



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 152 No. 088
Tuesday, February 24, 2026

Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 24, 2026

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

WAYS AND MEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Rebecca Alty (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1), I would like to table, in both official languages, a notice of ways and means motion for a bill entitled “An Act to give effect to the final Self-Government Agreement for the Tłegóhłı Got’ınę and to make consequential amendments to other Acts”.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present in both official languages the following two reports of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities: the third report, entitled “Advancements in Home Building Technologies”, and the fourth report, entitled “Canada Without Barriers by 2040”. They have been submitted electronically to the table.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the legislative committee on Bill C-18, an act to implement the comprehensive economic partnership agreement between Canada and Indonesia.

The committee has studied the bill, and I am very happy to forward it on to the House. It has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

FINANCE

Hon. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the legislative committee on Bill C-15, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025.

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

* * *

PETITIONS

PACIFIC SALMON

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition on behalf of constituents in Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford who are deeply concerned about proposed changes to the salmon allocation policy, which would decimate recreational fishing opportunities for coho and chinook in British Columbia.

Recreational fishers fully recognize conservation and first nations' constitutionally protected food, social, ceremonial and commercial fisheries. For generations, salmon have been managed by the government as a common property resource held in trust for the benefit of all Canadians. Changing this common property principle risks turning a shared public resource into an exclusive privilege that would reduce access for many Canadians and undermine confidence in fisheries management. Petitioners note that it would be devastating to our tourism economy and the millions of dollars that flow into conservation efforts. Constituents are calling on the Minister of Fisheries to leave current salmon allocation policies alone and uphold the cultural rights and traditions of all British Columbians.

• (1005)

Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a petition signed by the residents of my riding and many British Columbians.

Routine Proceedings

Salmon is a critical resource for not only our province of British Columbia and our region, but also our first nations and non-first nations. The petition is signed by citizens and permanent residents of Canada who are calling upon the Government of Canada to keep the common property resource principle in the revised salmon allocation policy so that salmon remain a publicly managed resource, federal stewardship stays transparent and conservation-focused, and no single group is given exclusive control over access.

It is important to note that we must have fish for today, fish for tomorrow and fish for the future.

WATER

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition today on behalf of residents from within Saanich—Gulf Islands and, increasingly, from across the country, I should add, who are concerned with the state of Canada's waterways and watersheds.

Petitioners recognize that riding alongside the climate crisis comes a water crisis. They call on the Government of Canada and the House of Commons to update Canada's water laws to ensure that no industry or corporation would take precedence over the health of Canada's waterways and watersheds. Of course, our water is essential for human health. They call for Canada's water laws to be updated with the guidance of professionals and specialists in the field of water conservation.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to petition on behalf of the people of Riding Mountain. I rise for the sixth time on behalf of the people of Dauphin, Manitoba, to present a petition on the rising rate of crime. Residents of Dauphin and the Parkland region are demanding that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on crime policies, which have fuelled a surge in crime throughout their communities. Since 2015, there has been a 54% increase in violent crime and a 75% increase in sexual assaults across Canada. Petitioners are deeply concerned by what they have read in their local papers, which included a report last month that the Dauphin RCMP arrested three men in connection to a crime spree of multiple incidents, including theft and armed robbery, all in a single day.

Our once safe communities have now turned into places where people fear for their lives because the government's catch-and-release policies have allowed violent repeat offenders to be out on bail instead of in jail. The people of Dauphin and the Parkland region demand that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on crime policies, which directly threaten their livelihoods and their community. I fully support the good people of Dauphin.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by the freedom-loving Canadians from my riding of Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke. They are concerned with the Liberal government's decision to sign Canada onto the WHO's pandemic agreement, which was agreed upon last May, right after Canadians had voted in the last election. This legally binding treaty will give unprecedented powers over the authority and laws passed by our Parliament and elected Canadians to unaccountable, unelected UN bureaucrats con-

trolled by the Communist Chinese. The health-conscious petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to immediately and unilaterally withdraw from the WHO's pandemic treaty.

REGISTERED DISABILITY SAVINGS PLAN

Hon. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions on behalf of my constituents. The first was started in Burlington. It is an e-petition that is calling on the government to increase the lifetime contribution for the registered disability savings plan. My constituents and petitioners note that only 35% of eligible Canadians contribute to an RDSP, and they are calling on the government to increase the lifetime contribution from \$200,000 to \$300,000. This would ensure that folks would be able to take care of themselves and that families could provide for their children and dependents for the long run.

● (1010)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is also coming from Burlington and it calls on the government to increase and modernize methane regulations.

PENSIONS

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by Canadian military and RCMP veterans who are calling on the Government of Canada to eliminate the so-called marriage after 60 clause, a discriminatory provision of the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act that denies survivor pension benefits to spouses and partners of military and RCMP veterans who marry after the age of 60.

This outdated policy punishes these veterans for finding love and companionship later in life and forces some to choose between financial security and their partners' future well-being. These veterans have served our country with honour, and they and their loved ones deserve to be treated with fairness and dignity. I am proud today to present this petition and to stand with the petitioners in supporting their call for the government to eliminate this unjust clause and ensure that surviving spouses and partners receive the pension benefits they deserve and should be entitled to.

* * *

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.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[For text of questions and responses, see *Written Questions web-site*]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—INTERIM FEDERAL HEALTH PROGRAM

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC) moved:

That, given that,

- (i) the cost of the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) has more than quadrupled in the last four years, from \$211 million to \$896 million,
- (ii) the cost of the IFHP is projected to rise to \$1.5 billion by 2029-2030,
- (iii) the IFHP provides non-citizens with failed asylum claims access to benefits that Canadian citizens do not have free access to, including vision care,
- (iv) Canadians that have paid into the healthcare system their whole lives are unable to get the healthcare they deserve in part because resources are going to false asylum claimants,

the House call on the government to:

- (a) review federal benefits provided to asylum claimants in order to find savings for taxpayers;
- (b) restrict federal benefits received by rejected asylum claimants to emergency lifesaving healthcare only;
- (c) provide transparency on federal spending on the IFHP by providing an annual report to Parliament, particularly regarding supplementary benefits which Canadian citizens do not have access to; and
- (d) pass policies to immediately expel foreign nationals convicted of serious crime in Canada.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the wonderful, hard-working member for Riding Mountain.

Under the Liberal government, we have seen a dramatic drop in public support for immigration in Canada. Before the Liberal government, Canada's immigration system welcomed people who came to Canada to work hard and to contribute. It protected the world's most vulnerable people, but the Liberals' decision to bring too many people into Canada too fast changed all of that. Canada's crumbling immigration consensus can be attributed to another Liberal failure.

To keep the system fair for everyone, we must end two-tiered Liberal policies that reward non-citizens with no legal reason to be in Canada at the expense of Canadian citizens and legitimate refugees. For example, the law is clear that Canada must deport non-citizens convicted of serious crimes. However, the Liberals have allowed judges to sidestep the intent of that law, handing down lighter sentences precisely to help non-citizen criminals avoid deportation. This makes our streets less safe for everyone.

Failed asylum claimants, people who have made refugee claims but who have had their claims invalidated through Canadian due process, are now given access to better health care, such as vision care and physiotherapy, than Canadians. All anyone has to do is go into one of our ERs to see first-hand that Canada's health care system is crumbling. More than 100,000 Canadians have died waiting

Business of Supply

for care since 2018, which directly corresponds to the explosion of the cost of the interim federal health program.

To restore order and fairness, the government must end both of these practices. That is why today, Conservatives are delivering constructive policy options and calling upon the government to do the following: ensure that when foreign nationals are convicted of serious crimes in Canada, our policies and practices ensure that they leave, and restrict federal benefits received by rejected asylum claimants to emergency life-saving health care only. These are common-sense measures that are needed to restore order and fairness to Canada's immigration and health care systems and to keep Canada working for everyone.

In my speech today, I want to debunk some of the spin that the Liberals are using to defend some of these failures. I want to start with health care benefits for failed asylum claimants.

For starters, under the Liberals, the interim federal health program, the program that provides benefits to asylum claimants, has morphed well beyond its initial intent, which was to provide care to a small number of legitimate refugees who were fleeing to Canada from war zones. Today, it is a massive boondoggle that provides care to many bogus asylum claimants. The cost of this program has ballooned too. Conservatives uncovered that under the Liberals, the overall cost of the interim federal health program has skyrocketed by over 1,000%, from \$66 million to nearly \$900 million a year, and it is projected to reach \$1.5 billion a year in very short order.

In fact, the Liberals have mismanaged the program so badly that they did not give the data to the Parliamentary Budget Officer on costs broken down by category. Right now, Liberals on the health committee are currently filibustering a motion that would ensure that the government provides the PBO with this data. That is because, contrary to Liberal claims, Canada's asylum backlog has gotten much worse and is still getting worse.

The backlog hit a record 300,000 cases in December 2025 and massive numbers of people in that backlog will be found to have made bogus claims. This is no accident. It results directly from Liberal failures like lifting visa requirements on countries like Mexico with no safeguards to prevent bogus claims, and refusing to tighten border laws to stop illegal crossings and fraudulent asylum applications.

Further, Conservative Order Paper Question No. 556 asked how many failed asylum claimants have remained in Canada since 2020 alone. To give members a sense of the scope of the problem of the government giving health benefits to failed asylum claimants, the data in this Order Paper question showed that by adding up the refugee protection division and refugee appeal division's decisions, 86% of rejected claimants remain in Canada, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 90,000 people.

Business of Supply

That aligns with recent government data showing that of at least 500,000 undocumented individuals in Canada, plus around two million people on expired or soon-to-expire work and other temporary permits, and thousands of failed asylum claimants, the Liberals only removed about 22,000 people last year. Millions of people minus 22,000 is still millions.

• (1015)

The government lacks both the operational capacity and the political will to accelerate deportations of non-citizens with no legal right to remain, so instead of removing them from Canada, as the law requires it to do, it is providing better access to health care to failed asylum claimants than to Canadians. That is not right. It is unfair to everyone. At a time when six million Canadians cannot find a family doctor, wait times to see a specialist have hit nearly 30 weeks and nearly 24,000 Canadians died on wait-lists in 2024-25, not a single person without a legal reason to be in Canada should receive better health care than Canadian citizens do.

Rejected asylum claimants should be removed from Canada instead. During the time they are awaiting removal, as we know it takes a long time under the Liberal government, their health benefits should be restricted to emergency life-saving care only. Failed asylum claimants would still have access to life-saving emergency care under the measures in our motion, but gone would be their access to receive benefits that Canadians are not eligible to receive. This would also serve to reduce the demand from non-citizens, who are essentially incentivized to abuse the system, and ensure that Canadians who pay into the system are prioritized.

Unfortunately, rather than ending the practice of giving failed asylum claimants better health care benefits than Canadians, the Liberals are now proposing to set up a costly bureaucracy that would still force Canadian taxpayers to foot the bill for 70% of the premium health care costs that failed asylum claimants incur. In fact, they have gotten things so backwards that they are, as a report stated this morning, cutting integration support for legitimate refugees who want to contribute and be a part of our country while giving premium health care benefits to failed asylum claimants. That is bananas.

Instead, the Liberals should support our motion, restore fairness and restrict the health benefits that failed asylum claimants can receive to emergency life-saving care only. Our proposal to restrict failed asylum claimants' health benefits to emergency life-saving care aligns with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and our Constitution. Given the rapidly ballooning costs of the interim federal health program, it responds to pressing and substantive policy concerns.

The 2012 changes to the interim federal health program were struck down primarily because they created tiers based on country of origin. Our motion today would apply to all failed asylum claimants. The 2012 Federal Court of Appeal ruling explicitly rejected the argument that immigration status alone triggers protected equality rights, affirming that distinctions between citizens and non-citizens are often permissible. Our policy aligns with that ruling by applying equally to all failed applicants. Moreover, the Federal Court of Appeal overturned any notion of a section 12 violation in the 2012 case. The trial court also dismissed section 7 argu-

ments, confirming the charter imposes no positive obligation to fund comprehensive health care for non-citizens.

The Liberals have also claimed that non-citizens convicted of serious crimes do not get more lenient sentences in order to help them avoid deportation. That too is a lie. Almost every week, another high-profile incident comes to light of a non-citizen convicted of serious crimes getting a lenient sentence and avoiding deportation. In the last three months alone, we have seen stories that included a man convicted of possession of child pornography, who knew it was a crime when he watched it, given leniency as the judge gave him six months less a day and explicitly stated that it was to avoid immigration consequences.

This practice is perpetuating a two-tier justice system in Canada where non-citizens are treated differently than Canadian citizens. That is wrong. It is a violation of the spirit of the law that has upheld Canada's immigration consensus for years. Having a two-tier justice system for non-citizens convicted of a serious crime and a two-tiered health care system for failed asylum claimants is unfair and needs to stop.

We need to get back to order and fairness in Canada's immigration system, as well as in our health care system. The motion today is a common-sense constructive proposal to get back on track. If the Liberals are serious about restoring order and fairness, they are going to have to support it. I encourage all parties in the House today to support this proposal.

• (1020)

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I wonder if my hon. friend from Calgary Nose Hill, as a proud Albertan, has thoughts on the premier's recent proposal around immigration as a referendum for Albertans since it touches on today's question. I am baffled by the fact that she is encouraging more people to move to Alberta, with Alberta complaining the federal Liberals are not doing enough to get immigrants to Alberta. If she has thoughts on this as a proud Canadian and Albertan, I would be grateful.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, the member opposite who asked that question supported Liberal policies that put an undue burden on provincial governments.

When the Liberals brought in too many people too fast for housing, health care and jobs to keep up, what happened was that the provinces ended up shouldering the burden for a lot of the social costs of that program. In fact, my colleague who sits on the health committee, who is about to speak, actually asked the immigration minister if she had even bothered to consult the provinces on the cost of health care related to their mass immigration numbers, and the answer was no.

Business of Supply

Of course, because the Liberal government has not enacted common-sense proposals like this one, the provinces are going to start coming up with solutions on their own. This is really about the need for the Liberal government to adopt proposals like ours, which are constructive and designed to restore order and fairness to Canada's immigration system.

Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, nowhere is this felt more impactfully than in our rural and remote communities. Over six million Canadians are without doctors. In our province of British Columbia, we have emergency room closures. We have OB/GYN teams that are absolutely abandoning our communities, and pregnant women are forced to go great distances to get help.

Almost \$1 billion has been spent on illegal immigrants and such. That money could be spent to do incredible work in our rural and remote communities, as well as on my file of recovery centres for those facing mental health issues and addictions. Could our colleague comment on that?

• (1025)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, the Liberals brought too many people in too fast for health care to keep up. When we look at the delta between federal government spending on health care and the number of people that came in, it does not match. That was validated by the fact that the immigration minister said that she did not consult provinces on the cost of health care.

Our proposal today is step number one: Failed asylum claimants should not get premium health care compared to what Canadians get. They should have access to life-saving care only. Then, as the law says, they should leave Canada. There should not be any costly bureaucracies set up. We have to get back to focusing on Canadians and those who pay into Canada's health care system.

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, the problem we are facing is largely caused by the skyrocketing number of asylum seekers and the unacceptable processing times for asylum claims. There are countries that have managed to reduce processing times, like France, where a claim takes less than six months to process, and Germany, where it takes less than eight months.

Should we not start by really focusing our efforts on putting as much pressure as possible on the government to reduce processing times for asylum claims?

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, first, we have seen that the government's efforts to "expedite" asylum claimants means rubber-stamping applicants from hostile nations like North Korea and Afghanistan without an in-person interview. That is not acceptable.

Second, the province of Quebec has seen an inordinate explosion of asylum claimants, many of them false, because the government has still not put in place more tightened restrictions to prevent illegal border crossings.

Third, this measure today will also reduce the incentives for people to continue to abuse the system. If people know that their asylum claim will be rejected and they will not receive premium health benefits, fewer people will be inclined to continue to abuse the system. That is why this measure is needed, particularly for the province of Quebec.

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, let us talk about a two-tiered health care system, not the fictional version that the Liberals and the NDP dust off every election to scare Canadians but a real one that actually exists. There is a two-tiered health care system in Canada today, but it is one that the left-wing politicians suddenly refuse to touch. This two-tiered system has a name; it is called the interim federal health program. This program was originally created to ensure that refugees fleeing genuine persecution had temporary health care while they transitioned into our provincial health care systems. Now it is being exploited by bogus asylum claimants.

Most Canadians know what the public health care system covers: doctors, hospitals and medically necessary care. That is what the Canada Health Act guarantees, and that is what Canadians are proud of. However, Canadians also know what it does not cover; it does not cover premium benefits like vision care, physiotherapy, counselling, assistive devices, occupational therapy and home care.

In 2016, the Liberals expanded the program to give supplemental health benefits to asylum seekers. According to the government, supplemental health benefits under the interim federal health program include vision care, counselling, assistive devices, home visits, nursing homes, transportation, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and interpretation services. Those are the government's words, not mine. These are not basic emergency services; they are deluxe health benefits that millions of Canadians pay for out of pocket or earn through their workplace.

However, that is not the most troubling part of the program. There is a group of people receiving these benefits that the government has tried to hide from Canadians. I am going to read from the government's own eligibility page for the interim federal health program. This is publicly available for anyone willing to look at it. Under the heading "Refugee claimants", it states, in the government's words, that coverage is provided if "your claim for refugee protection has been rejected by the [Immigration and Refugee Board]". It says "rejected", not "pending" and not "under review".

Business of Supply

The Immigration and Refugee Board, the very body the government created to make these determinations, reviewed a claim and said no. A legal body made a legal determination, and the Liberal government's response to that rejection is to keep those individuals enrolled in the program with full benefits, including the deluxe supplemental health benefits that Canadians are not entitled to. How long does this continue? The government's own website answers that too. In its words, it says that coverage remains in place until "you leave Canada." Why would anyone in that position choose to leave Canada?

Let me be absolutely clear. Conservatives support providing emergency and life-saving care to anyone in this country, including someone whose claim has been rejected. That is a basic humanitarian principle, and we stand by it, but it is not what the program does for rejected claimants. It does not restrict them to emergency care; it keeps them enrolled in a full program, including every supplemental benefit I have described, for as long as they remain in Canada. Vision care, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, home care and speech therapy are all fully covered for people who the refugee board has already said should not be here.

Because the government has allowed a historic backlog to paralyze the immigration system, with claims taking years to process, the number of people in the program is staggering. The Parliamentary Budget Officer projects there will be over 680,000 people who are eligible beneficiaries by 2030. Because of the Conservative-led investigation at the health committee, the Parliamentary Budget Officer also revealed that the interim federal health program will cost Canadians over \$1.5 billion by the year 2030.

• (1030)

To put it in perspective, that is up from approximately \$66 million from a decade ago. In under a decade, the program described as limited and temporary has grown by more than 1,000%. It is \$1.5 billion every year for a program called interim. That is the word I keep returning to: "interim", which means temporary. As I said earlier, the program was designed to be a bridge for genuine refugees who needed care but were not covered under the provincial insurance plans.

When a program costs \$80 million a year and serves a defined, time-limited purpose, it is reasonable to call it interim. When it costs over \$1.5 billion a year, is growing every single year and has no ceiling and no off-ramp, it is not interim anymore; it is a permanent, expanding entitlement that is being exploited by the people it was not designed to help. It costs \$1.5 billion every year, there is a backlog stretching years, and Canadians are waiting behind all of it.

Think about what this means for the Canadian family. Think about a mother in this country who has been waiting months to see a specialist. Her doctor referred her, but she is still waiting in a system that is already stretched beyond its limits. Genuine refugees are also on the wait-lists, seeking the care they deserve. They are playing by the rules, but ahead of all those Canadians and genuine refugees on that wait-list are bogus asylum claimants, people whose claim the refugee board has already reviewed and rejected. Think about that. Six million Canadians do not have a family doctor right now. The average wait time to see a specialist is around 30 weeks,

and over 100,000 Canadians have died since 2018 while waiting for care.

When rejected fraudulent asylum claimants are on the wait list, they add to the backlog and reduce timely care for Canadians and genuine refugees. It is not only the bogus asylum claimants who are exploiting the program; reports suggest that the medical community may be exploiting it as well. The health committee heard testimony from doctors that physicians are billing the interim federal health program up to five times the rate they charge for Canadian patients, with little oversight, if any. According to the program's fee guide, there are no maximum billing limits for many services under the program.

Canada is a generous country. We always have been. We welcome people who are fleeing genuine persecution, and we should. Conservatives believe in immigration and health care systems that are compassionate and fair, but fair means something. Fair means that the nurse in Winnipeg should not have to pick up an extra shift to pay for her glasses, while the federal government hands that same benefit for free to someone who had their fraudulent claim rejected by the refugee board and has not left.

Fair means that the mother trying to get her son the care he needs should not be on a wait-list behind the people whose legal right to be in this country has been denied. Fair means that when the Parliamentary Budget Officer reports that this program will cost Canadians over \$1.5 billion a year with no accountability, the government has an obligation to act.

Here is what the Conservatives are proposing: When the Immigration and Refugee Board rejects a claim, health coverage must be restricted to emergency and life-saving care only. The government should also review all the benefits provided by the program to restore fairness to the people who fund the health care system.

The Liberals and left-wing politicians spent decades warning Canadians about a two-tiered health care system, but they have built a two-tiered system. It is called the interim federal health program. It is a program that bogus asylum claimants exploit at the expense of Canadians and genuine refugees. It is time to restore this program to support the people it was designed to serve.

• (1035)

Doug Eyolfson (Winnipeg West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is much talk of the phrases "bogus asylum seekers" and "fraudulent asylum seekers". How does the hon. member respond to findings from the Immigration and Refugee Board that, at most, only a couple of dozen applications a year are actually found to be fraud?

Business of Supply

Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, again, I cannot believe what the member is asking of me. In the health committee right now, we have been analyzing this. The PBO came out with a report that found that the cost was going to be \$150 billion a year. Then the Liberals started saying, “But we found a solution to this. Look at what we've done. We're going to fix this problem. We're going to fix these bogus claims. We're going to fix the cost of the program, but we need more reports and more study.”

We then proposed an actual motion to do that, to give the Parliamentary Budget Officer the leeway and the time to actually go ahead and study it more. What did the Liberals do? They are filibustering this. They are stopping us at committee from actually going forward with the motion and getting to the bottom of this. Canadians deserve an answer, and I will stand to the end of the day until we get the motion through.

[*Translation*]

Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ): Madam Speaker, at the end of their motion, the Conservatives ask the House to “pass policies to immediately expel foreign nationals convicted of serious crime in Canada”, but under the existing legislation, such individuals serve their sentences here in Canada and are then deported.

Our concern is that people who are convicted of serious crimes will be immediately deported without having to serve their sentence. There is no guarantee that the person will serve that sentence outside of Canada, in another country. I am thinking about the families of victims of Driver Inc. truckers who lost their loved ones as a result of criminal negligence. We will have to tell them that the person who was found guilty will be deported without having served their sentence.

What is the reasoning behind this part of the motion?

[*English*]

Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, I am the shadow minister for health, so that is what I have been focusing on. The interim federal health program and the bogus claimants have had a devastating impact on our access to health care in Canada. As far as the technicalities of the question that the member asked go, I would refer that response to my colleague from Calgary who is the shadow minister for that department.

• (1040)

Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, while the member was speaking, I took a second to look up what the federal health transfers are to the province of Saskatchewan as a whole, and the amount for the program for bogus refugee claimants is actually the same as the amount of the transfer to the whole province. Saskatchewan gets \$1.6 billion a year, and the program gets \$1.5 billion.

How is it even fair to the people of Saskatchewan that they are getting almost the same amount in the health care transfer? They have worked hard and paid taxes—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I have to interrupt the hon. member. The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni is rising on a point of order.

Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, in this place, there is a responsibility to provide background in evidence when a member starts making claims that a whole province would be—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): That is debate, as the hon. member knows.

The hon. member for Regina—Lewvan can complete his question so we can resume debate.

Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, I would like to finish my question after having been rudely interrupted.

It is actually in the federal budget that Saskatchewan gets \$1.6 billion in Canada health transfers. If the member can read, he can see that.

My question is this: How is it fair to the people of Saskatchewan, who pay taxes and work hard each and every day to support this country, to get the same amount in health care transfers as refugees whose claims have been rejected get?

Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question my colleague just asked, and I think that is the crux of the problem with the program.

It is not fair to any one of us. It is not fair to the Canadians who pay into the system, and it is not fair to the refugees whom we are actually trying to service. That is what everybody is missing on this, especially on the Liberal side. I cannot for the life of me understand why the Liberals are not doing something about this, especially when we have now pointed it out. The program has grown by more than 1,000%. I know they are not very good with numbers, but surely that should stand out in anyone's budget on the other side.

Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I would like to indicate, under Standing Order 43(2)(a), that the allotted speaking times of the Conservative caucus will henceforth be divided in two.

Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade and to the Secretary of State (International Development), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I must confess, as I start my remarks, that I am coming from a place of extreme sadness around the level, tone and tenor of debate that I have been hearing in the House. I recognize that my Conservative colleagues and their political party are a bit against the ropes right now. They are down in the polls and not getting any traction with the public, and their set of issues is not something people are talking about. In fact, people are focused on what the Prime Minister is doing and how we are building the economy of the country.

Business of Supply

Conservatives go for the easiest thing they can always find when they are feeling challenged. They pick on the most marginalized and vulnerable people in our country. They go for that divide and conquer strategy that has always suited their needs. It is all about us Canadians versus the other. That is the entire essence of this debate. After hearing them use words like bogus refugees and fake refugees and talk about deporting non-citizens and foreign nationals, we might think Donald Trump was speaking. We might think those words came straight out of the mouth of Donald Trump, but here is a news flash. Those are the words of the leader of the official opposition. I mean, talk about using Trumpian language, talk about scaremongering, talk about fearmongering, and talk about dividing Canadians.

No wonder the Conservatives are losing support, my friends. No wonder they are even losing their own colleagues to this side of the House—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I have to interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary.

The hon member for Riding Mountain is rising on a point of order.

• (1045)

Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, I do not know what the relevance is of the speech—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member knows there is great leeway.

The hon. parliamentary secretary is starting his speech. We are going to give him the 20 minutes he has to make his point.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, I figured I would get interrupted a few times. I am ready for the right-wing troller trash to be unleashed on me as well as a result of my comments. I am completely ready for that, because what this motion would do has nothing to do with facts or how we can perhaps reform a system. It completely has to do with dividing Canadians, trying to use the Trumpian sentiments that we are seeing south of the border to bring that level of debate to our country.

Frankly, I find this motion to be irresponsible. I find this motion to be dangerous. In fact, I find this motion and debate to be lazy on the part of the official opposition. They can do better with their time. There is enough to debate and criticize the government on, there always is, to help build our economy, but to bring forward a motion that picks on refugees, immigrants and those seeking asylum because they are facing hardships and political persecution in the countries they come from is wrong. That is absolutely dead wrong.

I sometimes wonder if there is some sort of Conservative ChatGPT that exists out there and if, whenever they are having problems, they just ask for five ways they can pick on immigrants to solve the problems. That is exactly what we see from Conservatives time and time again. They never learned the lesson that dividing Canadians the way they are doing right now through this motion is not going to help build a strong country. It is not going to help build a strong health care system for all Canadians.

We saw the same thing from the Premier of Alberta, Danielle Smith, for the challenges she is facing and the mismanagement that she is responsible for. What is she doing? She is going to have a referendum on immigrants. How lazy must one be to think that is the way to solve the problems? That is not healthy debate. That is not looking at the facts.

Why do we not, then, look at the facts? Yes, the amount of money that goes into the interim federal health program has gone up. There is a very simple reason for that. It has gone up because the number of refugees who have come here seeking asylum has gone up as well. Of course, correspondingly speaking, more money is going to get spent to help those individuals receive health care services while they are in Canada and working through the system. For the official opposition to make these claims now, without any proof or data as to how many of those people are asylum claimants versus refugees, how many of their cases have been rejected or not or what stage of the process they are in, is absolutely trying to cloud the entire topic and not looking, factually, at what is happening and perhaps coming up with concrete, thoughtful solutions as to how to improve the system.

In fact, the government is looking into ways to improve the system, but we are not using language like “fake refugees” or “deport foreign nationals” or “bogus refugees”. That is, purely and simply, Trumpian language. I know so many members of the opposition personally. I know they do not believe in that. They should please not fall for that or take the bait of this below-the-belt conversation by going for the easiest thing. We have worked hard to build this country for everyone. All of us, with the exception of indigenous people, have come from some part of the world. People have come because life in the place they lived was not good. They wanted to come to this country to build a better life. So many of the ancestors in this place came through war-torn Europe. Why did they leave? They came as refugees on boats, because they wanted to build a better life. Were we going to deny them the kind of care they needed so they could rebuild their lives? Absolutely not, so why is there a double standard now? Why do we want to change our position now? Why is it so easy to call them bogus and fake?

• (1050)

We are better than that; we can be better than that. We can have better conversations and better debates in this chamber. What are we going to talk about next, remigration? Is that the next eventual debate we are going to have, where we start talking about somebody like me, who came here 37 years ago, and say that it is time for me to leave? Is that what we will be talking about next? This is where the conversation will go if we do not stand up today to have a thoughtful conversation.

I am not suggesting that the program being debated is perfect, but then let us talk about solutions. Let us not talk about bogus refugees, fake refugees or deporting non-nationals.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Business of Supply

Yasir Naqvi: That is the language you are using. Go on X right now. Take a look at your leader, who is walking around somewhere in downtown Toronto, talking about those things. You have been using all kinds of rhetoric, such as deluxe supplemental benefits, which brings all of us down. It brings down the spirit of Canada and what this country is all about.

I for one am not going to accept this. I am going to call it out every time I see it, because it is beneath all of us. I am going to stand up for all of us.

I am getting worked up, but this is an important issue. It is about setting the tone. This is about saying the right words and doing the right thing. The large majority of the people who have access to the program are not bogus or fake. Most of them have left the places they come from to protect their lives.

I am sure there are some people taking advantage of the system, of course, and that is human nature, but they are not the ones for whom \$1 billion is being spent. Somebody asked me how many there were, and I would love to hear the number from you.

An hon. member: It is 86,000.

Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, last year it was 86,000 out of 549,324 people. Do the percentage right now, my friend. All of a sudden, all of those people are bogus and fake. Come on.

Again, nobody is denying that the costs have gone up, but let us be careful with the language we use. Let us not incite Canadians against each other.

An hon. member: They are not Canadians.

Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, I just heard a friend of mine across the way say that they are not Canadians. The truth comes out. All of a sudden our humanity is out the window, because if someone is not Canadian, then we do not owe them anything. We have no international obligations and we do not protect their human rights. The truth comes out. The heckle from the other side was that they are not Canadian; it is us versus them.

Guess what? When a lot of our parents came here, they were not Canadians either at the time. They were not Canadians, but they were embraced and given refuge and opportunities to succeed, and they built this country. So will these people.

If members across the way are trying to discriminate between people who came from war-torn Europe versus people who may be coming from war-torn Africa, they should say it out loud and on the record. Do not just heckle me when the microphone is not on.

That is what this debate is about, and I will go back to my point. It saddens me, because that is not the debate we should be having in this country. We should be looking at this moment in time and how we are going to build Canada, and it will require every single one of us.

• (1055)

In a healthy democracy, we are going to disagree with each other, absolutely, but we should disagree with each other in a thoughtful way, in a way that is going to make us stronger, more resilient and more powerful. That is what we owe to this country, not tearing

each other down and not creating an us-versus-them narrative. That is exactly what the motion is trying to do.

Again, we can look at the language that is being used. The debate is not that somehow Canadians are going to be getting less health care because \$1 billion is being spent on this program. How can that be debated? One billion dollars—

An hon. member: Health care is broken.

Yasir Naqvi: Health care is broken? Madam Speaker, that is what I heard. I hope you are having that conversation with your minister of health in Saskatchewan, my friend. I hope you are having that conversation.

An hon. member: Alberta.

Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, is it Alberta? Yes, that is what your premier thinks too. She blames immigrants. She wants to have a referendum on immigrants because she is unable to manage her own books.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George is rising on a point of order.

Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, our hon. colleague knows that he is to address his comments not to the gallery but through the Speaker. He continues to answer questions, and it goes back and forth. I am just saying that he should get back on track and direct his comments through the Speaker, not directly to the gallery.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Yes, I would remind the hon. parliamentary secretary to speak through the Chair.

Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the appropriate point of order from my colleague.

Let us look at this program. In the fiscal year 2024-25, the eligible population in Canada for the program was about 549,324 people, as I mentioned, of whom 440,537 were asylum claimants, protected persons and victims of human trafficking and family violence. We can imagine those individuals, depending on which part of the world they come from, as asylum claimants, protected persons and victims of human trafficking and family violence. Would members not agree that they would require some important health care services, when it comes to not only primary health care but the kinds of counselling and physiotherapy they would need in order to rebuild? For those who are listening to this debate, that is what the money is going toward, trying to help those particular individuals.

If I look at, for example, the victims of human trafficking and family violence, the costs went from \$91.3 million to \$372 million over that one period. Of that \$1 billion the Conservatives are speaking of, \$327 million went toward victims of human trafficking and family violence. I for one would argue that the money was well spent. The kind of care needed for those individuals to rebuild their lives is really important. However, what we have heard in the debate is that somehow the entire \$1 billion has been wasted and spent on “bogus refugees” or “fake refugees”. Those are not my words but the words of the leader of the official opposition. That is not the case. The numbers do not bear that out.

An hon. member: Your numbers are fake.

Business of Supply

Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, again, we just heard my colleague say that my numbers are fake. We do not even have to name Trump anymore to say that is the kind of language he uses. The member can do better. This is what I am saying. How lazy is his argument if this is what he has to go to?

Let us focus on the issue at hand. The reason the cost of this program has gone up is that, as we all know, and we have debated it quite sufficiently in the House over the last couple of years, the number of immigrants coming to Canada has gone up. The number of refugees seeking asylum has gone up as well. In fact, that number is now starting to come down. However, if the number of people coming in increases, of course the services they need will go up as well. That is why the cost has gone up.

Has the government taken appropriate steps to bring the number down? Absolutely. In fact, we have seen it when it comes to the level plans, the number of temporary foreign workers, and in our arrangement with the United States on how we manage our borders. All of these things have been done, and we have seen results as a product of that. Therefore, of course, the cost of the program will come down as well.

The government is also looking at a copayment model. As many would know, that is part of the budget process that IRCC is working through to ensure that the costs could be managed. That is the thoughtful debate we should be working through in the House, not just trying to say that the entire program is going to fake or bogus refugees. Again, those are not my words but those of the opposition. Let us come up with thoughtful, sophisticated things.

In my last two minutes or so, I would again say to the House that we can do better. We can do better in our debate. We can do better in how we speak to all Canadians, whether they are citizens or not. We should never talk about us versus them. Guess what; I was one of them too at one time. How long will it be before this debate comes down to me or my children becoming “them” again? There is no us and them. We are all in this together.

• (1100)

We build this country together, as everyone before us has done. We will continue to do so. I know the hon. members across the aisle believe that as well. I want them to stand up to their leadership and say no to this kind of debate, absolutely no. This is not what Canadians are asking for. If Conservatives think this is how they are going to get popular again and maybe form government, they are dreaming in la-la land. They are. They will keep their base. Good for them. Their base will never vote for us anyways.

Let us work together. Let us build this country together. I look forward to working with all the members of the House to do that.

Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is a lot to unpack there. We can feel the passion from our colleague across the way. I do not think anyone is dreaming in la-la land, as our colleague across the way projected this morning.

Let us look at what the motion of the text says. It merely states that the cost of the interim federal health program has more than quadrupled, from \$211 million to \$896 million, in the last four years. It is projected to rise to \$1.5 billion. We currently have non-

Canadians who are receiving treatment when Canadians who have paid into it all their lives are not receiving it.

In my province, there are wait times up to 18 months. As I mentioned earlier on, we have emergency room closures. We have pregnant women who are having to travel up to four to eight hours to see specialists because we do not have doctors who are available for them in rural, remote communities. Our health care system is broken. I think we can all agree on that. What we are asking is that the House call on the government to review federal health benefits provided to asylum claimants in order to find savings for taxpayers. The Liberals like to bring up the guy to the south whenever they want to strike fear into and divide Canadians. All we are saying through this motion is that a calmer, measured approach needs to be taken to fix our health care system, and our motion clearly states that.

• (1105)

Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, I wish the member opposite would have written this motion or been the spokesperson for this, but I am sorry, that is not the language his leader has been using. We do not have to go too far to see it. We can just go on X or Instagram and look at it right now. I agree with the member that the debate around the state of our health care system is an extremely important debate, but how is this \$1 billion all of a sudden going to open all the hospitals that are being closed, for example, or help the people who do not have doctors? In fact, I will say, if these people who live in our communities, who are our neighbours, do not get health care, we can guess where they are going to end up. They are going to end up in emergency rooms. That is going to cost us more and cause more concerns and pains to our communities.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague's very impassioned speech and I get the sense that there is a topic he failed to cover. In fact, my colleague from Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Listuguj, the Bloc Québécois immigration critic, raised this point yesterday during question period. The government reportedly accepted thousands of asylum claims without conducting any checks or holding any in-person interviews.

Does my colleague think that is acceptable? In these circumstances, does he not think that the government needs to make some serious changes to the way it processes asylum claims?

Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, which is a fair one.

Business of Supply

[English]

Of course, we need to make sure our asylum claimant system works well. Nobody is debating or denying the fact that there are backlogs, that it could be managed better. I am not suggesting that there be no evaluation of this program or the way we review asylum claims, and the speed at which we do so, from an administrative and procedural perspective. I appreciate that tone of debate but not the kind we have seen from the Conservatives on this thus far.

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the framing of my colleague's answer, and his pushing back on the premise and the framing of the Leader of the Opposition around this. His framing is actually inflammatory and is a menace to our social cohesion.

Could the member tell me what his thoughts were when he heard the Leader of the Opposition framing refugees, people who are fleeing war and people who are fleeing climate disasters, as criminals? I know that my hon. colleague is also someone who came from a war-torn country to this country seeking a better life. Many colleagues in this House are in that situation. What does that do to our society?

As well, could the member talk about the future of the Conservative Party if it continues to divide Canadians and break our social cohesion?

Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, I will leave the future of the Conservative Party in the hands of the voters.

I think what we are seeing from some of the Conservative members is that they do not disagree with the position of our party and are actually choosing a different direction. I am sure it is not easy for anybody to leave their political party and join another one. Imagine the limits they are being pushed to by the level of discourse that we are seeing in the House for them to make this kind of decision.

The member asked me what my first reaction was, and it is that there is not even a pretense of a dog whistle anymore. They are saying the things that we thought the Conservatives used to believe in, about us versus them, about immigrants versus non-immigrants and about refugees versus non-refugees, but they are now just saying it out loud. It is a shameful day for this country.

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, with respect to the comments the parliamentary secretary made earlier, he is absolutely correct that the Conservative approach is divisive and penalizes the people who are most vulnerable in our community.

To the point on interim federal health policy, the Liberal government brought forward a copayment system in the budget. For those who are suffering mental health challenges with trauma, people who have escaped persecution, violence, gender-based violence and so on, access to mental health and access to medication would be critical. A \$4 fee could be prohibitive for them. A 30% increase in copayment fees could be prohibitive for them.

Would the member agree that the government should not go down that track because it is edging right into the trap that the Conservatives are setting?

• (1110)

Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, just yesterday I had a very thoughtful and detailed meeting with a doctor who is part of the Canadian Refugee Health Network, the executive director of Somerset West Community Health Centre, which is located in my riding, to have this exact conversation and to talk about the changes that are being proposed around copayment on some of these supplemental benefits. We went through the kind of impact that could have.

My commitment to them is that I look forward to sharing their findings with the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and having a conversation to see if there is a better way to look at the cost aspect of this program, but also, at the same time, to ensure that good health care is being delivered for these individuals.

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, our motion today is about people whose asylum claims have been rejected.

I think the member would have to acknowledge that the government recognizes that this is a problem, because it has put the copay mechanism in place. We are talking specifically about those who have had their request rejected.

Would the member not acknowledge that the government's copay plan acknowledges that this is indeed a problem?

Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, first of all, if that is the focus of the argument, it is a very small number of people, so to then argue that somehow the entire \$1 billion is being spent on people whose asylum claims may have been refused is an erroneous argument. Again, the way that argument is being presented is divisive.

The other thing I will say is that if people's asylum claims have been denied, they are probably going through the appeal process. There are constitutional, legal obligations that we have to follow. We cannot just pretend that the law does not apply because somebody is not a Canadian or a permanent resident.

There are many factors in play to make sure people are getting the care they need while they are working through the process.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to hear the parliamentary secretary say he will stand up and call out whenever refugees are made scapegoats.

Why did he not stand up and call out Bill C-12? Right now, the senators are trying, with sober second thought, to take out the anti-refugee components of that bill.

Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, I do not think the member is questioning my perspective when it comes to standing up for refugees. I do that kind of work in this chamber and outside this chamber all the time.

[Translation]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Madam Speaker, first I want to mention that I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon. Her riding may get a new name soon that will probably be easier to pronounce.

Business of Supply

As the Bloc Québécois critic for immigration, citizenship and refugees, I would like to lay out our party's position on the official opposition's motion on health care for asylum claimants that we are debating today.

The Bloc Québécois is against this motion for the following reasons. First, it omits important information regarding the reasons that explain the increase in health care costs for asylum claimants. Second, the motion makes a risky and counterproductive link between the health care costs incurred by asylum claimants and the lack of federal funding for the provinces' health care systems. Third, the motion proposes measures that may be difficult to implement, in addition to increasing the burden on the provinces, such as restricting reimbursed care for asylum claimants to emergency life-saving health care only.

I still want to emphasize that we agree with the motion's observation regarding the inequity between asylum claimants and Quebec citizens with respect to coverage for certain services such as vision care and dental care. Allow me to explain our reasons in a bit more detail.

First, the Conservative motion states that the cost of the interim federal health program has more than quadrupled in recent years, rising from \$211 million to \$896 million, which is accurate. However, I think it is important to explain what caused the increase in costs. In his February 12 report, the Parliamentary Budget Officer wrote that the cost of the program grew as both the number of beneficiaries and the cost per beneficiary increased significantly. He went on to say, "In recent years, the number of beneficiaries has increased considerably. The rising volume of asylum claims, along with the longer duration of eligibility caused by extended determination times, has been an important growth driver in recent years."

What the Parliamentary Budget Officer has said is that the costs are going up because of increasing demand and because the eligibility period for asylum seekers is getting longer. Global geopolitical events are partially responsible for the increase in asylum claims, and as a result, it is perfectly normal for us to step up to meet our international obligations. To give members an idea of the numbers, between 2019 and 2024, Canada's annual asylum claims rose from 64,000 to a record 173,000, according to data from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. There were 60,000 asylum claimants living in Quebec in 2021, and that number rose to 180,000 in 2025. This is a three-fold increase in the number of asylum claimants across the province. Obviously, these people come here, make an asylum claim and have access to health care, so it is understandable how this would drive up costs. More people are eligible for the program, after all. On average, Quebec has received approximately 40% of asylum claimants, even though the province represents slightly under 22% of the Canadian population.

The increased costs stemming from the fact that the eligibility period is longer is driven by the fact that the federal government is slow to process asylum claims. This is an important factor because it points to a solution, which is that the federal government should process claims more effectively. The government must process asylum claims faster, while maintaining the quality of the process. As my colleague said a few minutes ago, it is clear that when the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada is asked to go faster, the

instinct seems to be to botch the job, as we say back home, and to remove security checks.

Perhaps the members of the Bloc Québécois are somewhat idealistic, but I do not think it is naive to hope that the federal government, which is part of the G7, can work efficiently and quickly without compromising security checks. Asylum claim processing times are catastrophic. The number of asylum claimants has gone up. What does a responsible government entity do when it sees that it has a high volume of claims? It is clear that the instinct has been to cut back on security checks, but the rational reaction would be to increase resources to process claims faster. However, the Liberal government has not done that, and the result is that processing backlogs have increased significantly.

• (1115)

In Quebec, 40 months can go by between the time someone files an asylum claim and when they receive the final decision. The person has access to health care for that 40-month period. Of course this is going to drive up costs.

It does not have to be that way; it is possible to be efficient. There are efficient countries in the world. France and Germany have also dealt with waves of migration. France is able to process claims within six months and Germany within just over eight months. Could Canada learn from these best practices? Could it process asylum claims quickly? I certainly hope so. If there is a structural reason as to why Canada is always less efficient, I would ask the members opposite to explain it to us.

This gives me an opportunity to highlight the Bloc's traditional demands with regard to asylum seekers. As I have already mentioned, Quebec bears a burden that is much greater than its proportional weight in the Canadian federation when it comes to taking in asylum seekers. Quebec is very welcoming, but we believe that the burden that comes with welcoming asylum seekers could be better distributed among the provinces, even though, as I said, we welcome newcomers with open arms.

That could help Quebec provide public services to asylum seekers. We have also made demands regarding the additional costs stemming from the 2024 wave of immigration. We would like the federal government to repay Quebec for the costs it incurred, which amount to \$700 million.

To wrap up this point, I would like to refer to what the Parliamentary Budget Officer said, because on its face, the motion paints a doomsday scenario. It is true that the cost of the federal health program has quadrupled, but the Parliamentary Budget Officer says he expects the increase to be much smaller over the next few years.

As I said earlier, I think that the Conservative Party's claim that Canadians are unable to get health care because resources are going to rejected asylum claimants is dangerous and counterproductive. It is dangerous because ordinarily, a G7 country should be able to take on the cost of providing health care to asylum seekers while still allocating adequate funding for provincial health care systems. It is counterproductive because this kind of false inference sows division and resentment, when our goal should be to try to reconcile divergent interests in our society.

People in Quebec and in the other provinces who are waiting for health care do deserve better. The federal government could address that by increasing health transfers to the provinces. The latest budget has the federal government slashing health transfers to the provinces. What with inflation and population aging, it is clear that the federal funding will not keep up with system costs. To take action on this, I urge the Conservative Party to support our demand for a more substantial increase in federal health transfers.

In closing, the motion contains measures that are likely to be impractical and that will add to the burden on the provinces. One example is restricting benefits received by asylum seekers to emergency life-saving health care only. My time is almost up, but I would like to give two reasons for opposing that measure.

First, under the Geneva Convention, refugees lawfully staying in the territory are entitled to the same treatment with respect to public relief and assistance as is accorded to nationals. As such, they are entitled to public assistance. The federal government tried to take away services for asylum seekers in 2012, but the Federal Court ruled that this was contrary to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms when it comes to Canadians' right to be protected from cruel and unusual treatment or punishment and their right to equality. There is a legal issue at play, so that could not happen.

Second, let us imagine for a moment an asylum seeker who goes to a hospital seeking care for a broken arm. Let us apply the Conservative motion. Is a broken arm life-threatening? I do not think so. A person can survive with a broken arm. What happens then? Health care workers will treat the person, of course, but the federal program will not cover the cost. Who will pay the bill? The provinces. If this motion goes through, the cost will be transferred to the provinces. We are against that.

• (1120)

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have to say that, in general, I agree with most of what my colleague said.

I would just like him to get into a little more detail. He said that the Conservative motion is treading on dangerous ground by conflating a lot of things, which can lead to confusion. What is my colleague referring to, specifically?

Alexis Deschênes: Madam Speaker, my point is that legitimate grievances can exist in a society. A person waiting for a hip replacement in Quebec has a right to be angry about delays. What we need to do is find a solution to that problem, not look for someone to blame. That is what I am worried about.

I believe we certainly have the means to take proper care of asylum seekers. However, the federal government also needs to invest

Business of Supply

more in health care because, otherwise, there will be resentment. The Conservative Party has a role to play, but so does the federal government, and it should increase federal funding for health care.

• (1125)

G rard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague's speech was, as always, very interesting and well researched.

The issues are quite obvious for Quebec. It is clear that 40% of asylum seekers have come to Quebec, even though we represent only 22% of the population. Quebec is overburdened. In addition, in Quebec it can take 40 months before a case is processed, as my colleague so aptly mentioned. However, elsewhere, like in Germany or France, they do a much better job of it.

My colleague talked about the role of the federal government. Over the past 10 years, how has the Liberal policy led us to the situation we are facing now, where we are stuck with the problem, and why is it that Quebecers are most directly affected by this policy? I must add that we consider this policy to show a complete lack of respect for immigrants.

Alexis Desch nes: Madam Speaker, my colleague's question is an excellent one, and there are two parts to the answer.

As we have seen, the increase in costs is due to the increase in refugee claims. That is not the federal government's fault. However, the Liberal government needs to answer for failing to add resources to process refugee claims given the growing demand from asylum seekers. That is the federal government's fault.

More than that, pressuring the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada to process claims faster without giving it the necessary resources resulted in what we saw yesterday. The government is doing away with security screening. We can talk about that in the coming days.

[*English*]

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely correct, in that part of the issue around escalating the cost of the system is the Liberal government's inadequacy in providing the necessary resources to get the applications processed. In the case of the IRB, for example, it needs the actual resources and the capacity to be able to process the applications so applicants are not just jammed up in the system. Equally important would be for Quebec and the other provinces to receive the additional funding that is required in the delivery of health care. That is absolutely paramount.

My question to my colleague is this: Would he also join the NDP to collectively demand that the Liberal government do what is right and honour our international obligations to refugees, and also support provinces and territories, including Quebec, in getting the necessary resources to do the work that is required?

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Alexis Deschênes: Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has already been calling on the federal government for quite some time now to reimburse Quebec for its costs, given the influx of migrants at Roxham Road. I think we agree on that point, since we are both calling on the federal government to reimburse the costs.

I completely agree with my colleague that we need to apply pressure and that the federal government needs to live up to its obligations. This is all very sensitive, because there may be all sorts of consequences if the government does not properly process asylum claims within a respectful time frame.

On the one hand, there is currently a risk of criminal gangs from certain countries slipping in. On the other hand, there are also people who are waiting far too long when they should be receiving status. The government really needs to do a better job of delivering services.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Madam Speaker, as my colleague who spoke before me mentioned, we will be voting against this Conservative motion for several reasons. I am quite proud of my riding's position. When I read the motion, I felt somewhat uncomfortable because it seems to paint all refugees with the same brush. I will explain why we are opposed to the motion.

The Bloc Québécois has given this a lot of thought. This is such a sensitive issue. It is not easy to talk about subjects like immigration and refugees in the House without being accused of being racist. I would like to share an experience that I had. If, after my 12 years in federal politics, someone were to ask me what my most difficult moment in the House was, I would say that it was when my colleague Alain Therrien, the former member for La Prairie, and I were accused of being racist by the leader of the NDP. He did that because we dared to raise a sensitive issue in the House, namely that of immigration, our intake capacity, refugees and need to evenly spread the intake of asylum seekers among the provinces.

That was the worse slight that was cast upon me, the one that caused me the most pain. I am making this confession because, in the Bloc Québécois, we have been saying for some time that insufficient control over immigration is a problem. Today, we are talking about the refugee issue, but immigration is a very sensitive and heated topic. It is true that Quebecers and Canadians are welcoming people, but uncontrolled immigration has caused many social and economic problems. It is not just the fault of immigrants. It is because of the general context and the lack of supervision.

I am pleased that my political party is standing firm today and opposing the motion on the grounds that it lacks rigour.

First, we deplore the federal government's inability to process asylum claims, which unduly inflates the program's costs. Ultimately, we would like the federal government to review the generosity of the program, without going so far as to offload the problem onto the provinces, leaving them on the hook for the most expensive health services.

We also denounce the lack of nuance in Conservative rhetoric, which suggests that asylum seekers who commit crimes are not sent back to their countries of origin. We are proud to say that the Gene-

va Convention, to which Canada is a signatory, stipulates that refugees are entitled to public assistance.

That being said, let us acknowledge that this is still a significant issue. Today's debate is respectful of everyone's opinions, comments, and arguments. It is important to discuss this in a healthy manner. It feels good, because in 2019 and 2020, that was not the case here at all. Everyone was outraged, starting with former prime minister Justin Trudeau. In addition, some Conservative members of Parliament did not fully support our position, which was to demand more fairness in the treatment and reception of refugees.

That said, I think that my colleague was correct in saying that the problem with the services program is not necessarily the cost overruns, but the way the government is managing the program through the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. People should not have to wait 40 months before receiving a decision on their status. Some refugee claimants want protection. If I am a refugee seeking protection, I should not have to wait 40 months. I should not have to wait six, eight or nine months to get a work permit while my status is being determined. A person who requests protection wants to work and earn a living. They are not usually looking for a handout. Given how long it takes to get a refugee status decision, however, some people do file asylum claims to take advantage of the system and probe for weaknesses.

● (1130)

The government is currently making cuts almost everywhere, in all departments, including the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. Existing resources are not enough to allow them to clear their backlogs and also deliver decisions in a reasonable amount of time. A sort of domino effect comes into play. If it takes less time, it costs less: It costs the federal government less and it costs the provinces less.

I think that that is the key responsibility. The federal government is unable to provide services to citizens and refugees. It is unable to provide services in a timely manner. I am sorry to say it, but I think that the federal government is no good. It is no good at providing services. It is no good at providing services in a timely manner. It is no good at doing any of the things within its jurisdiction: It is no good at EI, it is no good at old age security, it is no good at passports. There is always some problem with processing times. I am not saying that the public servants are no good, I am saying that they do not have the resources they need to achieve their targets. That is because of outdated technological tools, methods of work, and especially the fact that teams are not getting what they need to be productive, effective and efficient in 2026. I think that is the biggest problem.

Business of Supply

As the Bloc Québécois's public safety critic, I have observed that we are also dealing with a lot of illegal entries. Some people enter legally through a border crossing, but others enter the country illegally. That also creates pressure. As the critic, I can say that the government still has a lot of work to do to control its borders better.

I am an MP from southern Quebec. My riding and that of my colleague from Châteauguay—Les Jardins-de-Napierville receive the largest number of illegal immigrants entering the country. Unionized RCMP officers at the Valleyfield detachment say they would need twice as many officers to cope with this issue. They do what they can and they are really good, but they lack resources. Instead of cutting the RCMP's budget, the government should give them better equipment, better tools, and double the number of officers on patrol.

It will take resources to prevent migrants from entering our territory illegally. Above all, we must bear in mind that those trying to come here are often helpless, in distress and in need of protection. Ultimately, we do need to support those who arrive illegally, but we also need to crack down on the smugglers who exploit these people.

There is an issue that no one is talking about and, as critic, I would like to address it in the time allotted to me. Not all small municipalities in southern Quebec have first responders and fire trucks. They share their emergency services with slightly larger municipalities. Every time a first responder leaves a small municipality, it costs the municipality money. As we speak, there are no Quebec or federal programs that reimburse municipalities for costs related to migrants. However, when a freezing cold migrant walks out of the woods and needs first aid, it is often the municipalities, through their first responder services, that intervene.

All that is to say that there is much to discuss on the whole issue of refugees: support for municipalities, support for border services officers, and support for RCMP officers. In my opinion, the government is not on the right track demanding cuts that will lead to a deterioration in service delivery. In public safety, a budget cut means a decline in public safety and a lack of important tools for first responders, RCMP officers and border services officers.

• (1135)

I would like to close by saying that we need more debates like this to engage in respectful dialogue about the immigration situation in Quebec and Canada and its impact on our society.

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by sincerely thanking my colleague for her remarks, particularly when she recalled the unfortunate incident when she was accused of racism. I remember the situation very well. I could not believe what I was hearing, especially regarding the hon. member and our friend Alain Therrien. Such things must be avoided as much as possible.

I still remember that we were asking the government about Islamophobia just two years ago. We questioned the appropriateness of the government's appointment and the authority given to that individual. The government called us intolerant. Well, just a few days ago, the current Prime Minister discontinued that person's position. That is why everything in the world is relative. It is important to ensure that this is done properly and responsibly.

Let us talk about responsibility. Would my colleague agree that when immigration is managed irresponsibly, as it has been for the past 10 years, it creates problems, and that the primary victims of this type of irresponsible immigration are the immigrants themselves?

• (1140)

Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and for his empathy for the trauma that Alain Therrien and I experienced in the House when we were called racists by the former NDP leader.

My colleague is absolutely right. In our debates, we often talk about files and cases, but behind the refugee claims are human beings, families and children. Basically, the vast majority of these people want protection and a better life. Leaving one's country and one's family behind and going into exile is no picnic for those who do it for the right reasons. It is a big decision.

My point is that in order for us to accommodate them properly, our intake capacity needs to be respected. We in the Bloc Québécois have always said that what is really important is for the responsibility be shared among the provinces. Niagara Falls, Ontario, had decided to do its part for a few weeks. However, when tourist season was coming up, the city said that its hotels were full of immigrants and refugees and asked that they be taken back because it needed the space. That hurts.

We are being told that something is not working. However, the Liberals continue to sit on their hands. Why are the Liberals not requiring the provinces to take in their fair share of these refugees? That is a question I would like to ask a Liberal member, if there is an opportunity later today.

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, less than a year ago, Canada elected a new Prime Minister, who talked about stabilizing immigration. If we look at the actions he has taken since then, the copayment was brought back in the 2025 budget and Bill C-12 was introduced, which would deal significantly with asylum seekers. Where I agree with the member is that there needs to be a respectful level of debate as opposed to promoting anger and racial attitudes on such an important issue.

We recognize that we need to make some changes. I do not recall how the Bloc voted on Bill C-12, but I would ask the member to provide her thoughts on that particular issue.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, Bill C-12 was the subject of vigorous debate at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. We proposed amendments and improved the bill. However, a bill does not solve all of the problems.

There is often a tendency to forget about and abandon the people who have to deal with things like organized crime and organized smuggling groups in their small communities. These people live in small villages and they worry about finding migrants who have crossed the U.S. border illegally in their fields or forests. These migrants may sometimes be freezing cold, injured or suffering from hypothermia. I do not often hear about solutions to help these people. We need to talk about that. Immigration is a complex phenomenon, and I think that we need to look at several aspects of it. I would encourage the Liberals to listen to today's discussions.

[English]

Burton Bailey (Red Deer, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I speak on the motion today, I would ask for the Speaker's indulgence to acknowledge the four-year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. I pray for peace and an end to the war.

I rise today to speak on the very important Conservative motion calling on the federal government to review the interim federal health program and put Canadian taxpayers and the health care of Canadians first. At a time when six million Canadians are without a family doctor and wait times to access health care have doubled in the past 10 years, the Canadian health care system is in crisis.

At the health committee, we have heard testimony from a variety of witnesses, be they health associates, health care professionals, those seeking to become health care professionals or government officials at all levels and more. Everyone acknowledges that the health care system in Canada is not operating at its best, and that this must change. However, this change can only happen if there is courage from those at the top, including the federal government.

Federal government officials often like to punt responsibilities to the provinces for health care and, indeed, health care is delivered by our provinces. However, when a federal program like the IFHP is funding health care for non-Canadian citizens and proven bogus asylum claimants through our provinces, that is when tensions arise between our provinces and the federal government, which brings me to the motion Conservatives have put forward today.

Our motion is simple. Conservatives believe that Canadians deserve the best health care their taxes are funding. It is the responsibility of the federal government to ensure that those tax dollars are being spent in a way that puts Canadians first. Canadians are compassionate people, but that does not mean that their compassion should be taken for granted and abused. That is exactly what the interim federal health program under the Liberal government has been doing.

Here are a few facts from the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Between 2020-21 and 2024-25, the cost of the program ballooned from \$211 million to \$896 million. That is four times the amount in just four years. The PBO estimates that, in total, the IFHP will reach almost \$1 billion in 2025-26 and rise to over \$1.5 billion in 2029-30. The current number of eligible beneficiaries qualifying

for the IFHP today is 624,000. In 2029-30, that number is expected to grow and reach over 680,000.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer also reports that since 2016-17, the cost per in-Canada beneficiary under the interim federal health program has risen at a significant rate. During questioning at committee, I asked the PBO to compare the health cost increase for the IFHP beneficiary with the increase for a typical Canadian over the same period. The response indicated that IFHP beneficiary costs grew by 14%, compared to just 5% for Canadians. In other words, health care costs for foreign nationals and fake asylum claimants covered under the IFHP grew at nearly triple the rate of the cost increases for average Canadians.

What kinds of health care costs are we talking about here? According to the Government of Canada's IFHP website, coverage includes what the government is calling "basic" care: hospital services; services from medical doctors, registered nurses and other licensed health care professionals; ambulance services; and lab and diagnostic services such as blood tests and ultrasounds. It also covers "supplemental coverage" like psychologists and counselling therapists; occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech language therapists; assistive devices like prosthetics, mobility aids and hearing aids; home care and long-term care; urgent dental care; limited vision care; and medical supplies and equipment.

To put it into perspective, a Canadian citizen facing mental health challenges may be offered MAID by the Government of Canada, but a potentially fraudulent refugee claimant receiving taxpayer-funded health care under the IFHP can access psychologists and counselling therapists. There is something deeply disturbing about that.

● (1145)

To make matters worse, government officials are not even aware of how many of the over 600,000 people in this country who are eligible for these IFHP benefits are receiving them fraudulently and abusing the system. The government has no clue how many people applied for asylum fraudulently, how many have been denied asylum and are still receiving health care, or how many are set to be deported but are still in this country and receiving health care.

Business of Supply

It must be said that without the Conservatives probing into this issue at the health committee, Canadians would not have been made aware of the significant abuse that has been happening every day in this country. This is why it is so important that at committee, later today, we will be resuming debate on a Conservative motion to request that the PBO prepare an updated report and demand that the Department of Immigration and the Department of Health reveal all the information they have, and if they do not have the information, they must find it.

In fact, all members around the table agreed that an updated report would be beneficial to understand how new measures would impact the program and also to dig deeper into the details about the number of fraudulent asylum claimants. Unfortunately, the Liberal members received orders from the PMO and abruptly changed their minds. They decided to filibuster the meeting and stalled on getting answers for Canadians. Some are calling it a \$1.5-billion cover-up. We will see later today whether the Liberal members of the health committee will put the health care of Canadians first.

What can be done about this massive Liberal fraud and abuse? There are some things that may be changed quickly, but others will take time. For instance, rejected asylum claimants should immediately have benefits under the IFHP restricted with the exception of emergency life-saving treatments only. There is absolutely no reason that an individual who has knowingly faked an asylum claim to stay in this country should be receiving public health care.

Another immediate change would be to expel foreign nationals convicted of crimes in Canada. The removal of individuals from our country who are deemed ineligible to remain here is just as important as ensuring they are not eligible to receive public health care paid for by Canadians.

Unfortunately, after 10 years of broken Liberal immigration policies, the long-term solutions are not a simple fix. Currently, there are nearly 300,000 people in Canada with pending refugee claims. This number, according to the PBO, is also set to grow given that the Immigration and Refugee Board is hearing cases at a pace that is slow and bureaucratic. Getting faster processing times is crucial both for legitimate refugee claimants who are fleeing war and persecution to get an answer, but also so that Canadians are not funding fraudulent asylum claimants. It is both compassionate and fair.

Unfortunately, we have heard at other parliamentary committees and through news reports that rather than enforcing our laws and ensuring fraudulent claims are not valid, nearly 25,000 refugee claimants were admitted without a single in-person interview by the IRB and its file review policy. That is not right. It is federal bureaucrats avoiding responsibility so they do not have to do the paperwork. It is potentially dangerous for Canadian public safety and also incentivizes more abuse from fraudsters who know they will be able to game the system.

Canada has a problem at every point of the immigration system. At the starting point, our streams are being overwhelmed by fraudulent claims of asylum. At the midpoint, while these fraudulent asylum claims are being processed, taxpayer-funded resources like housing and health care are being provided to these fraudsters. At the end point, whether or not the Immigration and Refugee Board decides to do its job properly to screen applications, the problem is

twofold: The backlog could grow because of slow processing and more fraudulent claims, or the IRB could decide to turn a blind eye and rubber-stamp anyone and everyone.

The interim federal health program is a symptom of a much greater problem. For a decade, our immigration system has been abused and, in turn, has turned our health care system into an unworkable mess. We hear testimony at committee that the federal government has no oversight or accountability for billing under the IFHP, meaning that health care providers could bill up to five times the amount they can for a Canadian. This incentivizes abuse at the provider point, as fraudulent health care claimants could be treated before Canadians.

• (1150)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think it is really important that we recognize that there are many who intentionally spread misinformation. Let us think of it in this sense: The Parliamentary Budget Officer and the projections that were being made were based on something that did not incorporate Bill C-12.

Bill C-12 comes out of Bill C-2. Our Prime Minister and the government brought in Bill C-2 to deal with asylum seekers, and the Conservatives know that. When they talk about the \$1.5 billion, they know it is wrong, because Bill C-12 is now in the Senate, and it comes from Bill C-2. That is the only thing we can get out of Bill C-2 from the Conservatives.

Would the member not acknowledge that the Parliamentary Budget Officer does not take into consideration Bill C-12?

• (1155)

Burton Bailey: Madam Speaker, it is a coincidence that the member mentions that the PBO report does not include provisions in Bill C-12. That is why the Conservatives moved a motion at committee calling for an updated PBO report that would include the provisions of Bill C-12, as well as further important details that the Government of Canada seems to have no clue about, including the number of fraudulent asylum claims, the number of claims that have been denied where people are still receiving health care, and the number of people who should have been deported but are still in Canada.

Liberal members at the health committee were delaying and filibustering the motion even though they were also calling for an updated report. The member should encourage his Liberal colleagues to stop obstructing Parliament, work with us and get this project done.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my Conservative colleague. Right now, I am working on the Driver Inc. issue, which involves dangerous truckers on our roads. It seems that some of these truckers do not necessarily have legal status in the country. Some do, but others do not.

In one case, a driver killed someone on the road, fled and was brought back here to face justice. He will likely have to serve time in prison. Under my colleague's motion, this driver would have simply been deported. He would never have had to face justice and he would never have to serve time in prison.

I am trying to understand. Is that really what he is proposing?

[English]

Burton Bailey: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my Bloc colleague. As a proud Albertan, I believe our two provinces share much in common.

To answer the member's question, I must say that there are many things I would have to ask the shadow critic about, because I sit on the health committee. I am disappointed that the Bloc members are not going to support us on the motion. In committee, we hear all the time about how they want more money for health care, and here we are coming up with some solutions. This could mean thousands more doctors in Canada, but they are going to block this Conservative motion.

As for the member's request, I would ask him to ask one of my colleagues who would have better information. On the health care side, the Bloc members keep asking for more money, so they should support the motion.

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our motion today calls on the federal government to review the federal benefits that have been given to asylum claimants, in order to find some savings for the taxpayer; to restrict benefits being given to asylum claimants who have had their asylum claims rejected; and to provide transparency on federal spending on this whole thing.

We have put in Order Paper questions and found that in 2020 alone, there were 86,000 rejected claimants. These people have had their application to be a refugee in Canada rejected, yet in some cases they have spent up to four years in Canada after that rejection, getting premium health care services that even Canadians are not eligible for.

What does the member have to say about that?

Burton Bailey: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the work the health committee is doing. Canadians would otherwise not even know about the 86,000 asylum claimants who should have been deported and are claiming health benefits. Some of them are receiving very expensive procedures. Some of them are receiving cancer treatments that they should be receiving in their home country after being deported.

I want to make it clear that Conservatives support regulated and legitimate refugee claims. People who are legitimately fleeing war

and persecution deserve compassion. We, as the Conservative Party, do support that compassion.

• (1200)

[Translation]

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a generous country. We are proud of our universal health care system, and we are proud of our tradition of welcoming newcomers. However, generosity must never come at the expense of fairness.

Today, Canadians can see that their health care system is under pressure like never before. Six million Canadians do not have access to a family doctor, and waiting lists are growing. Emergency rooms are overflowing, and provinces are calling for more resources to maintain basic services. In this context, a fundamental question arises: Is it fair that failed asylum seekers can receive taxpayer-funded health benefits that are sometimes more advantageous than those offered to Canadians who have contributed to the system all their lives?

At the Standing Committee on Health, the Conservatives highlighted a troubling reality. Some health care providers charge up to five times the provincial rates for services provided under the interim federal health program. Yes, I said five times. Meanwhile, the federal government claims it has no financial leeway. However, the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report on the 2025-26 expenditure plan gives us a clear picture of the country's financial situation.

The total planned budgetary expenditures for 2025-26 are \$486.9 billion. Of this amount, \$222.9 billion must be approved by Parliament. The Canada health transfer will increase to \$54.7 billion this year, up \$2.6 billion, or 5%. It is the largest direct federal contribution to the provinces for health care funding. At the same time, elderly benefits, including OAS, will total \$85.5 billion for fiscal year 2025-26. This represents about \$1 out of every \$6 spent by the federal government. Debt-servicing costs will reach \$49.1 billion, which is roughly equivalent to the entire Canada health transfer. These figures show one thing: Every dollar counts.

When program costs balloon and nobody reins them in, that reduces the government's ability to pay for Canadians' basic priorities: seniors' care, health transfers, infrastructure and economic security. Skyrocketing costs associated with the interim federal health program are symptomatic of a bigger problem: The Liberal government has lost control of Canada's immigration system. The cost of the program has more than quadrupled in the last four years from \$211 million to \$896 million. In addition, the cost of the IFHP is projected to rise to \$1.5 billion by 2029-30.

Business of Supply

Our immigration system used to be known for striking a balance between compassion and rigour. Now, it is completely overwhelmed. Delays are mounting. Removals are delayed. Costs are soaring. When the asylum system is out of control, that affects all public services, including housing, schools and hospitals.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer's report notes that transfers account for 60.5% of federal expenditures. This means that the majority of federal spending is going to payments to provinces, individuals and other organizations. We therefore have a duty to ensure that each transfer program is administered with the utmost care.

Given that public debt already costs \$49.1 billion a year in interest and the Parliamentary Budget Officer projects that these charges could reach almost \$70 billion in the next few years, it is irresponsible for the government to tolerate overbilling or unjustified benefits.

Let us be clear: Canada must provide emergency health care to every person within its borders. That is a fundamental humanitarian principle. However, it is unconscionable for ineligible asylum claimants to continue to benefit from expanded federal benefits while Canadian citizens are waiting for care.

We on this side of the House are bringing forward meaningful solutions. First, we propose restricting federal benefits received by ineligible claimants to emergency health care only. Second, we propose strictly aligning the IFHP rates with the provincial rates to prevent overbilling. Third, we suggest fast-tracking asylum claim processing and expediting the removal of rejected claimants. Fourth, we suggest adjusting immigration levels to match Canada's actual capacity. We need to ensure there are enough jobs, housing and health capacity before we take in more immigrants.

• (1205)

The Parliamentary Budget Officer's report shows that expenditures related to seniors are increasing rapidly due to population aging. This means that pressure on public finances will continue to increase over the coming years. We must therefore make responsible choices. We must prioritize Canadians who have paid into the system their whole lives. We must protect the viability of our health care system. We must restore the integrity of our asylum system.

Fairness is not an abstract concept; it is the cornerstone of public trust. When Canadians feel that the system is stacked in favour of those who bend the rules instead of those who follow them, trust is eroded. We can be a welcoming yet responsible country. We can be compassionate yet careful. We can stand up for Canada's humanitarian values while protecting taxpayers' legitimate interests.

The Conservatives are committed to restoring fairness to Canada's asylum system, which is unfortunately broken. At the end of the day, a government must have one clear priority: ensuring fairness, accountability and sustainability for our public finances so that our health care system stays available for all future generations.

Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question concerning the last part of the motion, which reads: "(d) pass policies to immediately expel foreign nationals convicted of serious crime in Canada".

Under the existing legislation, a person who is found guilty of an offence must serve their sentence before being deported, while under the motion, such individuals would be deported without serving their sentence. I am thinking of the victims of Driver Inc. truckers, for example. What would the victims' family members and loved ones think if they were told that the person found criminally liable would no longer have to serve a sentence here and that they may not even have to serve their sentence abroad? Why put that in the motion?

We asked other colleagues this question and none of them had an answer. Can the hon. member give us an answer?

Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that very good question. If there are asylum seekers whose claims have been denied, who are criminals and who must serve a sentence, I think that they should serve it in Canada, unless there are explicit agreements with countries that can confirm that the person will serve their prison sentence in the country in question. However, if there is any doubt at all, then the person should serve their sentence in a Canadian prison in order to bring justice to the victims.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to pick up on the idea of misinformation. There are some members who know full well that, when they talk about the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the \$1.5 billion, it does not take into consideration Bill C-2, which the Prime Minister and the government brought in last June and that ultimately led to Bill C-12, which is now before the Senate. That will have a profound impact on what the Parliamentary Budget Officer has to say.

Would the member not concede that Bill C-12 addresses a major concern from the Parliamentary Budget Officer and that the Conservatives are saying \$1.5 billion knowing full well that this is not the case?

[*Translation*]

Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, first of all, it is important to understand that Bill C-12 was introduced because objections were raised with regard to the problems with Bill C-2. A solution was found with Bill C-12.

Now, is discrediting the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who conducts assessments, a normal way of doing things for the Liberals? The Liberals have disagreed with the Parliamentary Budget Officer's numbers on several occasions. He is an independent official who provides information. No one on that side of the House will ever tell the truth. At least someone has access to the figures and can give us forecasts. If the forecast changes and things cost less, then so much the better for everyone. However, this is the data currently available, and I trust the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we put forward this motion to close a billion-dollar loophole in our health care system and to restore order to our broken immigration system. Our motion is about fairness and protecting people who need emergency care. It would stop the government from giving top-tier health care programs to non-citizens who have had rejected refugee claims, while six million Canadians cannot even find their own personal doctor.

I am just wondering if my hon. colleague has some more comments about that.

● (1210)

[Translation]

Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, we have been very clear. If people need emergency care, then of course we are committed to providing such care. However, the report that was tabled and that was discussed at the Standing Committee on Health clearly indicates that the system is being abused.

As we speak, there are people in Canada whose asylum claims have been denied and who are receiving extended health care, while there are six million people who do not even have access to a doctor in Canada. That is just wrong, and this situation needs to be fixed.

This goes beyond the immigrants themselves. This is about how the program is managed. Health care companies are charging five times the normal cost to treat asylum seekers. It is unacceptable that taxpayers should have to pay five times the cost because the care is being given to a failed asylum claimant. The system is being abused by companies that also have to answer these questions.

[English]

Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with not only a good friend of mine, but in fact a great friend of the Sikh community, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

The interim federal health program, or IFHP, is a temporary program. It supports people who do not yet have provincial or territorial health coverage. It is also an important tool to protect the health and safety of Canadians while supporting vulnerable people who are seeking Canada's protection.

Let me address the claims behind the motion before us.

The first is on the growth in costs. Yes, costs under the IFHP have increased, but we must be honest about why. The cost of this program depends mainly on two things: how many asylum claims are made, and how long it takes to make final decisions.

When claim volumes are high and processing times are long, costs rise. The good news is that under our government, asylum claims were down by about one-third last year. This will reduce pressure on the IFHP. Through Bill C-12 and other measures, we are closing loopholes at the border, tightening visa rules and discouraging misuse of the asylum system. These actions reduce future surges and shorten delays. That is how we control costs responsibly.

Second, the opposition relies heavily on the projections from the Parliamentary Budget Officer. We respect the work of the PBO, but this report presents an incomplete picture. It does not account for the recent changes to the IFHP announced in budget 2025, the expected impact of Bill C-12 on claim volumes and processing time, and the possibility of further future adjustments. It also assumes that the government will do nothing more, which is simply not true. When opposition members claim that the program will cost far more in the future, they are relying on projections that ignore reforms already under way.

Third is the claim that asylum claimants receive better care than Canadians. The IFHP provides basic and temporary coverage while claims are processed by the Immigration and Refugee Board. Essential care, such as visits to a doctor or a hospital, will continue to be fully covered. This protects public health and avoids higher costs later. For supplementary benefits, such as some vision care and medications, we are making measured changes. Starting in May, there will be a \$4 copayment for filling or refilling a prescription and a 30% copayment for other supplementary services. These changes were announced in budget 2025. They are expected to save hundreds of millions of dollars each year. They also align the IFHP with other publicly funded programs, including those for people on social assistance. At this time, essential care remains fully covered. We will monitor the impact closely to protect public health and meet our legal and humanitarian obligations.

Fourth, the motion claims that asylum claims are preventing Canadians from getting health care. There is no evidence for this. It is difficult to measure exactly how much pressure asylum claimants place on the health care system, and rejected claimants are only one portion of the IFHP users.

My two daughters are physicians who are proudly serving Canadians, and I can say that Canada's health care challenges mainly come from a shortage of doctors and nurses, an aging population and long-standing system pressures. Blaming asylum seekers will not fix wait times. It will not train nurses, and it will not build hospitals. That is why our government is investing in health care for Canadians.

• (1215)

More than six million Canadians are now eligible for the Canadian dental care plan, which is saving families hundreds of dollars a year. With budget 2025, we are investing \$5 billion in health care infrastructure. We are all well aware that this is the first time leadership has been shown by a federal government to intervene in this particular program. Through pharmacare, mental health investments and co-operation with provinces and territories, we are strengthening health care based on medical need, not the ability to pay.

Let me turn to the proposals in the motion. Part A calls for reviewing benefits to find savings. We already agree with this principle. That is why we introduced copayments for supplementary benefits. These changes will save hundreds of millions of dollars each year. We can remain open to further examination, but the motion ignores what has already been done.

Part B calls for limiting rejected claimants to emergency life-saving care only. This sounds simple, but it is not. Some people cannot be removed for humanitarian reasons. Limiting them to emergency-only care would create a contradiction. We would be saying we cannot send them back but also denying them basic primary care. This also risks pushing people into hospital emergency rooms instead of to family doctors. That increases costs and pressure on the health care system. We can show limited openness to reviewing how long coverage lasts, but the Conservative proposal would likely create higher costs and worse outcomes.

Part C calls for more transparency. Our government is already transparent. We have provided information to Parliament. We asked the PBO to examine the program. We answered Order Paper questions. The number of people covered and cost are already public. A new formal reporting law is therefore unnecessary.

Part D calls for immediate removal of non-citizens convicted of serious crimes. In Canada, criminal law comes first. People must face justice and serve their sentences before removal. If we change this rule, we would remove a real punishment for serious crime. People could commit crimes and simply be sent home.

Recently I had a discussion with one of the top young criminal defence lawyers, Gagan Nahal, who is also running for a city council position. I wish him the best. In fact, he agreed with me that they should be punished and serve sentences before they are sent back to their home country. The motion would weaken deterrence and threaten public safety as well.

I also want to speak about politics and accountability. The Conservatives say this motion is about accountability in health care spending, but if they truly care about accountability in the health care system, they would support my private member's bill, Bill C-239, which proposes to strengthen accountability under the Canada Health Act. The Conservatives cannot say they want accountability on one hand and then block an accountability bill on the other.

This shows the motion is not really about fixing health care; it is about playing politics with vulnerable people. The IFHP is not only about compassion. It is about public health and smart spending. Many asylum claimants will eventually become protected persons,

Business of Supply

permanent residents and possibly citizens. If we deny basic health care now, we will likely pay much higher costs later through the emergency care system. The government is acting responsibly by reducing asylum claim volumes, speeding up decisions, introducing copayments and investing in health care for Canadians. While the Conservatives debate what services to cut, we are focused on health care based on medical needs and fairness.

• (1220)

Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have known our colleague for a long time, and I have a lot of respect for him. I expect him to do better. I expect him to not participate in the dog whistle politics that we are seeing from others down the way here.

To sum it up, the motion simply says our health care system is broken. A considerable amount of money is being spent, yet we have Canadians who are without doctors. The hon. colleague and I live in the same province, and I know there are British Columbians who cannot get in to see a doctor in his own riding.

What we are saying through this motion is that a sober second thought has to be given to our health care system. Would the hon. member not agree with that sentiment?

Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, I have a tremendous amount of respect for the hon. member. He is very compassionate and a very good friend of the Sikh community.

As I mentioned earlier, there are accountability issues with health care. That is why I brought in Bill C-239, which proposes to strengthen accountability under the Canada Health Act. I would request that the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George and his leader support that bill, so we can provide the accountability that Canadians, particularly British Columbians, need.

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the fact that 40% of asylum seekers have settled in Quebec, while our province represents just 22% of the population. Does he not think that we should find a way to better distribute asylum seekers across the country or at least financially compensate Quebec? We know that, in 2024 alone, Quebec had a \$700-million shortfall for which it has not received compensation from the federal government.

Business of Supply

[English]

Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, on this particular question, I agree with the member.

When there was a non-controlled border location where people were moving into Quebec and piling up those claims, we, as a federal government, were fully committed to making sure that we were able to provide the resources that the Government of Quebec and Quebecers needed to deal with those situations. I personally support him on this idea.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Surrey Newton has been a very strong advocate for Canada's health care system. He talked about those five fundamental principles that Canadians have really grown to love. The member has introduced a piece of legislation to ensure financial accountability.

When we talk about the importance of health care, financial accountability is in fact so critically important. Could the member provide some more thoughts about his private member's bill, which I applaud?

Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank the hon. member for Winnipeg North for being the seconder to Bill C-239, and for his support and inspiration to me as I brought this forward.

I am hearing a lot of resentment from the opposition, particularly the Conservative Party. Conservatives think they believe in accountability, but they do not. In fact, if they really believed in accountability in health care and wanted to improve health care for Canadians, they would support Bill C-239. It is a very basic bill that would open up the Canada Health Act and introduce a sixth pillar, for provincial governments to be responsible so that Canadians' dollars are well spent on Canadians for their health care and for their well-being.

• (1225)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with some mixed emotions about what motivated the Conservative Party to bring forward the motion before us. It is interesting that a couple of the Conservatives have tried to downplay the anger, catering to the far right, to look at ways to raise money on such an important issue.

I take the immigration file very personally. For over 30 years, I have been working in the immigration area in many different ways, and never before have I seen a mainstream political party, well mainstream no more, take actions that I would suggest may be good for the far right but are not good for Canada. I do not say that lightly.

After the Conservatives asked questions yesterday, what did they do? They sent out information in the form of an email to generate funds to build a data bank. I will quote from the fundraising letter they sent out on this particular issue. It says, referring to what we are talking about today:

The cost of these perks is expected to continue to grow to \$1.5 BILLION by the year 2030!

That's unfair, and it must CHANGE.

That's why TOMORROW Conservatives are putting forward a real plan for change, a plan that will take care of our health care and our taxpayers. Add your name to support our fight before it's too late.

This is the type of email trash, based on misinformation, being circulated by the Conservative Party.

An hon. member: Oh, it's factual.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, no, it is not factual.

They are saying that the cost is going to continue to grow to \$1.5 billion by the year 2030. The purpose of this email is to generate their data bank of rage and more money for the coffers of the Conservative Party of Canada. That is the purpose of this debate, and of the email that they circulated to thousands of Canadians from coast to coast to coast. That is what we see today with the far right Conservative Party. This is not the same party of the Brian Mulroney, Kim Campbell or Joe Clark eras. It is far from that.

I have posed this question to members opposite: What is the purpose of saying \$1.5 billion by 2030, when they know full well that it is just not true? Canada voted for a new government back in April of last year, and the Prime Minister brought forward Bill C-2, which would dramatically reduce the number of asylum seekers. The Conservatives know that. That was back in June of last year, shortly after the federal election. The Conservative Party filibustered the legislation, and we had to come up with a compromise, which led to Bill C-12. That is still in the Senate, as opposed to being passed. It deals, in good part, with the concerns that Canadians have with asylum seekers. That is one action the Prime Minister and the government have taken.

• (1230)

Let us look at the 2025 budget. In that budget, we put in a copay system, and refugees have to pay a portion. This is something that will save taxpayers tens of millions of dollars. We have been able to work that through. There are two major initiatives that have been taken by the government, by the new Prime Minister.

On the one hand, the Conservatives filibuster. On the other hand, they ignore, and then they pump out material to try to give a false impression, telling Canadians something that is just not true.

When the Parliamentary Budget Officer says \$1.5 billion, that is not taking Bill C-12 or the copay system into consideration. The Conservative members who stand up, and they have been standing up, know full well that is the case, but that has not prevented them from talking about it, even though they know it is not true.

Why do the Conservatives do that? They do that for the same reason they like to use messages like "fake", "bogus" and "rejected". These are all terms they like to use.

If we take a look at the social media they post, we will see that its primary purpose is to cater to a very small group of individuals who are supporting the Conservative right so they can keep that group happy and, at the same time, generate money for their coffers. It is at a great expense, because there are many red Tories, progressive Tories and Liberals, Canadians who are living in Conservative ridings, who will see through the misinformation that is constantly being put out by the Conservative Party. These Canadians will realize that our Prime Minister and the government have taken several actions to address the issue while demonstrating at the same time, as other countries around the world have, that there is a need for governments to be able to support refugees.

Genuine, bona fide refugees come to Canada every year, as they do to other nations around the world. The Conservatives talk about health care as if the health care system is threatened because the government, today and in the past, has supported refugees. I used to be a health care critic in the province of Manitoba many years ago. One of the greatest threats to health care is not just money; it is how to manage the changes necessary to provide quality health care into the future, particularly for Manitobans.

Ottawa provides a great deal of tax dollars to provinces as health transfers. We also give equalization payments. We have also looked at ways in which we can expand all forms of health care, whether it is for personal care or mental health issues. Never before has a government invested more in health care than we have with this government.

Yes, people are concerned about health care. As a national government, we will continue to work with our stakeholders in provinces and territories to support where we can, but the Conservatives do a disservice to the whole immigration, citizenship and refugee file when they start to pick and choose and to distort reality to generate money for their political party. It feeds into the fact that the Conservative Party of today is more interested in its own political party than it is in the interests of Canadians.

• (1235)

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague spoke about the investments, as he calls them, that the Liberal government has put into health care.

There is a Somali woman who was in a polygamous marriage and lied to get into Canada. She won another chance to stay. There is Ahmed Fouad Mostafa Eldidi, a father who, along with his son, was granted refugee status. They will stand trial on terrorism charges for an alleged Toronto plot. An admitted Mexican hit man who fled the U.S. for Canada made a refugee claim. There are also 14 extortion subjects who have claimed refugee status.

Of the investments the Liberals say they are making in health care, exactly how much should go towards health care for these individuals?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, for generations, governments of Canada and prime ministers, both Progressive Conservatives and Liberals over the decades, have recognized the importance of refugees to our nation and to the world and of Canada's contributions. We witnessed all of those administrations recognize the need to provide support, which they did. I suspect that if we went through the decades of support for refugees, we would find

Business of Supply

cases like the ones the member brought forward. Fortunately, we have a process to ensure the interests of Canadians are looked after as a whole.

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we know that 40% of asylum seekers have settled in Quebec, while Quebec makes up only 22% of the population.

Does my colleague not think that we should try to find a way to better way to distribute asylum seekers across the country or at least properly compensate Quebec?

We know that, in 2024, Quebec had a \$700-million shortfall for which it did not receive compensation. What does my colleague think of this?

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the provinces do have their first ministerial conferences. I think the Province of Quebec can work with other provinces. The federal government has provided support to and has encouraged provinces. All provinces should be taking their fair share.

I would like to think that one of the nice things about being in a federal state is that there is a high sense of co-operation. I know Manitoba has reached out in the past to assist with asylum seekers. We need all provinces to be able to contribute more equally in that fashion. We need premiers, prime ministers, MLAs and members of Parliament working together, recognizing that this should be a shared responsibility within the federation.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, similar issues have come up within the riding of Waterloo, where people recognize that having a federally funded or publicly funded health care system is important. People are also noticing that provinces are oftentimes dabbling with the idea of a two-tier health care system.

There seems to be much recognition that asylum claimants are a different group of people in that they are usually very vulnerable, coming from places in the world where they will not be safe, hence why we have an asylum system.

I do believe that the road the Conservatives are travelling is scary, is at the risk of misrepresentation and is really about dividing Canadians on an important issue. A former cabinet minister and Conservative member did say that anger is an emotion, not a substitute for strategic policy.

I would like to hear from the member about any constructive feedback to ensure that the system does work for Canadians and that Canada takes its international—

• (1240)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Business of Supply

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would answer the question by looking at what has taken place over the last nine or 10 months since Canada elected a new government and a new Prime Minister. We have seen the Prime Minister and the government bring in a copay system, for example. This is something I believe will make a positive difference. It will save a great deal of money.

The Conservatives will try to talk about a two-tier system, meaning that refugees get a premium or deluxe program and that Canadians do not get that type of program. There is a lot of misinformation with respect to that. I ask members to take a look at the copay system and get a better—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Resuming debate, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for a century and a half, Canada had the best immigration system in the world. Many hard-working, law-abiding people were invited to come here in an orderly fashion. Most of them quickly found jobs, paid taxes, followed the rules, raised families and integrated into our way of life here in Canada to become real, genuine Canadians.

About four years ago, for reasons unknown, this Liberal government decided to overturn Canada's immigration system, to destroy the world's best immigration system. It did so by increasing population growth by 200%, adding 1.2 million people per year. Meanwhile, only 200,000 homes were built. The system is at a breaking point. The health care system and the housing and labour markets are now under unprecedented strain, and Canadians are paying the price.

It is important to realize that these problems were created by the Liberals, not by immigrants or by people. However, people are the ones suffering the consequences. Six million Canadians do not have access to a family doctor. The wait time to see a specialist is now 30 weeks. Last year, patients in Canada were waiting for 1.4 million procedures.

This Liberal Prime Minister promised that he would change things, but that was just an illusion. Now the results of his work are showing. Under this Liberal government and this Prime Minister, the cost of the interim federal health program has skyrocketed by 1,000%, from \$66 million to \$900 million. It is expected to reach \$1.5 billion by 2030.

Last year, the number of asylum claims increased by 2,900%. That is an almost 3,000% increase in the number of asylum seekers in Canada, and 86% of failed asylum seekers remain in Canada, even though they have been rejected by the system. We are talking about 86% of rejected claimants staying here. There are 500,000 people here illegally. Enough is enough. The Conservatives want to take back control. They no longer want to give deluxe benefits that help people who are here illegally more than they help Canadians, the people who pay the bills.

● (1245)

Finally, we want to put an end to the system that gives lenient sentences to foreign criminals in order to allow them to stay here. We will put an end to the two-tiered system. We propose limiting

benefits for asylum seekers, especially benefits that go beyond life-saving measures. We must cut costs and eliminate lenient sentences for foreign criminals. That is what we are proposing in our motion to restore the best immigration system here in Canada.

[*English*]

For over a century and a half, Canada had the best immigration system in the world. People came from all around the world. They worked hard, started families, launched businesses, contributed, paid into the system, integrated into our way of life and became proud Canadians.

About four years ago, for reasons still unknown, the Liberal government decided to overturn the entire system of immigration. The Liberals tripled population growth. They opened the floodgates. They allowed rich multinational corporations to profit by bringing in low-wage labour that would drive down jobs for Canadians and drive up rent for the people in our country.

The current Liberal Prime Minister claimed he would change things, but it was all an illusion. Things are getting worse. Six million Canadians now cannot find a family doctor as the system has been overloaded with excess population growth not matched by new doctors. Wait times to see a specialist have hit 30 weeks. Patients in Canada were waiting for 1.4 million procedures last year. More than 100,000 Canadians have died on a wait-list since 2018, roughly the time when this radical immigration experiment began. Twenty per cent of Canadians are stuck waiting over a year for elective surgeries, the most out of 10 peer countries.

Meanwhile, the government provides deluxe benefits that are not available to Canadian taxpayers. It gives those benefits to rejected asylum claimants. To be clear, these are things like vision care, physiotherapy, home care and speech therapy. Things not covered by the public plans of lifelong taxpayers are then being provided to people who are here illegally or have been refused because they made false asylum claims. The cost of the program that provides these benefits has gone up 1,000% under the current Liberal government, from \$66 million to about \$1 billion, and it is expected to run to \$1.5 billion by 2030.

Business of Supply

The backlog of asylum claims has exploded by 3,000% under the Liberal government. Three hundred thousand cases were active as of last December under the Liberal Prime Minister. Eighty-six per cent of rejected refugee claimants are still here in Canada. Over two million people's stays are expired or will soon be expired, and the Prime Minister has no plan with respect to how he is going to return them to their country of origin. The Liberals oversaw the removal of only 22,000 people last year. Again, we have two million refugees whose stay here will expire, and the Liberal government of this Prime Minister was able to remove only 22,000, barely a tiny fraction.

Even rejected asylum claimants get access to these deluxe taxpayer-funded benefits, and when Conservatives moved a motion at the committee to study this problem, Liberals filibustered and blocked it. It is more obstruction from a Liberal Prime Minister who does not want to change anything.

Canadians have big hearts, but they expect to be treated fairly, and they expect that they should get at least as good, if not better, services than those people who are here illegally, nor do Canadians accept the idea that Liberal-appointed judges give sentence discounts to foreign nationals who commit crimes while visiting this country. It is insane that these sentencing discounts are deliberately designed to prevent foreign nationals from being deported from this country after they commit crimes. The government should have a deliberate policy of deporting foreign criminals who are visiting our country and breaking our laws. We do not need lawbreakers. We need good, law-abiding Canadians.

To that effect, Conservatives moved a motion today for a full review of the federal benefits provided to asylum claimants, in order to find savings for taxpayers; to restrict benefits received by rejected asylum claimants to life-saving benefits, and nothing more; to provide transparency on the spending for these programs through regular reports to Parliament; and to pass policies into law that would immediately expel foreign nationals who are visiting our country and commit crime while they are here.

We call for no more sentencing discounts and no more two-tiered system. We need a system that treats everybody fairly. We are a compassionate country, but we are a country based on law and a country with an affordability crisis. We are a country with health care wait times out of control. Now is the time to work to change all of that.

Let us once again put our people first and ensure that they have affordable homes and food, safe streets to live on and health care that cares for them when they need it. That is a common-sense approach. We call on all members of Parliament to put aside their differences and support this common-sense motion. Let us bring back the greatest immigration system in the world.

• (1250)

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to put a question directly to the hon. leader of the official opposition. As an Albertan who, I know, is also a proud Canadian, would he let Canadians know where he will stand if there is a referendum on Alberta separation?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I will stand for a united Canada.

Vince Gasparro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the hon. member's service, but is the hon. member trying to save his failing leadership by attacking the most vulnerable in our society and by appealing to the radical right in his party?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: No, Mr. Speaker, and this is the old Liberal trick. When they mess up the system, destroy people's lives and turn the country upside down, Liberals immediately go on the attack. They start calling patriotic, honourable Canadians horrible names, anybody who disagrees with them or who is upset that they destroyed the immigration system, by their own admission, by the way. Instead of holding themselves accountable and firing the minister who did it, they promoted him to justice minister. It is no wonder we have a crime wave.

They then look out at all the millions of Canadians, the six million Canadians who cannot get a doctor or the 100,000 families who have lost a loved one on a waiting list, and call them horrible names because of the mistakes that the Liberal government made. It is disgusting.

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative motion seems to suggest that, as soon as an asylum seeker is convicted of a serious crime, they should be deported. First, that is already the law. Second, does that mean that somebody who is convicted of a serious crime should not serve their sentence and should instead be deported to a country where it is not certain that they will serve their sentence?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, they should serve their time in prison. After that, they should be deported if they are not a citizen or a permanent resident of Canada. These criminals are doing neither. They are not being sentenced and they are not being deported either. The Liberal system is allowing these foreign criminals to stay in Canada and harass communities. Quite frankly, it is immigrant communities themselves that are the main victims of these crimes.

[*English*]

I will say that in English. Right now, by keeping foreign criminals here and not allowing them to even serve a sentence in Canada, the biggest victims are immigrant communities who then have to live with the hell and the danger that is unfolding through extortion, theft and other crimes in our streets.

Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an incredible point was just made, and for the first time today in all this debate. Those who are suffering are the immigrant communities, whether it is the six million Canadians who are without doctors or the incredible crime rates and extortion rates being perpetuated in our immigrant communities.

I would like to ask our hon. colleague for the stories he has heard and why it is so important that we stand up for some of the most vulnerable communities.

Business of Supply

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals really should be ashamed, of course, of their really disgusting tactics over here today, pretending that they care about the immigrant communities they have put in such danger. Is it compassionate that in the city of Brampton, the municipality found there were 26 international students living in one basement? Is it compassionate that the same extortionists who have committed crime after crime are allowed to stay in our country and on our streets and terrorize communities like Brampton and Surrey and northeast Calgary? Is it compassionate that an entire generation cannot find a home, that six million Canadians are without a family doctor or that 100,000 have died on waiting lists since this radical experiment with open borders happened under the Liberal government?

Instead of trying to disparage and defame Canadians who are speaking out to restore our system, the Liberal Party should actually take personal accountability for the chaos it has unleashed.

• (1255)

Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization defines xenophobia as “the irrational fear or dislike of people from different countries or cultures, often resulting in discrimination and social exclusion.”

Is the hon. member trying to fuel the same sort of fascist rhetoric we are seeing in the south? I know the Liberals are trying to do that through Bill C-12, kicking out migrants and violating international law.

Does my colleague agree with me that what he is doing is irresponsible and places—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. Leader of the Opposition can give a very brief response.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, no, what is irresponsible is the radical open borders experiment that the Liberals have brought to this country, which has overwhelmed housing, health care and job markets. What is irresponsible is leaving six million Canadians without a family doctor and allowing thousands of people to die on waiting lists because the system is overwhelmed. That is irresponsible.

We want to restore the country we love so it is open to everybody and treats everyone fairly.

Matt Strauss (Kitchener South—Hespeler, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish we were here today to talk about health care. Instead, we have to talk about health care fraud. The fraud is undeniable. It is unfair, and the Liberals could stop it by voting for our motion today. For the Canadians watching at home, let me please explain.

Currently, if someone declares themselves a refugee to Canada, they get Cadillac health benefits that tax-paying, law-abiding seniors do not get. They get vision care, pharmacare, dental care, physiotherapy, home care, etc. If, after years of waiting for their refugee claim to be denied, it is denied, they continue to get these Cadillac benefits while they spend years making appeals. If their appeals are denied, they continue to get these Cadillac benefits waiting for their deportation to be scheduled. If they fail to show up for their deportation, and currently the government has lost 32,000 people who have criminally failed to show up for their deporta-

tions, they continue to get these benefits, even while they are on the run from the law.

Yes, they get these bonus benefits that tax-paying seniors do not get and, yes, they get them pretty much indefinitely, but it is also the case that they get better basic hospital care than Canadians.

At the health committee, we heard testimony from doctors who came and said that they and their colleagues are charging five times the rate to the federal government that they would charge to the provincial government for the same service. In Alberta, if a senior citizen needs a hip replacement, the surgeon charges \$1,000 to do it. That is a great deal, and I thank the orthopaedic surgeons. Someone could not walk and now they can.

However, if someone else comes in with a Blue Cross refugee card backstopped by the federal government, the surgeon can charge \$5,000 for the same procedure for that failed refugee. If members do not believe me, I invite all of them who are on their phones to google “Billing for out-of-country patients, Alberta Medical Association”. They can see that recommendation in black and white.

Let me ask members a question. If a surgeon had a \$1,000 case on their wait-list and a \$5,000 case on their wait-list, might they not be tempted to do one before the other? I love orthopaedic surgeons. They are good guys, but they are not saints. The Liberals have constructed a literal two-tier health care system, while they fearmonger about us doing something like that. In Ontario, the medical association currently recommends charging three times the rate to the federal government as they would for a Canadian, tax-paying senior. I had to use my own physician login to get that information on its website. That one cannot be googled.

Obviously, a system designed this way is ripe for abuse, and it is being abused. For instance, just this past December, Global News reported that 14 men claimed refugee status only after the B.C. extortion task force opened an investigation into them. That is not how actual refugees behave. That is how criminal extortionists behave once they are caught. This is beyond unreasonable. This is beyond unfair. Literal criminals are falsely claiming asylum to get Cadillac health benefits for years. It would be the easiest thing in the world for the Liberals to vote with our common-sense motion to stop this today.

I love Canada and I love that Canada is a place that welcomes refugees, desperate individuals who are legitimately fleeing extraordinary hardship like war, famine, genocide or religious persecution. In fact, I would not be in Canada if Canada did not welcome refugees, because I am the son of a refugee. My grandfather brought my mother here in 1967, fleeing persecution and hunger in Communist Yugoslavia. I am not the only MP on this side of the House with that sort of family history. We just heard from the Leader of the Opposition that his wife similarly fled a communist regime as a young girl, and therefore his children, like me, are first-generation Canadians.

We want to protect Canada's ability to help such people by saying no to the fraudsters and the criminals who are taking advantage of them.

Liberal mismanagement on this file has now prompted the Liberals to worsen health care for legitimate refugees. I am dismayed and disheartened that their solution to this issue is to introduce a co-pay for all refugees. That means that a six-year-old Ukrainian girl who steps on a land mine, who needs a prosthetic limb once she makes it to Canada, will have to pay 30% of the cost. She does not have that money to pay for that limb. That is insane. That is not a solution to any problem and certainly not the problem at hand. Conservatives will pay for that little girl's prosthetic limb 11 times out of 10. We will also send home the criminals who are abusing the system meant to help her.

• (1300)

Canadians expect compassion and discretion from their government. The Liberals today are providing neither.

The overall problem, the underlying problem, is the insane backlog and processing delays that Liberal mismanagement has introduced to the system. When Stephen Harper left office, there were 400,000 outstanding immigration files. I think Stephen Harper would agree with me that it was unacceptable. After 10 years of Liberal mismanagement, there are now 2.1 million outstanding immigration files, five times as many. This has passed being unacceptable. This has departed into the realm of the absurd. I know this can be fixed, and I know how to fix it.

I called my grandfather last night to make sure I had my facts straight. My whole life, I grew up hearing about my family's escape from Communism. He confirmed the story my late grandmother always told. After they crossed the border, they went to the nearest police station in the nearest city, Trieste in Italy. The police detained my grandfather for three days, separately from my grandmother who stayed with the children. They were treated with compassion and dignity. They were interrogated for three straight days to make sure they were not Communist spies, with questions like, "Were you in the military? Where did you serve? What years? Did you join the Communist Party? Are you a Communist? Where were you born? What is your daughter's middle name?" etc.

After three days, their stories were cross-referenced. They checked out completely and they were accepted to a refugee camp. Then, like college applicants, they waited to be accepted to a different country. They received offers from Australia, the United States and Canada. Thank God they chose Canada. They got on a boat, their papers were stamped at the port in Montreal, and that was it.

Business of Supply

That was the whole process: It was three days of interrogation by a NATO ally, and five months later, they were new Canadians.

They were still using telegrams in 1967. How is it that with all the new technological tools available such as facial recognition and AI document processing, the process now takes eight times longer and obviously does not have the integrity it used to have?

This is the problem underlying the health care fraud that our motion seeks to address today. We cannot fix the underlying problem. The bad news is that to fix the underlying problem would require an immigration minister who knows what they are doing. When I asked the current immigration minister at committee to explain the process as it currently exists, she could not even do that. I had to read her own website to her, for her to understand that failed refugee applicants still get these supplementary benefits. If she were my medical student, she would have failed her clinical rotation, but she has a position of authority much higher than a mere medical student. She is in the Prime Minister's cabinet. We can only remark that this calls the Prime Minister's judgment into question. I fear it will take a Conservative government with a new immigration minister to fix the fundamental underlying problem.

In the meantime, the Liberals could join with us to acknowledge and repair this glaring billion-dollar criminal fraud that is putting our health care system at risk. They could vote for our common-sense motion to stop giving Cadillac benefits to fake refugees, and I urge them to do so.

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague made a reference, I think, to two or two-and-a-half million illegal asylum seekers—

Matt Strauss: No, I didn't.

Carlos Leitão: Mr. Speaker, that is what I heard. Can he clarify that? Is it really two million?

• (1305)

Matt Strauss: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for seeking to allay my colleague's misapprehension or misunderstanding of my comments.

I said there are two million outstanding files in the immigration department, overall, awaiting processing. That is not the number of illegal refugee claims.

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, essentially, the motion is trying to address an issue that was largely created by the sudden surge in asylum claims and the lack of resources to process them. In some countries, like France, it takes less than six months to process an asylum claim. In Germany, it takes eight months. Here, it can take up to three or four years.

Business of Supply

Does my colleague agree that we must press as hard as we can to improve the processing of asylum claims?

[English]

Matt Strauss: Mr. Speaker, I think it is the case that, fundamentally, failure has been rewarded in the Liberal government, year after year, for 10 years straight. That is why the passport office broke. That is why the post office has broken, and that is why the immigration system is broken.

Eventually, those who govern need to exercise some judgment. They need to be able to say, “This isn't working well. We're going to change it,” instead of doubling down again and again and shovelling money at failed processes. That is why we are seeing the broken immigration system we currently have.

Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker. I want to thank my colleague for his wonderful in-depth speech on what is wrong with this program and our immigration system as a whole. I asked a question earlier about this. In health care transfers, Saskatchewan receives \$1.5 billion a year for the whole province of Saskatchewan. This program will receive, by 2029-30, \$1.6 billion. There are several people in this program who received it after they had their asylum or refugee claims rejected.

The actual wording of this calls it an “interim” program. Should an interim program ever receive as much money as a province for a health care transfer?

Matt Strauss: Mr. Speaker, it is important to put these numbers into perspective. Eventually, million, billion and trillion all becomes a haze. The cost of this program has gone up 10 times over the years that it has existed. It used to be \$86 million. Now it is \$1 billion, and that is about to exceed the entire federal health transfer to the province of Saskatchewan. It is bananas. It is out of control. It is a runaway train. I wish we did not even have to have this conversation. A competent immigration minister would have fixed the problem years ago.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unbelievable how the Conservatives continue to want to spread misinformation. They say, “2030” and “\$1.5 billion”. Even the leader of the Conservative Party says that. They are basing it on the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who did not take into consideration Bill C-12. I understand what Bill C-12 would do, and if the Conservative Party was honest with Canadians, they would give up and concede that it is misinformation to say \$1.5 billion because it is just not true.

Why does the Conservative Party continue to spread misinformation?

Matt Strauss: Mr. Speaker, I would just ask my colleague opposite not to shout. I do not think that sort of aggression is warranted here.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer made his report. He said this is the projection. It could change if Bill C-12 does not see court challenges. It likely is going to receive court challenges. Many groups have already said they are going to challenge Bill C-12 in court. The PBO said his office has the resources to redo the analysis with this question of Bill C-12 taken into account. We asked him

to do that at committee in a motion that the Liberals are currently obstructing. Rather than getting to the bottom of it, in good faith, as we will look into this with the PBO, who wants to, the Liberals are obstructing their own agenda. It is bizarre.

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am splitting my time with the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

I rise today to speak in strong opposition to the Conservative motion targeting the interim federal health program, and this is after the Liberals have already rolled it back.

Let us be clear about what the motion does. It scapegoats newcomers and refugees. It suggests that denying preventative care, prescription medication, dental treatment and mental health services would somehow produce savings. It would not. It would simply shift costs from preventative care to emergency rooms, from primary care to acute care, and from federal responsibility to provincial systems, where treatment is far more expensive and outcomes are far worse.

The Conservatives and the Liberals are approaching this challenge in the wrong way, and they should know better. Their previous changes to the interim health program were struck down by the courts because they were deemed unconstitutional in 2014 under the Harper government. This is the same playbook, same narrative and same fearmongering.

The Conservative leader keeps saying that he turned over a new leaf, but he is back to the same old games of politicizing social issues for political gain, whereas deeper nuance and compassion are necessary. It is disappointing watching the Conservatives walk the same path over and over again into a dead end.

The evidence is unequivocal: When governments adopt an emergency-only model of care, health outcomes deteriorate and long-term costs increase. Preventative and primary care are the most cost-effective interventions in any health care system. Denying early access to medications, mental health supports, dental treatment and assistive devices does not eliminate the need for care; it delays it until conditions become acute and far more expensive to treat.

We have seen this before. Under former prime minister Stephen Harper, supplementary coverage under the interim federal health policy was restricted. The result was confusion, suffering and documented harm. Courts found the cuts to be cruel and unusual. After 2015, those restrictions were reversed because they were harmful and counterproductive. Canada learned that lesson once; we should not repeat it.

Nonetheless, taking a page from the Conservatives, the Liberals have now introduced copayments under the interim federal health program in budget 2025. They frame it as modest fiscal restraint, but decades of health policy research demonstrates that even small user fees deter access to health care, especially for low-income and medically vulnerable populations.

The population covered under the interim federal health program is among the most vulnerable in Canada: refugees and refugee claimants who often arrive after suffering war, persecution, torture and prolonged displacement. Many arrive with trauma, and many arrive with chronic conditions that have gone untreated for years. They have extremely limited financial means. For some living in deep poverty, a prescription charge is not symbolic. A 30% copayment for mental health counselling is not modest. A copayment for mobility aids, dental care or vision care is not a small inconvenience; it is prohibitive.

In practice these copayments function as a denial of care. The consequences are not hypothetical; they are predictable. When people cannot afford medications, hypertension goes untreated, leading to stroke, and diabetes goes unmanaged, leading to amputations, kidney failure or intensive care admission. Untreated infections escalate into hospitalization. When people cannot access mental health supports, traumas worsen, crises escalate and emergency interventions become necessary.

● (1310)

Each avoidable hospital stay costs thousands, sometimes tens of thousands, of dollars. The savings generated by a small copayment are dwarfed by the downstream costs of acute care. Instead of containing costs, this approach escalates them. Instead of relieving pressure on the system, it intensifies pressure on emergency departments and provincial health budgets. It undermines newcomers' ability to acquire language skills, to work, to contribute and to feel like equal members of society.

If we are serious about fiscal responsibility, then we must focus on the actual cost drivers within the interim federal health policy. One of the most significant drivers is the prolonged enrolment due to backlogs in the immigration and refugee system. The IRB needs resources. When claims take years to process, individuals remain on the interim federal health program coverage longer than necessary. That is an administrative problem, not a refugee health problem.

The solution is clear: Accelerate fair and timely claim processing, invest in adequate staffing and resources for the IRB, ensure early comprehensive primary care upon arrival and maintain full interim federal health program coverage without copayments during this transition period. Let us remember that the interim federal health program is a temporary program. Early care reduces long-term costs, and timely decisions reduce prolonged enrolment. These are structural, evidence-based solutions. Punitive copayments are not. Moral obligations and economic logic align.

Protecting access to essential health care for refugees is not only a moral obligation; it is also sound economic policy. Healthy newcomers integrate more quickly, enter the workforce sooner, contribute to taxes and support their families. When we deny care, we delay integration and increase long-term public expenditures.

Business of Supply

The Conservative motion seeks to frame this as a question of fairness to taxpayers, but fairness requires facts. The facts show that cuts in copayments in refugee health care cause preventable harm, increase long-term expenditures, shift costs to provinces and undermines integration. That is neither fiscally responsible nor socially responsible. This is not evidence-based policy-making.

Rejecting division is what we must do. At its core, the motion divides. It suggests that refugees are a burden to be managed rather than human beings entitled to dignity and basic health care. Canada has chosen a different path. We have chosen evidence over ideology. We have chosen compassion aligned with fiscal prudence.

New Democrats will not support measures that scapegoat vulnerable people or repeat policy failures we have already corrected. We have to learn from the past. We know that restricting refugee health benefits causes preventable suffering and greater long-term expense. We know that even small user fees deter access for people living in deep poverty. We know that preventative care is more cost-effective than emergency intervention.

The Conservative motion is misguided, and the NDP will reject the motion. The Liberal government's decision to impose copayments under the interim federal health policy risks repeating a costly mistake. The responsible course of action is clear: Maintain full coverage under the interim federal health program, eliminate copayments, address administrative backlogs and invest in early comprehensive primary care.

For these reasons, the NDP will oppose the motion and any other attempts by the Conservatives or the Liberals to roll back this important health care delivery for all.

● (1315)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has talked a great deal about immigration over the years here on the floor of the House of Commons.

I have a question related to temporary visas, whether for visitors or workers. People will often apply for an extension just prior to their visa's expiry, which gives them implied status. I am curious about the NDP's position in regard to someone who has implied status and that implied status expires. Should they be entitled to claim refugee status?

Business of Supply

• (1320)

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, the member knows very well, in terms of refugee status, what the requirements and eligibility rules are. Those would apply to the individuals who are applying. That determination should be made independently and not by politicians. It is made at the IRB.

The government should be properly funding the IRB so it can process the claims accordingly, instead of creating a huge backlog like the one we are faced with right now that, as a result, is having an impact on the interim federal health policy. That is what the government should do, and the member knows it.

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the member has a fundamental misunderstanding about our motion. Everyone knows that we have a duty of care for legitimate refugees, but what we are talking about in the motion is people who have had it ruled that they are not eligible to be here in Canada and in fact should be deported, yet there is \$1 billion being spent on their health care, and they are getting superior health care to what Canadians who are paying their taxes get.

The NDP is always arguing for more benefits in the health care system for Canadians. Does the member not think that \$1 billion would be better spent on Canadians instead of on people who should be deported?

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I actually know the motion very well, as well as the intentions behind the Conservatives. Let us be clear: What they are also talking about is denying access to care for people who are under an appeal provision. In Canada, there is a thing called due process.

By the way, the federal court and the Harper government already did this. The Harper government took away interim health care provisions for supplementary benefits for refugees, and the courts ruled this to be unconstitutional. Apparently the Conservatives have not learned their lesson, because here we are talking about the same thing with the same old approach again.

What the NDP fights for is head-to-toe care for every single person in this country.

[*Translation*]

Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her compassionate speech.

My question has to do with a point that she raised in her speech and in her response to the government, and that is the atrocious processing times for claims. We are currently talking about roughly 40 months, whereas some European countries that are also facing waves of migration have implemented measures to speed up the process. In France, for instance, the wait time is around six months, and in Germany, it is around eight months or just slightly longer than that.

Should the government take urgent action to reduce these unacceptable processing times?

[*English*]

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. What the government must do to address the situation we are faced with right now, which is a problem caused by the government's in-

action, is to ensure that there are adequate resources to process the applications in the system. When the Liberals do not, they create a huge backlog, and that has implications and ramifications.

Quebec, for example, is in fact faced with a situation where health services are being impacted because there is a huge backlog. The government must be fair and just. Quebec and all provinces deserve equitable treatment. They deserve support from the federal government in support of immigration and for refugees so people can access health care when they need it, and at the same time, have applications processed in an expeditious manner.

Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government hides its xenophobia in omnibus bills such as Bill C-12, and the Conservatives have just laid it all out in front of us with today's motion.

I am just fact-checking: How does the Conservative disinformation campaign with today's motion harm migrant, refugee and immigrant communities?

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are preying on the most vulnerable for their own political gain, and frankly it will escalate anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiments in the broader community. That does not do anybody any good, so I call on the Conservatives to do the right thing: Stop the rhetoric and stop trying to gain with their fearmongering on the backs of refugees and migrants.

[*Translation*]

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my turn to say a few words on an extremely interesting and important matter.

• (1325)

[*English*]

I will do it in English to make sure we are all on the same page.

I will start by saying that, as a government, we need to manage public funds responsibly. However, that cannot be accomplished—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Order. The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île is rising on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Speaker, my colleague just said that he would speak in English to make sure that everyone understands. I find that unacceptable. He can speak in English or in French. Everyone should be able to understand with the help of the interpretation service.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): That is not a true point of order.

I invite the hon. parliamentary secretary to continue his speech.

Carlos Leitão: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's point, but I think it is important to say this in English.

[*English*]

However, that cannot be accomplished at the expense of our values.

We have already taken steps to ensure the sustainability of the interim federal health program and make sure that vulnerable people have access to care. We are maintaining necessary health care coverage while taking important steps to manage public funds. Recognizing these pressures, the government has taken a number of targeted and concrete steps to control costs and strengthen sustainability.

[*Translation*]

What did we do?

First, to control costs and strengthen sustainability, we implemented a copayment model for certain products and services. In budget 2025, the government introduced copayments to cover the supplemental benefits offered under the program. As of May 1 of this year, beneficiaries will cover part of the cost of their products and services. Basic medical services, such as doctor's visits and hospital care, will remain fully covered. However, beneficiaries must now cover part of the cost of supplemental benefits to ensure a certain balance with provincial public programs.

Let us be clear. Eliminating health care does not eliminate health care needs. Postponing essential care until provincial insurance can cover it, as the Conservatives are proposing, would be counterproductive for provincial finances. We would simply be shifting these expenses to the provinces.

Second, we suspended some updates to the interim federal health program benefit grids to make the program more rigorous. These benefits are continually adjusted to match the provincial and territorial benefits available to Canadians. I want to emphasize here that the federal assistance program for asylum seekers is not a deluxe program. The beneficiaries of this program do not receive benefits that go well beyond what the average Canadian receives.

Finally, and this does not pertain exclusively to the program, we have also put an end to hotel accommodations to make the program more affordable.

One of the most significant changes we are making stems from Bill C-12, which was passed by the House and is now before the Senate. Bill C-12, passed by the House, is part of the ongoing efforts to reduce the number of refugee claims. The bill will establish new grounds of ineligibility, strengthen system integrity and support the implementation of more efficient decision-making timelines for refugee claims. By cutting down abuse, improving efficiency and optimizing claims processing, these reforms will shorten the period during which people rely on temporary federal supports.

By putting measures in place that support the long-term sustainability of the interim federal health program, we are ensuring that people continue to have access to essential services until they become eligible for provincial health insurance. It is important to note that this set of measures demonstrates that our government is ac-

Business of Supply

tively monitoring the real financial pressures associated with the federal refugee assistance program and managing them responsibly. We will ensure that this program remains fair and sustainable through structural changes, cost sharing, strengthened oversight and audit mechanisms, and the alignment of benefits with provincial systems.

It is also important to note that in 2025, the number of asylum claims dropped by roughly one third compared to the previous year. This decrease shows that the measures already in place are helping to ease the pressure on the system. We are already taking action. Our Conservative colleagues mention in their motion that the cost of the system has skyrocketed, from \$211 million to almost \$900 million.

● (1330)

What they did not mention was the reason for such an increase. Essentially, it related to an increase in the number of people using the program. What caused this increase in the number of people using the program and claiming asylum in Canada? We do not live on an island, cut off from everything going on around us.

I clearly remember the Roxham Road situation in 2018, because I was working for a different government at the time. Thousands of people arrived in Canada. Why did these thousands of people come to Canada? I am sure that the Conservatives would have set up a barrier or built a wall and told all these people to go away. Back in 2018 and 2019, they came hoping that Canada would help them following the election of a U.S. president who is still around today and who sparked a mass movement of people who wanted to leave the United States for a more welcoming country like ours. Naturally, this caused a lot of disruption, and we had a hard time adjusting our programs to cope with it. However, we could not look the other way either. Barricading the border or telling people to leave because we could care less about their problems was out of the question. That is not the Canadian way. Canada has never been like that.

It has cost us a lot and it is still costing us a lot, but we will be able to normalize this situation. Again, we do not live on an island that is completely isolated from what is happening on the rest of the planet. That is why our government has taken steps to deal with the situation and normalize things by ensuring that benefits are harmonized with provincial programs. It is not true that asylum seekers have a deluxe health care system. Frankly, people need to get out there and see what is actually happening.

We have also introduced copayment mechanisms to improve the system's viability. We have passed legislation to ease the pressure.

Business of Supply

What I find least acceptable about our opposition colleagues' motion is point (iv), which suggests that Canadians do not have access to health care services because people from elsewhere are monopolizing the system. Frankly, that is an unacceptable correlation. By that logic, it is the fault of foreigners, of asylum seekers, that poor old Canadians do not have access to health services. That is what we call rabble-rousing.

[English]

Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are here today because over six million Canadians are without a doctor. Our health care system is broken, and I will add that the Liberals broke the system. It is those in our rural and remote and indigenous communities who are facing this. Do they know that between indigenous women and non-indigenous women in Canada, indigenous women are twice as likely to die from pregnancy-related deaths? Communities in British Columbia are missing OB/GYNs. They do not have access to them. Rural and remote communities are facing this.

Our motion today is saying that the government needs to give it sober second thought and to rethink health care in our country. Will the member not agree that this needs to be done?

• (1335)

Carlos Leitão: Mr. Speaker, I do agree with the issues my colleague pointed out. I do agree that people in remote communities and many other communities, such as in Montreal and Toronto, have difficulty accessing health services, but that has nothing whatsoever to do with asylum seekers, for Christ's sake. That has nothing to do with asylum seekers. Come on, guys. Wake up.

Andrew Lawton: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am sorry, but that was incredibly unparliamentary and disrespectful language that a great many Canadians would be incredibly offended was uttered in the House. I would ask the member to apologize and withdraw that comment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): It is unparliamentary. I ask the member to withdraw that comment, and then we can move on.

Carlos Leitão: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw, but I find it surprising.

[Translation]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we know that approximately 40% of asylum seekers have settled in Quebec, even though Quebec accounts for only about 22% of Canada's population.

Does my colleague think that we should find a way to spread asylum seekers more evenly across the country and that Quebec and the provinces should be compensated?

Right now, we know that, for 2024 alone, Quebec has a shortfall of \$700 million because it has not received proper compensation from the federal government. What does my colleague think about that?

Carlos Leitão: Mr. Speaker, I think that we should be able to ensure that asylum seekers are spread more evenly across Canada. We are not going to do that by force, and we are not going to force people to leave, but we should find a mechanism to facilitate a better spread.

Yes, we must also compensate the provinces that take in a large number of asylum seekers. These discussions are ongoing with the governments, particularly the Quebec government.

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if we could pick up on the point that the member raised in regard to the first question. In essence, this motion tries to bring two issues and make them one, and it then tries to portray refugees in a very negative light.

If the Conservatives wanted to talk about health care, why does the member think they did not just introduce a motion to talk about health care? I would love to have done that. Could the member maybe provide his thoughts on why they did not do that?

Carlos Leitão: Mr. Speaker, I have some thoughts on that, but I am afraid they probably would not be parliamentary, so I will abstain from going that way.

I find it deplorable to say that the very real problems with our health care system across Canada are the result of large numbers of asylum seekers.

[Translation]

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for my colleague and he knows that very well. First, he is an example of an immigration success story, just like my parents. Second, for me, he is a hero of government finances in Quebec because he was the last minister to balance the budget. I hope he draws inspiration from his experiences when it comes to doing what needs to be done at the federal level.

The member talked about Roxham Road. He is well aware that anyone crossing at Roxham Road would see a sign stating that doing so was illegal, but then that was changed to "irregular". It is the same thing, just using different words. Since my colleague talked about Roxham Road, can he tell us what he thinks of former prime minister Justin Trudeau waiting nearly a year following the agreement signed by Canada with the President of the United States before announcing that changes would be made?

For an entire year, the province of Quebec had to pay for Mr. Trudeau's silence on Roxham Road. Is my colleague proud of Justin Trudeau, his former leader?

Carlos Leitão: Mr. Speaker, I have only been here since April 2025, so I will refrain from commenting on what happened before or on what should or should not have been done.

However, the problem with the safe third country agreement, the agreement that allows asylum seekers from countries considered safe to be sent back, had to be resolved. That was done. After that, Roxham Road was closed.

• (1340)

[English]

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not have to say this, but I am going to say it anyway. I am splitting my time with my beautiful seatmate, the member for Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

As always, it is an honour to rise on behalf of Oshawa. Of course, I speak in support of today's Conservative motion.

Oshawa is a proud and welcoming community. Our city has been shaped by generations of newcomers who came to Canada, worked hard, raised families and built strong neighbourhoods. As an example of this, every year in Oshawa we celebrate Fiesta Week, Oshawa's longest-running cultural celebration. It brings together music, dance, food and traditions from around the world that are represented in Oshawa. Families visit different pavilions, share meals and celebrate their heritage, while also celebrating what unites us as Canadians.

Fiesta Week reflects the very best of our country. It shows that immigration, when it is orderly and fair, strengthens our communities. It shows that we can honour our roots while embracing our shared Canadian identity, but for immigration to continue strengthening communities like Oshawa, the system must be credible. It must be sustainable, and it must be fair. Right now, I am afraid it is not.

The cost of the interim federal health program, or IFHP, has more than quadrupled in just four years, rising from \$211 million to \$896 million. It is projected to reach \$1.5 billion by 2029-30.

At the same time, nearly six million Canadians cannot find a family doctor. Emergency rooms like Lakeridge Health in Oshawa are overwhelmed. Seniors are waiting months for procedures. Families are struggling to access mental health supports. In Oshawa, I hear from residents who cannot access timely care. I speak with seniors who are worried about surgery delays. I speak with young families who cannot find a primary care physician, yet, under the interim federal health program, rejected asylum claimants can access benefits that many Canadians do not have free access to. These benefits include pharmaceutical coverage, vision care, prosthetics and assistive devices, home care, nursing homes, physiotherapy, occupational and speech therapy and counselling.

Many hard-working Canadians in Oshawa do not have comprehensive drug coverage. They pay out of pocket for glasses. They fundraise for medical equipment. It is fundamentally unfair that rejected asylum claimants can access broader supplementary benefits than the taxpayers who fund the system.

At the House of Commons health committee, Conservatives learned that health care providers are charging taxpayers up to five times the provincial rates for services delivered under the interim federal health program. I will repeat that: It is five times the provincial rate. That is not sustainable, and it undermines confidence in the system.

There is another serious consequence of the government's mismanagement. The massive backlog of asylum claims, up nearly 3,000% since 2015, does not help legitimate asylum seekers. In

Business of Supply

fact, it harms them. When the system is flooded with claims, including those that are false and ineligible, processing times slow dramatically. Genuine refugees fleeing persecution are left waiting in uncertainty. They cannot properly settle. They cannot fully integrate. They are left in limbo and are at greater risk of falling between the cracks and not getting the help that Canada promised them.

A broken system fails Canadians, and it fails the very people it is supposed to protect. We cannot promise the Canadian dream if we cannot provide an efficient health care system. We cannot invite people to build their future here if we cannot ensure access to doctors, hospitals and basic care.

A dream without delivery is simply an empty promise. The motion simply offers reasonable solutions. It calls on the government to review federal benefits provided to asylum claimants in order to find savings for taxpayers. It calls on the government to review them, to take a look and see what is happening. Perhaps the extra benefits that rejected asylum claimants receive but everyday Canadians do not should be restricted.

• (1345)

I will give an example of that briefly. My sister had a terrible injury. She broke her leg. It was so bad that she expected to take six months to recover, and of course she was signed up for physiotherapy. When she called to get the physiotherapy that was covered, she found out she had to wait six months before she could see someone for that. This is the backlog that we are talking about. She is supposed to be walking again by the time she is supposed to start physiotherapy to learn to walk again, so let us make this fair for the Canadians who fund the system.

The motion calls on the government to review federal benefits provided to asylum claimants in order to find savings for taxpayers. It calls to restrict federal benefits received by rejected asylum claimants to emergency life-saving health care, so there would be no denial of care, as the New Democrats are also trying to claim. We would not be restricting refugee health benefits. We would be restricting them for those who have been rejected and those who perhaps have lied in claiming refugee status, and have been denied. That would ensure that we remain humane while restoring fairness.

Business of Supply

The motion calls for transparency through an annual report to Parliament on IFHP spending, particularly on supplementary benefits that Canadian citizens themselves do not receive, and it calls for policies to immediately expel foreign nationals convicted of serious crimes in Canada. The public safety of Canadians depends on it. The motion calls for these policies, and it is very important that public safety be put first.

The motion is about protecting the integrity of a system that has allowed communities like mine in Oshawa to continue to flourish. When immigration is managed responsibly, it strengthens our workforce, enriches our culture and builds vibrant cities. When it is mismanaged, costs spiral, backlogs grow and public confidence erodes. Conservatives believe we can restore balance, and that is all we are looking for. We can protect genuine refugees, and we want to. We can make that happen. We can reduce backlogs so legitimate claims are processed quickly. We can ensure that benefits are fair to taxpayers, and we can make sure that before expanding intake, we have enough jobs, enough housing and the capacity in our health care system to care as we would love to.

That is how we would preserve both compassion and fairness, and I think we can do it. We are simply calling on the government to help us help it preserve compassion and fairness. That is how we would better support communities like mine in Oshawa, Durham Region and across the country, and that is how we ensure that the Canadian dream remains real and attainable for those who come here and for the Canadians who have built this country.

For those reasons, I urge all members of the House to support the motion. I welcome all comments and questions as we continue in this debate.

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if our colleague is truly motivated by a sincere desire to improve public health issues, why not table a motion specifically addressing that issue today?

This is similar to other Conservative motions we have seen recently that have linked crime to immigration. Today, we are unfortunately seeing renewed attempts to establish connections between health care, immigration, and crime. I find it especially unfortunate to see opposition members attempting to make such connections.

I would like to ask my colleague what evidence she is using to justify the connections made in today's motion and how this approach actually contributes to improving public health. I believe it is more about polarizing the debate. I would like to hear her comments on that.

• (1350)

[*English*]

Rhonda Kirkland: Mr. Speaker, I do not think that the member is quite understanding. As an educational therapist, I look for evidence-based solutions for things all the time. This is simply what this Conservative motion is proposing: an evidence-based solution. The interim federal health program has quadrupled. Canadians are having a hard time finding a doctor and getting care. It is a simple cause and effect. Let us help the Canadians who fund this system.

Let us help the refugees who are here to seek help, and let us work on that together, compassionately and fairly.

[*Translation*]

Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have two questions for my hon. colleague.

First, does she agree that the main problem with regard to asylum claims is the processing time, which is currently more than 40 months?

Let us look at Europe, for example, which is dealing with waves of migration and where officials have made a significant effort to reduce processing times. In France, the processing time is six months, and in Germany, it is eight months.

Should this government do the same?

Second, the last part of the motion talks about passing policies to “immediately expel foreign nationals convicted of serious crime in Canada”. Currently, convicted criminals must serve their sentences and are then deported. Under this motion, they would no longer have to serve their sentences here, and there is no guarantee that they would serve them in another country.

Could my hon. colleague comment on that?

[*English*]

Rhonda Kirkland: Mr. Speaker, I will focus more on the second question, simply because I sit on the Standing Committee for Public Safety and National Security. I speak to CBSA agents and others quite often who tell me that they are concerned by the number of false claimants who are coming to Canada and that it feels as though it is 1% who are really legitimate refugees. Juxtapose that with the fact that we have violent criminals who are not Canadians staying in Canada: There are 10,000 plus, I think, in the GTA, and right now we have only seven CBSA agents who are actively working on inland enforcement and to make sure we expel those people. We need to do something about that, and we need to do it quickly.

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that there are refugees who were not legitimate and who have had their claims rejected. When they get a letter from the government saying they are going to be deported, they evaporate into the ether. There are maybe 500,000 of them, but the government is pretending there is not a problem.

Why does the member think the Liberals are so naive about the disaster they created with immigration?

Statements by Members

Rhonda Kirkland: Mr. Speaker, the simple answer to that is that they are not naive. I think they know exactly what the problems are. I think they know what the issues are, but they do not want to admit that the Liberal government's terrible policies over the past 11 years have caused the problems. To admit there is an issue would be to admit that they are the reason for it.

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to our Conservative motion regarding serious inefficiencies in the federal health care and immigration systems.

For those unaware, let us look at the cold, hard facts that were uncovered by the work of my colleagues and me at the parliamentary health committee last fall regarding the serious effects Canada's dysfunctional immigration system is having on our health care system, especially the effects of the interim federal health program.

It is a fact that thousands of my constituents and hundreds of thousands of British Columbians have no family doctor. It is a fact that residents in my riding often discover their emergency rooms are suddenly closing for hours, if not whole days, because of a chronic shortage of health care workers. It happened just this past weekend in Princeton. It is a fact that residents in my riding must wait months, if not years, to see the specialists they need, sometimes driving on treacherous winter roads to reach them.

It is also a fact that if someone is, for example, a non-Canadian arrested in Surrey in connection with extortion, or in connection with arson in Ontario, a shooting in Edmonton, or auto theft in the Lower Mainland, they can immediately file a refugee claim for asylum and be granted access to the interim federal health program. For Conservatives, this is not hypothetical. It is a real case, in which these individuals made real claims. Even our premier, David Eby, thought it was outrageous.

Conservatives tried to amend Liberal legislation in the committee to fix this. Our amendments would have prevented non-citizens convicted of serious crimes from filing bogus asylum claims in an attempt to escape deportation. Still, the Liberals voted against this common-sense change to our laws.

I know the Liberals will say we should let the process play out. However, even when clearly fraudulent claims filed by violent suspected criminals are rightly thrown out by our refugee board, these people still do not lose access to free specialty health programs. In contrast, they file an appeal, which may take years to be heard due to backlogs averaging up to four years.

Even with a budget of nearly \$350 million and 2,500 employees, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada is growing its backlog year after year. The Parliamentary Budget Officer's report, using IRCC data, shows that this backlog will only grow for the rest of the decade. Even when these bogus refugee claimants are denied at every stage, and the fraudulent visitors lose all rights to remain in Canada and are told they must leave, until and if they are physically walked out of the country, they can still walk down the street and receive vision care or physiotherapy, things that the average Canadian does not have access to.

Here is the worst thing about these departures. The IRCC cannot even tell parliamentarians how many are actually departing. I guess it expects these fraudulent cases to walk out the door on their own and leave behind free health care. That is the interim federal health program as it exists today, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed when his office appeared before the health committee just a couple of weeks ago. Canadians have increasingly lost confidence in the immigration and refugee system under the Liberal government, and it is easy to see why.

No governing party in this House has ever opposed the admission of real refugees from Syria, Ukraine or Afghanistan. No governing party has ever opposed the interim federal health program. Canada is a generous nation to those who need our generosity. If someone comes to Canada blinded by acid, without a limb, from a war-torn country, no one is advocating leaving them in the street instead of ensuring they have rehabilitative care.

● (1355)

What Canadians have come to oppose is the bent shape that our refugee system exists in today. A complete failure by the Liberal government to properly manage the admission of temporary foreign workers and international students into non-essential jobs and fake universities has led to this crisis.

Guests to our country quickly realize they can create nearly endless extensions, with access to special medical care that they do not have in their own home countries, by filing asylum claims that everyone knows do not meet any standard of refugee. I do not blame these people for doing this. It is the government's fault for allowing the loophole to exist in the—

● (1400)

The Speaker: Unfortunately, I must interrupt the hon. member at this point so that we can go on with statements and then question period. The hon. member will have approximately four minutes left in her speech, if she so chooses, after question period and special statements.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CUBA

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, in an open letter to the world from an island, an ordinary woman denounces a crime that the world refuses to see.

Statements by Members

She writes, “My name is like millions of others”, Ikay Romay. “I am an ordinary Cuban woman—a daughter, a sister [and] I write this with a broken heart and trembling hands. What my people [are experiencing] today is not a crisis.” It is a crime. “It is slow, calculated murder.... And the world looks the other way.”

Let us look at Cuba, at what the United States is doing to it, and ask ourselves, “Which side of history do I want to be on?”

This is a crime. I ask that we share her message. Children and babies are dying in incubators because of blockades. People are dying for lack of medication. I ask that we do not look the other way. Thousands of people sharing her message will make a difference.

* * *

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Ginette Lavack (St. Boniface—St. Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Black History Month comes to a close, we are reminded that meaningful celebration does not happen on its own. It happens because strong community organizations carry that work forward year after year. In my riding, two outstanding organizations are doing exactly that.

The Black History Month Celebration Committee has been a pillar in Winnipeg since 1981. It continues to lead Manitoba's largest Black History Month celebrations, bringing together thousands to honour the history, achievements and contributions of Black Manitobans.

[Translation]

Noir et fier, an initiative of Wilgis Agossa, together with its partners, created an inclusive francophone space that celebrates Black voices, promotes intercultural dialogue and puts young people front and centre.

[English]

Black History Month is strongest when it is rooted in community.

[Translation]

Through the efforts of these organizations, celebration becomes education, dialogue and social cohesion.

I thank them for their leadership and commitment.

[English]

Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, Canada has a long and painful history of forced and coerced sterilization, particularly affecting indigenous peoples. For decades, individuals were subjected to permanent procedures without their informed consent, including in residential schools and in northern and remote communities.

While many believe this practice belongs to the past, it does not. Survivors continue to come forward today, sharing experiences of pressure, coercion and procedures performed without true consent.

I am proud to sponsor Bill S-228, introduced by Senator Yvonne Boyer, which will clarify in the Criminal Code that performing a sterilization without consent constitutes aggravated assault. This legislation will strengthen accountability and affirm that reproductive autonomy is a fundamental human right.

An hon. member: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Speaker: There are no points of order during S. O. 31s.

An hon. member: It is unbelievable, the amount of noise. We cannot hear his statement.

The Speaker: This is an unfortunate interruption. One can hear very well on the audio and on TV.

We will let the hon. member take it up. I will not tolerate that kind of interruption again, whether there is too much noise or somebody passes in front of the camera.

From the top, please, the hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes.

* * *

FORCED AND COERCED STERILIZATION

Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has a long and painful history of forced and coerced sterilization, particularly affecting indigenous peoples. For decades, individuals were subjected to permanent procedures without their informed consent, including in residential schools and in northern and remote communities.

While many believe this practice belongs to the past, it does not. Survivors continue to come forward today, sharing experiences of pressure, coercion and procedures performed without their consent.

I am proud to sponsor Bill S-228, introduced by Senator Yvonne Boyer, which will clarify in the Criminal Code that performing a sterilization without consent constitutes aggravated assault. This legislation will strengthen accountability and affirm that reproductive autonomy is a fundamental human right.

I want to recognize the courageous survivors who are in Ottawa this week, whose advocacy has brought this issue to national attention.

I ask that all members support Bill S-228 and help to ensure that this injustice never happens again.

* * *

● (1405)

UKRAINE

Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, four years ago, Russia launched its unjustified and illegal full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

[Translation]

This war remains a serious humanitarian crisis.

[English]

On Saturday, in Montreal, I attended the Global Rally for Ukraine in frigid temperatures. We gathered in solidarity with the Ukrainian people. We stood against aggression and annexation, to protect children and to keep families together.

[Translation]

My thoughts, along with those of the Ukrainian families, are with the wives and children whose husbands and fathers stayed to fight on the front lines.

[English]

They are there defending Ukraine. This is a just cause.

I say to Ukrainians in Canada and across the world, their resilience and bravery inspire.

[Translation]

Canada will stand with them.

[English]

We stand for accountability and for a lasting peace grounded in justice, fairness and international law.

Dyakuyu.

* * *

[Translation]

FRAUD AND CYBERCRIME INITIATIVE

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to draw the House's attention to an initiative that I undertook in my riding to help people learn more about fraud and cybercrime, a reality that directly affects many families. According to data from the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre, between 2020 and 2024, more than 2,100 incidents of fraud were reported in Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles. The most common forms of fraud were identity fraud, extortion, theft of personal information and phishing. Financial losses have risen significantly, reaching nearly \$3.5 million in 2024, which shows the severity of the problem.

Given these concerning figures, I felt it was essential to provide people with clear, solid and local facts, along with some simple tips on how to better protect themselves, particularly when using credit and debit cards and dealing with online fraud. The response from my constituents has been very positive. Many of them told me that the information was useful and relevant and that it helped them to better understand the risks and take preventive action. Seniors and families in particular told me that they felt better informed and more confident. This initiative shows that accessible information supported by local data can really make a difference on the ground.

* * *

ALTHEA SEAMAN

Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, February 2026 is the 30th anniversary of Black History Month. This year's theme is the legacy of generations over time.

Statements by Members

Fittingly, I wish to acknowledge the role of Althea Seaman, who was born in Dominica. She was truly a pioneering member of Laval's Black community. She belonged to one of the first families to settle in our region in the 1970s. In 1983, Ms. Seaman founded the Ville Laval Black Community Association to build a network of solidarity and foster intercultural exchange. Over time, she even became an ambassador who connected francophone and anglophone Black communities.

Today the House of Commons acknowledges Ms. Seaman's resilience, courage and legacy—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga.

* * *

[English]

HEART HEALTH

Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, February is Heart Month, a time to focus on the health of our own hearts and to stand in solidarity with families affected by heart conditions, including congenital heart defects. It is a reminder that heart health begins with everyday choices. Small, consistent steps can play a powerful role in prevention and long-term wellness.

At the same time, we recognize those affected by congenital heart defects. Medical advances have transformed survival and quality of life, yet many families still navigate complex surgeries, specialized care and lifelong monitoring. We also honour those families who have experienced the heartbreak of losing a child due to these conditions.

Let us embrace both prevention and advocacy, caring for our own hearts while championing those whose paths began with unique challenges. With knowledge, healthy living and collective resolve, we can stand beside one another, honour every family's story and, together, work toward healthier hearts for all.

* * *

● (1410)

LUNAR NEW YEAR

Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this month, east and southeast Asian communities in Canada and around the world are celebrating Lunar New Year, one of the most important traditions across many cultures.

This year, 2026, marks the year of the fire horse, a rare occurrence that comes just once every 60 years. The horse symbolizes energy, determination and freedom. The fire element is said to amplify these traits, bringing passion, intensity and transformative momentum to the year ahead.

Statements by Members

Yesterday, I welcomed members of Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and Filipino communities to Parliament Hill to celebrate this special occasion. I thank my colleagues who made the event special.

Lunar New Year concludes with the lantern festival on March 3. May the light from the lanterns bring health, happiness and prosperity to all.

Xin nian kuai le. Saehae bok mani badeuseyo. Chúc mừng năm mới. Jyun siu zit fai lok.

* * *

INTERIM FEDERAL HEALTH PROGRAM

Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two-tiered health care policies that reward non-citizens who have no legal right to be here, rejected asylum seekers, are unfair to everyone. That is why the Conservatives have proposed an opposition motion to restrict health benefits for failed asylum claimants to emergency life-saving care.

It is not fair to anyone to have taxpayers paying for premium benefits like vision care and physiotherapy for failed asylum claimants, while seniors in Kitchener have a hard time getting home care or nursing care, while people across Canada struggle with their mental health and need support, and while disabled persons are living in poverty.

It is time to restore fairness to Canada's health care system. I encourage all people in the House to support our motion.

* * *

[Translation]

**SYMPHONIE VOCALE DE LA FRATERNITÉ DES
POLICIERS ET POLICIÈRES DE MONTRÉAL**

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the 70th anniversary of the Symphonie vocale de la Fraternité des policiers et policières de Montréal, the Montreal police choir.

Since 1956, this unique choir, made up exclusively of active and retired police officers, has been touching hearts with the power of its voices and the depth of its commitment. For seven decades, it has used music as a language of unity, emotion and friendship. Over the years, the choir has given numerous performances for community organizations and events, particularly at seniors' residences, at formal or festive ceremonies, and at funerals for members of the police force.

I would like to highlight the remarkable contribution of musical director Rolland Côté and pianist Denise Roy, whose passion and professionalism have shaped the excellence of this ensemble.

As it enters its 70th year, I offer my congratulations to the Symphonie vocale de la Fraternité des policiers et policières de Montréal and wish it continued success.

[English]

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Juanita Nathan (Pickering—Brooklin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Black History Month is not only a time to look back. It is a call to build forward. As we mark 30 years of its recognition in Canada, we are reminded that celebrating Black excellence must go hand in hand with expanding opportunities. This year's theme, "From Nation Builders to Tomorrow's Visionaries", speaks to this continuum. The entrepreneurs, community leaders and advocates shaping our economy today are laying the foundation for the next generation.

This is why this Saturday in Pickering—Brooklin, we will gather for our Black entrepreneurship forum, a space dedicated not only to dialogue but to connection, capital and concrete opportunity. With the participation of the Secretary of State for Small Business, the focus will be clear: ensuring Black-owned businesses can access the tools they need to grow, scale and thrive.

Together, through partnership and purposeful investment, we honour those who built before us and empower those who will lead next.

* * *

HOUSING

Roman Baber (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Toronto-area home builders reported the worst January on record since 1981. Last month, only 269 new homes were sold in the city of Toronto. The slump in new-home sales has lasted longer than the downturn of the 1990s.

Because of these Liberals, the dream of home ownership is gone for many Canadians. We already know that the Liberal housing plan is dead on arrival. That is because, according to CMHC, new housing starts will drop every year for the next three years. However, instead of getting government out of the way to build new homes, the Liberals are building a fourth government housing agency. Count them: the Department of Housing, CMHC, Canada Lands Company, and now Build Canada Homes, a fourth bureaucracy to employ Liberal cronies.

Instead of building another government agency, the Liberals can adopt our Conservative plan to take the GST off all new construction and for all new homebuyers, so Canadians can afford to buy a home.

• (1415)

[Translation]

PENTATHLON DES NEIGES

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, between February 14 and 22, Quebec City really came alive thanks to the Sun Life Pentathlon des neiges, the largest winter sports event in the country.

For over 20 years, this event has served to showcase Quebec's capital region thanks to a dedicated team, hundreds of volunteers and strong partners. I would like to acknowledge the spokespersons for this year's event, Olympic champion Alex Harvey and Lyne Bessette, a great athlete and former member for Brome—Misisquoi. I am also proud that Canada Economic Development has been supporting this event for several years now and has been helping to promote it across the country.

To wrap up, I would like to sincerely thank the founder of the event, Jean-Charles Ouellet, who was also my high school gym teacher and whose vision of shared enjoyment through physical activity continues to inspire our community.

* * *

[English]

COST OF FOOD

Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 57% of millennials say they have little to no money left over after paying monthly bills, according to the 2026 RBC financial independence poll. That is more than a statistic; it is a giant blaring warning signal. Young Canadians are not just postponing vacations or cutting back on luxuries. Many are struggling to put food on the table, let alone save for their futures.

The Liberals blame global events for rising food prices, yet 70% of the food we eat is produced right here in Canada. Therefore, it is excessive regulation, inflationary spending and the industrial carbon tax that are driving up costs here at home across the entire supply chain, costs that are passed on to Canadians. This is a made-in-Canada problem, and food prices have risen more than twice as fast as our overall goods. Every trip to the grocery store is a reminder that something just is not working.

How expensive does food have to get before the Liberals stop strangling Canadian food production with red tape and punishing taxes?

* * *

CIVIC EDUCATION

Vince Gasparro (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the students from Lawrence Heights Middle School who are joining us in Ottawa from my riding of Eglinton—Lawrence.

At a time when our country needs engaged young people more than ever, it is inspiring to see students who are civically engaged and eager to learn about our democratic institutions. I thank Principal Stewart for her leadership and for fostering a strong culture of civic education. For the students visiting from Lawrence Heights, I

Statements by Members

hope this experience inspires many of them to one day serve our community.

The students will be celebrating Black History Month with the Children's Breakfast Club. Members are welcome to attend at 4 p.m. in room 330 of the Wellington Building.

* * *

INTERIM FEDERAL HEALTH PROGRAM

Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, fraudulent and rejected asylum claims are straining a health care system that millions of Canadians cannot fully access. The interim federal health program's costs have more than quadrupled in four years, from \$211 million to \$896 million, and they are projected to reach \$1.5 billion by 2029.

At committee, we learned that providers are billing taxpayers up to five times the provincial rate for services to rejected claimants. Meanwhile, some six million Canadians lack a family doctor, yet failed claimants have supplementary benefits including vision care, benefits that many Canadians must pay for out of pocket. This is neither fair nor sustainable.

Conservatives are calling for limiting benefits for rejected claimants to emergency and life-saving care only. We are calling for full annual transparency to Parliament and the immediate removal of foreign nationals convicted of serious crimes. Canada is a compassionate country, but it must first be fair to its own citizens.

* * *

UKRAINE

Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks four years since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The Ukrainian people have been outmanned and outgunned, but they have shown tremendous courage in defending their homeland. Unable to win on the battlefield, Russia has resolved to pursue war crimes, including most recently trying to destroy the power grid to freeze millions of Ukrainians into surrender. They will never surrender, but they need our help.

For me, there are two reasons we support Ukraine. The first is that is the right thing to do. It is the moral thing to do. The second reason is that it is the right thing for Canada. If Russia wins, it will not stop at Ukraine, and NATO countries will be next. We know this because Vladimir Putin has told us so. That is why Ukraine's victory is vital to Canada's security. Canada has been a global leader in supporting Ukraine since 2022, with over \$25 billion in support. I know that under the Prime Minister's leadership, that support will continue.

The Ukrainian people are not only fighting for their own freedom and security; they are also fighting for ours. We need to fight for them until they win, until we all win.

Slava Ukraini.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS**

• (1420)

[Translation]

PENSIONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers are fed up with Liberal waste. After this Liberal Prime Minister doubled the deficit and drove up inflation, we are now seeing unconscionable waste: ArriveCAN, WE Charity and now Cúram. According to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, the fact that 85,000 seniors are not getting their cheques is good news. A \$5-billion cost overrun is good news.

Does the Prime Minister agree with his House leader that wasting money and depriving seniors of their cheques is good news?

Right Hon. Mark Carney (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to acknowledge that today marks the fourth anniversary of the beginning of Russia's unjustified and horrific war against Ukraine. Canada stands with Ukraine and we are sending more military and humanitarian aid today.

With regard to the Leader of the Opposition's question, as far as I know, the Cúram process started in 2017. The project was expanded to include other Canadian services, one of them being EI.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government has wasted \$5 billion in cost overruns. Today, under the watch of this Liberal Prime Minister, 85,000 seniors are not getting their cheques and cannot buy food. The Prime Minister doubled the deficit, saying that he did not have enough money, but apparently he had enough to squander \$5 billion.

What will the Prime Minister do to fix this Liberal scandal, protect taxpayers and make sure that our seniors get their cheques?

Right Hon. Mark Carney (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, the previous government began this project with OAS. We broadened the project's scope, adding EI, the GIS and the CPP. All amounts have been budgeted for and this project has already been reviewed by the Auditor General.

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve good quality health care, but after a decade of the Liberal government, six million Canadians do not have a family doctor. Part of the reason is that mass, out-of-control, Liberal immigration has overwhelmed the system, and many of those resources are going to people who are here illegally and have been rejected. There has been a 1,000% increase in the cost of providing deluxe benefits to many people who are here illegally.

Will the Prime Minister reverse this policy, support our motion and put Canadians first for health care?

Right Hon. Mark Carney (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, Canada is not America. Yes, Canada provides essential health care to everyone in this country. The increase in costs for the pro-

gram referenced in the opposition motion is a result of the increase in applicants for that program.

Now, what has the government done? The government has taken back control of immigration. The government has reduced the number of temporary workers in this country by 50% and the demands of asylum seekers by one-third. We are—

• (1425)

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the government is not taking care of health care for the Canadian people. Six million people do not have a family doctor and 100,000 have died while on waiting lists since the Liberals unleashed out-of-control immigration. There are currently literally thousands of people who are waiting for procedures as we speak.

The Prime Minister claims he is getting it under control, but it is all an illusion. He is just another Liberal. There has been a 3,000% increase in refugee claims under his out-of-control system. Will he rein it in, support our motion and put Canadians first for health care?

Right Hon. Mark Carney (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to coming up to my one-year anniversary as Prime Minister. During that time, new refugee claims and new asylum claims have gone down by one-third. During that time, students have gone down by 60%. During that time, temporary workers have gone down by 50%.

We have the immigration system under control, and we are supplying the health care Canadians need.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says he has the system under control. Obviously, he is just another Liberal. He thinks it is under control when the cost of deluxe supplementary benefits is up 1,000%, and the number of refugee claims is up 3,000%. Meanwhile, under his leadership, and after 11 years of Liberal government, we have six million Canadians who cannot find a family doctor.

Will the Prime Minister take his head out of the sand, vote for our motion and give Canadians back the health care they deserve?

Right Hon. Mark Carney (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he said 11 years, but I just got here. The member opposite has been here his—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I just want to remind the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman that only one person should be standing at a time in the House.

Oral Questions

The right hon. Prime Minister will need to start from the top.

Right Hon. Mark Carney: Mr. Speaker, I just got here. The Leader of the Opposition has been here his entire career, with one exception.

During the time that Canada's new government has been here, we have reduced asylum seekers by one-third. We have reduced temporary foreign workers by 50%. We have reduced new students by 60%. We are putting in place, and this is in front of the House in Bill C-12 and Bill C-2, an ability to end the abuse of the asylum system. We look for their support.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister may pretend he just got here, like he is a temporary foreign worker or something, but in reality, we have the same Liberal House leader, the same Liberal finance minister, and the same Liberal justice minister who was the immigration minister who broke the entire system, and they are running it into the ground today.

It is not just health care where there are two tiers. The Prime Minister is keeping laws in place that allow foreign criminals who are visiting Canada to have less time in jail after they commit crimes. Will the Prime Minister get rid of the two-tiered system so that we can lock up serious criminals and then kick them out of our country when they are done serving their time?

Right Hon. Mark Carney (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would encourage, in the spirit of the member opposite's question, support for Bill C-2 and Bill C-12, which would help to address some of these issues. That is the first point.

The second point is that, when someone commits a crime in this country, they should serve the time in this country.

* * *

• (1430)

[Translation]

PENSIONS

Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the sponsorship scandal cost around \$330 million. The SAAQclic fiasco in Quebec cost around \$1.1 billion. The infamous Phoenix fiasco is estimated to cost \$5.1 billion and counting. Estimates for the Cúram fiasco have ranged from \$1.6 billion to \$6.6 billion.

Is the Prime Minister proud to be presiding over the worst financial scandal in Canadian history?

Right Hon. Mark Carney (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, this project began in 2017. At that time, I was the governor of the Bank of England.

Second, the project was expanded. All amounts have been budgeted for, including the \$6 billion.

Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, he says it is not his fault.

In 2019, the Bloc Québécois called for the government to boost retirees' purchasing power. Then came the pandemic, which made matters worse for retirees. That was followed by postpandemic inflation, which further eroded retirees' purchasing power. Next, there

was discrimination between retirees over 75 and those under 75, and now we have Cúram, which is preventing 85,000 retirees from getting their cheques at the right time, in the right way or in the right amount.

Does the Prime Minister realize that his government is the one that has been mistreating retirees the most?

There must be at least one retiree in Terrebonne who is wondering about that.

Right Hon. Mark Carney (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, we have strengthened Quebec's health care system. Second, we have strengthened Quebec's dental care system. We have strengthened Quebec's pharmacare and more.

Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Cúram is the biggest financial scandal in Canadian history. Retirees' purchasing power has been falling since the Liberals came to power. I am talking about these Liberals and the ones in the previous government, because they are one and the same.

Since the Prime Minister says it is not his fault, will he at least agree to get to the bottom of the Cúram scandal by launching an independent public inquiry? That is what others have done.

Right Hon. Mark Carney (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Cúram project has already been reviewed by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and the Auditor General. All amounts have been budgeted for, end of story.

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we need to restore order and fairness in Canada's immigration system. Conservatives have a clear proposal to end the two-tiered health care system, where failed asylum claimants get access to premium health care while Canadians who have paid into the system wait in overcrowded emergency rooms. There is no reasonable justification to oppose fairness for Canadian taxpayers.

Why are the Liberals voting to protect a system that puts failed claimants ahead of Canadians?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister outlined all of the ways the levels of temporary Canadians, asylum seekers and others are going down, and going down quickly.

It is very interesting to us that, after a week away to lick their wounds, the Conservatives returned to Parliament to punch down at some of the most vulnerable people in this world, including, on this most solemn of anniversaries, an amputee child from Ukraine who comes seeking health care in Canada. They would deny that person.

Oral Questions

• (1435)

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here they go again, calling anybody who questions anything about them names.

In just 10 years, the cost of health care for asylum seekers has skyrocketed from \$60 million to over \$1 billion. That is a 1,500% increase. They cannot run away from that.

Legitimate refugees deserve protection. That is not the issue here. Failed asylum claimants should not be receiving premium coverage while six million Canadians cannot find a family doctor and are waiting 12 hours in an emergency room.

I will ask again, will the Liberals restore order and fairness to the system?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, failed asylum claimants are not granted asylum and, therefore, cannot stay in Canada.

The Conservatives need to stop punching down at the world's most vulnerable people. There are legitimate claimants and legitimate refugees on Canadian soil, including people fleeing the war in Ukraine, the anniversary of which we are marking today. The Conservatives should be ashamed of themselves for picking on the most vulnerable people on the planet.

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, six million Canadians do not have a family doctor, and the average wait time to see a specialist is around 30 weeks, yet the Liberals keep rejected asylum claimants, people their own refugee board has rejected, fully enrolled in a program with premium health benefits, on the same wait-list as those Canadians.

Does the health minister believe that the asylum claimants her own government rejected should be in the same lines as Canadians and genuine refugees, yes or no?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we are focused on strengthening our immigration system and building Canada strong.

If the Conservatives were really serious about health care, they would support our investments in hospitals, they would support dental care, they would support pharmacare and they would support the immigration program under the global talent stream that I just announced. Last week, the first physicians and surgeons were picked under that program to care for Canadians and everyone in Canada.

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Liberals actually cared about genuine refugees, they would not force them to wait in the same health care lines as fake asylum claimants, and they would not force them to wait in the same backlog as claimants whom the government rejected, but they do, and they refuse to fix it.

Will the health minister explain to those genuine refugees why rejected claimants are ahead of them on health care wait-lists?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a robust immigration

system. Our system works. We have an IRB that handles claims. The people who are inadmissible and ineligible are not going to the board; they are ruled out. Those who clearly fit in the system are in there, and we will continue to honour our humanitarian, constitutional and international obligations.

[*Translation*]

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the interim federal health program is paid for by taxpayers and covers the health care costs of asylum seekers and certain non-citizens. Six million Canadians do not have a family doctor and the system is overwhelmed, but we have found out that non-citizens and some non-permanent residents are receiving more generous benefits than Quebeckers and Canadians are getting. This is a matter of fairness.

Will the government support our motion to ensure that non-residents and non-citizens do not receive better health care than Canadians?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is not true. That is not true at all. We are strengthening our borders and we are making it more difficult for people to abuse our system. We reduced the number of asylum seekers by 33% last year. Bill C-12, which we passed, will improve our systems.

We are here to work for all Canadians, for all Quebeckers, for everyone in every province, including those who truly need our help.

• (1440)

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is right, we are here for Canadians and Quebeckers who are taxpayers. Asylum seekers who have been rejected by our system should never receive better health care than Quebeckers and Canadians. What is more, the Standing Committee on Health has learned that some providers charge the interim federal health program up to five times the normal provincial rate for services. The Liberals spend nearly \$1 billion a year on non-Canadians, and that cost is projected to reach nearly \$1.5 billion by 2030.

Will the government support our motion to ensure that Quebeckers and Canadians are the top priority?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we will never jeopardize the safety and health of Canadians. Our program keeps all Canadians safe. We will continue to work here, and we are asking the other parties to work with us for all Canadians, including Quebeckers.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, interim federal health program costs have quadrupled in four years. Providers are billing up to five times the provincial rates for care for rejected asylum claimants. Meanwhile, folks in Oshawa are waiting for care. They cannot find a doctor or access to benefits like vision care, physiotherapy and counselling, despite paying into the system their whole lives. Rejected claimants are receiving better health benefits than Canadians.

Will the Liberals help us make this right and support our Conservative motion that preserves fairness and compassion?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, do members know what the real question is? Will the Conservatives stop voting against investments in health care? Will the Conservatives stop voting against things like a national dental care plan, which is deeply connected to the health of Canadians?

I agree with my colleague. The Conservatives are punching down on the most vulnerable Canadians. I will say this. We are all in this together; Canadians are united in ensuring that we have a universal health care system that is there for people regardless of their ability to pay.

* * *

*[Translation]***PENSIONS**

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 85,000 pensioners are victims of errors in their old age pensions because of the Cúram software. Taxpayers are on the hook for \$5 billion in cost overruns, and that does not even include the Canada pension plan.

According to the Liberals, that is okay because “this is good news for Canada”. Pensioners having financial problems is a success story. The Liberals do not think that we should be calling that out. We should be celebrating that instead.

What are the seniors who have been waiting nine months for their pensions complaining about?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they want to stay in the very distant past. In fact, they would prefer benefits to be administered on a 60-year-old system, using paper, and be hand-administered.

That is not what the government has decided to do. We are continuing the modernization of benefits for all Canadians. The number that the Bloc Québécois continues to use is misleading to Canadians. In fact, it is the sum for the modernization of three major benefit programs. It is the sum that is invested in Canadians' ability to get their benefits online, in time and in the modern world.

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is already less celebrating going on.

Pensioners who have not received their old age pensions for nine months would like to celebrate with the Liberals, but they cannot because they do not have one red cent. Taxpayers would like to celebrate too, but when they think about all of the better ways to spend \$5 billion than on software cost overruns, they lose their childlike joy. The Liberals will not fix the problems with Cúram because they do not believe that there are any problems to begin with.

Now is it clear why a fully independent public inquiry absolutely needs to be called?

[English]

Hon. Stephanie McLean (Secretary of State (Seniors), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to be perfectly clear. To date, \$1.5 billion has been spent. This covers completion of the old age security transformation and initial development for employment insurance, and \$6.6 billion is an upper ceiling for all the projects that this covers. This amount may never be spent.

It would have been cheaper if it had been undertaken between 2005 and 2015, when the Conservatives were in power. They knew that the tech was from 1966. My mother was only 10 years old. Let me be perfectly—

• (1445)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saskatoon West.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago we had a stable immigration system that Canadians were proud of. Now the Liberals have transferred to automated approvals and have abandoned security checks from certain countries. People can enter Canada, make a claim for asylum and receive approval in the mail without even talking to a government official. It is auto-approval. The countries listed will shock members. Iran is on the list, which encourages senior members of the dreaded IRGC to seek refuge here, all with no security checks.

Why did the government, including the current Minister of Justice, remove safeguards on Canada's refugee system?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we have a series of questions like this that have come on the floor of the House of Commons this week, we have to invite ourselves into the conversations that the Conservative Party must have had as it was getting ready.

Oral Questions

We can imagine its members all sitting around asking what they are going to prioritize this week to help them raise some money. Could they tackle, perhaps, the Canada-U.S. relationship? No, that is just going to upset their members, who think Canadians are having a hissy fit. Could they tackle affordability for families? No, that goes against type. Could they do health care? Sure, they could do health care, but they will make sure they do it in a way that helps no one.

Punching down by demonizing refugees, saying they are going to cut health care, is a blatant political opportunity, not something that is going to help a single person in the country.

Sukhman Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister's former chief of staff, the current justice minister and the member for York South—Weston—Etobicoke ran the immigration file, their reckless policies broke our asylum system, overwhelming it to the point that the Immigration and Refugee Board was forced to gut critical safeguards just to keep up. Nearly 25,000 individuals were admitted to Canada without a single in-person interview.

Why did the Liberals dismantle our critical safeguards for our refugee system and put Canadian lives at risk?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the translation has been difficult to hear over the anti-refugee dog whistle that has been coming from the other side of the chamber all afternoon.

We are talking about people who are fleeing violence, war and persecution. Do you not remember the images of the people who died, washed up on the shore like Alan Kurdi from Syria? Have you not sat down with members of the Ukrainian community who have found safe haven in Canada? Have you not had the opportunity to speak with the Afghans—

The Speaker: I know the hon. minister knows this, but comments go through the chair.

Hon. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, let me flip this around. I know you have had the opportunity to meet with families from Syria, because we worked together during the effort. I know you have had the opportunity to meet with Afghans who have served alongside the Canadian Armed Forces, and I know you have supported Ukrainians finding safe haven in Canada, fleeing Putin's war of aggression.

Harb Gill (Windsor West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Liberal government, the asylum system has become so overwhelmed that the Immigration and Refugee Board eliminated key safeguards.

Nearly 25,000 claims were approved without an in-person interview, and in some cases decisions were issued without a direct conversation with an official, which is ridiculous. These policies were put in place when senior members of the current government were responsible for the file.

The immigration minister must explain why these safeguards were removed. Are the Liberals not concerned about the safety of Canadians?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my role, I have the privilege of speaking with leaders

and citizens around the world, and I repeatedly hear that countries respect and want to emulate the immigration system in this country.

In addition, I would ask the opposition to vote with us on Bill C-12. This would be a reform to strengthen our asylum system.

We have also recently announced changes to the interim health care program by introducing certain services relating to copayment. These are responsible, fiscally important moves—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to something that the government House leader and the justice minister said. Since 2020, 86% of failed asylum claimants are still in Canada, and 100% of those people are receiving taxpayer-funded benefits that are better than most Canadians receive, like vision care and physiotherapy.

How is it punching down to ask that we restore fairness by limiting the benefits of failed asylum claimants to emergency, life-saving care?

• (1450)

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the new government takes these issues very seriously. That is exactly why our mandate was to restore immigration and to strengthen our immigration system.

I agree with the foreign affairs minister that our system is the envy of the world. We are proud of the system we have. We have curved asylum by one-third. We have introduced measures to bring in physicians and health care workers, global talent. Work with us—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the justice minister just dismissed the fact that the Liberals are rubber-stamping and approving asylum claims from Iran without an in-person interview.

This is the type of sloppy, far-left Liberal garbage that has undermined Canada's consensus for immigration and made it harder for millions of people—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I do not know if we will find that word on a list of unparliamentary—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

The Speaker: I am not sure that word falls on an official list of unparliamentary language, but anything that creates disorder is unparliamentary, so I will ask the hon. member to continue but to please not use incendiary language.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, the justice minister made light of the crisis that Canada's immigration system is facing in Canada.

I have to ask the immigration minister this: How does she feel about having to clean up the mess of a man who made the mess and failed upwards in the government?

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combating Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout question period and throughout the debate in the House today, we have heard immigrants and refugee and asylum claimants linked to criminals and be told that their claims are all bogus. This is false.

When someone's case is determined to be invalid, when the process is complete, their work permit is cancelled, and so is their health care. The Conservatives are just trying to divide Canadians. They are not trying to improve health care by any means. If they were, they would have voted for dental care. They would not be creating two-tier systems in provinces across this country. They are not concerned about—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the fourth anniversary of Russia's barbaric and illegal invasion of Ukraine. As we sit in the House, our friends in Ukraine continue to make sacrifices as they bravely fight for their freedom.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs share with the House how Canada is working to support Ukraine and Ukrainians in their time of need?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this, the fourth anniversary of the illegal further invasion by Russia of Ukraine, Canada continues to stand with Ukraine in the short and the long term. This morning, I announced \$20 million in supports for Ukraine's energy infrastructure. In addition, this brings our total investment and supports for Ukraine to \$25.5 billion. Canada stands with Ukraine and makes sure that we are there with our allies so Ukraine can fight and win this war.

Slava Ukraini.

* * *

YOUTH

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, young people in Canada today are worse off than their parents' generation. They cannot find jobs, and they cannot afford homes. The pain that young people face is leading to delayed family formation and to increasing hopelessness. An RBC poll out today shows that two-thirds of millennials are anxious about their financial future, and more than half are concerned about current cash flow. It is not like it was 10 years ago.

Will the Liberals now listen to young people and reverse course on policies that have blocked opportunity for the next generation?

• (1455)

Hon. Anna Gainey (Secretary of State (Children and Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is there in support of all Canadians, including with a first-time homebuyer's tax credit and a number of other measures to increase affordability and build homes at scale. That is just one of the many ways that we are there. We are investing in apprenticeships, in job training and in Canada summer jobs.

There is a great deal of opportunity and investment, and it would be great to have the Conservatives cease their obstruction, in particular on the national school food program work at committee, which they have continued to filibuster, and get onside.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, actually, at that committee, Liberals are opposing our efforts to study food inflation, which is more than double what it is in other jurisdictions, and their budget is weakening training by defunding career colleges.

We have put constructive proposals on the table to unleash the economy, to fix immigration, to fix training and to build homes where the jobs are. Liberals could simply take our good ideas instead of doubling down on failure, defunding students at career colleges and continuing to block development that creates jobs and opportunity.

Why are they unwilling to take the solutions we have offered? Why instead are they standing in the way of progress for young people?

Hon. Anna Gainey (Secretary of State (Children and Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are giving Canadians a boost across this country, up to 12 million of them, with the grocery benefit, which will reach families with up to \$1,900 this year to give them a boost.

I was at the Daily Bread Food Bank in Etobicoke recently. They were very happy about this increased GST rebate, as well as with the national school food program, which we are using to fight food insecurity. We are investing in greenhouses and a national strategy on food security.

Again, it would be great to have the member's collaboration to fight food insecurity together in the House.

Oral Questions

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a recent poll by the Royal Bank of Canada shows that 64% of millennials are worried about their future, 57% have little or no money left at the end of the month, and four in 10 fear that they will never pay off their debts. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the aspiration of home ownership has been the cornerstone of community stability and has long been within reach, but after 11 Liberal years of rising house costs, inflationary deficits and higher taxes, young Canadians are being locked out of the dream of home ownership.

When will the government finally lower costs and create an economy in which young Canadians can afford to live?

Hon. Joanne Thompson (Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member likes to stand in the House and talk about what she feels her constituents need, but she actually needs to talk to them and ask whether building houses matters in her riding, whether supports for rural communities matter in her riding, as well as \$10-a-day child care and the school food program. I know these things matter too for the constituents in her riding, because they talk to me.

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Liberal programs worked, young Canadians would be getting ahead, not watching the dream of home ownership slip further away. According to CREA, the average sale price in St. John's has increased by nearly 10% from 2024 to 2025. This generation has done everything right. They should be building wealth and home ownership, but instead they are falling further behind, and they are losing hope.

How much worse does affordability have to get before the government lowers costs and makes it possible for young Canadians to build a future in this country?

Hon. Joanne Thompson (Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to remind the member from Newfoundland and Labrador that she needs to read budget 2025, because in that budget, she will notice that there are strong supports for youth across this country and within our province, opportunities for them to further their education. There are programs that build houses, affordable houses in communities, and that build this country through major projects that will see young people working. Home ownership will follow. The member needs to read the budget.

HOUSING

Scot Davidson (New Tecumseth—Gwillimbury, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is unbelievable. Only 269 new homes were sold in the GTA last month. It is the worst ever on record for new home sales, but it is not because Canadians do not want to buy; it is because they cannot afford the homes being built. The Liberals' failure to address out-of-control immigration, rising inflation and red tape has resulted in an entire generation being priced out of the market.

Why is the government making it so hard for Canadians to afford a home?

• (1500)

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is focused on

making housing more affordable across the board, starting with our first-time homebuyers getting a tax break. Build Canada Homes has almost 9,000 homes now in development in cities across the country. Supportive housing was announced last week in B.C., with 700 homes for those who are at risk of homelessness.

We are delivering. We need support from the opposition on the Build Canada Homes act to go further.

Scot Davidson (New Tecumseth—Gwillimbury, CPC): Mr. Speaker, you are not delivering. Young Canadians are flat broke—

The Speaker: I am going to take that personally. Speak through the Chair, please.

The hon. member for New Tecumseth—Gwillimbury.

Scot Davidson: Mr. Speaker, young Canadians are flat broke and falling behind, with 57% reporting that they have no money left at the end of the month. Four in 10 fear they will never pay off their debt. They have one foot in the grave and one on a banana peel. Canadians are draining their savings while their dreams of owning a home, starting a family and building a secure life have been shattered.

Instead of making things even worse, when will the Liberal government lower costs so young Canadians can afford to live?

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is what Build Canada Homes is all about. We have a plan to deliver. We are delivering, and the experts are weighing in on this. The Canadian Housing and Renewal Association said it clearly: Build Canada Homes 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 have an opportunity to deliver for Canadians. The whole House should stand in unison to support the Build Canada Homes act.

Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the dream of home ownership has been shattered by a decade of Liberal policies and rhetoric. Only 269 new homes were sold in the entire Toronto area in January. Sales are down 36% from last year and are 80% below the 10-year average. The last time it was this bad was the early 1990s.

The Prime Minister promised to “build, baby, build”, but the only thing the Liberal government seems able to build is more office space for more bureaucrats for more layers of bureaucracy.

When will the Liberal government stop obstructing builders, stop doubling down on failed policies and finally scrap the GST on all new homes?

Hon. David McGuinty (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this morning we announced a phase two addition of 7,500 new residential units in 25 locations across the country. Already, more than 800 new residential housing units are under way. The shovels are in the ground. For Valcartier, Petawawa and Edmonton, there are 1,000 new units; for Kingston, 900 new units; and for Galetown, 500 new units.

We are delivering for the Canadian Armed Forces, and we are delivering for our economy.

* * *

[Translation]

PENSIONS

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the initial budget for the Cúram software was \$1.6 billion, but it ended up costing \$6.6 billion. That is a \$5-billion cost overrun. What did the government House leader tell us yesterday? He called it a success story. That is what he said.

Who in the Liberal cabinet is going to take responsibility for this financial fiasco? Who is going to take care of the 78,000 seniors who are waiting for their cheques? Nobody. That is Liberal leadership. Nobody is handling this file.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know why my colleague is in the House of Commons: Unfortunately, theatre school did not work out.

The fact remains that, as the Prime Minister has said, as ministers have said and as every person responsible for this system has said, we have a technological implementation. This is a massive project to replace outdated systems. It is on budget and it is working. The bugs will be fixed. I invite my colleague to send them to me.

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this issue concerns 85,000 seniors in Canada who are currently having trouble with what is essentially their one and only source of income. That is the problem. This situation is affecting 85,000 people.

Yesterday, the Minister of Transport said that there were only a few cases, but the number is 85,000. He said, “It is a success story”, but there are 85,000 cases. This is Liberal arrogance at its ugliest. Now the Prime Minister just said earlier, “end of story”.

Can the Prime Minister, who is a very honourable man, stand up and admit that he made a mistake?

• (1505)

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is room over here. I agree that the Prime Minister is an honourable man, and that is why I am so confident to serve under his leadership.

Oral Questions

Regarding the issue of Cúram, it would be great if we had some honourable conversations about the real facts of this case. In fact, 7.7 million seniors have been transferred to the new system without any delay. The number that the opposition members keep repeating are new applicants.

We have a process as well for urgent cases. I have asked the member opposite to come to me with those urgent cases, and we can get people's benefits started within 24 to 48 hours. There is a—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Halifax.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Shannon Miedema (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all agree in the House that tuberculosis rates in Inuit Nunangat and in many first nations communities remain far too high and that this serves as a reminder of historical discrimination and the lasting effects of colonization.

Can the Minister of Indigenous Services tell the House what our new government is doing to eradicate tuberculosis by 2030?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my esteemed colleague for this important question.

To eradicate tuberculosis, investments have been made in innovative, Inuit-led approaches to improve health outcomes in those communities that are most at risk.

Our government has just announced an additional \$27 million in significant investments for tuberculosis solutions in Inuit Nunangat.

[English]

We will advance this work in partnership with ITK and Inuit treaty organizations to better support prevention, screening and—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberal revolving-door policies strike again. Today in Toronto, a criminal who, while out on bail and convicted of stabbing a male seven times on the subway, caused life-altering injuries and permanent trauma, is now walking free. The judge called him a high risk to reoffend, and now his victim fears for his life.

How many more innocent Canadians have to be stabbed, shot or terrorized before the government stops propping up a broken system and actually starts protecting victims?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, cases like this are exactly why we brought in Bill C-14. I am glad to report that Bill C-14 has passed on to the Senate. The Senate is doing its work. There will be bail reform in that bill. There will be harsher sentences for people who commit crimes. I am glad we will be able to tackle this issue.

My role has been put in place because we are a tough-on-crime government, and we will do everything that it takes to make sure we do not have incidents like this.

Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that tragic case is a direct result of Bill C-5 and Bill C-75's laws that weaken bail, water down consequences and fuel the revolving door for violent crime.

Conservatives have repeatedly fought to strengthen bail and early release provisions and to keep violent offenders behind bars. We have offered to work with the government, yet the Liberals vote down tougher laws that Conservatives propose, choosing ideology over public safety.

How many more Canadians have to be violently attacked before the government admits its laws are failing?

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one-third of all legislation that we have brought forward has been tough-on-crime legislation, justice reform and public safety bills. Many of these measures have moved forward and progressed, but there are some measures that have not moved forward at all because the Conservatives have been obstructing those measures. We need to be able to provide law enforcement with the tools it needs, the advancement that is needed. Lawful access measures are a part of that regime.

I would like the Conservatives to work with us.

* * *

● (1510)

JUSTICE

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a man was recently sentenced to two years less a day for possessing over 2,600 images of child sexual abuse and exploitation material. Let us remember that it is Parliament's jurisdiction to set sentencing ranges. That is why I put forward a bill last Parliament to raise sentences for people who commit sexual offences against kids.

Make no mistake: I believe that every member of the chamber wants to protect children, but if that is the case, will the Liberals commit today as to when they will introduce legislation that will strengthen our sentencing for people who possess these criminal and awful materials?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to answer the hon. member's question directly.

During the fall sitting last year, we put forward legislation that is going to increase sentences for a range of sexual crimes. We are also going to be restoring mandatory minimum penalties, including

for child pornography charges, following the Senneville decision of the Supreme Court.

However, on this side of the House, we know that it is not enough to punish bad actors after a crime has taken place. That is why I would urge all members of the House to get behind the government's efforts to pass Bill C-2 so we can actually adopt a lawful access regime, give cops the tools they need to put criminals behind bars, and keep our kids safe.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Philip Earle (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know how important it is that Inuit children have timely and equitable access to the health, social and educational supports they deserve. The Inuit child first initiative has been instrumental in helping to close long-standing gaps, ensuring that Inuit children are not left behind.

Could the Minister of Indigenous Services please update the House on her recent announcement and explain how it will further strengthen supports for Inuit children and families, including those in my own riding of Labrador?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased to be able to respond to my colleague and affirm the announcement of \$115 million towards renewed funding for the Inuit child first initiative that will reach those children and families in his riding, and like mine.

I want to thank my constituents who expressed their support for this progress. I am looking forward to continuing to deliver in this space. Of course, we are going to be doing long-term work in partnership with our colleagues to ensure that we are able to determine the future next steps of this process.

* * *

[Translation]

SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have locked the doors to the Saint-Augustin-de-Desmaures experimental farm and the Laval University research centre in the Minister of Public Works and Procurement's constituency. Everyone agrees that this decision will have long-term consequences for our food sovereignty and our Canadian expertise.

Agricultural research is already being neglected under the Liberals. The Prime Minister has stated that a country that cannot feed itself has few options.

Why is the government not walking the talk?

[English]

Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, now more than ever, it is vital we find ways to streamline our services and focus our efforts in the right place. I have had the opportunity to sit down with representatives of Laval university to talk about AAFC and the partnerships we have.

Streamlining research in collaboration with academia and the private sector will prioritize our high-impact areas and duplication, and align ourselves for the future. We are going to continue to be the biggest science entity in the country, and we will use that to our advantage in our trade negotiations.

* * *

HEALTH

Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Health Act guarantees Canadians universal access to public health care, but Danielle Smith is creating a private system that will hollow out health care in Alberta and spread to other provinces, making the crisis across the country even worse.

At the same time, Canadians in nine provinces and territories still have no access to national pharmacare, and the health minister will not even meet with the Canadian Health Coalition to talk about it.

Is the Prime Minister deliberately letting Canadian health care erode, or does he simply not care enough to protect it?

[Translation]

Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows, our government and I will always defend the Canada Health Act. As I have said many times, we are working closely with our provincial and territorial partners to advance the best health services for all Canadians.

* * *

[English]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our health care system is already stretched, yet the Liberal government piles on needless paperwork.

The College of Family Physicians warns that the disability tax credit form is worsening the strain on family doctors and limiting access to the Canada disability benefit. Instead of fixing the problem, budget 2025 sets aside \$10 million to help people navigate a broken system. Provinces already determine disability eligibility.

Why will the minister not just accept provincial approvals for the disability tax credit and cut red tape so family doctors can focus on patient care and so people with disabilities can actually access their benefits?

● (1515)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so proud to be part of a country that believes that people with disabilities deserve to live in dignity, and that is why we have a disability tax credit. As the member knows, this is important work for the full inclusion of

Tributes

people with disabilities in Canadian society, and we will continue to advocate to ensure that everyone reaches their full potential in this country.

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, you are the guardian of my parliamentary privilege, and one of those privileges is to ensure that, when I attend question period, I can hear the questions and the answers, regardless of how I may feel about them.

However, during several recent question periods, the people sitting to your right have developed the bad habit of not containing their enthusiasm. They are standing up and applauding before the answers are finished, which prevents the interpreters from doing their job. It has happened on a few occasions that they have been unable to do their job. When the interpreters are able to do their job, we cannot appreciate it because we cannot hear the rest of the answer at all.

Mr. Speaker, I would like you to make this clear to the people across the way.

The Speaker: I thank the member. I will take note of that and investigate. However, I must admit that this comes from both sides. There are some rather strong voices on both sides. I know them. I know who they are.

I thank the member for his intervention.

* * *

● (1520)

[English]

UKRAINE

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Monday, February 23, 2026, I now invite the House to rise and observe a moment of silence for Ukraine and the victims of Russian aggression.

[A moment of silence observed]

Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, 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 the House:

(a) condemn Russia's ongoing, unjustified, full-scale military invasion of Ukraine;

(b) call on Russia to cease its hostilities against Ukraine and withdraw to recognized international borders;

Tributes

(c) strongly condemn Russia's deliberate and ongoing attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure, depriving civilians of heat, electricity and basic services, particularly during the winter months;

(d) reaffirm the Government of Canada's unwavering support for Ukraine, its territorial integrity, and independence and sovereignty within internationally recognized borders and territorial waters;

(e) affirm Canada's commitment to working toward a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace in the region;

(f) support the establishment of robust and legally binding security guarantees to Ukraine;

(g) acknowledge the work of the Government of Canada, provinces, and territories, in assisting those displaced by Russia's ongoing, unjust, invasion of Ukraine; and

(h) recognize Canada's leadership at the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children and call for all possible efforts to be made to ensure the return of all Ukrainian prisoners of war, illegally detained civilians and children forcibly deported to Russia, and to support efforts to bring to justice those responsible for war crimes before the International Criminal Court.

[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]

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to statements regarding Ukraine and the victims of Russian aggression.

I now recognize the hon. member for Ottawa South.

[Translation]

Hon. David McGuinty (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night, Ukrainian parents hugged their children as sirens began to blare. Some rationed what little heat they had left; others huddled together in dark, cold apartments. They listened as drones flew over the city for hours, then to the deafening sounds of missiles. For Ukrainians, this is just another night.

[English]

This morning marks four long years since Russia launched its unjustified, full-scale invasion of Ukraine. For four years, Russia has bombed Ukraine's churches, schools, hospitals and maternity wards. Russia has abducted thousands of Ukrainian children. It has targeted Ukraine's energy supply, attempting to freeze civilians to death by bombing power plants and heating systems in the dead of winter. Nonetheless, the glory and freedom of Ukraine have not perished; they have instead persisted.

[Translation]

Four years later, Russia is weakened. Its forces are exhausted. Its economy is in turmoil. Although Russia has gained ground thanks to its superior military might, it has greatly underestimated a force that cannot be measured by weapons: the courage, determination and strength of the Ukrainian people.

[English]

Canada has a long and consistent history of standing with Ukraine. We were the first western nation to recognize its independence. When Russia illegally annexed Crimea in 2014, Canada launched Operation Unifier, sending Canadian Armed Forces personnel to help strengthen Ukraine's security and defence. Since then, Canada has become one of Ukraine's most significant supporters, providing substantial financial assistance and military training, and standing firmly with the Ukrainian people in defence of their very sovereignty.

Canada's support has also been reinforced on the world stage. At last year's G7 summit, leaders reaffirmed their united commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and long-term security, and Canada played a key role in advancing that collective response. Through coordinated sanctions, financial assistance and sustained military support, Canada continues to stand with Ukraine, alongside its closest international partners.

In Sophia Square last summer, standing with President Zelenskyy, we announced that Canada would provide more than \$1 billion to strengthen Ukraine's defence, including drones, ammunition and armoured vehicles. In September, Canada stood in the United Nations with President Zelenskyy to call for Russia to return the thousands of illegally abducted Ukrainian children.

We are at a critical point in this war when the collective efforts of Ukraine and its partners have made the possibility of peace real. To secure a just and lasting peace, Canada is bolstering our support for Ukraine. This morning, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and I announced new measures to further reinforce Ukraine's defences and increase pressure on Russia.

Through Operation Unifier, the Canadian Armed Forces have trained over 47,000 Ukrainian soldiers since 2015. Today, Canada renewed Operation Unifier for an additional three years until March 2029. Canada is also allocating a total of \$2 billion in additional military assistance for Ukraine for the upcoming fiscal year, building on previous commitments to drones, ammunition and contributions to NATO's prioritized Ukraine requirements list.

● (1525)

[Translation]

Canada is also imposing sanctions against 21 individuals and 53 entities, as well as 100 vessels in the Russian shadow fleet. We have also lowered the price cap on Russian crude oil. These measures are aimed at restricting Russia's energy revenues and targeting the financiers of the war.

[English]

Lasting peace and real security will require strong, credible guarantees for Ukraine, because trust alone will not protect a nation fighting for its survival. We are determined to ensure that Russia will never again be in a position to threaten Ukraine or the peace and security of Europe.

Tributes

Canada stands as a proud and active member of the coalition of the willing. Let me be perfectly clear: Our unity is strong and our commitment is absolute. We will stand with Ukraine, not only in this fight, but also in the work that follows to rebuild its cities, restore its infrastructure and support its people as they recover from this unjust, tragic and devastating war. Canada will remain steadfast in our commitment, in our partnership and in our defence of freedom.

So many Canadians, so many of our constituents, grew up in communities that were shaped by the contributions of Ukrainian families and neighbours. Their language, culture and traditions have long been woven into the fabric of our beautiful country. Ukraine's colours, blue sky over golden fields, symbolize peace and prosperity. They represent the horizon Ukraine once knew and the future its people deserve. That is what we are committed to protecting. That is what we must help restore and rebuild.

Last year on Ukrainian independence day, Canada's Prime Minister stood with President Zelenskyy in Kyiv and made a solemn promise to the Ukrainian people. He stated that, at the end of this horrific war, "When peace comes [for Ukraine]—and it will come— Canada will be there." That is because Ukraine's fight is our fight, their struggle is our struggle and their independence will be our victory.

James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise on behalf of his Majesty's loyal opposition to speak on behalf of the Conservative Party of Canada.

Conservatives have always stood with Ukraine, from Macdonald to Mulroney to Harper. Today, in solidarity with everyone in the House and across this country, we stand proudly with Ukraine.

Four years ago, we watched Putin launch his full-scale invasion of Ukraine, a war he said that he would win in three days. It has been a barbaric war and invasion that has been gut-wrenching to witness. It is unjust what Russia is doing in Ukraine. Russia is bringing destruction and bloodshed to Europe that we have not seen for generations.

Russian soldiers have been killing innocent civilians. Over 15,000 Ukrainian civilians have been killed. We have witnessed them use rape as a weapon, and we have seen them dig mass graves. Russia has been targeting civilian infrastructure. We recently witnessed different energy systems being knocked out, including all the electrical generation plants, water infrastructure and rail. They have also targeted things such as Kyiv's Okhmatdyt children's hospital and Odesa's Transfiguration Cathedral. I do not think any of us will ever forget the Mariupol theatre.

Over 19,000 Ukrainian children have been kidnapped by Putin and his barbarians. They have been taken back to Russia, where they have been reprogrammed. Through this brutal war, over 55,000 Ukrainian soldiers are dead and over 600,000 soldiers have been wounded. Families have been torn apart as they have mourned their lost and cared for those who have been hurt. *Vichna slava heroynam*. May the memories of these heroes be eternal.

For four years, we have been inspired by the resilience and strength of the people of Ukraine. We have watched the en-

trepreneurs run their businesses within earshot of the front line. We have witnessed the ingenuity and innovation of everyone in Ukraine, how they have been able to keep in this fight for four years, how they are fighting and how they continue to evolve in this brutal war that the Kremlin thought it would win in less than a week. We have witnessed the courage and selflessness of members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. They are fighting not only for Ukraine, but also for our shared values of democracy, freedom and human rights.

For four years, we have been grateful for all the Canadians from coast to coast to coast who have stood up to help, the volunteers who are serving and who are getting money raised to help those who were left behind in Ukraine. I thank all of those unwavering Canadians. They have opened up their hearts, wallets, homes and businesses to all of the Ukrainians who have sought refuge here.

I thank the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and all of the provincial branches, as well as all of the organizations they work with, for their tireless efforts to ensure that newcomers could receive settlement services, to find them employment, to be there as their conduit back to Ukraine and to coordinate so many fundraising activities for the efforts in Ukraine.

I thank the Government of Canada, on behalf of the Conservatives, for the efforts that it has done in supporting Ukraine through all of this, as well as the provincial and territorial governments for the programs they have offered to everyone who has sought refuge.

● (1530)

To the Ukrainians who have come here and now call Canada home, I thank them for all their contributions. We know that, while they are here working in their jobs and participating in Canadian society, they are still worrying about their loved ones who were left behind. As the Conservative leader stated earlier today, we look forward to the day when they will once again raise their sons and daughters under a peaceful sky in a free and sovereign land.

On Sunday, across Canada, there were rallies held in support of Ukraine, and at many of these rallies, we prayed for peace, but we know that Vladimir Putin does not want peace as long as he thinks he is winning. The minister talked about trust, and no one trusts Vladimir Putin. All wars end at the negotiating table, so we have to make sure that Ukraine has a strong hand. We have to make Ukraine strong. We can do more as Canadians and as a government. Conservatives are asking the government to continue to use all the sanction tools it has at its disposal to align with our allies to hold Putin, his kleptocrats, his oligarchs and the Russian military to account for all of their war crimes.

We need to help defund Putin's war machine by displacing Russian oil and gas by selling Canada's ethical oil and LNG to Europe. Former prime minister Stephen Harper led the charge in kicking Putin out of the G8. We have to remain steadfast and not let anyone try to convince them to allow Russia back into the G7. Putin and Russia do not belong at the major tables in the world.

Tributes

We thank the government today for its announcement about Operation Unifier and Operation Reassurance, which were started under the Harper Conservatives. The continuation of those programs is paramount to the success of Ukraine and the defence of our NATO allies, but we also have to invest in Canada. We need to make sure that our Canadian Armed Forces get the equipment and build up the stockpiles that we need to defend ourselves here. As we ensure that the Canadian Armed Forces are ready to stand up to Moscow and its authoritarian allies, we need to make sure that we do more with what we already have.

While we are rebuilding our fleets, and while we are replacing our equipment, our weapons and our kit, let us not waste a bunch of taxpayer money in Canada on decommissioning those stockpiles and sending them to the scrap heap. The Conservative leader, two years ago, asked the government to send Ukraine our stock of CRV7 rockets, which were about to be sent to the scrap heap, and 87,000 rockets, because of the ask from our leader, have now been sent to Ukraine. I thank the leader for making that request and helping Ukraine save lives, and I thank the government for listening. As we look at other retiring fleets, such as our light armoured vehicles, armoured ambulances and other weapons systems, let us donate them instead of decommissioning them as we find new equipment for our military.

Finally, Putin and his barbaric military must be held to account for their war crimes and crimes against humanity. They must be dragged in front of The Hague and the International Criminal Court.

Taras Shevchenko, a poet laureate and an inspiration to multiple generations of Ukrainians, said 200 years ago, “If you fight, you will overcome”, which reminds me of Winston Churchill’s “blood, toil, tears and sweat” speech of 1940 in the House of Commons. He said, “victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival.” I can say that without victory, there will be no peace in Ukraine.

Slava Ukraini.

● (1535)

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, just five years ago, Ukraine was the breadbasket of Europe. Its fertile, rich and plentiful lands provided good soil that was perfect for growing crops. Large fields of sunflowers covered the landscape, their faces turned towards the sun. Barely five years ago, Ukraine was an almost peaceful European country. It is true that there were serious conflicts in Crimea. It is true that there was unrest in the Donbas region. However, Ukraine was not facing a death threat. The crisis was not existential. Then, war came four years ago.

War came, and in its wake came horrors, suffering and tears. Thousands of women have been killed. Why? Hundreds of women have been raped. It is a tactic of war used by the occupiers to sow terror among Ukrainians. Hundreds of children have been killed. Why? Thousands of children have been forcibly deported to Russia, torn from their families. War had come.

There have been roughly two million casualties, deaths and injuries among soldiers on both sides. More than 15,000 civilians have been killed. Why? Nearly 10 million people have had to flee their homes and abandon their pre-war lives in the hope of having a life after the war. Why? What is the point of all this? Can any meaning be found in the deaths of all these women, all these children, all these people? What meaning can be found in the deadly drone strikes in Kyiv and the armoured vehicles rolling through Ukraine’s wheat fields? What twisted ambition can justify this endless daily tragedy? Can anyone offer a satisfactory answer to this simple question: Why?

The war in Ukraine has dragged on for four years. If enough pressure is put on Russia, there may be a way out. However, when our hopes for peace lie in the hands of Putin and Donald Trump, is there really any reason to hope? Well, the answer is in the words of Ukrainian poet Lesya Ukrainka, who wrote:

...through all my tears I still shall laugh,
Sing songs despite my troubles;
Have hope despite all odds,
I want to live! Away, you sorrowful thoughts!

Let us hope. Let us stand with the people of Ukraine and choose hope. Let us choose to believe that this war will end, that Russia will come to its senses and that this deadly stubbornness will eventually run out of steam. Let us choose to believe that Ukrainians will use their courage to rebuild their homes and that they will no longer be forced to pick up arms and bury their loved ones. Let us choose to believe that there is a way out and that this sad and absurd war will eventually come to an end.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I say to all Ukrainians that we are behind them all the way. One day, peace will come. We must have hope, even in despair.

● (1540)

Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House to speak on behalf of the NDP on this very sad day.

February 24, 2022, is a day that will go down in infamy. Without any justification or valid reason, dictator Vladimir Putin brutally attacked Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. For four years now, Ukrainians have been suffering and living in fear and terror with a colossal number of military and civilian victims.

For the first time since the collapse of the former Yugoslavia, Europe has seen war again with all its brutality, massacres, suffering and crimes. We are talking not only about war crimes, but also about crimes against humanity. Rape is being used as a weapon of war and there have been mass kidnappings of Ukrainian children to brainwash them and cause them to lose their own identity.

Every day, every week, there is death. There are drones and bombings. People live in constant fear. There are 3.4 million internally displaced persons within Ukraine, which is paying the heavy price of a dictator who is seeking to expand his influence and who is refusing to respect the peoples around him.

I think we should salute the courage of the Ukrainian people, who have stood firm despite everything for four years now; four years of massacres and rape, four years of living in the cold among the ruins of infrastructure, hospitals and schools. As a democracy, I think we have a duty to show our full support for Ukraine.

Ukraine's honorary consul in Montreal has often said something that has kept coming back to me in recent months, if not years. He said that if Russia stops fighting, it will end the war, but if Ukrainians stop defending themselves, it will end Ukraine. The outcome is totally different. That is why, as others have said before, for the Ukrainian people, this is an existential fight for their survival, for their existence, for their territory, for their territorial integrity and for their civilian population.

Given that Ukrainian men and women are fighting and dying on the front lines today, I think we need to be keenly aware of something: This front line is not just the front line of the Ukrainian territory. It is the front line of our values, of Europe, of democracy, of the rule of law, of respect for human rights and of respect for the self-determination of peoples. That is why we this involves each and every one of us.

Saving lives is paramount. Respecting the will of the Ukrainian people is the first priority. However, there is also the question of the kind of world we want to live in. Do we accept a world where brutality becomes the norm, where international law is flouted and where everything is based on power dynamics? Would we rather have a world built on dialogue, multilateralism, respect and decisions that are made on the basis of law and not brute force?

This has been happening for four years in Ukraine, but we also have an American president south of the border who has a tendency to want to do the same thing. Do we want to live in a world where we respect people's right to self-determination, or do we want to live in a world of spheres of influence, where we believe that if it is our backyard, we have the right to do anything, including invade, massacre and kill?

I think we need to have an important discussion about defending international law, but also about the kind of international relations we want to build and have on the planet. That is fundamental. When I talk about international law, I also mean respecting its institutions, such as the International Criminal Court, which has issued an arrest warrant for dictator Vladimir Putin.

I think that, as Quebeckers and Canadians, we should always show support for the decisions of the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice. I hope that those responsible for the massacres, war crimes and crimes against humanity will be brought to justice.

• (1545)

As parliamentarians, we must continue to support Ukraine. As citizens, let us continue to welcome Ukrainians with open arms.

Tributes

More than 200,000 people have found refuge here. It would be nice for those who wish to return safely to their homes and their country to be able to do so. Failing that, we are prepared to welcome them for as long as necessary. Let us continue to show our solidarity. Let us continue to be there to say that we stand with the Ukrainian people, so that they can one day be treated with respect.

Slava Ukraini.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, today, it is almost impossible to imagine and believe that, for the past four years, there has been a war in Ukraine that is the result of the brutality of one country, one man: Mr. Putin and his pointless and cruel war.

[*English*]

We are united in this country. We are united in this Parliament. I want to thank every one of my colleagues who spoke, including the hon. Minister of Defence, my friend and colleague from Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, the member for Lac-Saint-Jean and the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

[*Translation*]

I completely agree that we stand with Ukraine. We stand with the people of Ukraine. It is unacceptable that our world is being torn apart by a war that was impossible to imagine five years ago.

[*English*]

When we think of the naïveté that we had, the wonderful thought of the political theorist Fukuyama, it seemed so clear that we had *The End of History*, as he wrote in 1992, that the political and ideological evolution of nations led inevitably to a time of the rule of law, to liberal democracies that lived within a set of rules that were predictable.

A land war in Europe?

[*Translation*]

It was impossible to imagine. It could not be true.

[*English*]

When Putin invaded Ukraine, we saw the signs. We saw it was coming, but it still seemed far too impossible to believe. I will never forget February 24, 2022. For the first time, I put on yellow and blue ribbons, and I thought that I would put them on every day until this awful war was over.

Tributes

Now, Putin thought he could end it in three weeks. I thought the world, the community of nations, would stand with Ukraine so clearly that it would not be long before this was over. The sense of the courage of President Zelenskyy, I thought, was the variable that Putin did not count on. He thought that not that many Ukrainians would stand up and defend their country. He thought, as did the United States at that time, that when they said, “Do not worry, Mr. Zelenskyy, we are sending a plane for you,” and he said, “I need ammunition; I don't need a ride,” that was the surprise: a genuine hero of his country, someone actually elected, someone who had been a comic on television. He was the unexpected variable of courage that was so unusual in our times, when leadership is in name only.

President Zelenskyy addressed us here for the first time almost four years ago, on a TV screen. I so wished for the day that he could come back, when there was peace in Ukraine and we could celebrate him as the leader who survived a dreadful and unjust war. We still pray for that.

We know that Putin miscalculated. He thought he could end a war in three weeks, but he miscalculated the corruption of his own military, the lack of consideration for what it would mean to the world, and the solidarity of Europe. Today, on the fourth anniversary, the President of the European Union is there in Ukraine. Today, in the United Nations, a resolution was carried whereby 107 nations said, “We stand with Ukraine. We stand with peace.”

Today, President Zelenskyy spoke of Putin and of his lifetime political career of destruction, of hatred, of war. He actually said, of Putin, “He is war itself.” He said that to stand with him is to stand with unending war.

I cannot help but feel, as I always have since we first started debating in this place what we would do for Ukraine, that we have not done enough. In some ways we cannot do enough. We have NATO. We have the United Nations. We have massive efforts.

• (1550)

I am grateful, as my colleagues have said, that the Government of Canada has consistently stood with Ukraine. I am grateful we have welcomed Ukrainian refugees to Canada. However, more should be done with sanctions. We need to cripple the Russian economy. We need to do more. We need to seize the assets of oligarchs and see that they are liquidated and that those funds go to the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian government.

War cannot be the solution to war. More bombs do not bring peace. As other members of Parliament have said today, peace will come at a negotiating table. It is extremely important and fundamental that Mr. Putin understand that Canada, every single last one of us, stands with Ukraine, which means Russia has made itself a pariah. When the government changes, perhaps we can welcome it again into the community of nations, but there was no Russian flag at the Olympics. There will not be a Russian flag where civilized people gather, because we recognize what President Zelenskyy has said: Putin is “war itself”.

Now, as we stand here on the fourth anniversary of the beginning of that impossible war, we must make peace possible.

[*Translation*]

We must choose peace. We must work tirelessly and do what we can to ensure that there is peace around the world, particularly for the children of Ukraine and for the people of Ukraine.

[*English*]

For all those who have suffered and died at the hands of Russian forces, and, yes, I grieve with the Russian mothers too as they have an impossible leader who has taken them to heartbreak and disaster, peace cannot just be a dream. We have to make it real. We have to rescue the Ukrainian children who were kidnapped from their families. We have to reunite those families. We have to pour into Ukraine the help it needs so desperately.

With those words, I join all colleagues here in saying, *slava Ukraini*, peace and victory to Ukraine.

• (1555)

The Speaker: Colleagues, thank you for your words of support for our friends, the people of Ukraine.

The friendship between our two countries spans generations and centuries. Canada was the first western country to recognize Ukraine's independence on December 2, 1991. With a Ukrainian Canadian community of approximately 1.3 million people, Canada has one of the largest Ukrainian diasporas in the world.

[*Translation*]

It has been four years since Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, in clear violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The House of Commons, which is often divided on many issues, continues to reach a consensus on the issue of Ukraine. Since February 2022, we have passed several resolutions on the Russian invasion, an invasion that is a violation of the rules-based international order and is contrary to democratic values.

[*English*]

It is with the utmost respect and admiration that I note that the counterpart of this House in Ukraine, the Verkhovna Rada, under the leadership of Chairman Ruslan Stefanchuk, has remained active and functioning since the onset of the full-scale war. The message to its citizens and to the world is unequivocal: Although Ukraine is under attack, democratic institutions matter and continue to play a central role in fending off Russia's aggression.

As we mark this sombre day and reflect on the tragic consequences of this aggression, we recognize the unwavering resilience that all Ukrainians demonstrate.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

In the House and in this country, we are united and inspired by Ukraine. We stand in solidarity with our friends until a just and lasting peace is achieved.

Thank you.

[English]

Pursuant to order made on Monday, February 23, I wish to inform the House that because of the statements, the time provided for Government Orders will be extended by 37 minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—INTERIM FEDERAL HEALTH PROGRAM

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Mr. Speaker, rejected asylum seekers quickly realize they can create near-endless extensions for years with access to specialty medical care they do not have in their home countries. It swiftly adds to the backlog, which in turn adds to the cost. By the end of this fiscal year, the annual cost will be \$986 million. By the end of this decade, the annual cost will be \$1.5 billion. Those are not my figures; they are the Parliamentary Budget Officer's figures. Anyone who doubts these can ask him in person.

His report also shows that in the early days of the Trudeau government, the number of interim federal health program beneficiaries was around 100,000 and was split evenly between asylum claims and refugee cases. Today, it stands at around 600,000 beneficiaries, more than two-thirds of whom are asylum claimants, with a much smaller number than before being refugees. It is important to note that when these are refugee cases, approval does not mean staying on this program indefinitely but seeing only to some temporary medical issues. At the same time, they are transferred into provincial health programs so they can then potentially work and pay back into our system. Asylum claimants remain on the program entirely through the long and winding Liberal backlog.

Another reason this federal program has increased in cost from the tens of millions to the soon-to-be billions is the recurring issue we heard about at the committee from witnesses of specialist doctors who are providing these services overcharging the immigration department due to a lack of oversight of billing. According to Dr. Arun Anand, physicians who provide services to claimants are charging the federal government more. He said, “because it is uninsured and there's less accountability, physicians are more aggressive with their billing practices. They charge premiums on these programs and services” and “because services are not covered by provincial plans, physicians can bill up to five times more for their physician fees in these programs”.

I know what the members opposite will tell me. First, it is that I oppose assisting people in need, and that is completely false. I want our nation to be the welcoming nation it has always been, one that

welcomes someone like me and the many of us in this room who came from all across the world. What I oppose is people who file false asylum claims being rewarded with specialty health care, benefits like physiotherapy, which too many Canadians cannot access. I am not opposed to someone being saved in an ER. I am opposed to them getting free eyeglasses after they commit extortion.

If the members opposite would like the policies they say will fix this mess to be studied thoroughly by our Parliamentary Budget Officer, might I suggest they join me at the health committee when I am done here this afternoon to tell their own Liberal colleagues to end the filibustering they have been up to for the last couple of weeks so that we can look into this, find out the truth and make our health system and our immigration system better.

• (1600)

Hon. Kody Blois (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would respectfully encourage my colleague opposite, if we want to maintain a place in Parliament to continue to provide compassionate and welcoming places here in Canada, to not put opposition motions on the floor concerning something that is 0.00004% of the entire expenditure of the Government of Canada in any given year, and that is for legitimate asylum claims. They like to stand up and make the suggestion that individuals who have been convicted of crimes are also benefiting from this policy. That is simply not true.

Why is she against individuals like the Ukrainian asylum claimants who are here? We just celebrated and recognized the contribution of Ukraine. We have vulnerable individuals. Why is she against them having due process in our asylum system and having basic coverage?

Helena Konanz: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure the member was listening. I know that only half of my speech occurred while he was sitting here, but we are talking about rejected asylum seekers, some of them criminals. I think the worst thing is that the government has no idea actually how many there are. If he wants to learn more about this, he can go to the health committee meeting that is happening right now, or he can also look at the PBO report that states that this is going to cost us billions if it continues as it is.

Business of Supply

Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that my hon. colleague has done incredible work on the health committee. In our province of British Columbia, and I know our colleague is experiencing this in her region as well, we are seeing maternity wards that are closed down. We are seeing emergency rooms that are closed down because we do not have enough doctors. The assertions from the other side are that we are anti-immigrant on this side, which is completely egregious to even say. What we are against are known fraudulent immigrant cases, applicants who are jumping in front of veterans, jumping in front of everyday Canadians, jumping in front of approved asylum seekers and getting the health care treatment that the rest of those groups cannot get.

I want to ask my hon. colleague if she is hearing any more information and stories in her own riding that she could share.

Helena Konanz: Mr. Speaker, what I resent is members from the Liberal Party downplaying an issue that is very important for every Canadian. Six million Canadians are without doctors. As for my own riding, I could actually, probably, google my riding right now, because there might be another hospital closed suddenly. It happens on a regular basis. Princeton was just closed a couple of days ago. How would anyone like it if they drove up to a hospital with their child, who might have just broken their arm, and found out that the hospital is closed suddenly because of the lack of doctors and that they have to drive their child an hour and a half to the nearest hospital?

We need to correct this and that is what furthering this report and supporting the motion will do.

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have already had this debate. The members of the Bloc Québécois moved a motion during an opposition day to close Roxham Road and to call on the federal government to reimburse the health care costs of certain asylum seekers because Quebec was the place that was receiving the most asylum seekers. The Conservatives did not seem overly concerned about that at the time.

I find it odd today to see this unfortunate conflation today regarding criminal migrants who take advantage of health care. It has become a—

The Deputy Speaker: I have to give the member a chance to answer the question.

The hon. member for Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

[*English*]

Helena Konanz: Mr. Speaker, this is a problem across the entire country. This is not focused just on one province. I know that thousands of people in my riding do not have a doctor, and we have this gateway system for health. These issues need to be addressed. As for those rejected asylum seekers and criminals who are avoiding being sent back to their country, and some of them are criminals, this should be addressed so that money is spent on Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Kody Blois (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is a privilege to be here today to discuss and debate a Conservative opposition day motion.

I would like to point out that today is the fourth anniversary of Russia's unjustified and illegal invasion of Ukraine. I would like to add my voice and that of my constituents in Kings—Hants, Nova Scotia, and my colleagues on this subject. Obviously, we are extremely proud of all the people of Ukraine for their efforts to defend their territory, sovereignty and freedom from Russian forces.

I believe this is important for Canadians. I believe that while most Canadians understand the situation, it is not only a matter of Russia and Ukraine. The people of Ukraine are fighting for their sovereignty and their freedom, but also for us, for international rules, for NATO, and for power in an extremely uncertain world. We are fully behind Ukraine. I am proud of all my colleagues who have spoken to this issue today.

With that in mind, I find the motion introduced by the Conservatives today very strange. It is not crazy, but it is strange, in my view. It is unbelievable, given the numerous challenges around the world. Examples include the situation in the Middle East, the situation in Ukraine, and the talks between Canada and the U.S. For example, they could have raised the issue of our Olympic athletes or made statements about them.

Today, although Ukraine is a very important topic, none of the questions raised by Conservative members during oral question period touched on that country. The Conservatives have not brought a motion on how important it is for the Government of Canada to continue supporting our allies at this time.

• (1610)

[*English*]

Today is about the desire of the Conservatives to eliminate the interim federal health program for vulnerable asylum claimants in the country. I was trying to express in French that there is a lot going on in the world. We did not hear questions today from the Conservatives, in question period, on Ukraine.

There is important context to what is going on. The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot once called Ukraine a faraway land, and I think all of this bleeds into the question about the seriousness of the types of questions that the Conservative Party puts before the House, in terms of what we are looking at. Again, when we think about the economy, foreign affairs, Canada-U.S. relations, the Olympics, our athletes, food security and affordability, there are a lot of places where we could be spending our time in Parliament, and this is what we have today.

It is important for Canadians to understand what exactly individuals are entitled to. We have heard a lot of debate today in the House. I want to zero in on facts. Of course, Canada has a long history of being a country that is welcoming and compassionate but at the same time principled about how support is given to individuals who may find their way to our shores and how we assess their claims.

Individuals who arrive in Canada are entitled to a process to claim asylum based on the concept that their return and that of their family back to their country of origin could create a situation that could put their lives or their health in jeopardy, or they could be politically prosecuted. There is an entire process that Canada has established. It is something Canadians should be proud of.

We are a country that has welcomed individuals from all around the world. It is part of the cultural mosaic and the fabric of this country. We have a process for it. There is a process independent of the government that assesses the claims, their quality and whether there is enough rigour. Someone simply does not get the benefit of staying in this country if their claim for asylum is not ultimately accepted. Still, the principle we have is that individuals are entitled to a process. I think that is really important when we talk about how the Conservatives have framed this opposition day motion.

The last colleague who spoke in this House talked about individuals who are criminals. I have heard the word "terrorist" brought around in the House. There is not a single member of Parliament in this House who would support the proposition that individuals who have a criminal record ought to be able to stay in the country, and that is not, in fact, what happens. However, the Conservatives have tried to narrow in on an issue that we will see a whole bunch about on social media, with no context, to, frankly, gaslight Canadians and try to create these types of issues. I do not think this is the most important thing happening in the country, but we will get into that.

What are individuals entitled to? Let us say that a member has a constituent in their riding, someone who has arrived in Canada from a country and decided to claim asylum. There is an entitled process where they have an ability to have their case heard. Individuals who register for asylum are, in many cases, vulnerable individuals. I will get to the point that the Conservatives are trying to raise, which is about the idea of illegitimate claims. However, we have to, and ought to, as Canadians, think about individuals who are vulnerable, and we should have a system that allows them due process.

Once an individual registers for asylum, what happens in this country is that they are entitled to have a work permit and basic medical benefits. There are what are called supplementary benefits, and the government has actually moved to introduce copay contributions. Individuals going through this process have basic medical care. I have heard the idea that they are somehow jumping the line. They are not jumping the line. They have an ability to go, like any one of us as Canadians, to see family physicians. When they see a doctor for whatever ailment they may have while they are going through that process, the cost is recovered by the Government of Canada. That is something the Government of Canada pays to the medical physician in question. That is what individuals are entitled to.

Business of Supply

The Conservatives are making big hay around rejected applicants. There is an ability for someone, once they have their initial hearing before the Immigration Review Board, the IRB, if they are ultimately not successful, to have one more recourse, which is to apply for an additional process to argue, basically, an appeal to the initial ruling. The government's policy for quite a long-standing period of time has been that those benefits would continue to flow for individuals, so long as they are still within their entitlement of that process. Now, people could reasonably make different assertions. We have heard a lot from the opposition benches that that is unjust, that the cost overall should not be necessarily borne by the system, but we have not heard a whole lot of statistics backing up what actual percentage of the program is tied to individuals who may be asserting one final ability within their entitlement, their due process, and having access to those benefits.

We have put before the floor of the House of Commons changes to this program. We certainly would concur that if there is any concern around abuse of programs, we want to make sure there is no abuse. Of course, people are entitled to a process. I would point my colleagues on the Conservative benches to provisions in Bill C-2 and Bill C-12, where the government is already taking action on this front to ensure that if there is any undue influence, or this idea that individuals are trying to use the asylum system improperly, we have the safeguards to be able to deal with that situation.

The Prime Minister today in question period was very clear that if we look at the number of asylum claims in this country, the amount of temporary foreign workers and the amount of international students, all of those numbers have gone down. Any suggestion that the immigration system in this country is "out of control" or that there is not due process, I think, again, is trying to create a narrative that is not helpful. It is trying to gin people up at home, and I do not think there is validity to what has been said here today in the House of Commons. I think that is important.

● (1615)

Let us think about the entire augment of every vulnerable individual who arrives on Canadian shores, where we have a process. By the way, if, when they go through that process, they are determined to have not met the threshold, both in the IRB and then afterward in the appeal, they are not entitled. When an individual is truly rejected, i.e., they have no ability for any additional recourse from an administrative process, they are not entitled to additional benefits. The Conservatives need to come clean with that message, because they are talking about rejection halfway through the administrative process. If they want to suggest there should not be an administrative process where one can appeal one additional time from the initial ruling, then they should just come out and say that.

Already, in Canada, any individual who is rejected on their asylum claim is not entitled to this benefit, but we do not hear that from the opposition. We are not going to see that on the 45-second clip that is going to be put out there to say how terrible this is and that the government is trying to deceive people. This is the kind of stuff that is corrosive in our society.

Business of Supply

The government has already taken measures to introduce copay. That is important. It is not a problem for the Conservatives to raise this in Parliament, but I think it is outrageous that they are using an opposition day motion to do so. This work can be done at committees. At the end of the day, we are talking about 0.0004% of the entire expenditure of the Government of Canada.

Part of the opposition day motion reads, “Canadians that have paid into the healthcare system their whole lives are unable to get the healthcare they deserve in part because resources are going to false asylum claimants”. The Conservatives have not made out that we are talking about \$211 million four years ago; that number has gone up. The government has taken adjustment measures within its legislative authorities. We are talking about 0.004%.

If the Conservatives have a problem with access to health care in this country, why did they not support the government when it put 40 billion dollars' worth of new health care spending over a 10-year period? They voted against it. That is a bit more damning for Canadians getting health care than 0.004%, which includes legitimate asylum claimants. The Conservatives suggest to us that they do have a compassionate heart for these vulnerable Canadians and that we should continue to support these individuals.

We are talking about an even more minute number, and this is what the Conservatives choose to bring before the House of Commons. How about dental care? There are almost 9,000 constituents in Kings—Hants who received the federal dental care program. Conservatives voted against it. I find the premise a bit rich that, as we try to work through the challenges of health care and a larger baby boomer demographic and as provinces are making choices on how they are going to allocate, this is the type of policy being brought forward.

We heard some responses from the ministers in question period about the idea of gaslighting and the dog whistle stuff. I have belief in my hon. colleagues that there are good members across the way, but this is playing with fire a little. The facetious part is when I hear reference to “rejected asylum claimants”. They should say that “asylum claimants who have appealed within their internal process” should not be entitled. They should just come out and say that, because these individuals are not yet fully rejected. There are not terrorists getting asylum benefits in this country. There are not criminals going through this process who are getting these benefits.

Those are the monikers and the names that are used to gin people up at home, because any rightful Canadian would say of course that is BS, but that is not what is happening. This is the kind of stuff that frustrates Canadians, and rightfully so. By the way, I stand here as a parliamentarian of six-plus years. There is plenty to criticize of any government that sits on this side in a Westminster system. This government is not perfect. I am proud of the work of our Prime Minister and our government, but I am sure there are ample areas where the Conservatives could stand up and talk about issues that perhaps deserve attention. This is not about valid public policy. This is about trying to gin people up at home in a political context, with zero context about what is and what is not true. That is where I see it.

I am just going to take a quick tangent that is connected to this. There was a group of farmers in my office today, and we were talk-

ing about food security and support for farmers. I asked about things such as the clean fuel standard. I said that instead of real, substantive policy, what we get from the Conservative Party is the idea of getting rid of the clean fuel standard, which is driving biofuel policy, which is benefiting rural western Canadian farmers, particularly in the canola sector. They are talking about eliminating Canada's most effective greenhouse gas emissions reduction program to get a negligible benefit on the farm.

● (1620)

That is the quality, or lack thereof in my personal view, of the policy direction we are getting from the Conservative Party of Canada. I want to see better. I will take it, because it is going to continue to provide the Liberal Party and the government an ability to show a real contrast in terms of our differences. This is not thoughtful public policy, in my respectful view.

The government is already taking measures to address any of the concerns, as I have mentioned, in Bill C-2 and Bill C-12. We are not going to stand idly by if there are individuals arriving in Canada who are trying to use the asylum system, which has been compassionate in Canadian history, and if these are not legitimate claims. We have a way to deal with that. We have a way to try to expedite the work around asylum claims. There has been the hiring of individuals at the IRB to try to speed up these processes and ensure that we are legitimizing the vulnerable individuals who are arriving and seeking refuge in Canada to be able to contribute to our communities as part of our social fabric. At the same time, we are making sure that we have a pathway for individuals to leave the country if their claim is not met.

Conservatives stand up and speak about rejected asylum claimants, but that already happens. Once they go through the process and they have no other recourse, they do not get the benefit. How many more times do we have to say it? Why do the Conservatives not just say, “We do not want individuals to have the benefit when they are halfway through the process”?

They might as well just say they do not want an appeal court for individuals who might be convicted. This is the same thing. We have a process in this country through our institutions. It is fair game if they would like to suggest that individuals have only one shot at IRB; that is fine, but let us actually deal with that. They should just say it. Those are important points. That is what I find deeply frustrating about this.

Why has the budget overall gone from about \$200 million to \$800 million in the last four years? I will go back to where I started this speech. Look at what is going on in the world. We have a war in eastern Europe. Individuals have fled Ukraine and have sought refuge here. We have war in Sudan. We certainly have war in the Middle East. We have geopolitical conflicts all over the world, so I wonder if we could ask ourselves why there might be a rise in asylum claims when we look at Canada, a country of stability, a country of rule of law, and a country of institutions where people say, “That is a place where I would like to take my family.”

Now, people are not entitled to that process illegitimately. Individuals are not just allowed to come to Canada and stay. We have rules, order and process. If the Conservatives would like to suggest that the process is, in their mind, too fair or too long, then they should just come out and say it, but when they come out and say that rejected asylum claimants should not get the benefit, at the end of the day that is not actually the case. Once an individual, a vulnerable individual who arrives, is fully rejected through the process by which they are entitled to seek and to make their claim, any cases regarding individuals who do not have validity are being challenged.

These are the things on which we just have to have better debate on the floor of the House of Commons. I know it is easy for me to say that, but I would invite all members to see that we have to be more thoughtful than this.

Again, we are choosing to spend an entire day on the floor House of Commons to gin people up about individuals who come to Canada on the premise that they are vulnerable individuals coming from war-torn countries and challenging political situations where they cannot go home. We have a program of services that Canadians would be proud of. Individuals are not jumping the line. They do not get access to medical services above and beyond a Canadian. If and when they are able to access the medical services in question, the Government of Canada helps contribute to the cost as part of our international obligations and as part of our humanitarian programs.

We have taken measures in Bill C-2 and Bill C-12 to make sure that any abuse of that program is reined in. We have introduced copays. As far as this goes, the government is already taking any actions that reasonably could have been seen from the opposition benches. I just wish we could have a little more serious debate. There is plenty of room for questions, so I look forward to the conversation from my colleagues.

• (1625)

Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of questions.

Early in his speech, the member rightly referenced, right from our motion, that the interim program cost \$211 million, and he said early on that it has gone up a bit. Now, he did come back to the numbers. It is now \$896 million. Would he define “up a bit” as quadrupling in four years?

The second question is regarding “interim”. Could the member define interim? Is this program going away, or does interim refer to

Business of Supply

just the period during which people are qualifying? What do they mean by interim here?

Last, the member said they are going to address the cost by copay. As part of our motion, we are projecting that the cost will go to \$1.5 billion by 2029-30. Does he agree with that assessment, and will—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister.

Hon. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, I respect my hon. colleague on the other side. I am going to tackle “interim”. Interim is the interim process while someone is going through the asylum process. Once a person registers and seeks an asylum claim, they are entitled to the benefit. The moment they have exhausted any of the administrative processes they are entitled to, the benefit goes away. It is that interim period until there is a determination by the authorities in this country. That is what we are referencing. It has gone from \$211 million to \$896 million. We take issue with the way in which the Parliamentary Budget Officer has framed up the forward-looking numbers, because of the provisions in Bill C-2 and Bill C-12. We are making adjustments.

When the hon. member talks about copay, we have introduced the requirement for individuals to contribute toward supplementary benefits under this program.

The last thing that I am going to say is important. We have 10 minutes. We are talking about \$800 million out of \$486 billion, and we are talking about legitimate—

The Deputy Speaker: We have to continue with questions and comments.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Montcalm.

Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, beyond how each side presents its arguments, there are uncomfortable questions arising from this debate.

Does my colleague not find it embarrassing that it takes 40 months to process a claim and get a response? Does he not find it embarrassing that, in order to speed up these claims and responses, 25,000 asylum seekers per year have been exempted from the security process? Does he not find it embarrassing that his government is still delaying the payment of \$700 million owed to Quebec?

Hon. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, that is precisely why the government introduced changes to the general process for asylum seekers in Bill C-2 and Bill C-12. We have a system in place to ensure that, in general, the process takes less than 40 months.

Most asylum seekers, 80%, are accepted at the end of the process. We have a process. We want to create a faster process for determining status. That is precisely the reason for Bills C-2 and C-12.

Business of Supply

• (1630)

[English]

Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find the narrative that the Conservatives have been using today, and in this discussion generally speaking, extremely alarming, because what they are basically saying to Canadians is that their health care system is not working because of refugees. They are using dog whistle politics to attack a subgroup of our population intentionally because they have, in my opinion, the same motive as we are seeing in neighbouring countries of ours right now with the way their administration is approaching this.

I am wondering if the member can provide some insight into what he thinks the Conservatives' motive is behind this. Is it just a coincidence that there happens to be a big development, or there has been over the last number of months, to the south with respect to immigration?

Hon. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, what I tried to express during my remarks is that I have no problem with the Conservatives coming forward and saying, for example, that they would like to have a changed process. I have no problem with the Conservative Party coming forward and talking about how we can make sure that we have programs in place to support individuals and how, if there are additional challenges in that process, individuals should not be entitled, but that is not what we were talking about today.

The Conservative Party continues to use the claim that a rejected asylum claimant is the reason Canadians, in some cases, may struggle to get access to health care. It is utter BS. I do not agree with that at all.

I have explained to the hon. colleagues across the way that this is 0.004% of the entire budget of the Government of Canada, and we are talking about legitimate claims that are taking place. When they say that it is rejected asylum claimants, but no rejected asylum claimants in this country are getting benefits, that is dog whistle politics in my mind.

The Deputy Speaker: Before I continue with questions and comments, I want to remind the parliamentary secretary that just because he uses an acronym instead of the full word, it is basically what I heard the chief government whip whisper to him, that he is still doing indirectly what he cannot do directly.

The particular word you used is not a parliamentary word.

I would just offer the member the opportunity to retract the statement.

Hon. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, in rural Hants County, sometimes we get a little colloquial and casual. I certainly withdraw it.

Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just like my hon. colleague across the way, I am appalled at the Conservative motion today, but I think the Liberals need to look at their own backyard.

Bill C-12 conflicts with the 1951 refugee convention, because the convention does not allow imposed timelines. It violates the right to due process and fair hearings, because it denies the right of asylum seekers to full oral hearings before the Immigration and Refugee Board. It is also arbitrary, because it provides wide discre-

tionary powers to cabinet to cancel visas or suspend applications in the so-called public interest. One only has to look to Trump to know how dangerous it is to make immigration cases partisan.

Finally, the Canadian Bar Association has highlighted that removing judicial oversight in favour of ministerial discretion weakens the true rule of law. My hon. colleague spoke about the rule of law. I am wondering why his government is choosing to violate it.

Hon. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, what this government is seeking to do is exactly what I said in my speech, which is to ensure that for vulnerable individuals, Canada continues its compassionate pathway for individuals who want to make their case, but at the same time has measures to ensure that there is an orderly process, that Canadians believe in that process and that there is no abuse in said process. Those provisions are meant to try to address a compassionate country that wants to have entitlements for individuals to make their case but at the same time ensure that individuals who could be trying to abuse the system do not have the ability to do so.

I am confident that the House has scrutinized these rules and that it is within the parameters and both compassionate and orderly. This follows what other countries are doing around the world, including G7 countries, in terms of making some adjustments in our policy. Ultimately, this is before the Senate. The upper house is scrutinizing this now, and we will act accordingly when we determine what they choose to come back with.

• (1635)

Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if it bothers the Liberal members across the aisle that people whose refugee claims have failed get better health benefits than many Canadian senior citizens, including vision care and physiotherapy.

Hon. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, why does the member stand up in the House of Commons and talk about rejected asylum claimants?

I just explained very clearly to the opposition benches what happens once an individual goes through the two processes for making the administrative claim, the IRB process and the ability for an appeal. Once those are exhausted, they are then a rejected asylum claimant and have no access to what the member just talked about.

Why is the member standing up, so uninformed about the process, to jam this out on social media and to gin up his constituents, with no ability to know what the heck he is even talking about?

That is a prime example of the Conservative members not even knowing what they are talking about. If a person goes through the process that they are entitled to and is not successful, they do not get the benefit, Mr. Speaker. Grow up.

Honestly, Kerry. Jesus.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope the member was not telling the Speaker to grow up. I think I am done growing.

Business of Supply

Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order. There was unparliamentary language that came from the parliamentary secretary again.

Some hon. members: What did he say, grow up?

Ted Falk: No, the word that came after that. It started with a J.

The Deputy Speaker: I did not hear the word that was said, but I see the parliamentary secretary rising.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: I heard from the member for Provencher. I see the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister is rising, and I will let him speak.

Hon. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, certainly you can sense my frustration. If there was any unparliamentary word that members heard, I certainly withdraw it and do not mean to offend this House. It is part of the frustration at what I am hearing from the opposition, and I am asking them to be better.

The Deputy Speaker: All I needed was a withdrawal. I consider the matter closed.

[*Translation*]

It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Climate Change; the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Employment; the hon. member for Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, The Economy.

[*English*]

Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to our motion. I am going to talk a bit about the interim federal health program and then a few other things.

The first point I want to make clearly is that the program creates a two-tiered health system in our country. It has a Cadillac benefits system for failed asylum claimants and a basic system for regular Canadians. That is the design of this system. The costs are already nearing \$1 billion a year, and they will be climbing to \$1.5 billion within four years. Of course, the Liberals claim the system works. They have all kinds of answers, supposedly, to all the complaints, but I will demonstrate that it does not work.

First of all, on two-tiered health care, in 2025, 300,000 asylum claimants received benefits. Let us get clear on the benefits. There are two kinds.

There are the basic benefits, the things we would all agree people should have. That is coverage for things like emergency room visits, doctor visits, hospital treatments and required surgeries, any kind of emergencies that come up. That is basic health care, the basic health care that all Canadians have. Nobody would argue that people in our country should not have access to that kind of coverage, and Conservatives certainly agree. Provinces do not pay for that, because it is not for permanent residents or citizens, so they can rightly come back to the federal government and ask it to cover the costs, which it does.

The second part is called supplemental benefits. These are benefits that many Canadians do not have. These are for things like, for example, vision care: glasses, contact lenses and getting a new pair of glasses every two years. They are part of supplemental benefits. Dental and drug coverage, ambulance visits, in-home nursing, medical supplies, hearing aids and these kinds of things are also supplemental benefits. They are things that many Canadians do not have and have to pay out of pocket for. Unfortunately, failed asylum claimants get that coverage for free through the program, and it accounts for nearly half of the cost of the program, a significant cost.

I would also bring to the attention of the House the fact that there has been testimony at committee that showed that the program is badly managed. As I said, physicians charge the federal government for this coverage, and they are charging in some cases up to five times what they would normally charge their provincial government for services, because the federal government does not manage the program very well and is willing to pay that extra cost. That shows the poor management happening with the program right now.

Now let me talk about the cost. Four years ago the program cost about \$200 million, and right now it is costing about \$900 million. It has gone up more than four times in four years. The Parliamentary Budget Officer did a projection for four years from now, and the cost is going to be up to \$1.5 billion. That is going to be eight times the cost within an eight-year period. I would say this is an out-of-control program that definitely needs some help and some work to get it back under control.

The Liberals proposed a solution, which they are calling copay. Let me talk about that. The copay they are proposing is four dollars for a prescription. Someone, let us say, getting a \$1,500 Ozempic prescription is going to pay four dollars, and the government is going to pay \$1,496. For the other supplementary services, the Cadillac services I spoke of before, the copay is going to be 30%. It will reduce the cost a little, but it is still going to be far more than \$1 billion a year four years from now. We are kind of splitting hairs on cost. It is still going to be a more than \$1-billion program four years from now.

Another way to think about this is that if we take the entire budget for health care, which I think is somewhere in the order of about \$55 billion for our country, the money that is given to the provinces for health care, that works out to about \$1,275 per Canadian. If we take this line item and put it against how many asylum seekers there are, it works out to about \$3,300 per Canadian. On a per capita basis, the government is spending almost three times as much money on this program as it does on benefits for all Canadians. What if the Liberals got the system under control and were able to manage it properly? That is what needs to be done and what I argue is not happening.

Business of Supply

Why are there so many refugee claims? Let me talk about legitimate refugees versus bogus refugee claims. We know that legitimate refugees are fleeing war, persecution and violence. There is a government sponsorship process for that. The UNHCR is involved in that process. There is also a private sponsorship method where groups of people can get together and sponsor refugees to come to Canada. Conservatives have no issues with that. These are what people think of when they think about asylum claimants and refugees, and we are a generous country so we want those kinds of benefits extended to people to the extent that we as a country can afford to do that.

● (1640)

When we talk about asylum claimants, it is different. There is no real process for this. This is when people enter Canada either with a permit of some sort or illegally, and then they immediately claim asylum. They say that they are under some sort of persecution and that they fear going back to their country, or something like that, and of course some of those claims are legitimate as well. There are definitely people who arrive in Canada who truly fear going back to their country, and I would have no problem with letting a person like that go through the system and be found to be a legitimate refugee whom, should Canada have the capacity to bring them in, we could bring in.

However, there are also many who take advantage of the system, and we have seen it so many times, where a person comes to our country and is here for a while. Maybe they are a student, or maybe they are working or doing whatever they might be doing, and then something bad happens to them. It could be as simple as not being able to get their paperwork extended and being requested to leave the country, or it could be something worse, such as being convicted of a crime, and then they are actually going to be deported. What do they do? They claim refugee status, claim asylum, and this is where there is a lot of abuse in the program and there a lot of people who take advantage of the generosity of the very bureaucratic system.

The system takes almost four years to go through, with all the different ways that someone can appeal. We have talked about it, as have many other speakers, but someone can have a claim rejected by the IRB, and then there are several avenues of appeal they can take. This is the time period for the people who have been rejected, and they are trying to game the system. They are the ones who are getting the benefits.

The other interesting thing in the whole process is how many of the claims are actually accepted. In Canada right now, we are accepting roughly 80% of refugee claims, which seems like a high number, off the top. I did some looking into peer countries. The parliamentary secretary just talked about G7 countries, and I looked at some of these countries. Germany has an acceptance rate of 59%, versus ours of 80%. Sweden has an acceptance rate of 40%, and Ireland has an acceptance rate of 30%. Therefore, it seems odd to me that we are accepting 80% of refugee claims made in Canada, because that just does not seem to match up with what some of our peer countries are doing.

We definitely have a pull factor for people wanting to come here, because the system is quite easy to game, but another thing that

came to our attention this week related to this is something the Immigration and Refugee Board does, called a file review. With a file review, there are certain countries of origin that have been determined to be not worthy of having somebody look at the file, so if someone happens to be an asylum seeker from such a country, they basically get approved automatically by the system, and nobody actually even looks at the file. Nobody talks to that person. The countries on that list are kind of scary to me. They are the ones for which we might want to actually talk to those people just to make sure we are not allowing bad actors to come into our country.

The list of countries includes, for example, Afghanistan, North Korea, Yemen, Pakistan and Iran. That is not in any way to say that everybody coming from those countries is bad. I am saying that when somebody comes to our country from, let us say, Iran, I want a government official to actually interview that person. Is the person a member of the IRGC? Does the person have military history? Is the person escaping their country with the rewards of something that they did unlawfully in their country and coming to Canada to stay here? I want somebody to actually ask those questions and check that out, and that is not happening. That is partly why our acceptance rates are so high in this country.

Is the program worth \$1.5 billion? I would suggest it is not. If someone is a phony asylum claimant, if they are a foreign criminal or if they are a Liberal politician, then I guess it is worth that. However, if someone is a regular Canadian, I would say it is not. Let us remember that we do not want a two-tiered health care system in Canada.

The Conservatives have a plan that is about fairness and about focus to protect emergency care but end the extras for rejected claims, reduce the strain on the system and ensure that Canadians get the health care they have earned and paid for.

● (1645)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the Conservatives continue to use the \$1.5-billion figure. The Parliamentary Budget Officer did a good job of presenting a package for parliamentarians. What the member does not highlight is the fact that it does not take into consideration Bill C-12. The Conservatives know that. The leader of the Conservative Party is very much aware of that, and this means that the \$1.5-billion figure is just not true.

However, the Conservatives have done two things: They have taken the health care issue, and they have taken this issue to try to pump out a message that is very anti-immigrant, I would suggest.

I am wondering if the member would not agree that it was in poor taste for the Conservative Party of Canada to be sending out information that it knows is not true.

Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, it is definitely in poor taste to put forward incorrect information, which is what we have been hearing all day from the other side.

Business of Supply

The PBO did his analysis of \$1.5 billion. The Liberals are going to do a copay system, so maybe the number is going to be a little smaller. It is still a billion-dollar program. What we have seen from the government is not a reduction in the number of refugee seekers in this country but a dramatic increase in numbers. There are 300,000 in the backlog today. The IRB can process only about 70,000 or so a year. That is how we end up with a four-year wait to process through the backlog.

The government has not been able to demonstrate any kind of efficiency with respect to this, nor any possibility of getting control of the system. I highly doubt it is going to do that in the future.

Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to say that today has been a pretty difficult day in the House, all day long as we have been debating. We have had our character attacked. We have been compared to the U.S. administration. We have been told that we on this side of the House do not care about Ukrainian asylum seekers. We have had standing ovations from members on the other side when they attack our intelligence. I think these are all really false narratives to hide the real question that we are asking today, which is why rejected asylum seekers are getting better health care than Canadian citizens, such as vision, physiotherapy, and the list goes on.

Can my colleague explain in a very simple way the answer to the question we are asking today, which is why rejected asylum seekers are getting better health care than Canadian citizens are?

● (1650)

Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on something the member said in that question, which are the accusations from the other side that we do not care about immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. We absolutely do.

What we are trying to do here is find a way to make the system work better so legitimate refugees and legitimate asylum seekers who come to our country are treated well, so regular Canadians are treated well, so we have the best possible use of the money that all Canadians contribute to the government, and so when we spend that money, we spend it wisely. That is not happening today. The government is not doing that well. I want to see that change and improve.

Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the Conservatives say they just want to make the system better, but they set up false dichotomies. They make it an “us versus them” issue, saying that our health care sucks because of refugees. That is what they do. This is what we have heard, not just in this debate but in so many debates with the Conservatives. If they were genuinely interested in fixing a problem and making a system better, they would not set up a false dichotomy like that, but they routinely do it.

Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, we have never said that; it is the Liberals who keep saying that. I want to highlight that it is bogus asylum claimants we are focused on. I will give the House a really good example.

In B.C. recently, there were 15 people who were going down the road of being convicted of a crime. Guess what they did. Every single one of them claimed asylum as a way to avoid the results of their actions in Canada. It puts them into the asylum system. It

gives them a four-year pathway to protect themselves and avoid true justice in Canada. These are exactly the kinds of things we want to fix, and the government has been unable to do so.

Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, who are we? Are we a nation that is defined by a collection of grievances? Are we a nation where one set of rules applies to one citizen and another to someone undermining that very sense of citizenship?

Nations are defined and defended by knowing who they are, their history, their traditions and the laws that shape their societies and their culture. When a government undertakes a political project to revise a national history and its identity with Marxist philosophies, grievance culture and borders open to those who are here to actively undermine the people through extortion or through terrorism, that is a state-sponsored attack on the very concept of Canada itself.

In this speech, I want to lay out three main points: first, fairness in health care; second, equality before the law; and third, the defence of our national identity and sovereignty.

Let us start with a system that is already at its breaking point: health care. Six million Canadians cannot find a family doctor. That is not a number on a page. That is a senior down the street. It is a single mom waiting for hours in an overcrowded emergency department. They are our family members, our friends and our neighbours. Thirty weeks is how long the average Canadian must wait to see a specialist. That is seven months of waiting, seven months of pain and seven months where life hangs in the balance, yet the Liberal government chooses to prioritize people who do not even belong here. Rejected asylum claimants are getting health care benefits that Canadians themselves cannot even access, deluxe benefits like vision care, physiotherapy and supplementary services, and that is where the real outrage begins.

The Liberals opened the border, and then they abandoned screening, rubber-stamped soaring asylum claims and let the backlog spiral completely out of control. Now Canada's health care, housing and job markets are at their breaking points. Their backlog of asylum claims has exploded by over 2,900% since they took office in 2015. The Liberal interim federal health program cost \$211 million four years ago. Today, it costs \$896 million. By 2030, it is projected to cost \$1.5 billion annually for people who have already been rejected as asylum claimants, people who have never paid taxes and people who have no legal right to be here.

Business of Supply

At the health committee, Conservatives discovered that providers are charging up to five times the provincial rate for services for these individuals. Meanwhile, our own people wait months for a specialist. Seniors wait for procedures that could literally change their lives. Families wait in emergency rooms because they cannot find a primary care physician who could keep them out of those emergency rooms, which would be a great relief to our health system and our hospitals. What do the Liberals do? They write blank checks for people who are not even contributing members of our society. Generosity without fairness is not generosity; it is betrayal.

Before the new year, I had a neighbour write to me deeply concerned about the federal budget and public health care. She told me she was worried that the federal government had said very little about improving our health care system. She asked me, in no uncertain terms, how we would help to ensure that Canadians got the care they needed. Her concerns are not unique. Her story is one of millions. That is why we are presenting a motion that would restore fairness. Rejected asylum claimants would receive emergency life-saving care only. Canadians come first, full stop.

The soaring costs and abuse of the Liberal IFH program are no accident. They are the predictable result of a Liberal government that has broken our immigration system. Hospitals are full. Emergency rooms are overflowing. However, the Liberals do not raise alarm bells. They open the floodgates to more people, more arrivals, more strain and more chaos.

Tax season is coming, and this is a fair question for anyone who is working their butt off and cannot get ahead: Where is all this money going? They cannot buy a home. They cannot get health care in a reasonable time. They can hardly afford to put food on the table, and Liberals keep telling them everything is fine. No, it is not.

A government's job is not to micromanage our lives or pick our pockets to fund its failed experiments. A government's job is not to put foreign nationals, criminals and terrorists ahead of its own people. It is to put Canadians and Canada first. Conservatives will ensure health care is available to Canadians first. We will review federal benefits provided to asylum claimants to identify savings for taxpayers. We will stop overwhelming our communities with numbers the system simply cannot handle.

• (1655)

We are a generous nation and Calgary is a generous city, but generosity requires discipline. Compassion requires fairness. If we cannot care for our own people first, we are not governing. We are failing our citizens.

Then there is the law. Under the Liberal government, foreign nationals here on asylum can commit crimes and, in some cases, avoid meaningful consequences because the system prioritizes process over justice. If we have two people charged with the same crime, one is a Canadian and the other one is not, and the consequences are not equal, that is unacceptable.

Let us be clear about how this problem manifests in real life. When someone files an asylum application, it can trigger automatic stays of removal, meaning they get to stay here until their case is reviewed. Across Canada, there are reported cases of individuals

charged with violent offences, trafficking and gang-related crimes who, by filing asylum or refugee claims, remain in the country longer, sometimes for months or even years.

In British Columbia, law enforcement uncovered organized extortion rings where multiple suspects used refugee claim filings to halt their removal. They tied up enforcement resources and frustrated victims for months. Their legal status keeps shifting and enforcement is stalled. When it comes to assault, theft, fraud and extortion, Canadians face immediate consequences, while foreign nationals can delay, postpone or even avoid sentencing for years using asylum claims.

This is a loophole that rewards lawbreakers and punishes Canadians. When someone is charged with a crime, they should face the full weight of the justice system with no loopholes and no preferential treatment because of where they filed paperwork. Our motion calls on the government to immediately expel foreign nationals who commit serious crimes, with no soft landings, no loopholes and no special carve-outs.

We are calling for stronger enforcement. When violent offenders, gang members or organized crime suspects are caught, they must be removed. Communities cannot flourish when criminals exploit loopholes in the law. Families cannot feel secure when the system is rigged against them. Canadians deserve a justice system that works for them first. If someone break the law in Canada, whether they are a Canadian or a foreign national, they should face the consequences. That is equality before the law. Our people expect nothing less.

Let us look at the numbers and the costs. We are spending \$896 million in health benefits today and \$1.5 billion by 2030 for people who are not taxpayers and have no legal standing to be here. Where is it going? The Liberals have failed to answer. The Conservatives will demand every dollar tracked, every service justified and no more blank cheques. Every taxpayer dollar spent must go to service Canadians first.

We are not talking ideology here. We are talking about the Canadian promise: an affordable home, an affordable life, health care when someone needs it and safe streets. We are moving this motion to restore fairness, restore order and restore trust. Rejected asylum claimants get emergency care only. Foreign criminals face full consequences. Fairness is not sacrificing our neighbours so that someone from outside the country can get better care than them.

What do the Liberals want me to do? Should I go back to my riding and tell a grandmother that she has to wait seven months for care while someone who is not even from here, who could be illegal, a criminal or a terrorist, gets better care before her? What am I supposed to tell an immigrant who comes to this country to build something new, who through the sweat on their brow and the pain in their back has contributed to building up this country? What am I supposed to tell that immigrant when those who follow are exploiting the broken Liberal system? Am I supposed to tell them that playing by the rules did not matter?

Let me conclude with this: Who are we? The danger of creating one set of rules for one and another set of rules for the next is that it attacks the very idea of our national sovereignty, the very idea of our national identity and the very idea of the nation we seek to build together.

If I could carve something onto the desk of every border official, every bureaucrat, every judge, every legislator and every academic, it would read that Canada is the third-oldest democracy on planet earth. We are heirs of the British Magna Carta and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man. We are an inheritance forged by first nations and newcomers, the scars they endured together through wars, depressions and hard times, and the promise they built together. We are a constitutional monarchy where the laws are written by the people and their democracy, not the ruler by diktat. We are a promise, and ours is a promise to keep.

For the millions in this country who do not respect that this is the core of our national identity, the core of our national sovereignty and the core of who we are and what we are here to defend, then comes the uneasy task of demanding that the government members remove those who they, themselves, brought in.

• (1700)

[Translation]

Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my hon. colleague.

Can the member describe in concrete terms the pressure that the Conservatives believe asylum seekers are putting on Canada's health care system, which all Canadians are very proud of?

[English]

Shuvaloy Majumdar: Mr. Speaker, we all know that the system has been abused by fake asylum seekers, and I did discuss some of the specifics in my remarks. I will leave it at that for now.

[Translation]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lestiguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the Conservative Party's motion, they propose to adopt policies that would see the immediate deportation of foreign nationals convicted of serious crimes in Canada. However, section 36 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act already provides for the deportation of individuals convicted of serious crimes punishable by a term of imprisonment of at least 10 years, as well as those sentenced to a term of imprisonment of more than six months.

What is wrong with that section and what would the Conservative member like to add?

Business of Supply

[English]

Shuvaloy Majumdar: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague's question is well thought out and considered. The problem is not necessarily the law. The problem is that it is not being implemented. People are not being kicked out properly. Judges are acting in the interest of process over justice. That requires remedial effort right away.

Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know we are having a good day on the opposition side when the Liberal benches are yelling and screaming and bringing out all the tricks in the book in terms of how to discredit what we are trying to say. What we have said, time and time again, is that refugees who have had their claims denied or who have failed should not get the same health care as seniors across our country or people who have paid taxes their whole lives across our country, which is a fair assessment to make.

I want to give my colleague a couple of minutes to talk about some of those failed claimants. We talked about a couple of them. In B.C., 15 people were charged with extortion and 14 put forward asylum claims so that they would get health care benefits that our seniors across the country do not get. Does he think that is fair to all Canadians?

• (1705)

Shuvaloy Majumdar: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is a hard-working person for the great people he represents. He does great work in the House every single day.

No, it is not. In fact, the inequality of services being provided to people who have paid into the system for a lifetime, our seniors, is not matched by the deluxe care that fake refugee claimants are being provided in the country. It is absolutely an unjust system that is taking advantage of those who have paid into it and preferencing those who are here to exploit it or, worse, to commit acts of extortion or terrorism or other federal crimes.

Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives could have accomplished the same thing and would not have even had to talk about health care and set up this dichotomy of us versus them, if they had just made their motion say to get rid of the appeal process. That effectively would have accomplished the same thing. By getting rid of the appeal process, once a claimant is rejected, it is over. Once a claimant goes through the appeal process, they are required to leave the country.

Why did Conservatives have to set up this whole thing pitting seniors against other people and this and that about health care? Why not just say to get rid of the appeal process?

Shuvaloy Majumdar: Mr. Speaker, as an hon. member of the government, he could get rid of the appeal process today if he chose to. I do not understand why he did not. Conservatives have had to sit here and watch the Liberal government divide Canadians over a decade of terrible immigration policy and terrible justice policy, terrible policies that have resulted in chaos across the streets of Canada.

Business of Supply

Conservatives have stepped up today with a motion to fix a difficult problem that Liberals created because Liberals refuse to take the steps that they must. What they should do is take our advice in earnest and implement it in full. Our motion would help Canada perform better despite the egregious pains that the Liberal government has caused Canada for well over a decade.

[*Translation*]

Abdelhaq Sari (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Over the past few years, we have all seen the importance of good public governance. Canadians expect their government to manage public funds responsibly, but never at the expense of our values. Canadians' values are reflected in the values of our government. These are our core values, our humanity and our sense of justice. This is precisely the balance we seek to maintain in managing the interim federal health program.

Generally speaking, finding balance is the most difficult aspect of governing. Governments must avoid going to one extreme or the other. Sometimes, finding a balance is extremely complex and difficult. Despite this, our government is ready to take on this challenge and is ready to seek this balance and implement it.

This program exists for one very simple reason: to ensure that those who are most vulnerable, including asylum seekers, have access to basic health care during a transitional period, and I emphasize the word "transitional", until they become eligible for provincial and territorial health insurance. Let us also be clear: This program must be managed rigorously. It must be managed transparently and, most of all, sustainably.

Certain figures are being used today to stoke fear and concern, particularly with regard to the increase in the program costs. This makes it important to go over the facts once again.

The increase in costs is not due to an expansion of benefits. This really needs to be stated so that Canadians listening today clearly understand the cause and do not draw simplistic correlations such as the one that was just heard. The increase is not the result of a change in the program's purpose, either. That is not the reason.

This increase in costs is due mainly to a significant increase in the number of refugee claims in recent years and to longer processing times for these claims. In practical terms, this means that some people stay in the system longer and therefore continue to be covered temporarily by the federal program before being transferred to provincial and territorial plans.

In response to these pressures, our government has not stood idly by. As I said earlier, our government has worked very hard to maintain equilibrium within this program. We have taken targeted measures, responsible measures and, above all, concrete measures.

First, we introduced a copayment model for certain supplemental benefits as of 2025. Recipients now contribute a portion of the cost of drugs, the cost of dental care, the cost of vision care and especially the cost of counselling services and assistive devices. Basic care such as medical consultations, hospitalization and tests remain fully covered. This change makes the IFHP more consistent with

the experience of many Canadians who also have to contribute to their supplemental plan.

Second, we suspended certain updates to the IFHP that would have resulted in an automatic spending increase, while maintaining coverage comparable to that offered by the provinces and territories to people on welfare.

Third, we introduced and advanced legislative reforms, including Bill C-12, to reduce abuse, improve processing times and reduce the length of time people rely on temporary federal support.

I would like to digress for a moment. When we speak of temporary situations, we are not talking about people who take advantage of the system, on the contrary. No one on the path to immigration wants to remain in a temporary situation, to remain in uncertainty or to abuse our program. On the contrary, these people want a reply so that they can become part of society, enter the workforce, and integrate into Canadian society with their family. This is very important, because sometimes in our speeches we draw parallels that can create false perceptions or misunderstandings.

Fewer delays mean lower costs. Fewer delays mean a much fairer system for everyone.

● (1710)

Fourth, we ended the use of federally funded hotel accommodations for asylum seekers, and we refocused our efforts on more permanent, sustainable and community-based solutions. These decisions lower costs and promote more stable integration pathways, as I said earlier.

It is also important to remember a fundamental principle: Cutting health care does not make health care needs disappear. On the contrary, delaying essential care until entering into a provincial plan would only shift costs to the provinces and territories and would often only increase them, since health problems do not improve. Instead, they become worse and more expensive to treat. Our government's approach aims to prevent these situations, protect public health and ensure an orderly transition to the provincial and territorial systems.

Furthermore, the program is rigorously monitored. Claims are analyzed, audited and administered through a structured network of health care providers, with clear mechanisms to ensure the integrity of expenditures and the proper use of public funds. We also continue to assess benefits to avoid duplication and maintain fairness across governments.

It should also be said that some financial projections have not yet included the savings generated by the new quotas or the impact of the ongoing legislative reforms. These measures will have a direct impact on how long the program is used and on overall costs. In fact, we can already see some results: In 2025, the number of asylum claims dropped by about one-third from the previous year. This shows that the government's measures are working and are helping to reduce pressure on the system.

Canadians want a well-managed, compassionate and credible immigration system. They want us to protect the vulnerable, address abuse and ensure that every taxpayer dollar is used wisely. That is exactly what our government is doing. We are aligning benefits with provincial plans, introducing cost-sharing mechanisms, strengthening oversight and transparency, reforming the system to improve efficiency, and continuously monitoring, assessing and adjusting the program to ensure its long-term viability.

The interim federal health program is not a privilege. It is a temporary safety net, a public health tool and a transition mechanism. It is a reflection of our values. As we proceed with the reforms, including those in Bill C-12, we will continue to reduce financial pressures, improve efficiency and ensure that this program remains responsible, fair and sustainable. That is why I encourage the House to support these reforms and continue building a system that is rigorous, compassionate and true to Canadian values.

• (1715)

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could provide his thoughts on one of the prevailing discussions that have taken place here today, which is that the official opposition, the leader of the Conservative Party in particular, has made the decision to try to bring the issue of health care and the needs of our health care system and put it in with the issue of refugees. I have seen the fundraising letter in which the Conservatives try to almost blame refugees, as though they are the reason there are deficiencies in our health care system.

If the Conservatives want to talk about health care, then why do they not bring in an opposition day motion to deal with that? If they want to talk about refugees, then why not bring in an opposition day motion to deal with that? It seems that the motivation is to cater to the extreme right and put immigrants in a negative light. What are the member's thoughts on that?

[Translation]

Abdelhaq Sari: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question, and it is an opportunity to get back to the issue of correlation. Making simplistic correlations between immigration, asylum seekers, vulnerable people and the health care system is nothing but two-bit politics. We really need to work very hard to make sure that Canadians truly understand the real impact indicators that are causing problems and longer wait times. I think that the parliamentary secretary was clear in his explanation earlier that it is, in fact, a very small percentage of people who benefit from this.

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since my colleague stopped on his own, I will give him the opportunity to continue in a few moments.

Business of Supply

Like me, the member for Bourassa is a member from Quebec. As he knows, a few years ago, what became known as Roxham Road turned into a ordeal overnight. First, it is an ordeal for immigrants, but it is also an ordeal for those around the world who followed the rules and then learned that it was possible to circumvent the rules by arriving via a small road called Roxham Road. The Canadian government posted a huge sign telling people that it was illegal to cross there. After that, it was changed to “irregular”. Okay, they changed the wording.

What I want to know from the member for Bourassa is what happened next. When the agreement between the United States and Canada was finalized, it took the Liberal Prime Minister almost a year to make it public. Like me, the member is from Quebec, and for almost a year, the Quebec government had to bear all the social costs of this immigration, which—

The Deputy Speaker: I am going to interrupt the hon. member to give the hon. member for Bourassa a chance to respond.

Abdelhaq Sari: Mr. Speaker, I did not hear a question but I think the comments are very clear.

We must be careful. We are talking about the health care system. Once again, a correlation is being made with an immigration issue, which we agree on.

During that time, I was a city councillor in Montreal. We did indeed welcome these people. I am the member for Bourassa, and I work very hard to strike that balance I talked about: being a country that is welcoming and that offers services while also ensuring there are no abuses or cost increases. We all have to work very hard to that end.

I think that going back on a particular issue and creating yet another simplistic correlation between immigration, asylum seekers and the problems with the health care system is unacceptable in the House.

Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Bourassa spoke about respect for fundamental human values. I would like to know whether he feels that taking 40 months to process an asylum claim is an example of fundamental human values.

Does he believe that it is time for his government to give Quebec—which has demonstrated fundamental human values by welcoming twice its demographic weight—the \$700 million it is owed?

• (1720)

Abdelhaq Sari: Mr. Speaker, that is one way to ask the question.

Is there an issue? The answer is clearly yes. Have there been problems? Are there things that need to be corrected? In fact, my introduction was along those lines. Are the delays really long? Yes, but what has the government done?

Business of Supply

I have identified four important measures that the government is working on to reduce costs and delays, so that immigrants are treated humanely and with the dignity that Canadians can truly offer.

[*English*]

Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during this debate, I have been thinking back to 2016. A new government had been formed in the fall of 2015, and it had committed itself to accepting Syrian refugees into Canada out of necessity because of what had been going on at that time in Syria.

I remember this vividly: In the late winter, after a lot of the refugees had come into Canada, we had a number living with host families in Kingston. A local organization that had been coordinating all of this put on an event to thank everybody who had gone out of their way to be so generous in accepting and bringing new refugees into their home so that they could start a new life.

I remember being at this event. I was a newly elected member of Parliament at the time and very proud of the work that our government had done. At the request of the organizers to say something to the group, I got up and talked about the incredible generosity of our community and of those who had extended their hands and opened the doors of their homes to let refugees in. I thanked them profusely for doing that and for being so Canadian in a moment of need for people around the world. I concluded my remarks, and I sat down.

At the end of the event, there was a reception, and an individual came up to me and said, "I really liked what you said, and I thought that it was great that you thanked all of the local families for being so incredibly generous, but you forgot to thank the refugees." I asked what he meant. He said, "You forgot to thank them for picking Canada." I do not think I have ever forgotten that moment, and I have thought a lot about it over the last 10 years. When the individual said that, he made me realize something that is so incredibly true to the Canadian identity.

Thinking about it, a refugee, an asylum seeker, is somebody who has chosen to leave everything behind in their home country, pick up their family and leave property, assets and valuable connections to their history and their culture behind. They go and probably stay in a refugee camp for several months before struggling and fighting their way to get to Canada to start a brand new life for their family, in an area they have never been to before that has a cultural identity they have never been a part of. When we stop to think about it, who could we possibly want more in our community, to build our community, than fighters like that?

When that individual made his comment to me and he said that I had forgotten to thank the refugees for picking Canada, this dawned on me: Who could we possibly want more than people who are willing to fight? These are not people who want to milk the system. These are not people who want to just lie back and do nothing. They put everything on the line to get here. They want to fight for their survival most times. I cannot think of anybody whom we would want more to build our country and contribute to our country.

It actually made me think of my grandparents, albeit they were not refugees by the definition that we use today. Like so many other immigrants who came to this country after the Second World War,

my grandfather on my mother's side was from Italy. Their country was destroyed. My father was from Holland. Again, their country was destroyed. My grandparents decided that they wanted to pick up and go to another country to start a new life for their families. As a result, they came here.

My Italian uncles set up construction companies and contributed to this country. My grandfather worked as a janitor in a hospital so that his son could go to law school and one day become a member of provincial parliament, and his grandson is standing before the House right now. That is the result of our embracing culture and identity in Canada. Somebody mentioned it earlier today. They said, "Unless someone is of indigenous descent, we have all come to this country over the last couple of hundred years." That is the reality of the situation.

• (1725)

Conservatives are focused on saying that we are trying to paint a picture of them setting up a false dichotomy of us versus them, and that is not true. It is right in their motion. The fourth item says, "Canadians that have paid into the healthcare system their whole lives", obviously talking about seniors, "are unable to get the healthcare they deserve in part because resources are going to false asylum claimants". They are intentionally setting up a dichotomy of us versus them because they know that is dog whistle politics.

What is dog whistle politics? We use this term a lot, and I will define it for members. Dog whistle politics is when a human hears nothing unusual, but dogs hear a loud, clear signal. In other words, it is political messaging that seems harmless but carries a hidden meaning for a specific group, and the hidden meaning in the motion before us is, "refugees are stealing your health care". That is the message they are giving. They will take their videos and clips, feed them to their base and say, "The leader of the opposition can stop this. All we need is \$25 from you. Donate now."

We have been watching this for the better part of 10 years, and certainly since this Leader of the Opposition came along, it has gotten a lot worse, but that is what we are experiencing right now. We are experiencing and watching, once again, Conservatives trying to say that refugees are horrible because they are taking everything away from our Canadian identity. Why do they have to phrase it like that? I asked the Conservative member who spoke previously a very pointed question.

The Conservatives will claim that, once a claimant has been rejected, they should no longer get health care. Well, once a claimant has been rejected, they do not get health care. What they are leaving out of this, and it is a nuance that is very important to point out, is that, just like in all of our justice processes, there is an opportunity to appeal. The Conservatives are saying that, once the first decision has come down that a claimant is not going to be given asylum, they should not be given any health care through the appeal process.

Business of Supply

Well, if that is how they feel, if their issue is really about the appeal process, why did they not come in here today to put forward a motion that says we should get rid of the appeal process? It is because that would not have generated the same kind of fundraising that they plan to generate off this.

I am extremely disappointed to, once again, have to stand in the House and call out Conservative tactics, the games that they play, to intentionally divide Canadians. That is what they are doing now, and that is what I have seen them do for years. I think it is absolutely shameful to do it in this regard.

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here we are today, on the fourth anniversary of the war that Russia implemented on Ukraine, and what did we hear from a Conservative? A Conservative got up and stated that “the program for bogus refugee claimants” costs the same as the transfer to the whole province of Saskatchewan at \$1.6 billion a year. Basically, the member is insinuating that every single immigrant and every single refugee has a bogus claim.

Maybe the Conservatives are trying to hide the fact that, up until yesterday, they had only asked four questions of the health minister. They could do better.

Does my colleague agree that these refugees and immigrants pay taxes, that they work in our health care system and that this exercise here today is shameful?

• (1730)

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I told the story at the beginning of my speech about Syrian refugees. The thing is, a lot of them have been here long enough that we can see what they have become and what they have accomplished. I am so incredibly proud to have Syrian refugees, or former refugees who are now Canadian citizens, living in my community. They contribute to my community in a way that genuinely has an economic impact, a social impact and a cultural impact. That is what we are talking about here.

Conservatives are more than happy to paint all asylum seekers as illegitimate because they do not care about due process or protecting vulnerable individuals.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the Conservatives are not standing up to ask questions of the member. I think it is because the member has really nailed the issue.

The Conservative Party, particularly the leadership of the Conservative Party, has made the determination to take a very important issue that Canadians are concerned about, health care, and then tie it to the issue of refugees. They are trying to give this false impression that it is because of refugees that we have problems with health care. It is feeding to that far right. I am wondering if the member could amplify that particularly disrespectful way of dealing with the politics of rage.

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, just like this member, I have seen this happening for years now. The Conservatives just rage bait and look for opportunities to get people amped up so they can then say, “Don’t worry. We can fix the problem. All you have to do is donate \$10 now.” I have seen it so many times.

I have been the subject of those emails throughout the years after I have spoken in the House. The Leader of the Opposition is the absolute worst at it. It should surprise my colleagues, who are heckling or laughing or who have said stuff during my speech today, that they are still sitting on that side of the House. They had a 25-point lead, and as soon as somebody else came along, Canadians could say that they prefer this guy rather than that guy. Can the Conservatives not just rip the band-aid off and get rid of him?

Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have just listened to 10 minutes of literal rage baiting across the aisle, and then they are saying that we are the ones doing the rage baiting for what we are trying to do here. It is absolutely incredible.

I want to be very clear. I am from Kitchener Centre, and I am incredibly proud of the asylum seekers who have come to my riding, like the Rohingya community, like all the other communities that come to Kitchener Centre. This is not a complete compilation of immigration as a whole.

Why are rejected asylum seekers getting better health care than Canadian citizens? This is the only thing we are asking. We are not doing a huge immigration consensus here today. The member can stop the antics and answer the question.

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I will answer the question. The reality is that what she is saying does not exist. She asked why rejected applicants continue to get health care. They do not. The problem is that that member and the Conservative Party consider somebody rejected before they have gone through the entire due process they are entitled to. What that member should have done was bring a motion here saying that they want to get rid of the appeal process altogether, because had they actually done that, they would have been doing something they believe in, rather than just—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix.

[*Translation*]

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I rise today, I am not only addressing the House. I also want to address the families of Quebec, the seniors who are waiting for care, the young parents who do not have a family doctor, the sports enthusiasts who are taking care of their health and the athletes from coast to coast to coast who work hard and do everything they can to succeed. Today’s debate is about our priorities, about a fundamental issue. Are we putting Canadians first when making decisions about our country?

Here is the crisis. The interim federal health program for asylum seekers will soon cost Canadian taxpayers \$1.5 billion. Canadians have this information today because the Conservatives forced this study at the Standing Committee on Health. That figure would not have been released otherwise. We demanded transparency. We did our job as the opposition and we held the government to account for its decisions.

Business of Supply

In 2016, the Liberal government expanded the coverage provided to asylum claimants above and beyond just emergency care. Vision care, counselling, assistive aids or devices for persons with physical limitations, home visits, residential care and transportation were added. Today, over 50% of the program's costs relate to supplemental care like physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and interpretation services. That is a far cry from essential emergency services.

Another even more worrisome issue concerns the fact that even when an asylum claimant is turned down by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada and asked to leave the country, he or she is still eligible for all of these services while physically present in Canada.

We know that some of these individuals stay in the country even after they have been asked to leave, and they still have access to services. They might have been turned down by our system, but they still qualify for federal services. Why would anyone agree to pay for services offered to people who no longer even have the right to be in Canada? That is the real question.

Even now, in 2026, six million Canadians do not have access to a family doctor, and not for lack of trying on their part. Families are doing everything they can to get a family doctor. Doctors are also doing everything in their power to see as many people as possible and help as many people as possible with their health concerns. Still, the numbers just do not add up.

I would like to remind everyone that, over the past 10 years, 100,000 people have died while waiting for health care. In Quebec, emergency rooms are overcrowded. Seniors are waiting months for home care. Children are waiting for speech therapy services. Families are paying out of pocket for physiotherapy and other supplemental services. Despite making significant financial contributions to our health care system, people often have to turn to the private sector and pay out of pocket to access services more quickly.

That begs the following question. Is it normal for a person who has been rejected and deported by our legal system to have access to supplemental care that many Canadian citizens cannot even afford? Is it normal for citizens who pay taxes to be unable to access services to which non-residents or rejected claimants are entitled? Are they entitled to it? That is the question.

Emergency care should always be covered. We will never oppose that. It is emergency care. Canada is a welcoming and responsible country. People in an emergency situation can always find help here in Canada. However, offering extended supplemental care while citizens have to wait is a bit much. That is not compassion, it is poor management of priorities.

We need to shorten wait times and deport bogus asylum seekers, not give them perks so they stay in the country and use resources that many Canadians do not have access to. I would like to make a quick reminder here. There are 86,000 rejected claimants who are still in the country. There are currently half a million people in our country without status. In 2025, there was a backlog of 300,000 asylum claims. These are not small numbers.

• (1735)

We also learned in committee, and this should not be overlooked, that some service providers covered by the interim federal health program can charge up to five times the provincial rates when services are provided under this program. A Canadian is charged the normal price. A non-resident or asylum seeker is charged five times more. The cost has risen from \$211 million to nearly \$900 million a year, with projections of \$1.5 billion by 2030. That is a lot of money. It is not sustainable to think the we are going to get there. It is not responsible, and it is not respectful to Canadian citizens, taxpayers, and those who pay for this service that is available in Canada.

As I near the end of my speech, I would like to draw a parallel with something that has been bothering me and that I consider to be extremely important. I wonder if the Liberals are investing in the right areas. Let us see where this is going. Here, we are talking about investments in health, but when it comes to the health of Canadians, sports, and physical activity, suddenly there is no money, no funding for that, and it is not a priority.

As another Olympic cycle draws to a close, we can all agree that the Olympic Games that we just experienced were outstanding. We are proud of our athletes, proud of our flag and proud to leave home to represent our country and show off our homegrown talent around the globe. I think that the ratings for the final Canada-U.S. hockey match were probably fairly high. Obviously, every Canadian was hoping for a win.

However, now that the dust has settled, we have to be honest and consider why a country as rich and as proud of its history and culture as ours does not seem to be performing to the level we would like to see on the international stage. To be clear, I am talking about something far beyond medals. Canada can do better, but it means looking at the facts, at priorities, at how taxpayer money is invested and spent. In 2022, federal funding for sports amounted to \$327.1 million a year. That is less than 1% of the country's total annual budget. Over five years, the average annual investment is \$263 million.

Let us compare that to health care. I see a strong link between sports, physical activity and health. Getting back to the subject, I want to point out that, by 2030, the government will be spending \$1.5 billion a year on health care benefits for asylum seekers, some of whom have even been denied and do not have the right to stay in the country. That is six times more than the average annual investment in the entire Canadian sport system. Is that a reasonable balance? How is that fair? Is that responsible, knowing that for every dollar invested in prevention, that is, in physical activity and health, there is a return on investment of between \$3 and \$20?

National sports organizations are talking about a real financial crisis right now. Some are even at risk of shutting down. They are being asked to provide greater safety in sport, more inclusion and better governance. These are extremely important objectives, but the organizations are not being given the means to achieve them. According to a Deloitte study, 90% of national sports organizations need government funding to exist and to continue operating. However, looking at this government's choices, that is clearly not a priority for the Liberals.

The cost of physical inactivity is quite staggering. A preventive rather than reactive health care system should really be a priority. Investing in sport means investing in making Canadians more active. In fact, nearly 20 years ago, the cost of physical inactivity was estimated at \$7 billion. That is what it cost taxpayers. That cost is certainly higher today. Canadians and Quebecers could be in much better shape, physically and mentally. More physical activity means less obesity, less diabetes, less heart disease and less pressure on our emergency rooms and our health care system.

If we are serious about improving the health of the population, we must make decisions accordingly, whether we are talking about sports, our young people or our communities. We need to reduce the pressure on the health care system. Instead of spending billions of dollars to manage the consequences, perhaps it is time we started thinking about prevention. That is the connection I want to make here today. On the one hand, the government does not have enough money to invest in prevention; on the other hand, it is going to spend nearly \$1.5 billion on health care for people who do not even have the right to be in our country. I think we need to think about that.

• (1740)

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the member spent as much time as he did with regard to health care. I have a challenge to put to the member opposite, and I have had the opportunity to raise this.

The Conservative Party, in particular the Conservative leadership, has made the decision to try to paint refugees in very negative light, saying that Conservatives are going to talk about the issue of health care, an issue that, there is no doubt, Canadians are concerned about, while tying it in to all sorts of misinformation related to refugees in Canada. It is ultimately meant to feed the far right within the Conservative Party.

Can the member explain to Canadians why the Conservatives chose to do that as opposed to having an opposition day motion to talk about health care as an issue?

• (1745)

[Translation]

Gabriel Hardy: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question.

In fact, there is nothing far right about what we are doing. It is simple math. When there are 300,000 people waiting and we offer them services, it costs taxpayers a lot of money. Those same taxpayers, who contribute to society, do not have access to health care. When we ask someone to leave the country because, upon analysis,

Business of Supply

they have no right to be here, but we continue to pay for their care until they leave, it is not logical and it is disrespectful to the people who contribute to the health care system.

This has nothing to do with the far right. This is a factual analysis. We are in favour of offering support, but we want to ensure that we are respectful of taxpayers.

Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the member pointed out the flaws in Quebec's health care system. He referred to the fact that the range of services is limited, and rightly so. However, he knows very well that the main reason for that is that the federal government is committing to funding only 21% of health care costs. The provinces are responsible for 79% of health care costs. As my colleague knows, in Quebec, we were locked down for a year because the network was too vulnerable.

However, after the pandemic, what did the federal government offer? Although needs grew to \$28 billion a year, the government decided to provide \$4.6 billion a year. My colleague's leader said that he might increase that offer.

Does the member not think that there should be a bit more for health funding and transfers?

Gabriel Hardy: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question.

I would like to talk to him about the importance of working on prevention instead of always looking at curing illness. If we want to reduce the burden on our health care systems, we need a more active population that uses health care systems less. Health is not the absence of illness; it is our ability to deal with illness. Physical and mental health are declining in our society, and that puts more and more pressure on health care systems.

Yes, we must continue to invest and work hard to ensure that the health care system can meet our needs. However, it is high time we invest money in prevention. Reducing the burden on our system is prevention.

G rard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Montmorency—Charlevoix on his first election and his first year as a member of Parliament. He is a great role model and an example to follow. I am particularly impressed by his work, but also by his passion for health, as we heard in his speech. I am in good health and can confirm that I look into all of his suggestions.

My colleague talked about hundreds of thousands of people whose files are pending. Can he tell us how things are going in his riding, not necessarily in terms of just asylum seekers, but also in terms of immigration files?

Is the federal government doing a good job of processing the files of people who want to live in Canada and whom we should warmly welcome? Ultimately, we still need to have the means to welcome them.

Speaker's Ruling

Gabriel Hardy: Mr. Speaker, it is clear that there is too much bureaucracy. It is clear that it is currently very difficult to access services. It is also clear that, this year alone, in order to speed up services, 25,000 asylum claims were approved without a single interview having been carried out.

While 300,000 people are waiting, 25,000 people were allowed in. There is a lack of control and a lack of efficiency. It is high time for that to change.

[*English*]

Fred Davies (Niagara South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had a lot of ground to cover today on the immigration question, but I think I am going to focus on a couple of health care issues that I need to get on the record with respect to my riding.

Canada's health care system is under some serious pressure. The wait times are long, access to primary care is in crisis and hospital systems are in debt. In my riding of Niagara South, we are in the middle of an unfair and catastrophic reconfiguration of our community hospitals. In Fort Erie and Port Colborne, Niagara Health is slated to close two vital urgent care centres that were built by our fathers, our grandfathers and our aunts and uncles. Workers actually had deductions from their paycheques in order to build these institutions. People are rallying to pressure the government to step up and recognize the responsibility it has to provide community-based hospitals and emergency and complex care.

Interestingly, I have been trying to obtain information about the new health infrastructure fund that the government announced in the budget. It is supposed to provide capital for improvements to rural and remote hospitals, for smaller hospitals and communities. I cannot get answers. I have reached out to virtually everyone from the minister's office to the policy people in the department. I cannot get a response to anything about when the funding will be rolled out and how it will be administered, whether it will be done by the province or the federal government. It is another example of the failure of the government to respond to serious crises in our communities.

The last thing I want to make mention of is that the public safety minister yesterday made reference to the new cohort of graduates for CBSA guards. This 1,000-person cohort does not even keep up with the replacement requirements at CBSA on a yearly basis. The cohort is simply keeping pace with the departmental turnover. The intake process is seriously flawed. I know of several highly qualified candidates, one of whom worked for CBSA as a student with outstanding performance reviews, who cannot get through the bureaucratic process to even get an interview. With all the academic and direct job experience, this outstanding Canadian cannot get beyond the keyboard to talk to a real human being at CBSA.

I am running out of time. I just wanted to get those comments on the record because I think this is important for the people in my community.

● (1750)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): It being 5:52 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion.

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

Fred Davies: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded vote.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 25, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

● (1755)

POINTS OF ORDER

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN BILL C-2 AND BILL C-12—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on February 10, 2026, by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands regarding the similarities between Bill C-2, an act respecting certain measures relating to the security of the border between Canada and the United States and respecting other related security measures, and Bill C-12, an act respecting certain measures relating to the security of Canada's borders and the integrity of the Canadian immigration system and respecting other related security measures. Bill C-2 is currently at second reading in the House, while Bill C-12 is currently under consideration by the Senate.

In raising the point of order, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands argued that Bill C-2 should not be debated, voted on or even remain on the Order Paper because it is in violation of the same question rule, which prevents the House from considering legislation that is substantially the same. In her intervention, the member contended that parts 1 to 3 and 5 to 12 of Bill C-2 are identical to those already adopted by the House in Bill C-12, and she requested that the Speaker direct the government to remove Bill C-2 from the Order Paper.

The member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes also intervened on the matter. He argued that Bill C-2 and Bill C-12 are very similar in substance and that Bill C-2 should not proceed in its current form. The member further argued that Bill C-2 must be placed in abeyance while Bill C-12 continues its progress through the other place. If Bill C-12 receives royal assent, the member suggested, the order for consideration at second reading for Bill C-2 should then be discharged and the bill dropped from the Order Paper.

Speaker's Ruling

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons also offered remarks on the matter. He stated that parts 4, 11 and 14 to 16 of Bill C-2 do not appear in Bill C-12 and that therefore the bills do not seek to accomplish the same objectives by the same means. Based on his interpretation of a ruling made by Speaker Rota on February 18, 2021, the parliamentary secretary argued that a high degree of similarity must exist between two bills for them to be treated as substantially similar questions, a threshold not reached by the two bills in question, given the broader scope and additional measures contained in Bill C-2.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

Precedents set out key considerations for the House and the Chair to assess similarity, including the following: first, the Chair looks at whether the principles and scopes of the two bills are substantially identical. The Chair does not base its judgment solely on overlapping clauses or numerical comparison. Second, a broader bill may render a narrower bill problematic if the broader bill were adopted first, particularly where the narrower bill is duplicative or substantially identical in purpose to a part of the first bill. Third, the Chair considers whether duplication or incoherence in decisions could result by the House occupying itself with a similar question.

In a ruling regarding similar bills, one of which had a broader scope than the other, my predecessor concluded, on December 12, 2023, at page 19979 of the Debates, that:

To be clear, when a government bill and a private member's bill or when two private members' bills are substantially similar, only one of them may proceed and be voted on. Once one of the two has passed second reading, a decision cannot be taken on the other within the same session. Where bills are only similar in part, the effect of adopting one might have a different impact on the other depending on their principle, scope and, of course, which bill is adopted first.

[*English*]

A comprehensive review of Bill C-2 confirms that it does contain many provisions also found in Bill C-12 as adopted by the House. Parts 1 to 3, 5 to 10, and 12 and 13 of Bill C-2 are, indeed, substantially the same as what the House has adopted in Bill C-12.

However, Bill C-2 is broader in scope and also contains a variety of measures not included in Bill C-12, namely parts 4, 11, 14, 15 and 16. From this, the Chair can conclude that the two bills, though overlapping, are not substantively identical.

Further, given that the narrower Bill C-12 was adopted first and that there are substantial provisions in Bill C-2 that the House has not yet debated and considered, it is difficult to argue that the House is being asked to pronounce itself again on identical provisions.

That said, the Chair is admittedly concerned about the extensive similarities between Bill C-2 and Bill C-12, which could potentially create duplication or incoherence in the House's decisions as both bills continue to move through the legislative process. Moreover, the situation currently before the House is somewhat different than the precedents reviewed by the Chair, both in the extent of the overlap and in that Bill C-2 and Bill C-12 are government bills.

[*Translation*]

The government's prerogative to introduce legislation and to determine when it is called for debate means that there are different mechanisms available to it than are available for the consideration of two private members' bills, or a private member's bill and a government bill. For example, the government could choose to introduce a new bill without the overlapping provisions, or Bill C-2 could be amended in committee during clause-by-clause consideration to achieve the same end, thereby avoiding the concerns raised.

Nevertheless, given the principles outlined previously, the Chair's close review of both bills leads the Chair to conclude that Bill C-2 is broader in principle and scope than Bill C-12 and that, as a result, the question the House would be asked to decide at second reading for Bill C-2 is substantially different than its decisions on Bill C-12.

I thank members for their attention.

• (1805)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Winnipeg North is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect you would have unanimous consent to call it 6:07 p.m. so we can begin private member's hour.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[Translation]***SERGEI MAGNITSKY INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

The House resumed from November 26, 2025, consideration of the motion that Bill C-219, An Act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act, the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act (Sergei Magnitsky Law), the Special Economic Measures Act and the Broadcasting Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I could summarize my speech by saying yes, but also no, and sitting back down. However, I will try to go a bit further.

Yes, we intend to support Bill C-219. This bill is, in fact, a repeat, if I may say so, of former Bill C-281, which died on the order paper in the Senate when Parliament was dissolved last year. However, it had previously received unanimous support here in the House of Commons at third reading. It is no surprise that we are announcing that we will support Bill C-219.

That being said, there are a few small changes that were made to this bill and that are worth studying in committee, perhaps even amended. That is why I am saying yes but also no. I am saying no to it as a whole, but yes to studying it in committee.

Bill C-219 proposes some key principles on which we cannot disagree, particularly when it comes to cracking down on states that abuse their power over political prisoners. Much has been said about the law that underpins all of these discussions, the Sergei Magnitsky law. Sergei Magnitsky, whom I would actually like to commend, was a Russian lawyer who was arrested for exposing fraud committed by Russian authorities. He was sent to prison where he died the following year. Three years after his death, a trial was held and he was found guilty of fraud. We cannot make this stuff up. This type of abuse is outrageous. It has been recognized pretty much everywhere around the world as an unacceptable and irregular deviation from the rule of law.

The United States passed a bill and implemented a law that covers this type of situation. Canada did the same in 2017. We agree on that. Bill C-219 revises these provisions, which, again, is not necessarily a bad thing, but we have to be careful.

For example, it has been proposed that the names and status of political prisoners be published. For someone like Mr. Magnitsky, whom I just mentioned, who is imprisoned, his name and status could be disclosed, which might seem valid in many respects, but the problem is that those states that abuse their power tend to crack down on the families of individuals instead. For example, if a state takes action against one of its citizens in a way that is considered completely abusive, would we want that individual's family to be harassed or pressured? I think that would be a bad idea.

We will have to look at this carefully in committee. The Bloc Québécois believes that in some cases it may be valid and in others it may not. However, before deciding whether or not to release the identities of political prisoners, we should first obtain the prior consent of their families. As the bill is currently worded, this informa-

tion would be released unless the family objects. We think the opposite should happen. We should not wait for an objection. Before releasing the names of political prisoners, we should obtain permission from their immediate family. I think it would be wise to proceed in this manner, but this is the type of discussion that we will obviously have in committee.

There is also the issue of varying definitions. The bill seeks to define transnational repression. That may seem obvious but, in reality, it may not be. I think we will have to look at that carefully.

Here is the definition of transnational repression that appears in the bill:

tactics used by a foreign state to intimidate, harass, surveil or threaten individuals or groups located outside the state borders or physically harm such individuals or members of such groups, including elected officials, political dissidents, human rights defenders, exiled journalists, diaspora communities, civil society activists and refugees, for the purpose of silencing dissent and stifling activism.

● (1810)

This definition seems to be quite broad, but it is worth asking whether it covers everything. I am not sure. Is what it does cover actually useful? I am not sure about that either. We will have to look at it carefully. I think this is indeed the kind of bill where we need to hear from experts. We need guidance from people who are familiar with this type of situation and who can ensure that we are making the right decisions and taking action where needed.

There is also the matter of defining what a prisoner of conscience is in the bill. It refers to "an individual who, in contravention of international human rights standards, has been detained or otherwise physically restricted solely because of their identity or their conscientiously held beliefs, including religious or political beliefs." This too may seem exhaustive, but it deserves our consideration. We need to look carefully at whether we are really achieving the objective we want to achieve with this bill. Should the definition be broadened? Should it be narrowed or clarified? For example, when we talk about beliefs, perhaps we should define what beliefs are.

We had some tough debates on this issue during the last Parliament, and I think it deserves careful consideration. I am not talking about paying close attention to lobbyists. It is important to hear from them because they will provide insight, but as a legislator, I need to hear the opinions of experts, people who know about these issues. These could be lawyers who deal with these situations or retired judges who have worked on these issues in these states. I think it will be important to do that. We would be remiss if we did not.

Another proposed change in Bill C-219 that strikes me as somewhat questionable is a name change. Name changes are usually fairly straightforward. They appear uncomplicated and we usually approve them without too much discussion, but in this case, the name change could lead to confusion. We are talking about the Special Economic Measures Act. That is its current name. The bill proposes to change the name to “An Act to provide for the imposition of economic measures against a person, entity or foreign state for grave breaches of international peace and security, gross and systematic human rights violations or acts of significant corruption”.

That is a bit of a complicated title. In fact, the proposed short title is the Sergei Magnitsky international anti-corruption and human rights act. The long title is far too long and far too complicated. It will hardly ever be used. I would be very surprised to hear a lawyer stand up in court, address the judge and spend three minutes naming the law. The long name becomes useless at that point. People will use the short title instead. However, there is already a law called the Sergei Magnitsky law. What will happen when people refer to a law that bears the same name as another law? That would cause confusion and we would be no better off. I think that, too, will have to be examined in committee.

I will dispense with the details of the bill as a whole. It is interesting. It includes sanctions for renewing licences for companies that are influenced by foreign entities that are engaged in repression. There are many things we want to keep, but as I just said, there are parts of this bill that we will have to review in committee.

• (1815)

[*English*]

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are discussing this important piece of human rights legislation on the fourth anniversary of the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Four years ago at this time, in my household, we were celebrating the arrival of my now four-year-old son, Augustine. Three days after his birth, we began to see the terrible images and hear stories of carnage, death and widespread destruction. The joy we felt at the birth of a new child contrasted sharply with the agony of fathers and mothers in Ukraine who had children taken away from them in the prime of life. This brutal war was the choice of one man, Vladimir Putin, a choice that he made with wilful disregard for the lives of the Ukrainian people and the Russian people alike.

While welcoming a new child into my family, I thought about the many parents who would never see their children again because of that evil decision. I also think about the many Ukrainian parents whose children have been abducted from occupied territories by the Russian government. The reality of systematic child abduction by the occupiers underlines that this war of aggression is not just about stealing territory; it is about stealing people. It is about ripping children from their parents and severing their filial connection to their people and their heritage.

In response to these events, we must do everything we can to strengthen Ukraine's position for fighting and its position for negotiating. These objectives are one and the same. Whether Ukraine is defending itself on the battlefield or at the negotiating table, a stronger Ukraine will lead to a more just outcome. A stronger

Private Members' Business

Ukraine will force Russia to stop making absurd maximalist demands and to actually get serious about ending the war. Russia chose this war. It can choose to end it. Ukrainian strength will ultimately force that change of position.

As part of supporting Ukraine, Canada must do more to close sanction loopholes and prevent the Russian government from using international exchange to fuel its aggressive war. I therefore repeat my long-standing call on the government to close the sanction waivers on Russian titanium that it created and to put more pressure on Russia's strategic partners around the world, China and India, among others. The Canadian government has repeatedly granted sanction waivers that have assisted the Russian government and the Russian army. In particular, the titanium sanction waivers the Liberals gave to Russia must be removed right away.

From time to time, I hear questions or feedback from people about the amount of money the Ukraine war is costing. It is my view that strong support for Ukraine and tough sanctioning of the aggressor right from the outset, indeed immediately after the initial invasion began in 2014, would have prevented this war or led to a faster Ukrainian victory. It is particularly true in this case that early decisive support pays critical dividends, and it remains true that principled, strong, supportive engagement early on strengthens our strategic position and spares us costs down the line. The cost of investing in security is outweighed by the cost of not investing in security.

Although it would clearly have been better if this war had never started, the fact that Russia's basic military and strategic weakness has now been exposed, and the fact that a substantial portion of Russia's fighting capacity has been destroyed underline the strategic benefits to the west of past and ongoing military support for Ukraine. In the midst of these events, it astonishes me that some people still make the absurd claim that victory for Ukraine is impossible. It is astonishing because when I think back to where we were four years ago, when I would wake up with the baby and anxiously check my phone to see if Kyiv had fallen, and how from those dark early days, when it looked as though Ukraine's government might collapse and immediately be replaced by a puppet regime that would rule the whole country, we have instead come to this present situation where parts of eastern Ukraine remain occupied but with little territorial change and Russia continues to sustain far more casualties than the Ukrainians do.

Private Members' Business

The war is terrible, but what Ukraine has achieved and preserved is also incredible. Imagine what would yet be possible if the west were a bit more serious about giving Ukraine every tool it required to fight and succeed. Small countries with sufficient economic and military support and the superior will to fight can and do win wars and change the course of history. Ukraine can win. Ukraine must win. Ukraine will win. My support and our Conservative support for the Ukrainian people will be unrelenting until victory is achieved, and we call for the policies that will allow that victory to be achieved as quickly as possible.

Today we are debating Bill C-219, an important bill that deals with international human rights. This bill draws pieces from other human rights bills that have been before the House previously. In particular, this bill contains provisions from the international human rights act that I worked on extensively in the last Parliament. That bill was adopted unanimously by the House but was not even examined by the Senate.

● (1820)

I do not think the government liked the bill, even though it did not oppose it openly. I believe it directed its allies in the Senate to prevent that bill from moving forward. The Senate is supposed to be the House of sober second thought and not to do the government's dirty work by blocking legislation without studying it, so I hope that we do not see a repeat of that abuse.

Bill C-219 would strengthen the sanctions that were applied against violators of human rights, including those responsible for transnational repression, it would strengthen accountability by requiring the government to respond to recommendations for sanctions put forward by parliamentary committees, and it would amend the Broadcasting Act to prohibit foreign state-controlled media involved in human rights abuses from having privileged access to Canadian airwaves.

Foreign state-controlled media have actually been directly involved in the perpetration of human rights violations through the production of forced confessions. It is unthinkable that forced confessions, extracted through grievous violations of fundamental human rights, would be shown on Canadian television through the awarding of broadcasting licences to those who are perpetrators of human rights violations. I would strongly encourage the CRTC and the heritage minister to take steps on their own to prevent this kind of complicity in human rights violations even before we pass the bill.

While we rightly work to pass legislation that advances human rights, the use of sanctioning tools will always be dependent on political will and on whether the government actually uses the tools that legislation provides. The Trudeau government's approach to human rights was symbolic but insincere, preening without pushing. It abstained on genocide votes in this House and dismissed arms sales to aggressors as no big deal while pushing for the most general, non-binding human rights language and adding the word "progressive" to the front of trade deals already negotiated. This approach placated some and annoyed others, but it did not actually change anything that mattered.

The current approach of the Liberals has dropped the pretenses, but they have learned the wrong lessons. A G7 nation does have the

power and the capacity to take on specific human rights issues in a real, substantive and prudent way and advance them in a manner that puts substance ahead of signalling. This is the right thing to do in response to a recognition of the universal and immutable dignity of the human person. It is also the strategically smart thing to do.

The compromises that the Prime Minister wants to make on human rights are not just at odds with our values; they are contrary to our interests. At a fundamental level, the world is in a period of escalating competition. In this world, Canada must be strong. Canada must form durable alliances with real partners, and Canada must play a role in managing the flow of essential resources so that we and our allies are not strategically dependent on our enemies.

The Prime Minister's recent deal with China increases our strategic dependence on a regime that could cut us off for arbitrary political reasons without any possible avenue of independent appeal, increasingly making us more dependent on the CCP. This is not right, and this is not smart. Our most critical relationships with other peoples and nations are formed when we stand up for our values and when we build community with those who are on the same side.

Aristotle wrote that perfect friendship is the friendship of men who are good and alike in virtue, for these wish well alike to each other. What is true of friendship among individuals is also true among nations: Strategically useful, trusting and effective friendships among nations form when nations are good and alike in virtue. By good, I mean not necessarily that their present leaders are good, but that they have good constitutions. It is the real substance of an international rules-based order that nations can ascend in the virtuousness of their constitutions and laws and can be drawn into greater community with other like-minded nations through that ascent.

The alternative, highly transactional approach to global affairs promoted by the Prime Minister necessarily leaves us more vulnerable, and this is why human rights are important, not just as ends in themselves, but as means to other ends.

In closing, I would like to draw the attention of the House to one particular case of concern related to human rights, that of Silvana Atef Fanous in Egypt. Silvana is a minor with an intellectual disability: She has the cognitive ability of an eight-year-old. She disappeared and was later discovered to be in the custody of an older man, who claimed she had converted and planned to marry him. This is a clear violation of Egyptian law. There are many very troubling aspects of Silvana's case, including the way that authorities continue to treat her family. I am closely following this case, and I call for the immediate, safe return of Silvana to her family.

Private Members' Business

Human rights advocacy is about thinking of the human person on the other side of the world and who that person is, and recognizing their dignity as the same as ours and our children's. Human rights are about placing real people at the centre of what we do and advocating that the Silvanas of the world never be forgotten.

● (1825)

James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to speak to Bill C-219 and Canada's ongoing work to promote human rights and address corruption. Canada recognizes the work and influence of Sergei Magnitsky in helping create international tools designed to respond to acts of significant corruption and human rights violations. These tools remain essential as we confront modern threats to international peace and security.

I want to acknowledge the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman for his role in enacting Canada's Sergei Magnitsky Law and thank him for introducing Bill C-219. The bill seeks to amend four pieces of federal legislation related to foreign policy, sanctions, international human rights obligations and broadcasting licences.

Under the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, Canada has imposed sanctions against 80 foreign nationals. Canada has also imposed dozens of sanctions against individuals and entities responsible for human rights violations and corruption under the Special Economic Measures Act.

Let us also recognize that today marks the fourth anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. On this solemn anniversary, we remember those who have lost their lives fighting against Putin's tyranny, and we recommit to ending this war and holding Russia to account. Since the invasion began four years ago, Canada has imposed sanctions on thousands of individuals and entities linked to the Kremlin, including senior officials, oligarchs and those enabling the war effort.

The promotion, respect and advancement of human rights continues to be at the heart of Canada's foreign policy. Protecting and defending human rights is essential to building stable, prosperous and inclusive societies. We see this clearly in Ukraine, where civilians continue to face indiscriminate attacks, including strikes on energy infrastructure, schools and hospitals.

We have delivered over \$23.5 billion in military, humanitarian and financial assistance since the war began, making us one of the largest contributors to Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction. Canada has provided armoured combat support vehicles, artillery systems and ammunition, drones, winter gear and advanced air defence systems to help Ukraine protect civilians and critical infrastructure. We have also funded demining initiatives and battlefield medical support to help save lives.

In addition to military support, Canada has provided billions of dollars in financial assistance to stabilize Ukraine's economy. This includes sovereign loan support and direct budgetary funding to help the Ukrainian government continue delivering essential services like pensions, health care and education, even as the war continues.

Humanitarian support remains a cornerstone of Canada's response. We have committed hundreds of millions of dollars in life-

saving assistance, including food aid, emergency shelter, clean water, medical supplies and winterization support. Canada has also provided generators, transformers and grid repair equipment to help restore a lot of the electricity and heat following Russian strikes on energy infrastructure.

Human rights defenders are often on the front lines, shining a spotlight on violations and advocating meaningful change. Canada has supported Ukrainian civil society organizations, accountability initiatives and documentation of war crimes to ensure that perpetrators are held to account.

We have also welcomed tens of thousands of displaced Ukrainians through special immigration measures, and provided support to help them rebuild their lives in safety, including work permits, settlement services and access to education and health care.

Support for human rights defenders is non-negotiable for these courageous individuals who hold governments and companies to account, often while risking their safety in the face of reprisals and repression. When and where necessary, Canada will respond decisively to states' use of repression and violence beyond their borders, as well as against their own people.

Considering this, as mentioned in the first hour of the second reading of this bill, the government supports the objectives of Bill C-219 but remains concerned about significant flaws in the legislation. We look forward to working with the member of Parliament for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman and our opposition colleagues at the foreign affairs committee to address these concerns.

Under the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act, human rights defenders, activists, journalists, lawyers, community leaders and ordinary citizens are essential for accountability and progress. Canadians care deeply about human rights and expect their government to help protect and advance human rights at home and around the world.

Canada recognizes the vital role that human rights defenders play, often at great personal risk, in upholding universal rights and strengthening the rule of law. We have demonstrated this through concrete action. Canada has trained tens of thousands of Ukrainian troops under Operation Unifier and its continuation in Europe, contributing instructors and expertise in multinational training missions, which I saw first-hand last year.

Private Members' Business

• (1830)

We have provided advanced military equipment and worked with partners to strengthen Ukraine's resilience on the battlefield and beyond. Canada has also supported Ukraine's long-term recovery and reconstruction. We have contributed funding to international financial institutions and reconstruction initiatives aimed at rebuilding critical infrastructure, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and strengthening democratic institutions and anti-corruption reforms.

We have also supported international investigations into atrocities, including efforts to pursue justice for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Canada has funded documentation efforts, legal assistance and accountability mechanisms, including support for international courts and Ukrainian prosecutors working to hold perpetrators accountable. I will emphasize again that supporting human rights defenders is not optional. It is imperative.

Bill C-219 aims to amend Canada's sanctions regime and the Special Economic Measures Act to address certain perceived gaps and shortcomings. However, it would have negative impacts by adding unnecessary paperwork and administrative burdens. The Prime Minister has been clear that he wants to improve government efficiencies. That said, our government supports some of the legislative amendments proposed in this bill such as new sanction triggers, and we look forward to further discussions on this at committee.

Canada's use of sanctions has been a critical tool in responding to Russia's war against Ukraine. We have worked in lockstep with allies to impose one of the largest sanctions responses in history, including coordinated measures to freeze assets and restrict access to global financial systems. We have sanctioned thousands of individuals and entities linked to the Kremlin and those enabling the war effort. We have also moved forward with innovative tools to seize and repurpose sanctioned assets in support of Ukraine's reconstruction. Canada was the first G7 country to introduce legislation allowing for the seizure and repurposing of sanctioned Russian assets, and we continue working with partners to ensure those resources are directed toward rebuilding Ukraine.

Lastly, I will touch on the bill's proposed amendments to the Broadcasting Act. Acknowledging the crucial role media plays in supporting and advancing human rights, I think we can all agree this is a shared objective. We have seen how disinformation has been weaponized in the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, reinforcing the importance of credible, independent media and responsible regulatory frameworks.

That said, these provisions fail to account for important factors such as the CRTC's lack of expertise to determine whether a genocide has occurred. The bill could also benefit from amendments allowing the CRTC to address content distributed by foreign broadcasters of concern and to rely on the expertise of judicial and quasi-judicial bodies, both domestically and internationally, when making determinations related to political influence and international criminal law.

In conclusion, the government looks forward to continuing the in-depth study of this bill in committee. We firmly believe Parlia-

ment can address the concerns raised and strengthen the legislation by adopting meaningful amendments.

Let me be clear: We cannot and will not support amendments that compromise the safety of individuals. Similarly, provisions that are duplicative and costly will not be supported.

We stand ready to collaborate with the member opposite and with all colleagues in the House to develop practical and sustainable solutions consistent with the spirit of Bill C-219.

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the anniversary of Russia's brutal invasion in Ukraine, we are reminded of something that should never be controversial in the House: Unchecked tyranny anywhere threatens freedom everywhere. We have seen it in Kyiv. We have seen it in Tehran, and increasingly, we see it reaching into our own communities here at home.

Tyranny does not start with tanks. It starts with corruption, with kleptocrats stealing from their own people and with judges who do not serve justice but instead serve the dictators who put them there. It starts with silencing women and girls, jailing dissidents and crushing journalists. Then, when no one stops it, it metastasizes. It becomes the brutality of war. This is the pattern we saw in Moscow, and that is the pattern we are seeing in Tehran and we have seen in Tehran over the last 47 years. It is the pattern this legislation is designed to confront.

Nearly a decade ago, Canada made a decision that defined who we are. My colleague in this place from Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, alongside Senator Andreychuk and many other principled advocates close to this place, brought Canada's Sergei Magnitsky Law into force. It was named after a man who exposed corruption and paid for it with his life. Sergei Magnitsky was tortured to death for telling the truth. His murder was meant to silence others, and instead it gave democracy their most powerful non-military weapon against modern authoritarians: targeted sanctions that strike kleptocrats, despots and dictators where it hurts more, which is their money and, most importantly, their mobility. Canada acted with moral clarity, but today's threats have evolved and so too must the country's response.

Long before I got elected to the House, I had the privilege of working alongside colleagues who understood this deeply, including the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, who has spent more than a decade pushing Canada to take corruption, human rights and foreign intimidation seriously. When he is in the room, I know I am in the right room, and his commitment extends well beyond the House and his time here in it.

This legislation builds on that foundation. It strengthens, modernizes and sharpens our sanctions regime so it is not symbolic, it is not slow and it is not selective. In other words, it makes it clear, predictable and enforceable. It does this because silence protects dictators, while scrutiny, the very thing we are responsible for here, protects those who are oppressed.

Here is a short breakdown for everybody who is interested as to how this modernization would look. This would require an annual public report on Canada's human rights sanctions and on prisoners of conscience worldwide, including Canadians unjustly detained abroad. There is far more that could be done on that front, but this is a start. In fact, there have been a number of pieces of legislation introduced to the House to look at that issue specifically that have been rejected wholeheartedly by the government. We have to say this out loud: Sunlight does save lives. It saved the life of Vladimir Kara-Murza. It did for the two Michaels, and it can do that again.

This bill would also formally define and sanction transnational repression, because what once required secret police crossing borders now requires only a phone, a consulate and a proxy organization operating quietly in our communities. We know it is happening. Let us be honest about what that means. Authoritarian regimes in Beijing, Tehran, Moscow and beyond are intimidating, surveilling, harassing and threatening people right here in Canada. Dissidents receive midnight calls. Activists are told that their families back home will suffer. Students are followed. Journalists are pressured. This is not an abstract theory. It is happening in Toronto, in Vancouver, in Calgary, in Montreal and right across the country.

• (1835)

As an MP, and I am not the only one in the House, I have often taken a call from someone in a car, far away from their house, with a blurred-out background, whispering because they are terrified that the regime they ran away from is following them right here in Canada. If authoritarian states can reach into our cities and hunt their critics, we no longer have full control over the spaces that we claim are our own. Canada should be a sanctuary for freedom, not a playground for these foreign tyrants, but that is exactly what is happening here.

This bill would ensure that when regimes engage in transnational repression on Canadian soil, there are swift, automatic consequences: We would freeze their assets, ban their travel, name them publicly and make it unmistakably clear that Canada will not be their hunting ground and that Canadians who ran away from them will not be hunted.

We would also close the loophole that allows intimidated family members of sanctioned officials to live in luxury while their relatives jail protesters and siphon money from abroad. There would be no more parking illicit assets here while citizens back home suffer, or regime activists working out in the local fitness club or eating steaks at Toronto's fanciest restaurant, which we have also seen.

We would revoke broadcasting licences for state-controlled propaganda outlets run by regimes committing atrocities. A regime committing a genocide does not deserve a megaphone on Canadian airwaves. We should support the creation of an international anti-corruption court, because before tyrants become war criminals, they are corrupt officials. We know this through every point in history.

Private Members' Business

They steal; then they repress, and then they wage war. If we confront corruption on the front end, we reduce the atrocities that often follow.

I want to spend a few moments on why this matters and to whom it matters. The tragedy of flight PS752 still weighs heavily on many families in this country. They have waited years for justice and compensation. Frozen regime assets exist, and they should serve the victims, not sit idle. I know this is not foundational to families, because money does not heal the unimaginable and permanent loss they experience, but it would serve a purpose and it would tell the world that we stand up for our people.

Russian sovereign assets frozen in Canada should support Ukraine's fight for survival. When foreign governments intimidate people on Canadian soil, it is not only a violation of rights. It becomes a test of our own, of whether we still believe in moral consequences or have grown too distracted and too divided to draw that very important line.

The Cold War had a clarity that many in our era have forgotten. It drew a line clearly between fear and freedom. Today, those lines are less visible, but they are just as real. They run through the phone of a dissident who fled Tehran, through the inbox of a Hong Kong activist and through the heart of a Ukrainian family who believed that Canada meant safety and now wonder whether the regime they escaped followed them here. If we do not draw that line, we teach dictators that Canada could be a welcoming home.

This legislation would draw that line clearly. It would say, "Canada will name, shame and sanction you, and will shut the door on your money and your friends. It would say, "Canada will not be neutral between those who are jailed and the jailer." It would say something that matters deeply to Iranian Canadians who marched for Mahsa Amini and those who marched in the hundreds of thousands, even in the last week, against the genocidal mullahs; to the Ukrainian Canadians watching their homeland defend itself; to the Hong Kong democracy advocates; to the Tibetans; to the Uyghurs and to anyone who came here because Canada represented freedom: "We will not allow the dictators you escaped to intimidate you here in Canada." That is something everyone here should agree on.

I hope that this legislation passes, that the Liberals take it seriously, that it is studied in committee and that the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman is successful in his pursuit of human rights, dignity and the rule of law, as he has always been in this place.

Private Members' Business

• (1840)

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 and address the issue that the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman has brought forward in the form of a private member's bill.

This is one of those occasions when there is substantial support to see a bill advance. I believe we have had members from all sides of the House support the principle of the legislation, recognizing that Canada is indeed a world leader in many of the things we do. There is an expectation that where we can in fact improve upon the system, there is movement toward doing so.

The Prime Minister has been very clear over the last year, since he first became our Prime Minister, about how important it is that Canada has a place on the world stage. We know the experience that he brings to the table, his understanding of the economy and the relations he has with world leaders. From a personal perspective, and what virtually every member of the House would be able to talk about, we recognize what our Canadian values are and understand that we can make the world a better place to live.

I see Bill C-219 as a piece of legislation that has the potential for a more thorough discussion at the committee stage. I know the government is very interested in advancing that. When we talk about the bill itself, there are four aspects. In terms of sanctions and so forth, there are four pieces of legislation that we should be aware of: the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act; the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act; the Broadcasting Act; and the Special Economic Measures Act.

As our caucus has indicated, there are things we can do to update or modernize our sanction regimes. I think this piece of legislation before us today affords us the opportunity to do just that. Hopefully, we will be able to capture the same sort of goodwill that we see on the floor of the House of Commons in the debate on this legislation and carry it to the standing committee. I think that is important. I will not be in attendance at the standing committee, but I trust that if we can get that same sort of co-operation, and build on a consensus, we can all take some pride in the final product that the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman is proposing.

It is interesting that we are debating this legislation today. On Sunday, I and the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, along with Manitoba's premier and the mayor of Winnipeg, spoke at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. We addressed literally hundreds of people who came to downtown Winnipeg to listen to what we had to say, and hear what the Government of Canada had to say, in regard to what is taking place on the four-year anniversary of the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Putin. There was a great deal of emotion flowing through the human rights museum.

People are looking to Canada for the types of things that Canada can do and has done. I, for one, look at the seizure and repurpose of Russian assets and how, as a nation, we led the way, in terms of the G7 countries.

• (1845)

I provided comments there with regard to the billions of dollars, over \$22 billion, that the federal government has committed to sup-

port and has spent on helping the people of Ukraine. What is happening in Ukraine matters a great deal here in Canada. I reference the 1.3 million people in Canada of Ukrainian heritage, not to mention the 300,000 people who fled Ukraine because of the illegal invasion to come to Canada, where they would have a sense of security; where their children can in fact continue on with some normalcy, whether it is in their education or in having some health care services; and where they can contribute.

I am absolutely amazed how, in both urban and rural communities, individuals coming from Ukraine have really worked to develop and improve our economy here. I think Canada opening its doors was very important and was the right thing to do.

I made reference to the horrors of war. We have talked about issues such as how Canada is using billions of dollars to support Ukraine. My colleague made reference to Operation Unifier, which was enabled through our forces to assist in the training of tens of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers in a very direct, and at times indirect, way. We have supported the military with armaments and supplies of all different forms.

We have talked about the humanitarian aid that Canadians have provided, both through public dollars and through individuals stepping up and donating their dollars directly. Canada has been there in a very real way.

We have talked about the issue of child abduction, which brings us back to the whole issue of human rights, the tragedies and what we have been witnessing there: a wide spectrum of human rights violations. Canada will continue to monitor that and act where we can.

We have talked about the importance of international courts. We have talked about how important it is that not only are we there today for Ukraine but also that we continue to be there in the future. There are things such as the trade agreement that was signed when the President of Ukraine came here, when we looked at the issue of investing in infrastructure and the rebuilding of Ukraine. Having a system of sanctions that is effective is absolutely important, not only for this government but also, I believe, as a reflection of what our values are. There is an expectation that we look at ways to improve those four pieces of legislation. That is something we want.

As I indicated in my opening comment, we are prepared to work with all members of the House. Hopefully, if the bill gets to committee, we will be able to continue on that consensus bill and, at the end of the day, continue to demonstrate that as legislators here in Ottawa, we can in fact make a positive difference and make our sanction regime even better by modernizing it.

• (1850)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman now has his right of reply.

James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank everyone who has spoken to my bill, Bill C-219, the Sergei Magnitsky international anti-corruption and human rights act. I have been listening carefully through the two hours of debate that we have had.

First of all, I have to thank my seconder, the member for Northumberland—Clarke, for the work he did in the previous Parliament on his own piece of legislation, which was folded into this one. I also have to thank the member for Thornhill for their very kind words. I thank the members for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Calgary Heritage, Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Etobicoke Centre, Rivière-du-Nord, Winnipeg North, Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton and Lac-Saint-Jean, and of course, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is also the member for Don Valley West, for their interventions.

This legislation will strengthen Canada's sanctions regime to better align with our allies so we can hold foreign states, foreign entities and individuals to account for their abuses of power and corruption around the world. It encompasses changes that have been advocated by the diaspora communities here in Canada for years.

What we have heard from so many people today is that we have, for far too long, been hearing about things like foreign interference here in Canada and transnational repression. The people who are in communities here are still worried, whether they are from the Iranian community, the People's Republic of China, from Sudan and other places or from Ukraine even. There are Russians living here who are pro-democracy advocates and who are getting stories from back home of the ongoing corruption, interference and abuse that is taking place.

It is fitting that we are here on the fourth anniversary of the war in Ukraine, of Russia's unjust invasion. We know that, if we had this type of legislation in place some time ago, if we were sanctioning kleptocrats and corrupt foreign officials like Vladimir Putin when he was shaking down people like Bill Browder and ordering the murder of Sergei Magnitsky, maybe they would not have become the tyrants, despots and dictators who then want to wage war on their neighbours, just like the theocracy in Tehran, Putin in Russia or what we are seeing the Communist Chinese Party doing to Taiwan and Hong Kong. This is important.

Just to quickly recap what the bill does, Bill C-219 would require that the Minister of Foreign Affairs publish an annual report to advance what they are doing to advance human rights internationally, including the names and status of prisoners of conscience who are being held around the world. This would amend the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, the Sergei Magnitsky Law, which I had passed here in 2017, as well as the Special Economic Measures Act, changing it to the Sergei Magnitsky global sanctions act.

The bill would define what transnational repression is, and it would sanction the foreign nationals who commit it here in Canada and elsewhere. It would ban, immediately, the immediate family members of sanctioned foreign nationals so that Canada could no longer be used as a safe haven for those corrupt foreign officials to hide their families and their wealth. It would require the government to table in Parliament the names of foreign nationals and any that are added to the sanction list.

It would provide support to the Minister of Foreign Affairs at their sanctions bureau by requiring the RCMP and FINTRAC to report to the minister and give them more tools, allow parliamentary committees to hear from diaspora communities and suggest names

Adjournment Proceedings

and entities to be added to our sanctions regime, and establish timelines for the forfeiture of frozen assets. Finally, it would amend the Broadcasting Act to revoke the licences of media outlets that are in countries that have been sanctioned by Canada or that the House and the Senate have recognized as committing genocide.

In the bill, in the preamble, we are encouraging the government to continue to pursue the establishment of the international anti-corruption court at The Hague, along with our allies. If we can get at these corrupt foreign officials sooner, maybe they would not turn into warmongers like Vladimir Putin or people like Ayatollah Khomeini and the mullahs who are committing mass atrocities in Iran today and creating destabilizing impacts across the region.

● (1855)

I ask everyone to support this bill. I am looking forward to our work at committee and to seeing the amendments that may be proposed.

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

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

James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the House pass Bill C-219 unanimously.

● (1900)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

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

* * *

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing the House that the Senate has passed the following bill, to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-242, an act respecting national action for the prevention of intimate partner violence.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

*Adjournment Proceedings**[English]*

CLIMATE CHANGE

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House tonight, in Adjournment Proceedings, to pursue a question I asked on a memorable date, November 17, 2025. It was a day on which we were going to vote later in the day on the budget itself.

My question pertained to the budget. It was for the Prime Minister. In that instance, I asked him if he would agree that there was a deficiency in the budget, in that our legally binding Paris Agreement commitments were not mentioned and that we had not yet seen what was described as a nature strategy: Canada's commitments under COP15 of the biodiversity convention, otherwise known as the Kunming-Montreal agreement.

It was a very strong answer, but there have been some inconsistencies. The Prime Minister did respond, and it is important to repeat it for the purpose of the Hansard.

He stated:

I can confirm to the House that we will respect our Paris commitments for climate change, and we are determined to achieve them. I can confirm with the House that consistent with our Kunming-Montreal commitments, the nature strategy will be released in the coming weeks.

The Prime Minister also mentioned that it was important that we be “on the path for real results for climate, for nature and for reconciliation.”

My question at this hour is this. Now that we are looking at the answer that was received, and since then the changes that have been made in government planning, we are still, according to all reports, not on track to meet our Paris Agreement targets. We can measure things in weeks, but certainly “the coming weeks” suggested that we would see the nature strategy relatively quickly. This was November 17. We are now almost four months later and have not yet seen the nature strategy.

I certainly hope that someone representing the Prime Minister here this evening can update the House on when we are on getting the nature strategy brought forward. It is critical if we are going to meet the commitments that are due by 2030, it now being 2026, that we see action, that we see commitments and that we see funding.

It is also important to mention, and I look for any kind of an update on climate commitments, that the budget that was tabled that day and that we voted on shortly after this exchange in question period included, at page 348, a clear commitment that what are called enhanced oil recovery measures would not qualify for investment tax credits. However, some days later, not that long thereafter, a commitment was made to the Government of Alberta in an MOU that such investments to increase oil production would in fact qualify for further subsidies to encourage further oil production. This was contrary to the exact wording of the budget we had voted on that day, which said “Eligible uses include” and then listed some, but not enhanced oil recovery.

That left us in this place, and across Canada I might add, with some significant questions about where we are as a nation. What can we make of the commitment of November 17 that we will act

to avoid exceeding a 2°C global average temperature increase and will take steps to ensure that the nature strategy and our commitments globally are observed?

I note at this hour, as my time is running out on putting forward my argument in this late show proceeding, that time is also running out for the climate. We are dealing with atmospheric changes that are irreversible and can be self-accelerating without quick action.

I look forward to this debate.

● (1905)

Wade Grant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise to engage with my dear colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands.

The government does and will always take climate change commitments very seriously. In 2015, Canada, alongside 194 other countries, adopted the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The agreement sets a global goal to limit warming, strengthen resilience and align financial flows with low emissions and climate-resilient development. In addition, almost every country in the world, including Canada, has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for the impacts that climate change presents.

Our government recognizes that climate action is both a moral responsibility and an economic necessity. Budget 2025 sets Canada on a path to meet our legally binding commitments, while building a strong, resilient economy. This includes cutting greenhouse gas emissions and addressing the impacts of climate change. Our climate competitiveness strategy in budget 2025 drives these outcomes while building a resilient economy. As the Prime Minister has stated, this budget puts us on a path for real results for climate, for nature and for reconciliation with indigenous peoples. We respect our Paris commitments, and we are determined to achieve them.

Industrial carbon pricing is central to Canada's climate strategy. It is designed not only to reduce emissions but also to unlock investment in clean technologies, support Canadian industries and maintain our competitiveness in global markets. By putting a price on pollution for large industrial polluters, we drive decarbonization, support innovation and create good jobs, while keeping energy and goods affordable.

Adjournment Proceedings

EMPLOYMENT

Strong industrial carbon markets also help Canada maintain trade relationships with partners like Europe and the U.K., ensuring that our exports meet the growing global demand for low-carbon products.

We are also investing in adaptation. The national adaptation strategy, supported by the Government of Canada adaptation action plan, lays out more than 70 actions to protect communities, improve health outcomes, safeguard nature and support a resilient economy. Since 2015, Canada has invested over \$6.6 billion in adaptation, including new funding in budget 2025 for community infrastructure and youth-focused initiatives.

The Government of Canada has a fundamental commitment to reconciliation and respects indigenous peoples as equal partners in the country we are building together. If I did not believe that, I would not be standing on this side of the House. The government supports the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and invests in indigenous-led climate solutions. Since 2020, over \$2 billion has been committed to indigenous climate action, including funds for clean energy, energy efficiency and resiliency. Indigenous knowledge and leadership are critical to achieving meaningful, long-term and long-lasting change.

The Government of Canada is fully committed to delivering on its climate obligations, supporting adaptation, advancing nature protection and working with indigenous peoples across this country to ensure a sustainable, resilient and prosperous Canada for all.

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, surely my hon. colleague is aware that recent studies, including by the government-appointed experts in the Canadian Climate Institute, have shown that Canada is not on track to meet any of our targets. That includes that Canada is not on track to meet the climate targets put in place by former prime minister Stephen Harper and that Canada is nowhere near the targets under former prime minister Justin Trudeau that we are supposed to be meeting, because we have, as the Climate Institute report pointed out, weakened more actions than we have strengthened.

It is a foregone conclusion that without much more robust actions to reduce emissions, we are going to risk hitting tipping points in the atmosphere that put us on a path to unstoppable, self-accelerating climate change that threatens future generations and human civilization itself.

• (1910)

Wade Grant: Mr. Speaker, I just want to address the fact that Canada's climate strategy is about more than meeting commitments; it is also about building a safer, stronger and more prosperous country. By putting a price on pollution, investing in clean energy and supporting indigenous-led solutions, we are reducing emissions while creating jobs and economic opportunity.

Our national adaptation strategy and action plan help communities prepare for climate risks, protect biodiversity and build resilience. Canada remains fully engaged internationally, reporting under the Paris Agreement and working with partners to ensure that our climate actions are effective. We are committed to measurable results for climate, for nature and for reconciliation. That is not only for today, but that also is for many generations to come.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I get into my remarks about youth unemployment, the subject of my question, I want to share with members of the House that I am dressed for our victory at Adwa celebrations happening right now on the Hill. I invite all members from all parties, including the Speaker, to come join us for some great Ethiopian food and community spirit after the House adjourns. The Adwa Victory Day is actually celebrated on March 2, but the House will not be sitting at that time, so we are hosting the event today. It is a celebration of Ethiopian victory over colonial forces and, indeed, a time to celebrate the right of self-determination of peoples and the critical defence of Ethiopia's sovereignty. Again, I invite members to come for that important event as we celebrate with each other and the Ethiopian community.

I am following up on a question that I asked about the metastasizing crisis in terms of low youth employment levels. In tracking the month-to-month job numbers, we now see this trend of more people, youth and the middle-aged, dropping out of the labour force, giving up on job searches. While the unemployment rate, which is the percentage of those in the workforce who are not employed, goes down, we see that the employment rate, the number of people working, is going down. That is a really concerning indicator as people give up and drop out of the labour force. Young people are worried about the opportunities they are going to have in the future. They are concerned about their ability to afford food, afford a home and find a job that allows them to meet their basic needs.

In the midst of this crisis of youth unemployment, Conservatives have sought to be constructive. In the fall, we put forward the Conservative youth jobs plan, which articulates specific measures aimed at helping young people get back to work. These measures are focused on unleashing our economy, fixing immigration, fixing training and building homes where the jobs are. We had proposed measures for the government to consider implementing as part of the budget. Unfortunately, the Liberal budget goes in the opposite direction, particularly as it relates to training. I want to highlight this aspect of the budget because it has gotten very little discussion, and I would appreciate it if the parliamentary secretary is willing to comment on it.

Adjournment Proceedings

The budget says that students studying at private for-profit institutions, in effect, career colleges that provide many critical trade skills and skills for other professions for which they may not be able to train at public institutions, will lose their grants. The intention articulated in the budget is that all students studying outside of the public or the not-for-profit system would not be able to access student grants. Many students in many fields seeking trade skills, traditional Chinese medicine and most dental hygienists are trained at these private institutions. Students pursuing in-demand careers in these areas where we need people are facing the arbitrary cut-off of their student grants, not because their jobs are not required by our economy but simply because the government has made an ideological decision about the institutions they go to.

The problem is that if we say anyone who goes to any university program gets the grant, but nobody who goes to a career college gets the grant, that devalues critical skills that our economy needs and will exacerbate the mismatch in our economy between the training people have and what is actually needed. What is the government's response to these problems?

• (1915)

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to address youth issues. I welcome the comments of my colleague. I will disagree with a number of points that he has raised, naturally, but I do not discount his passion on these issues. I know he has been a member for a long time, and he has made it his focus in the past few months, as I understand it, to take up the issue of youth.

The member began with a point on the youth unemployment rate, which is unacceptably high. We did see a positive change in January. The youth unemployment rate now is at 12.8%. It was in excess of 14% in September. Still, it is unacceptably high. We must do better. However, he does not mention the context.

The reason the youth unemployment rate has been so high is the general uncertainty that Canadian businesses are facing with the dynamic that exists between Canada and the U.S. right now. That is a very troubling situation, to say the least. The U.S. and the imposition of tariffs that we have seen have created enormous questions about the future of Canada, specifically the economy and, I would say, youth as well. In fact, what the government is pursuing in terms of building this country up, looking at our natural resources, doing whatever we can to export those resources and building the infrastructure to make that possible is all part of an opportunities agenda that the government is putting forward.

Tomorrow, the Conservatives will have an opportunity to make clear where they stand on budget 2025, which is a clear articulation of where the country needs to go. I know my colleague has particular issues with the budget, but in the main, I wonder if he and his party will support it. There are so many good things there that I know Conservatives can get behind on behalf of our constituents and on behalf of our country.

The member raised a particular point on colleges, I believe. We are in what we call the late show here, in the parlance of the House of Commons. I would be very happy to engage with him afterwards to understand his specific concerns. He raised a number of other

concerns in the potpourri of issues he brought forward tonight. It is not a criticism so much as an attempt on my end to understand what, exactly, he is pointing to. He has pointed to a number of issues. Can he centre on at least one so we can have an engaged discussion on that? I turn the floor back to him, so I can hear a rebuttal, which I look forward to.

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, the government is always keen to blame events beyond their control and say, "Well, bad things keep happening to us. That is why we cannot control these outcomes." Of course, Canada, like other countries, is subject to events beyond our control, but there are many things we can control. During our study on youth unemployment, we heard many concerns about the business environment, taxation, regulation and failures of immigration policy as well as failures of training that are within the government's control to remedy.

I do want to take the parliamentary secretary up on his willingness to engage further and maybe come back to the House regarding the concerns I raised about career colleges. This is at page 217 of the budget. There has not been a lot of discussion on it publicly, but it is a serious concern to those who are affected. Many young people studying to be dental hygienists, to be in acupuncture or to be in other fields have to study at private career colleges. That is their only option, and they would lose their student loans based on page 217 in the budget. I hope the parliamentary secretary will take that back and change the policy.

Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, I am more than happy to have a further conversation over coffee, tea or whatever the member wishes to have. He and I have worked together for over a decade now, so that is quite fine. It might be a bit too late with respect to the budget and an upcoming vote. Regardless, as I said before, he is interested in matters of education and those that pertain directly to youth. However, I did not hear anything in there about whether the member is going to support broadly the opportunities agenda that is in front of the House. We want to see that. I know we can do it. I know we can rally together on behalf of the country right now.

THE ECONOMY

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to follow up on a question I asked in the House a few short weeks ago about an issue that has become a massive one, not just across the country, but in particular in the communities I represent across Elgin County, St. Thomas and London South, and that is the issue of food affordability.

This is a global issue, when we talk about inflation, but it is one that has a disproportionate effect in Canada. The figure of 7.3% is the one that came out between when I initially asked my question and now. That is the year-over-year inflation on just food products that Canadians are facing.

Adjournment Proceedings

We have seen record demand in the food banks across my riding. The St. Thomas Elgin Food Bank has had, I believe, three straight years of increases, feeding 30,000 mouths last year. The Corner Cupboard Food Bank in Aylmer is on a very similar trajectory, and the London Food Bank is very similar.

On one hand, I am so grateful that the community has risen to look out for those who are dealing with food insecurity. There is a tremendous success story in my riding, in St. Thomas, called Harvest Hands, which is a service that rescues surplus food from farms, distributors and manufacturers and makes sure it goes to places in need, such as food banks.

Last week, I took a tour of the Ronald McDonald House in London, which feeds families that are dealing with children in hospital, in part because of contributions from the community and other partners, including Harvest Hands. However, the community's willingness and ability to meet this need is still because this need is there.

I am calling on the government in my question tonight, and our Conservative team has been calling on the government for quite some time, to put forward a real food affordability plan that does not just offer Canadians some temporary support but actually deals with the cost drivers.

I understand food prices are complex. There is no one single input to food inflation, which is why I believe the federal government and all levels of government must pull every lever available to them. I do not just come with a problem; I come with solutions. We have put forward repeatedly the idea of removing the industrial carbon tax, which makes it more costly for producers, manufacturers and shippers. We have talked about the importance of getting rid of the fuel standard, a 17¢-a-litre tax which cannot but drive up the cost of shipping food and drive up the cost of agriculture. We have talked about supports for our farmers.

The fact that the 7.3% food inflation rate is what Canadians are dealing with is especially important because it is a made-in-Canada problem. That is double the inflation rate for food we are seeing in the United States. It is the highest among G7 countries.

Where is the government's solution to truly bring down the price of food? That is my question.

● (1920)

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member represents an area I know very well, just down the road from the constituency I have had the honour of representing for a decade. I have friends and family there.

These are very real issues, to be fair, that he raises. Food is expensive; we know that. We go to the grocery store and see those prices, particularly when it comes to meat and vegetables. I genuinely wonder, though, and this is not a straw man type of question, about whether he has had the opportunity to review the Bank of Canada report.

He first put this forward in a question a few weeks back. The Bank of Canada has authored a report, a very important report, that touched on food prices. I wonder if he has had a chance to look at that report, first of all, and I would love to hear his ideas on that.

Also, I will give the member an opportunity. I do want to hear from him, genuinely, on solutions. He touched on that, but his time came to an end. I will give it back to him to give an explanation of how those solutions could work. I think we will probably have a disagreement there, but I do want to hear it.

Andrew Lawton: Mr. Speaker, there was an old improv game on *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* where a question was answered with a question. I was hoping my question would be met with an answer. I am sitting here in opposition. The member opposite is part of the government. They are the ones who have to meet this problem with a solution.

As Conservatives, we will continue to put forward more solutions in hopes they will take these ideas: driving down and removing the industrial carbon tax and driving down and removing the fuel standard tax. Another idea I did not get to in the initial question was removing some of the packaging and plastics regulations and taxes, all of which are part of this.

At the end of the day, we need to get serious about it, and we need to understand that when Canada is seeing food inflation at twice what is being seen in the U.S., we need to find solutions rather than just blaming global factors. This is a productivity and competitiveness problem in Canada, and the government has to provide a solution to it.

Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, I am smiling because I made a genuine good-faith effort to put it back to the member as to what general solutions could be put forward. He is well read and knows very well that there has been no credible evidence that says the Conservative talking points, and that is exactly what they are, would do anything to alleviate food prices at the grocery store for Canadians.

Canada has imported fruits and vegetables, in particular, for generations now. We have a climate catastrophe taking place around the world. We see more drought and more flooding as a result of global warming. That is a fact. The Bank of Canada report, which unfortunately he clearly has not read, points to that.

When we import our food from areas of the world that have been impacted by drought and flooding, because that has an impact on supply, naturally we will see higher prices at the grocery store. That is just one point—

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1925)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The time has expired.

The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:26 p.m.)

Gladu	5940
Konanz	5941

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Cuba	
May	5941
Black History Month	
Lavack	5942
Forced and Coerced Sterilization	
Schmale	5942
Ukraine	
Zuberi	5942
Fraud and Cybercrime Initiative	
Paul-Hus	5943
Althea Seaman	
El-Khoury	5943
Heart Health	
Kramp-Neuman	5943
Lunar New Year	
Yip	5943
Interim Federal Health Program	
DeRidder	5944
Symphonie vocale de la Fraternité des policiers et policières de Montréal	
Barsalou-Duval	5944
Black History Month	
Nathan	5944
Housing	
Baber	5944
Pentathlon des Neiges	
Duclos	5945
Cost of Food	
Goodridge	5945
Civic Education	
Gasparro	5945
Interim Federal Health Program	
Guglielmin	5945
Ukraine	
Baker	5945

ORAL QUESTIONS

Pensions	
Poilievre	5946
Carney	5946
Poilievre	5946
Carney	5946

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Poilievre	5946
Carney	5946
Poilievre	5946
Carney	5946
Poilievre	5946
Carney	5946
Poilievre	5947
Carney	5947

Pensions	
Blanchet	5947
Carney	5947
Blanchet	5947
Carney	5947
Blanchet	5947
Carney	5947

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Lantsman	5947
MacKinnon	5947
Lantsman	5948
MacKinnon	5948
Mazier	5948
Diab	5948
Mazier	5948
Diab	5948
Hardy	5948
Diab	5948
Hardy	5948
Diab	5948
Kirkland	5949
Hajdu	5949

Pensions	
Lemire	5949
Hajdu	5949
Lemire	5949
McLean (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke)	5949

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Redekopp	5949
Fraser	5949
Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley)	5950
Fraser	5950
Gill (Windsor West)	5950
Anand	5950
Rempel Garner	5950
Diab	5950
Rempel Garner	5950
Sahota	5951

Foreign Affairs	
Maloney	5951
Anand	5951

Youth	
Genuis	5951
Gainey	5951
Genuis	5951

Gainey	5951
Anstey	5952
Thompson	5952
Anstey	5952
Thompson	5952
Housing	
Davidson	5952
Robertson	5952
Davidson	5952
Robertson	5952
Ho	5952
McGuinty	5953
Pensions	
Lefebvre	5953
MacKinnon	5953
Deltell	5953
Hajdu	5953
Health	
Miedema	5953
Gull-Masty	5953
Public Safety	
Brock	5953
Sahota	5954
Brock	5954
Sahota	5954
Justice	
Caputo	5954
Fraser	5954
Indigenous Affairs	
Earle	5954
Gull-Masty	5954
Science and Innovation	
Gourde	5954
MacDonald (Malpeque)	5955
Health	
McPherson	5955
Michel	5955
Persons with Disabilities	
Johns	5955
Hajdu	5955
Points of Order	
Oral Questions	
Thériault	5955
Ukraine	
Baker	5955
Motion	5955
(Motion agreed to)	5956
McGuinty	5956
Bezan	5957
Brunelle-Duceppe	5958
Boulerice	5958
May	5959

The Speaker	5960
-------------------	------

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Business of Supply

Opposition Motion—Interim Federal Health Program

Motion	5961
Konanz	5961
Blois	5961
Doherty	5962
Simard	5962
Blois	5962
Epp	5965
Thériault	5965
Gerretsen	5966
Gazan	5966
Diotte	5966
Redekopp	5967
Lamoureux	5968
DeRidder	5969
Gerretsen	5969
Majumdar	5969
Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)	5971
Deschênes	5971
Steinley	5971
Gerretsen	5971
Sari	5972
Lamoureux	5973
Deltell	5973
Thériault	5973
Gerretsen	5974
Johns	5975
Lamoureux	5975
DeRidder	5975
Hardy	5975
Lamoureux	5977
Thériault	5977
Deltell	5977
Davies (Niagara South)	5978
Division on motion deferred	5978

Points of Order

Similarities Between Bill C-2 and Bill C-12— Speaker's Ruling

The Speaker	5978
-------------------	------

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Sergei Magnitsky International Anti-Corruption and Human Rights Act

Bill C-219. Second reading	5980
Fortin	5980
Genuis	5981
Maloney	5983
Lantsman	5984

Lamoureux	5986	Grant	5988
Bezan	5986		
(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)	5987	Employment	
Message from the Senate		Genuis	5989
The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater)	5987	Fragiskatos	5990
		The Economy	
ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS		Lawton	5990
Climate Change		Fragiskatos	5991
May	5988		

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>