Canadian-made vehicles so Canadians have a big incentive to buy Canadian and support our Canadian auto sector. We would take the GST off Canadian-made vehicles and support Canadian auto workers, while the Liberals have a \$2.3-billion plan that is going to provide hundreds of millions of dollars to American-made vehicles coming into our country. It is completely unacceptable. It is the opposite of elbows up and needs to be scrapped immediately. Will they do it?

Mike Kelloway: Mr. Speaker, Canada's auto industry is undergoing a historic shift, and our government is ensuring that Canadians are ready to lead in a future that is electric. Indeed, our elbows are up and will remain up. The bottom line is that we are going to where the puck is. We are making investments in Canadians, Canadian workers, Canadian businesses and the Canadian automotive sector. We will continue to do so. The world has changed and we must with it.

THE ECONOMY

William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tax policies do not exist in a vacuum. They only work if the system actually works for the people who rely on it. As a chartered professional accountant, I have spent 26 years in public service. I have filed thousands of tax returns. For decades, friends and clients relied on me to navigate our complex tax system.

Canada's tax system is based on voluntary self-reporting, and that translates into ordinary Canadians being penalized if they do not get it exactly right. The role of CRA should be to help people comply on time and accurately. That means clear answers, knowledgeable staff and accessible service. However, most Canadians have a bad experience with CRA. They struggle to get through on the phone, and they receive inconsistent answers. Some agents are excellent professionals. Others simply read from a script, offer confusion instead of clarity or are simply wrong. That is not good service. Good service requires proper training, accountability and staffing models that allow agents to access the tools they need to help taxpayers.

The CRA touches millions of Canadians every year. It does not have to be this painful. If the Liberal government is serious about respect for taxpayers, it should focus less on extracting every last dollar and more on helping Canadians comply with confidence, dignity and accuracy.

For months, Canadians have been told by the government that there is no tax on food. In December, when I asked the Prime Minister about hidden taxes on food, one of his parliamentary secretaries claimed that the taxes have zero impact on food prices. However, Canadians cannot buy groceries with Liberal talking points. They pay with their hard-earned dollars. When government policies drive up the cost of fuel, energy, packaging and production, that is a tax on food, even if we do not see it listed on our grocery bill.

The clean fuel standard alone adds real costs to gasoline and diesel. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has confirmed this increases fuel prices now and they will keep rising. That affects farmers running equipment, truckers hauling food, processors packaging it and stores keeping the lights on. These costs do not disappear. They are passed on to families at the grocery store. The same is true for the industrial carbon tax. Taxing industries that grow, process, transport and refrigerate food means higher prices for everything we eat. Experts have warned that these policies are making Canadian food producers less competitive, especially compared to the United States, and the gap is growing.

Then there is inflation driven by the reckless spending and the Prime Minister's recent \$78-billion deficit. Inflation is the most painful hidden tax of all because it erodes the value of every paycheck. On top of that, the government piled on new costs through its food packaging rules, hitting restaurants and takeout providers already facing serious financial strain. Thousands of restaurants have closed and more are expected to follow.

These policies all add costs to food. Conservatives call it what it is, a tax. If the Prime Minister is serious about affordability, would he eliminate the fuel standard and bring his deficit under control to stop taxing the food supply chain?

• (1855)

Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport and Internal Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the global landscape, as we know, is rapidly changing, leaving economies, businesses and workers under a cloud of uncertainty. In response, Canada's government has focused on what we can control, which is building a stronger economy to make life more affordable for all Canadians. To that end, we are securing new trade and investment

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partnerships abroad and building our strength here at home to create good career opportunities with higher wages for Canadians. However, we understand that many Canadians are struggling to make ends meet and need immediate support.

When we go to the grocery store, we see higher prices, and it is harder for Canadians to put food on the table for their families. With the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit, normally known as the goods and services tax, or the GST, credit, we are making groceries and other essentials more affordable. I am proud to say that the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit will provide additional support for more than 12 million Canadians, including many in my riding of Sydney—Glace Bay.

We are increasing the amount of the benefit by 25% in five years, beginning in July of 2026. On top of that, we are providing a one-time payment this spring, equivalent to a 50% increase in the 2025-26 value of the HST credit. Combined, this means that a family of four will receive over \$1,800 this year and about \$1,400 a year for the next four years. A single person will receive up to \$950 this year and about \$700 a year for the next four years.

The government is also setting aside \$500 million for the strategic response fund to help businesses address the cost of supply chain disruptions without passing on the cost to Canadians at the checkout line. We will also, for the same reason, dedicate \$150 million under the existing regional tariff response initiative to support investments in food security by small and medium-sized enterprises and the organizations that support them. As we know, thanks to budget 2025, we are doing much more to make life more affordable for Canadians.

Budget 2025 builds on the many actions we have already taken to support Canadian businesses at a time of significant uncertainty and affordability challenges. When we look at things such as rate reductions, which is currently before Parliament as Bill C-4 and would apply to a taxable income of up to \$550,000 in 2026, that is essential. This change would ensure that 22 million Canadians would benefit from tax relief up to \$420 per person, saving two-income families up to \$840 this year.

Adjournment Proceedings

We are making many initiatives happen to support Canadians. It is a tough time for Canadians, and these measures, along with other measures, focus on businesses, business support and sector support. Building Canada strong is not just a slogan. It has deep meaning in terms of building Canada and building for Canadians with Canadian workers. Together with the hub and spoke model, this is a focus on solutions over slogans.

• (1900)

William Stevenson: Mr. Speaker, in December, I raised Grande Cache as an example of a remote area that is bearing the brunt of rising grocery costs. Residents of Grande Cache have been fighting for years to have their community recognized under the northern residents deduction, a program designed to acknowledge the higher costs of living in remote areas.

Grande Cache is remote. Everything costs more, including travel, access to services and groceries, but an arbitrary line on a map drawn by a bureaucrat has excluded it. That is why residents came together to launch a petition simply asking for fair treatment. If Grande Cache were to be included, some families would save more than \$1,200 annually. Real money would go back into household budgets and groceries. This is a request similar to that made by Haida Gwaii in B.C., which was reclassified just last year, in 2025.

Would the government reclassify Grande Cache into zone B under this program?

Mike Kelloway: Mr. Speaker, one of the key items to think about is that the government is focused on empowering Canadians by lowering taxes and expanding opportunity while protecting vital social programs that Canadians, including those in the member's riding opposite, need, from child care to dental care to pharmacare.

We recently announced programs and highlighted one of them here: the Canada groceries and essentials benefit. The key thing is focusing on the multitude of programs that are going to lift Canadians up and help them in their time of need. That is essentially what being Canadian is all about, in my opinion. It is about helping Canadians, giving them a hand up and being there for them with programs that are going to help them, help their families, help their communities and help their industries. That is what we will continue to do.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:02 p.m.)

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