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Thursday, February 26, 2026

Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 26, 2026

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)
[*English*]

MAIN ESTIMATES, 2026-27

A message from Her Excellency the Governor General transmitting estimates for the financial year ending March 31, 2027, was presented by the President of the Treasury Board and read by the Speaker to the House.

Hon. Shafqat Ali (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table in both official languages the main estimates, 2026-27.

* * *

FEDERAL TAX EXPENDITURES

Hon. Shafqat Ali (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table in both official languages, on behalf of the Minister of Finance, a document entitled “Report on Federal Tax Expenditures” for 2026.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present in both official languages the 17th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The committee advises that, pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business met to consider the order for the second reading of a private member's public bill originating in the Senate, and recommended that the item listed herein, which it has determined should not be designated non-votable, be considered by the House.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the report is deemed adopted.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages with respect to the motion adopted on Thursday, February 5, 2026, regarding the historical interpretation of the events and actions that contributed to the decline of the French language in Canada and in Quebec.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

* * *

• (1005)
[*English*]

PETITIONS

THE ENVIRONMENT

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise on behalf of the constituents of Saanich—Gulf Islands to present a petition through which constituents in Saanich—Gulf Islands are looking to see the government pursue the promise of protected marine areas. It has been such a long time, as it has been decades, since it was first proposed that there be a protected marine area next to the Gulf Islands National Park. It was so long ago that Jacques Cousteau endorsed the idea.

In any case, there are 11 classifications for marine protected areas, and depending on how they are classified, a different department would oversee the marine protected area. Petitioners are pointing out that, when areas are closed off to fishing, there is a net benefit to fisheries throughout the region. Areas where there is a no-fishing rule allow fisheries to recover and be more plentiful in the areas surrounding the protected area.

The petitioners call on the government and DFO to work with relevant government branches to simplify the communication and ensure that marine protected areas are put in place.

TAXATION

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of Canadians to present a petition.

Petitioners argue that massage therapy is vital for both mental and physical health and for injury recovery. Currently, massage therapy is not recognized by the Excise Tax Act and Canadians are charged HST and GST on massage therapy. Petitioners draw attention to the inequality this creates in relation to affordability and access.

Routine Proceedings

Petitioners call on the Minister of Finance to include massage therapy under the Excise Tax Act and remove the HST on massage therapy.

[*Translation*]

MINISTERIAL POWERS

Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to table two petitions.

The first is from citizens who are concerned about potential abuses of power by cabinet. Proposed section 12 in part 2, division 5 of Bill C-15 permits ministers to exempt entities, meaning companies, from the application of any act of Parliament apart from the Criminal Code.

These citizens are of the opinion that such unlimited, unrestricted and undefined power could undermine core protections established by laws related to the environment, public procurement and competition. They are therefore calling on the government to reconsider proposed section 12 in Bill C-15 to prevent such abuse of power by ministers.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition comes from a group of citizens who are concerned about animal welfare.

Canada has no national registry of individuals who have been convicted of animal cruelty, neglect or killing under the Criminal Code of Canada. That means there is a possibility that shelters, rescues or breeders could place animals with criminals who are a danger to the animal's welfare.

The petitioners are calling for the creation of a national registry of people who have been convicted of abusing, neglecting or killing an animal. They are also asking that the names remain on the registry for 10 years and that the provinces be able to share this information so that these individuals cannot move to another province and continue to compromise animal welfare. This petition has been signed by more than 7,400 people.

[*English*]

BRAIN INJURY

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to table a petition from Canadians on Vancouver Island, from Victoria and Courtenay to Port Alberni and Parksville. They are all calling on the federal government to take leadership on brain injury awareness, prevention and treatment.

The petitioners note that brain injuries can occur in many ways, from accidents and sporting events to illnesses, strokes and overdoses, and they often result in serious physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioural effects. They would like to see better coordination between the provinces and the federal government on this issue.

The petitioners further point out that brain injuries are frequently linked to other challenges, including substance use and homelessness, and they create additional barriers for those affected. It is esti-

imated that there are 1.6 million Canadians who are living with a brain injury today, yet there is no coordinated national response.

The petitioners call on the government to support my bill, Bill C-206, to develop a national strategy on brain injuries; to improve education, awareness and prevention; to ensure better access to treatment and rehabilitation; and to have better coordination and recovery supports for Canadians living with the impacts of brain injuries.

• (1010)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the first petition I am presenting to the House today is with respect to the urgent need to implement a foreign influence registry. The petitioners highlight concerns about foreign interference in Canada, which are broadly shared, especially within certain diaspora communities that have been targeted through foreign interference. They highlight the need to defend our country, our sovereignty, and the integrity of our democratic processes.

The petitioners want the government to implement a foreign influence registry, rather than see it back off as it tries to warm relations with the powers that are responsible for a lot of the foreign interference.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling highlights concerns with an amendment to a Liberal bill, Bill C-9, that would criminalize situations in which an individual might read a passage of a sacred text such as the Bible, the Quran, the Torah, etc. The petitioners are saying that the state has no place regulating the reading of a religious text or the teaching of a faith community. They highlight that freedom of expression and freedom of religion are fundamental rights that must be preserved in this country. They are against the efforts of Bill C-9 to infringe on those fundamental rights.

The petitioners are asking the government to protect religious freedoms, uphold the right to read and share sacred texts, and prevent government overreach into matters of faith.

TAXATION

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition highlights specifically the impact of the carbon tax and the continuing impact of the industrial carbon tax on farmers. They highlight the costs associated with the carbon tax and, importantly, that its impacts are still being felt because the government continues to believe in this tool and apply it through the industrial carbon tax.

Therefore, petitioners are calling on the House to exempt farmers from the impacts of this tax. They encourage the House to recognize the broader economic harms associated with the government's continuing this policy.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the final petition I will table today deals with medically facilitated death and the impact of the current regime on Canadians with disabilities. The petitioners are concerned with the frequent offers of facilitated death by those in authority, including in cases where people are not seeking information on it. There have been instances where people with disabilities are seeking access to unrelated public services and, instead, have been confronted with proposals from people in authority that they pursue facilitated death.

There is a bill before the House that I put forward, Bill C-260, the care not coercion act, which seeks to deal with situations where MAID is proposed to those who are not seeking it. The petition goes further than the bill and calls on the House to protect all Canadians whose death is not reasonably foreseeable by prohibiting medically facilitated death for those whose prognosis for natural death is more than six months.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to present a petition on behalf of the residents of Fairhaven, Meadow Green, Parkridge and Confederation Park in Saskatoon about the challenges they are facing because of the crime, chaos and disorder that has taken over their neighbourhoods. The petition speaks to how neighbourhoods have been overrun with drug use and homelessness, making public areas unsafe. It also talks about how the safe supply and harm reduction programs paid for by the federal government have prolonged and encouraged drug use instead of offering treatment for addictions.

The petitioners are calling on the government to bring back the mandatory minimum sentences for the trafficking and importing of illegal narcotics, which were removed in Bill C-5. They want to end the dangerous safe supply experiment, which has lowered the cost and increased the supply of narcotics on the street. Finally, they want the government to invest in real treatment for drug users, such as rehabilitation beds, that encourage people to get off drugs.

* * *

● (1015)

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 that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Government Orders

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUDGET 2025 IMPLEMENTATION ACT, NO. 1

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.) moved that Bill C-15, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025, be read the third time and passed.

[English]

Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand before the House to speak to the third reading of the budget. The finance minister has done an extraordinary job of putting forward a blueprint for Canada that would enable us to be more competitive, to provide for prosperity and to protect our sovereignty. These are important steps, so I thank the minister of finance for doing so. These are values that are critically important to all of us. I believe it is a vision shared by all parties and certainly by Canadians.

I came back into politics for a number of reasons. I think many members have as well. It is important for us to provide value in the House and to enable the next generation to be better off than we are, given the circumstances and the opportunities that we have in this place to do something better.

We are at a pivotal moment in our history. Geopolitical challenges are before us. Our largest trading partner is becoming less dependable, which is requiring us to be more forthright, to broaden our reach. The budget speaks to that. These are complex issues, so gimmicks do not work in this case. We need a serious road map. We need some serious engagement by all sides to enable this to succeed and to enable Canada to succeed.

At times, I hear us attacking the independent institutions in our democratic society that make us trusted partners around the world. I hear attacks on the Governor of the Bank of Canada or our securities commissions or our independent judges. We create the laws, but judges enact them, and we need that to be the case. The blame game that we sometimes see in the House can only go so far. We are all accountable here. We are all accountable to our constituents. We are all accountable to our children and to our parents. We in this House are trying to enable our society to care for our elders and to provide every opportunity for our children, which brings us to the budget.

I joined politics after 25 years in the private sector having my own business. I spent 20-plus years in the banking sector, supporting commercial business clients and participating in the capital markets. I enabled mergers and acquisitions and fostered ways for Canada to succeed. In that circumstance, I recognized—

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I must interrupt the hon. member to remind members that if they wish to have conversations, they may do so outside the chamber.

Government Orders

The member for Mississauga—Lakeshore.

[English]

Charles Sousa: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know the members are very interested in what is happening. It is creating discussion, and that is important.

After 25 years in the private sector, I wanted to give back to a society that enabled us to have opportunity. Many of us are products of immigration. My parents came in 1953 from a postwar fascist regime in Europe, seeking that opportunity to continue to prosper, to allow us that engagement and recognize that we all play an essential role in the well-being of Canada.

My first priority in politics and government is to promote economic growth, to promote economic stability and to enable opportunity and prosperity. That is essential to who we are and what we do in the House. The budget speaks to that in a large way.

The second priority is to be able to sustain social programs. We cannot do that without a strong economic force, and those programs are essential to help those less fortunate, to ensure that we have education and health care and that we have the backstop for those who are most in need. My community in Mississauga—Lakeshore cares about our economic prosperity and our ability to have jobs but also about ensuring that no one is left behind and that we support our elders as they move on to retirement.

Another priority has been unity. Spending the years I did in the private sector, I recognized some of the challenges between provinces. Tearing down those barriers and enabling us to foster greater competitiveness as a country means we have to have stronger unity as a country between provinces. I tried at one point to foster a national co-operative securities regulator across all provinces, and I was able to get eight provinces to sign on. That enabled us to have a shared vision, one where we could attract more foreign direct investment at a lower cost to them, and people of all political stripes understood that.

National unity is essential for Canada's prosperity. We can have our differences, but we recognize that when we work in tandem and try to help one another, we all succeed in our federation. At that time, I was representing the Province of Ontario, and we in that provincial government were going through some challenges with the 2008 downturn and the financial crisis. We still picked up, and we still contributed more to the rest of the federation than we brought in, because we understood that Canada is one, notwithstanding all the provincial differences. I strongly support co-operation and success in Quebec, success in British Columbia, success in Alberta and success in all of our provinces, because that way we all succeed.

Last, a fourth priority in this engagement, as to why I became a member and sought elected office, is to ensure that Canada stands proudly on the world stage. We have a lot to be proud of. Some may say we are reliant on major powers, and others may say Canada is a trusted partner and one that actually provides engagement regarding peace and the rule of law. That stands Canada apart. It is why we are a major force in NATO. It is why we continue to be a major force in the United Nations. It is why we must continue

to stand tall and stand proud, to enable the rule of international law to prevail.

Canada is sought after because of our sense of peace, our sense of democracy and our sense of rule of law. We are not here to dictate what others should do but to, by our own example, encourage other parts of the world to behave appropriately, with respect. The budget speaks to respect: respect of our businesses, respect of our citizens and respect of those around the world. Yes, we have global challenges, and Canada is facing them.

• (1020)

In Mississauga—Lakeshore, in my community where I grew up, people care about the community. They care about education, jobs and security. They do not care about who is responsible. They just care about the results. They do not care about us deflecting blame to others. They care about us working together to ensure that greater security is had at home, that protection measures are there for them, and that prosperity and opportunity are provided for them as we go forward. The budget speaks to their priorities, investing to build more homes and protecting our society through a number of bills beyond our budget, on crime and bail. In the budget, there is already an allotment for greater border security, greater RCMP and greater measures of protection to ensure that Canada remains safe.

More importantly, this budget is about empowering Canadians, giving them skills and job opportunities and providing a number of aspects within industry, with our trade routes and our negotiations abroad, to enable Canada and Canadians to do even more. The budget not only charts a course for Canada, but it charts a course for individuals to succeed.

There are a lot of discussions around generational investments in the budget to build major infrastructure. The major projects being proposed would unleash the great potential that Canada has. It is why so many are seeking to invest in Canada and so many are trying to control those investments. We need to foster and protect our indigenous communities and protect Canadians. We must protect our borders, and we must empower Canadians by also providing better measures of affordability.

Again, the budget would provide tax cuts for low-income Canadians, incentives to produce more housing, and support within the mix so people can afford those groceries that have been costed up by inflation, which has been under control, but we need to do better in the interim. We must compete, and the budget talks about how we can compete and prosper, how we can build to enable that support and that prosperity, but it also says we must be more responsible and eliminate some wasteful spending. There are measures within the budget to empower us to invest but also to be mindful of where we spend. That is clear in the budget and the process by which we are proceeding without impeding those social programs that are so critical to all Canadians.

Government Orders

Attracting investment is a third issue in the budget that I want to touch upon. Canada is one of the strongest in the G7. We are unleashing over \$1 trillion over the next five years through our major projects, our critical minerals sovereign fund, roads and bridges, our communities strong fund and Build Canada Homes. The defence industrial strategy is yet another piece of an economic imperative as well as a sovereign imperative.

The Major Projects Office will trigger \$150 billion in total capital investment, which is critical. Many Canadians want to see Canada invest in itself. It is not just about taking minerals out of our ground. It is about processing and refining those minerals for value-added use. These things are essential as we proceed.

Let us talk about the fiscal impacts in the budget. We are in the midst of many trade agreements. We have witnessed a record number of measures already being taken by the Prime Minister, the trade commissioner and our trade minister. The world is looking to work with Canada.

● (1025)

Canada is the only country that has trade agreements with all G7 countries. That says something about how we are viewed by other parts of the world. Canada is also sought after because we are an energy superpower, one that has a sufficient amount of oil and natural gas that has yet to be taken to its full potential. We recognize that, but we also recognize the clean energy grid that is also important in our ability to trade and to enable some of our industry to be even more competitive in the long term. Those measures are taken into account.

Our fiscal capacity is strong. We have a strong credit rating. We have very low net debt to GDP among others. Interest rates have come down, and we have locked in our bonds and yields for the long term to enable us to take advantage of the low rates today.

The skills, training and career ability of our people are also essential. This attracts people to Canada, knowing that we have the talent pool to enable manufacturing and advanced manufacturing innovation to succeed. Canada is nurturing that. We are an incubator as well as a builder. Those things must be maintained within Canada. We know that companies all too often will go after larger markets to enable them to succeed. We can do more to help them succeed here at home by having alternative trade routes across other parts of the world.

We have talked about affordability, the grocery benefit, and having the ability to ensure that people who are less able today would be able to reduce their taxes and have a way to foster greater engagement if they have found it difficult, certainly after the COVID years. We all recognize that. We talk about that, but Canada, by enabling greater prosperity and job creation, is also able to provide greater support and opportunity for people who have had a difficult time.

However, that measure is one of global effect, as colleagues know. The United States is going through the same thing, as well as other parts of Europe and other parts of the world. Canada is one of the few countries that has stood out in providing help and supports directly to the people most in need. We also supported industry,

providing stimulus and other measures to help it be more competitive through the industrial strategy.

We have a housing strategy to try to foster and create more affordable homes, reduce homelessness and provide greater social well-being. The acceleration of some of those housing projects through our housing strategy will enable that to take place. Many are now breaking ground.

Public safety, as I talked about earlier, is an essential part within this budget. So many border security officers have now been hired. For the RCMP, the funding of those essential supports are part of this budget.

Also considered as a part of this budget is fraud and financial crime, which affects so many and is hard to engage. Within this budget, as we go forward, we are engaged in those protection measures.

Our defence strategy recently came out, funded by the opportunities within this budget. It will help us bolster Canadian-made supports in aerospace, ammunitions and critical minerals. Our defence industrial strategy is aligned also with NATO and Europe, our allies, because we need to ensure that we are able to broaden our reach and our markets so we can have those measures invested here in Canada to enable Canadians to invest and also to prosper within those skills and manufacturing sites.

The key to this is our defence investment agency to foster and partner with the manufacturing and production facilities at home. The security action plan with Europe, and our strategic investments as we align ourselves across this country to support the industry, will help support and guarantee northern sovereignty, as well as our overall sovereignty in Canada and the Arctic, and provide an international boost for new careers across Canada.

● (1030)

Our focus is on Arctic and northern defence, technology and innovation, and, more importantly, on maintaining and securing a strong Canadian supply chain.

We are talking about a budget that encompasses housing abilities, our defence ability, our industrial major projects ability, the enablement of energy, the opportunity to maximize our critical minerals, and, above all, to be a trusted partner in the engagement with other parts of the world. Buy Canadian is a big part of this budget. We recognize that is a key factor for Canadians, our citizens, to succeed. It is a positive vision, one with confidence and discipline and one that abides by the rule of law.

Government Orders

I thank all members across the way as we maintain and strengthen Canada to keep Canada strong.

• (1035)

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I normally thank colleagues across the way for their speeches, but I cannot today.

I enjoyed serving on OGGO with the member opposite, but the media, if it bothered to fact-check the member's speech today, would probably spend two or three hours picking everything apart. It was funny to listen to the beginning of his speech. The former Kathleen Wynne finance minister who helped destroy Ontario's finances thanked the finance minister, who is on his way to matching the massive debt spending. He was also the Ontario finance minister who saw Ontario receive equalization payments from the rest of the country for every year he was finance minister.

I want to talk about one specific item. The member talked about respecting institutions. The government has not yet appointed a new Parliamentary Budget Officer. The interim officer's term ends March 3, and a new officer has not yet been named. The government operations committee put forward a motion that the government consult with Parliament about choosing a new Parliamentary Budget Officer, but none has been named yet.

Why is the government not respecting the institutions the member talks about its wanting to support so much?

Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, having engaged with the member opposite in OGGO, I appreciate his reminding the House that I did six budgets and that I did balance the books. Ontario was the largest contributor to the rest of the federation. Even when it was a so-called have-not province, we contributed more to Canada, over \$11 billion, than all the other provinces, while Quebec and others were receiving some of that funding.

Ontario was also the first to increase its credit rating, during the time I was there, recognizing the strength of our measures being taken. Over one million net new jobs were brought to the province of Ontario during that time, after we had to suffer the 2008 recession, during which the Conservatives were in power. We were still able to balance the books.

The member opposite talked about the PBO being an independent member of the House. That is essential, and I am sure it will happen in time. We will require that to be the case. All of us are held to account, and the truth matters.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, it can be difficult to maintain order in the House. However, we in the Bloc Québécois respect the Chair, of course.

My colleague is a former finance minister. In the budget and the budget implementation bill, Bill C-15, the government is extending carbon capture tax credits for five years to help oil and gas companies.

Does my colleague, who, as I just said, is a former finance minister, believe that oil companies are having so much trouble staying afloat and making a profit that it is justified for Quebec and Canadian taxpayers to help them spend money?

Does my colleague really think that oil companies are in such bad shape and that they are not making enough money?

[*English*]

Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, the question enables us to talk about some of the measures that I took when I was minister of finance, as the member opposite reminds us. We brought in a cap-and-trade system in Ontario, aligning ourselves with Quebec. Quebec was part of the western climate initiative with California. Ontario had decarbonized its system, so we were great receivers of \$1.3 billion annually through that system.

It was the Conservatives who brought in carbon tax pricing to Ontario as a gas tax. We were the ones who were exempt. The Liberal Party of Ontario was able to provide an exemption on that very issue, as was Quebec.

We talk about the \$1.3 billion that we use for dollar-for-dollar reinvestment in inspiring economic growth in the province of Ontario. This has now been delayed because the Conservatives brought forward a carbon gas tax that was unnecessary. As it stands, all of us should be paying a little extra to provide greener opportunities for all of Canada.

• (1040)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would be interested in hearing the member's understanding or appreciation of the importance of trade to Canada and why, whether it is the Prime Minister, the cabinet or so many of our colleagues, they are pursuing ways in which we can increase exports. It is a very important aspect of the economy. Canada makes up about 0.5% of the world population, yet we participate in 2.5% of world trade.

I am wondering if the member could provide his perspective on the important issue of trade.

Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, it is an essential part of the budget. Expanding our trade routes and expanding trade across the world is part of what gives Canada an opportunity to provide a measure, a step, for some countries to deal in the western hemisphere. Canada has been succeeding. Over \$1 trillion is now being projected in supports with Canada's engagement. We are punching above our weight. In fact, Canada remains one of the top destinations for foreign direct investments, and the reason is that investors believe in Canada.

Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the member opposite why it was necessary for the government to include a provision to exempt individuals and companies from acts of Parliament, rather than using the usual legislative amendment provisions.

Government Orders

Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, the member opposite is speaking about exemptions for opportunities to make Canada more effective, to expedite matters more essential to our economy. I would refer her to those particulars. Every exemption that occurs has to be fully transparent.

There is one thing that should never be hampered but is when the Conservatives try to control the Governor of the Bank of Canada, the Ontario Securities Commission or judges. That is uncalled for, and it is one of the reasons a public budget officer is also essential to this role.

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, the government is bringing back the clean electricity tax credit in Bill C-15, which, in many ways, is a better written bill than some of its predecessors. Officials confirmed to the Standing Committee on Finance that this credit would apply to small modular nuclear reactors that would be specifically used to clean up the oil sands in order to produce more oil.

Can my colleague explain what is clean about using nuclear electricity to produce even more of the dirtiest oil in the world?

[*English*]

Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, the member opposite may or may not know that CANDU reactors and the corporation are within my riding. I have met with representatives of Candu Energy on a number of occasions. We talked about small modular reactors providing supports and electricity to those remote communities in the far north that rely primarily on diesel, which is extremely dirty, to provide greater sources of, and more secure, electricity in those areas. As we move into major projects around Canada, we are going to need some greater degree of energy.

I can say that world markets are looking to Canada-made reactors and that our CANDU reactors, not just the small modular reactors but our CANDUs, are sought after because of their ability, effectiveness, competitiveness and safety measures. I support our nuclear program in Canada for that very reason.

Kristina Tesser Derksen (Milton East—Halton Hills South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned the respect that Canada commands from countries and international organizations around the world. One recent example is from the International Monetary Fund. The IMF highlighted that Canada is a G7 country that has significant fiscal headroom to support economic growth through investment.

Can my colleague comment on how this budget leverages Canada's fiscal capacity to build and unleash our country's economic potential? Does he agree with the IMF's accolade?

• (1045)

Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that very much, and I think all of us appreciate it. All of us in the House should stand proud and tall for the fact that Canada is seen around the world, and by the G7 and the IMF, for its ability and capacity to grow and invest. Canada has done extraordinary things during downturns. Certainly in 2008, we weathered it better than any other part of the world because we had taken those steps. The IMF appre-

ciates Canada. I think the rest of the world does as well, and so should we.

Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I ask for unanimous consent to share my time with the member for Calgary Centre.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, on the budget implementation act, I really have three things I want to talk about. I want to talk a bit about the process and the committee process that took us to what may be the last day that we debate this bill. I want to talk about some of the things that Conservatives agree with that are contained in the BIA, and I want to talk about those with which we disagree.

I want to begin by being clear on the parliamentary record that what happened with the debate on the BIA in many respects is a credit, if I may say so, to the parliamentary process by which parties agree to a work plan within committee and have a robust work plan that calls for officials and ministers to appear. We did not really have time to call very many experts outside of the public service itself, but when the bill was referred to committee, the committee got to work and got to work collaboratively.

The reason I bring this up is that it has been falsely and repeatedly said in this chamber that this bill was held up by the opposition. It was not. There is only one party that has filibustered and delayed business at the finance committee. It is actually the Liberal Party, which did so on Bill C-4. On three different occasions, they filibustered their own bill.

I am being heckled by the member for Winnipeg North. I invite him to check the record, maybe check with his parliamentary secretary.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, I am just being heckled left, right and centre. I do not know what is with the Liberals today, but I will maybe leave it at that on the process and talk about things that Conservatives agree with in this BIA. This BIA contains policy reversals from the government that we support, like repealing the digital services tax, something that we fought tooth and nail in the last Parliament. We foretold all of the consequences of that bill, and now here we are in the next Parliament, with the Liberals admitting through their legislation that Conservatives were right all along, and repealing the digital services tax. They are also repealing the luxury tax on corporate aircraft and some watercraft.

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We said at the time that these taxes would simply harm industry, would raise insignificant amounts of revenue and, in fact, would likely result in lost economic activity. They have come around to us on that. They have come around on the underutilized housing tax, which we raised concerns about when they brought it in, and they are repealing this. These are all positive steps with which we agree. There are many things we do not agree with in the BIA. I am going to talk about a few of them as time will allow.

The BIA creates a Crown corporation to at least explore the construction of a high-speed rail network. We are not opposed to infrastructure, if we want to call this train such, but what they are actually doing here is proposing and beginning to spend significant amounts of money on a train that has dubious projections for its ridership and absolutely terrifying possibilities for total cost. We oppose this. The CEO of this new corp testified at committee. He was candid, and he certainly gave nothing to assure Canadians that this would not ultimately become an extraordinary boondoggle. He would not even acknowledge and seemed to act surprised when we talked about the existing subsidy to keep the existing rail network going, which relies on a subsidy of \$2 for every dollar that it takes in fares.

I am going to run out of time with all the things that are wrong with this budget, but we move on to Veterans Affairs. The BIA contains an absolutely disgraceful provision for the Government of Canada to correct what it calls an ongoing mistake. Really, it is that the Department of Veterans Affairs, over a series of governments, has systematically denied proper levels of compensation to veterans on the basis of a 1998 law.

● (1050)

The government is being sued successfully, and it appears that it would be ordered to repay \$870 million to veterans, many of whom are in long-term care. These are elderly veterans who have, in some cases, given blood and limbs for their country. To deal with the prospect of being ordered to pay nearly \$1 billion in compensation, the government is trying to retroactively change a 1998 law to avoid it and give itself legal cover to refuse compensation to veterans. It is shameful.

We have heard a lot about the ministerial powers, including in the last interventions in the previous speech. I am going to go past that one because, fortunately, these were amended. This is what happened at committee. We agreed to a 605-clause bill that we went through clause by clause in only six hours. Amendments were proposed. Some amendments were accepted by the government, which is appreciated. Partially dialing back the draconian powers that the government has given itself would be one point, but we had ministerial appearances, and I have to take some time and unpack what happened when we had the Minister of Finance at committee.

The budget implementation act would implement a budget with a \$78.3-billion deficit. The members of the governing party campaigned in an election, promising not to exceed their deficit. The last deficit that was tabled in the previous budget was \$42 billion. There was a promise not to exceed that deficit. The Liberals formed a new government, a continuation of the old government. They added \$20 billion in new deficit spending in a projection. They then

promised that they would not exceed that deficit projection, but they tabled a budget with a \$78-billion deficit.

I do not understand how all of these members, especially the ones who have been here since 2015, campaigned in election after election, promising that it was going to get better and that they were going to rein in spending. They promised, in 2015, to balance the budget by 2017. The Liberals have broken every promise, blown through every fiscal guardrail, cut loose every fiscal anchor, and now want to be taken at their word that \$78 billion is the new number they will not exceed. The debt-to-GDP ratio is not even declining. It is going up. That used to be the sacred line that they would not cross, in the words of one of the previous finance ministers.

When the current finance minister came to committee and was asked repeatedly about balanced budgets, he actually said to me that it was irresponsible for members of the opposition to ask the finance minister when the government would balance the budget. He refused to answer a basic financial question for five solid minutes. He could have said to the committee that the government currently does not have a projection that goes out far enough to find a balanced budget, that what we see in the budget is as good as it gets or that the officials have nothing further to say on the future of deficits, but he did not. He actually challenged the legitimacy of the question. How arrogant does someone have to be, when they are in government, to suggest to an opposition member that they should not ask basic questions about the health and future of the finances of this country?

The Liberals have talked in their speeches today about the construction of major projects. They promised to build these at speeds unimaginable. We are a year in now. There are no approvals and not even any real talk about these projects. They will not even say the word "pipeline" out loud. Again, when confronted with questions about on which date construction might begin or on which date we can expect an approval, there was no answer.

The accountability has been disappointing, and that is why we oppose this budget implementation act.

● (1055)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is a fundamental flaw in the member's argument when he talks about the deficit. Surely to goodness he would recognize that of the G7 countries, countries like the United States, France and England, there are only two countries that have a AAA rating, Canada being one of them. We, the government and the Prime Minister, are using our financial capacity to build a stronger, healthier infrastructure here in Canada. We then hear the Conservatives waffle, saying they do not think this or they are not too sure about that. We saw that yesterday.

For example, does the Conservative Party support a high-speed train for Canada? I think the Conservative Party needs to be straightforward with Canadians and say yes or no. I will leave it at that.

Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, it is always fun watching the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader try to hold the opposition to account. That intervention says everything about these guys.

First of all, he is ignoring all of the promises he has run on in four elections. He is now taking credit for a AAA credit rating that his government inherited from the previous government, which is under threat by at least one agency that is talking about review. His government deserves no credit for that. It would be one thing if they had not promised something different. They did not promise to expand the deficit forever because of their fiscal capacity. That is not what they ran on. They ran on not increasing the deficit, and they have broken that promise.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague, with whom we work very well on the Standing Committee on Finance. In the budget, the government allocates \$11.5 billion to Build Canada Homes. This money will not be subject to parliamentary oversight. We have no idea how the programs will work and, more importantly, we have no guarantees that the money will be allocated fairly among the provinces.

I would like my colleague to tell me what he thinks about Build Canada Homes. I would like to know whether he thinks that there should be a guaranteed percentage for social, community and communal housing in Quebec, among other things.

[English]

Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, his question takes us right into everything wrong with the government's approach to nearly any public policy problem out there. The Liberals build bureaucracies. That is what they build. They set up fiscal structures and financial structures that, at best, are oblique and, at worst, just send money into black holes. I fundamentally disagree with the approach of the government. I am extraordinarily skeptical of its ability to achieve any of the things that it says its bureaucratic structures are set up to do.

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, the bureau of pensions advocates is about to lose half of its workforce. The Liberal government is sunsetting a program that is meant to address wait times for Canada's RCMP and military veterans. This is important for veterans who are appealing benefits that have been denied. In fact, the bureau has had an 89% success rate for cases that have been heard improving benefits.

Greg Harlow, the president of the Association of Justice Counsel, the union representing the lawyers employed by the federal government, said, "Veterans are going to get hurt" by this. The NDP put forward a motion to reverse these cuts, which was defeated by the Liberal government just yesterday.

Can my colleague speak about the duty and the honour we have to support Canada's RCMP and military veterans?

• (1100)

Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, my colleague, the member for Airdrie—Cochrane, commented on this in debate yesterday. For those watching who do not know, this structure they are cutting is one that was created to help veterans cope with the sheer complexity of systems that seem almost designed, in cases, to deny benefits. That

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is what fiscal discipline, if that is what they want to call it, looks like with the current government, trying to stick to a promise-breaking deficit by clawing back or refusing to repay \$870 million to veterans and by cutting the people who protect veterans who are struggling to get the benefits they are entitled to.

Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my first time speaking to this budget, so I am happy to rise in the House today.

The first thing I would like to deal with, and all the time, of course, is the balance that we are talking about here. This budget projects a balance of \$78.3 billion, and that was delivered not so long ago. Since then, we have accumulated billions of dollars more in program spending that the government did not foresee when it initially brought the deficit out at \$78.3 billion, and the budget was significantly late. I know my colleagues will find me to be a broken record on that, but the ability to plan and spend requires having some focus, not just a blank cheque.

There is no foresight. There is no planning. Now, we are dealing with parts of the budget and spending money as if we have money when, in fact, we do not as a country. We have central bankers writing cheques at this point in time thinking there is no problem and just pushing out the payments for what we are doing today onto future generations. Well, there is a problem. That problem is already being witnessed across the country in higher inflation, in higher food costs, in higher housing costs and in higher costs for Canadians in general, which are leaving a generation of people behind who will need to catch up to make sure they have great futures, not more expensive futures but futures where they can build families, have housing and feed their families really well.

However, we are a country awash in debt and not just at the federal level. We look at the \$1.3 trillion in debt that the country has right now, and it is going to continue to get higher. My colleagues on the other side will say, "We still have a AAA credit rating." I would ask them if that is because they have fooled the financiers who are providing the rating, like they do in the budget documents they provide where they say that Canadians' pensions and the Quebec pension plan are actually part of the dollars they use as collateral against the debt. They are not. They are Canadians' pensions and they should not be putting those at risk, or at any conception of risk, in the marketplace. That would be a fundamental mistake. Take it out of there, and they have the highest debt-to-GDP ratio in almost the entire world, save for one or two countries.

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Canadians are also personally in debt. I remember when the previous prime minister talked about piling on debt by the Government of Canada so that Canadians would not have to pile on that debt themselves. Canadians are the highest personally indebted people in the G7. It is double in Canada. We have a very indebted federal government and indebted provincial governments, but very indebted consumers as well. Therefore, when things happen badly, they are going to happen very badly as this debt spiral unfolds.

I am going to switch now to some of the things that we have talked about. The government mistakenly put forward in the budget implementation act what it calls “regulatory sandboxes”. I am going to talk about these regulatory sandboxes because many of us have dealt with them before. I know some of my colleagues in the financial services industry have probably seen them in the way regulators look at bringing in new financial products, but the government wanted exemptions from everything. Effectively we call them King Henry VIII laws. This is what the finance committee of the House of Commons had to deal with. The Conservatives brought forward some part-way solutions on this in order to get this over the line in a way that did not more or less emasculate Parliament.

The exemptions that the government members were seeking were that “Subject to subsections (3) and (7), a minister may, by order, for a specified validity period of not more than three years and on any terms that the minister considers appropriate, exempt an entity from the application of (a) a provision of an Act of Parliament,” except the Criminal Code, “if the minister is responsible for the Act”.

What the Liberals are doing here is trying to say, “All those laws that are passed that are part of the law of Canada, part of the regulations, we get to go around them. We do not care what they say. We want an exemption from all those laws because we think Parliament is a bit of a hurdle we have to get over. We want executive power in ourselves and not to have to answer to this House of Parliament.”

We know there are 343 members in the House, and I have no idea why half of them on the other side want to make themselves irrelevant. If they want to make themselves irrelevant as a party, I would say to the Liberal Party, do not run, because we have a country to run here. This is Parliament. If they think Parliament is just the executive, I would submit that they are wrong. Democracy requires that we have three stools to democracy. That includes an independent judiciary; a legislature, which we are here; and an executive. We empower that executive to get things done, but members of the executive have to bring all kinds of issues to the House to get the authority to act, including to spend money.

● (1105)

That is what the government is doing here with the budget implementation act. The estimates will confirm what we are going to let it spend. However, it is Parliament that decides that, and the government cannot get around the laws of Canada or Parliament in that respect.

It reminds me of Bill C-5. Members will recall Bill C-5. It was the Building Canada Act that happened in the summer, and we passed it subject to Conservative Party changes at committee that effectively said we are putting a whole bunch of borders around what the government can exempt itself from here, because we are

still a country governed by laws. Those laws are important, of course. People expect those laws to continue. If we are not going to be a country of laws, we have lost something very important, and investors around the world see that.

I will contradict my colleague on the other side who said earlier that there is lots of investment coming into Canada. The only investment coming into Canada currently is government spending, which is more or less putting us deeper and deeper into debt. We are billions upon billions of dollars behind as far as investments in Canada go. Our pension plans are investing elsewhere. Everybody is investing elsewhere, because they do not see the path forward in Canada at this point in time. This is something we need to change, and if the government wants to change it, my colleagues and I will be behind them all the way making sure we make changes to things, like the Impact Assessment Act and like the tanker moratorium on the west coast, that would actually encourage us to have an economy that works in this country again. The government must get on to the real issues that should be addressed in the budget.

I am going to address a few other things here. One of the issues that we talk about is the memorandum of understanding that happened between the government and the Government of Alberta, the province where I live. The interesting thing is in the budget itself. I am going to read directly from the budget, which was passed on November 17 in the House. The budget says, of carbon capture, utilization and storage, “Eligible uses include dedicated geological storage and storage in concrete, but not enhanced oil recovery”.

Ten days later, the government had a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Alberta that said it was going to extend federal investment tax credits and other policy supports to encourage enhanced oil recovery. I am all for that. As a matter of fact, I put a bill forward in the House of Commons five years ago that said that is exactly what we should do because we are losing technology and businesses to the United States. We needed to do this a long time ago, but why on earth would the government pass a budget saying it was not going to do that and then sign a document with one of the provincial governments in Canada, the Government of Alberta, saying it is going to do exactly that?

It is no wonder the Liberal Party's own members do not trust the executive on the other side, and I would ask those backbenchers on the other side who do not support this, and half of them on the other side do not support this, why they are going to continue to push forward to give this executive even more power so it does not have to bring these kinds of issues to the House of Commons. It is our job to legislate here, and I will stand with my colleagues and make sure the government does not walk over our rights in the House.

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There is one other thing I want to talk about, because it is important: the high-speed rail. We are country awash in debt. I think I pointed that out several times in the House. One of the reasons I ran here was to get our fiscal house back in order, and for us to actually plan on spending perhaps \$90 billion on a new train that would serve a small geographic portion of this country at this point in time is a stretch. It is a gross stretch, but I will also point out that the start of the spending on this happened while the government was not even here. It had prorogued the House, and the government issued warrants, which is what they are called, to pay for unauthorized work with one of their favourite companies, AtkinsRéalis, which used to be SNC Lavalin, which was awash in corruption. Members will recall that very well, I am certain.

Something this country has to be ahead of is the fact that there is a lot of money going into hands behind Canadians' backs that has nothing to do with the House of Commons. This is something we have to get ahead of. We are a democracy. Let us uphold our democratic country here. Let us build a stronger Canada. Let us make sure we expose this budget and understand it so that Canadians can have the transparency they require.

• (1110)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member is concerned about some exemptions in regard to ministers and he is not recognizing what the budget would do for technology, building and promoting economic growth. It is not to take away from the powers of the House of Commons. We could be using our standing committees in many different ways than we currently use them, ensuring more accountability and transparency. My concern is more so with the member's statements when he talked about these major projects.

I have two very simple questions. Does the member, or does the Conservative Party, actually support the entire MOU between Canada and the Province of Alberta? Second, when he makes reference to that small stretch of railway, that small stretch he is referring to is very important to the province of Ontario and the province of Quebec. Does the Conservative Party actually support that?

Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I thought we were limited to one question, but I get to answer two questions. I hope we get some time for that.

The first one is on the memorandum of understanding between the Government of Alberta and the executive here in Parliament. I would submit to all Canadians, and all Albertans in particular, that they should read that document, because it is a document full of false starts. It is full of, "A is a prerequisite to B, and B is a prerequisite to A." They have already admitted this week that their April 1 deadline on many parts is unworkable. Talk to the companies that have to invest in that. They are saying this is uninvestable.

When we have a memorandum of understanding that every private sector organization says does not work, we have to pay attention to that. Every level of government has to pay attention to it and look at what they are getting at the end of the day. There are many benefits that happened in that, which were things the Government of Canada had to accomplish anyway.

[*Translation*]

Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I really appreciate my colleague for Calgary Centre, who used to serve with me on the Standing Committee on Natural Resources. His mother is from Jonquière. That is why I like him.

I know that he shares some of my views on the special tax treatment given to the oil and gas industry. In the budget, there are major tax credits for carbon capture and sequestration. There is also the accelerated capital cost allowance, which will enable the oil and gas industry to benefit from lavish tax breaks. The government is offering all of that even though the oil and gas industry has been making record profits since 2022.

I would like to remind the House that, since the big oil and gas companies are mainly American-owned, most of the profits are going to the United States.

I would like my colleague to talk to me about the lavish tax breaks being given to the oil and gas industry in the budget. Is he comfortable with that?

Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for mentioning my mother and her hometown, Jonquière. My mother says hi to him. Sometimes she watches what is happening in the House.

Alberta's oil and gas sector is important for the country. It is Canada's most important sector, and it is important for exporting oil overseas via the new pipeline that will run from Alberta to Vancouver. It is important for everyone. It is important for tax revenues and our standard of living, but it is also Canada's most internationally competitive sector. We produce oil here that costs more than \$40 a barrel, but the oil produced in the Middle East costs \$6 a barrel. We are competitive here, it is—

• (1115)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I have to give time for one more question.

The hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk.

Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Madam Speaker, given that tens of billions of dollars are going to be allocated for high-speed rail, does the member think that it is necessary for the government to have some sort of independent cost-benefit analysis that would include when there is not enough ridership in order to fund the rail system and the cost to taxpayers?

Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, many of my colleagues on this side of the House know that I used to be the policy adviser to the minister of transport back in the early 1990s. We were looking at this project at that point in time, and it was too expensive then. It was massively expensive, and now, of course, the country is awash in debt. When we have bills to pay, we have to pay our bills first, rather than getting the bright, shiny, new toy on the horizon. We have to make sure that we take—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Mirabel.

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Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, just before I got up to speak, I was looking at the website of Environment Canada, a science-based department that we love. The government is cutting positions in that department. According to Environment Canada, the temperature in Ottawa today felt like -18°C. On days like these, it warms our hearts to see you in the chair, Madam Speaker, so thank you very much for being here.

We are talking about Bill C-15. We are talking about the budget, and we are going to talk about its substance, its content, but we also have to talk about its form. We cannot ignore the fact that the government chose to introduce a 603-page omnibus bill.

These big omnibus bills have become grab bags that include much more than what is in a given budget. They were roundly criticized by the Liberals in the Harper era. Even in the Harper era, people thought this approach was undemocratic. Budget implementation bills used to be much slimmer.

We have before us today the second-longest budget implementation act in the history of the Confederation. It is 603 pages long and amends 49 statutes. This poses a problem for democracy because, as I said, it is a real grab bag. A lot of the legislative items in it have no business being included in a budget implementation act and should have been debated separately in the House.

These 49 statutes, 603 pages and certain measures pose significant problems for democracy and for people's rights. I am going to talk about expropriated individuals, but I am also going to address other issues. We had just one day in committee to study all that. That just goes to show that the government has decided to govern without the House of Commons and has little regard for Parliament. We know that the Prime Minister has decided to act like Canada's CEO. We saw an example of that today.

This budget was tabled partly because parliamentarians had asked for one. In the last election campaign, we were told that the world had changed, that a budget needed to be presented quickly, and an election was called. We were not told whether there would be a budget when Parliament returned and, in the end, there was no budget. Fall came and we had to nag the Minister of Finance to tell us whether he was going to table a budget. He did not know.

Eventually, the government decided to switch up the budget cycle. It did not allow the Standing Committee on Finance to hold pre-budget consultations. It did not let us listen to Quebeckers and Canadians so we could consider their recommendations. It tabled a budget.

Despite the fact that some top-notch officials worked on the document, it is a budget that is, in many ways, poorly cobbled together and inadequate. There are some poorly drafted measures, and certain provisions will have unforeseen effects, so we had to work very hard during the only committee day we had. In some cases, the government listened to us. In other cases, it did not.

One example of something that should not have been included in the budget is the high-speed rail network act. I believe it should be debated. I believe that cost-benefit analyses are needed, as my Conservative colleague said. I believe conversations are needed. I even believe that it could be a promising project.

However, as part of this project, a decision was made to create two classes of citizens along the proposed route. A decision was made to make it easier to expropriate people living along the route than would be possible with any other project in Canada.

Mirabel is an expropriation case study. What the people of Mirabel and people along the route are being told is that they are not equal before the law and that there is a special law for them. What they are being told is that, if this were any other project happening elsewhere in Canada, when they receive a notice of expropriation, they would have the right to challenge the price and ask to be heard by a hearing officer, who is impartial, before the minister makes their final decision. However, since they are along the route, they will be pushed to their limits. They will be asked to drain their savings and their RRSPs to go before the Federal Court.

With our amendments, we simply wanted to restore people's right to be heard. I do not think it is unreasonable to ask for justice and equality and to ask that folks not be treated like second-class citizens. It seems to me that this has nothing to do with the project itself. It seems to me that this is about a basic level of justice. The Liberals have decided that justice no longer matters, as long as the train goes through. As for the Conservatives, some of them decided to hide behind the curtains when it came time to vote to restore the rights of people in our communities and across Canada who live along the proposed route.

● (1120)

We think a study should be conducted on the impact this will have on communities. Villages are going to be separated. This train will cross 700 roads in Quebec. It is possible that villages will be cut in half. This is not about opposing the project, but it is normal to want to know what is going to happen. It is our job as parliamentarians to seek the truth. Truth is not Alto's specialty, and it is our job to demand it.

Under the legislation that is about to be passed, if the train runs through the end of a farm or field and the owner receives an expropriation notice, they will not even have the right to rebuild their silo, barn or stable in the event of a disaster.

Yesterday in the House, I talked about my friend Éric Couvrette from Sainte-Scholastique, whose cattle shed burned down two summers ago. He is a dairy farmer. His farm runs alongside the airport fences. He has experienced expropriation before. He had to rebuild from scratch. He lost his livelihood to the fire. We saw his cows lying charred in the field. I went there the next day. It was awful. Rebuilding all of that is complicated.

These people have a right to earn a living. Under Bill C-15 as it stands today, if the train goes through their property, they would not be able to rebuild everything and would not be able to earn a living. They would be told to just declare bankruptcy.

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We introduced an amendment, but the government would not hear of it. What does this have to do with the actual train? It has nothing to do with the actual train. We actually want to help improve the bill, but the government is telling us that it is no good and it is unwilling to get better. However, the opposition can be constructive, and that is exactly what we suggested.

We also said that expropriations should not happen by email by default. We understand that it is the 21st century and people do not communicate by telegram anymore and they can send emails. Alto officials told the committee that if someone wants a registered letter, they just have to ask, and Alto will accommodate them. I introduced an amendment to incorporate what Alto asked us. It was not a joke. Our amendment said that traditional means of communication would be used, unless someone asks to receive communication by email, in which case the rest of the process could be done by email. I do not think this constitutes extremism, obstruction or opposition aimed at preventing the budget from passing. We are saying that the government has gone a bit overboard—"a bit" is a euphemism here—and that it needs to respect people. The answer we are getting is that we are the opposition, that we are just whiners, and that people's land is being expropriated by email. However, on the ground, Alto officials are saying that they cannot expropriate by email. It is in the bill. It is in the legislation. It is written in black and white, and we explained that in committee. These people are being given tools to misbehave. We cannot assume that they will misbehave, but they have been given the tools to do it. They are coming to our ridings. They were there this week, and they are lying to the people who show up for their so-called consultations.

Our amendments would not have delayed this project, because there is no project yet. Mr. Imbleau, Alto's chief executive officer, appeared before the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance and was asked how much the train was going to cost. He does not know how much it is going to cost. He cannot tell us that. Two weeks ago, I asked the chief executive officer of the Canada Infrastructure Bank, or CIB, whether it was going to be providing funding. The CEO of the CIB said that it was hard to know, because the project does not exist yet. However, for some reason, there is an urgent need to expropriate land at top speed, accelerate the process and say it is coming soon. Something does not add up. None of this was slowing down their project. What we are asking for is decency and respect in a project where all the usual red flags are already up.

My colleagues know that megaprojects that fail and become a disaster for taxpayers all have a number of things in common: over-estimated revenues, underestimated costs and very long-term forecasts to make things look better, because most of the costs come earlier in the project. We have the right to ask these questions. We have the right to want to improve things. That would have required an entire committee and a separate bill. That is what Parliament is for, and that is why this should not be included in such an omnibus bill.

We have a major democratic issue with a bill that is so thick that I had to buy a trailer for my car to haul it around with me.

• (1125)

Let us talk about the digital services tax. The Prime Minister said he would exempt companies that are already evading taxes from the digital services tax, and at the same time, the minimum tax for multinationals was removed. These companies are not paying their fair share. It was a gamble on the part of the Prime Minister. He figured he would bow down a little to President Trump in the hopes that that would put him in a good mood, but he was still in a bad mood, so then we thought the Prime Minister might reinstate the tax. The president was in a bad mood, but the Prime Minister did not want to reinstate the tax because he said it would put the president in an even worse mood. Then, however, the Prime Minister went to Davos and infuriated the president, but he is still not reinstating the tax, despite the media crisis and the fact that our local media are having their content stolen and that it is a struggle to fund our newsrooms. There are no measures in the budget to ensure the health of the fourth pillar of democracy. It seems to me that this alone would have warranted a debate.

When an omnibus bill of this size is tabled at the last minute, in the fall rather than in the spring, there can be unforeseen events and effects from the budget. Let me give an example. The government decided to exempt Canada Post from its obligation to have its rate schedule approved by the government. However, Canada Post provides services that may not be financially profitable but are socially beneficial, particularly for visually impaired individuals and for the BIBLIO Network of municipal libraries in the regions that send books to each other, sometimes over long distances, at preferential rates. The government worked so quickly, because it was not ready to table its budget, that it forgot it would deprive all the remote regions of Quebec and the rest of Canada of this preferential rate.

I asked the Minister of Finance and National Revenue in committee whether he was aware that his bill had that impact. He did not have a clue what I was talking about. The government was right about that. I followed up with the minister and an amendment was introduced. That is what the Bloc Québécois is for. An amendment was introduced and as we say back home, we managed to patch that hole. However, how many holes are there in this bill, which parliamentarians did not have time to go through in one morning? This is fundamentally a democratic issue.

There is a rare earth elements and critical minerals strategy. The government forgot one important mineral, namely, phosphate, which is used to make batteries. We had to add that in the bill. The government did not want to. The government says it wants an energy transition, but it overlooked the fact that batteries require phosphate and that 100% of new phosphate-refining projects are geared towards battery manufacturing. That is what the Bloc Québécois is for. It took the Bloc Québécois and my amendment to add phosphate to the bill. The government said no initially, but through debate, it finally said yes.

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When you cash a cheque in Canada, federally regulated banks are not allowed to freeze a cheque that is for less than \$100. This amount has not been indexed for years. Today, if you have a small family, you cannot even deposit \$100 and then go to the grocery store. This means that if you deposit a cheque for the new Canada groceries benefit at the bank, under the current law, the cheque will be frozen for two weeks. The Bloc Québécois had to introduce an amendment to increase the minimum amount to \$250 to ensure that individuals who get these government cheques can deposit their cheque, and the funds will not be frozen. We are not making this stuff up. Had the Minister of Finance and National Revenue taken the time to do his job properly and to ensure public servants did their job, we would not have been forced to patch yet another hole.

Let us talk about regulatory sandboxes. Countries around the world have regulatory sandbox arrangements. There are ways to make legislation and regulations more flexible for innovation, particularly in the health sector. No country in the world introduces legislation that applies to all sectors indiscriminately and to all laws but the Criminal Code. That does not happen. Taking those powers away from Parliament is a Canadian innovation. We think this can be a good idea, but everything depends on how it is done. This way of doing things does not exist in other countries.

The Conservatives joined forces with the Liberals. An agreement was reached. They decided there were some laws that the government could not waive in those regulatory sandboxes. That is better than nothing. However, environmental laws are not protected. Labour laws are not protected. First nations' rights are not protected. The official opposition's temporary absence from the House allowed things to move forward. They can shout until they are blue in the face, but that is what happened in committee.

● (1130)

We are in favour of open banking. We all want competition in sales and banking transactions. We want apps on our phones. However, banks are regulated by the federal government under the Bank Act. They are manufacturers of financial products. The brokers are regulated under Quebec's Consumer Protection Act. They are not manufacturers of financial products. The Bloc Québécois had to get an amendment adopted that explicitly says that the new federal legislation will not effectively invalidate Quebec's Consumer Protection Act. That is basic stuff, but the Liberals are still not doing their job properly. We had to patch those holes. We are not just complaining, we took tangible measures. We were forced to propose amendments so that the Quebec government would be comfortable with the bill. Do these ministers not have phones? Does the House not pay for phones?

I want to talk about the clean electricity tax credit, which will apply to modular nuclear reactors that will be used to clean up dirty oil. What is clean about that? If my colleagues think that is clean, I invite them to drink a glass of it and see how they feel the next day. This is like a bad movie: long-winded and zero suspense. A clean electricity tax credit should not apply to dirty oil. The carbon capture tax credit is being extended until 2041 and, at the same time, this bill is weakening the anti-greenwashing law. Since Bill C-15 was introduced, oil company advertisements have started to once again promote carbon capture and green oil. At the same time, the

government is funding these technologies. That is what this bill does. It is anything but an energy transition.

With regard to the Canada Infrastructure Bank, the government is increasing its capital from \$35 billion to \$45 billion even though the bank's officials have not managed to spend what they already had. Our committee has been chasing after them to find out how they spend the money. We do not know and they are incapable of telling us, but the government went ahead and added \$10 billion in capital, all of which is hidden from parliamentarians because it is outside the government's reporting entity.

The budget has \$11.5 billion for Build Canada Homes. No one is against homes. Personally, when I take a walk in my riding, I see that everyone likes homes. However, the \$11.5 billion is for an administrative entity. We do not know the programs or how things will work. Neither do we know whether Quebec will get its share. We do not know how the funds will be distributed across the provinces. However, we do know that this is important, because Quebec is the only province that has permanent social, community and co-op housing construction programs. This has always been a sensitive matter. This is exactly what derailed the Liberals' national housing strategy initially for three and a half years. That was three and a half years ago. Well, here they go again. We would have liked to have some answers about that. However, what can we do, under closure, in a single morning?

There are many things we could mention. There are a few good things in the budget, but not enough to vote in favour of it. For example, there is the luxury tax on aircraft. The New Democrats are shouting themselves hoarse, but the luxury tax was a luxury in name only. What we were doing was taxing commercial aircraft. We were taxing our own aerospace industry. Do members know what people were doing? They were buying aircraft from other countries. Aircraft fly and cross borders. We were killing our own market. It took three, four, five years for the minister to understand, even though it was part of our budget requests.

The government also agreed to reimburse customs duties to organizations for donated goods. Organizations were receiving donated goods and paying customs duties. I do not know if anyone looked up the word "generosity" in the dictionary, but that was not part of the definition. We had that corrected. Furthermore, is the accelerated capital cost allowance a good measure? It is an investment support measure. However, the Liberals choose the winners. The winners are oil. The winners are gas. We also have a problem with digital sovereignty. Fibre optic companies are chasing after the minister, trying to alert him to the fact that they were overlooked. The Liberals have picked the winners. For once they were in the right place, they picked the winners.

I believe in the work of the opposition parties. I think that we can improve budgets and are capable of doing something good with them. However, nobody thinks that spending half a day in committee on 603 pages makes the slightest bit of sense. In future, I urge the government to perhaps not do that again.

• (1135)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me attempt to address the member's concerns head-on. As the member knows, it was a unanimous consent motion that ultimately allowed us to get the process to where we are today. Prior to that unanimous consent motion, if we just flash back to a couple of months ago, there was a great deal of filibustering taking place on the floor of the House of Commons.

This legislation was introduced back in November. There was plenty of opportunity for the House to discuss it. I remember even standing up asking for us to sit until midnight in order to accommodate more debate. We could have had it go to committee back in November or early December, but unless the opposition allows legislation to get out of second reading, we ultimately have to wait until we can get unanimous consent in order to get it through.

We are grateful it is going to pass today, do not get me wrong, but that is because a unanimous consent motion was brought forward. It would have been far better to pass it at second reading back in November, and we could have spent more time on it in committee. Would the member not agree?

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, there are two parts to my colleague's question.

The honesty of the first part is debatable. The budget timeline is perfectly normal. There was the budget speech, which the House adopted. There was a notice of ways and means motion to ensure that the tax measures already apply. We voted on the estimates. We now come to the budget implementation bill, which was tabled after the budget, and we see that it is two and a half inches thick and that we need time to study it.

My colleague can say whatever he likes, but sometimes it takes time because the government went too far and the bill is a bit too thick. We can already see the improvements that we have made in the little time that we have had to work on it.

I grew up in northern Quebec. Through the Quebec BIBLIO Network, I was able to read books in a town with a population of 4,000 and order books from other libraries. That was overlooked, but it is fine.

If the government wants things to move quickly, it needs to allow opposition members to work. The government needs to table legislation that is less divisive and that actually implements the budget, instead of it being a grab bag. It needs to let us do our work.

That is entirely its prerogative.

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Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I particularly appreciated my colleague's observation on the omnibus nature of this bill.

We saw that the Liberals concealed some measures in Bill C-15 that were not in the budget. One example is the regulatory sandbox. That would have allowed cabinet ministers to exempt companies or individuals from almost any federal law or regulation in Canada.

I am thankful that we were able to correct this harmful measure in committee. Still, I want to know what my colleague thinks of the fact that the Liberals tried to sneak in this measure in the first place.

• (1140)

Jean-Denis Garon: The facts are very simple, Madam Speaker. We were in committee before Christmas, preparing to study the budget. We then wondered which minister we were going to invite to come and testify. Well, the entire cabinet could have been invited given how many subjects they put in it and just how much they packed into it. There were between 15 to 20 ministers. It would have taken 10 or 12 committees, because the Standing Committee on Finance, with its resources, was not even able to get through this bill. We worked miracles with our colleagues in the other committees.

Now the Liberals are standing up and telling us that we are very slow. What is next? Are they going to tell us that the earth is flat? At some point, the limited resources that we have run out. We need to be able to focus and do the necessary analysis. It is not right that we have reached the point where we are studying omnibus bills that require 22, 23 or even 24 ministers in committee. Compromises were made: Only 18 ministers and 12 committees were involved with this budget.

That is when we realize that ultimately they are using the convention of confidence votes for bills that should not be subject to such votes and should be more consensual. They sneak them into the budget to ensure that there is no opposition. Then they criticize us for being too slow.

I think that if anyone should be calling their methods into question, it is the government members.

Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to take a moment to commend the work of my colleague from Mirabel.

The government often accuses the member for Mirabel of leveling harsh criticism. When we take a closer look, we see that he is a model of co-operation. He is a champion of collaboration. Through this bill, he managed to get the government to add phosphate to the list of critical minerals, which will ensure that Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean has an industry that is as promising as the forestry and aluminum industries.

When the member for Mirabel says that studying bills of this magnitude takes time, he is absolutely right.

I would like him to tell us what else could have been amended, what else could have been improved if he had more time.

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Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, we could have worked on the fact that the government, as I said, decided to pick the winners of the accelerated capital cost allowance.

The government says that we need to be able to override any legislation to create regulatory sandboxes, because we want innovation but we never know where it might happen. When it comes to issuing growth-related accelerated capital cost allowances, however, the government says it knows exactly where to turn, and it is always oil.

Albertans have never had to fight in the streets to get tax credits for dirty oil. The tax credits came right away. In our case, for phosphate, it took a high-level diplomatic effort to have it included.

In the end, what did we do? I spoke of amendments, which no one can say is not constructive. Every morning I read a butterfly sticker as I was instructed by the member for Lac-Saint-Jean. It is on the mirror in my office, and below it is an inscription telling me to never forget who I work for. Every time that we worked on a clause of this bill, I was working for Quebeckers, for the people back home. It produced some results, but we lacked the means to work as we had hoped.

The last-minute reversal of the budget timeline, with no advance notice, is very hard to accept.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague from Mirabel a question.

The member for Winnipeg North said that we have had plenty of time to study this omnibus bill, which is over 600 pages long. However, first reading was on November 18, and then we had the Christmas break. We did not have time to properly study all the sections and each very complicated provision, particularly those concerning high-speed rail.

Does my colleague share my view that we have not had enough time to properly study this bill?

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, our friend from Winnipeg North is very likeable, but he makes it sound as though we all have to belong to the Prime Minister's fan club, and the moment we disagree with the budget measures, we are being obstructionist.

The budget timeline was moved up. It is not uncommon to see budgets that, given that they were tabled in the fall, would have passed in March or April. That is why there is a notice of ways and means motion, why the tax measures apply, and why we are voting on the estimates. It was well done. For specific measures that fall under other departments, we needed time, but we have not had that time yet. We have been faster than the government could have hoped for in its wildest dreams. Government members are still rising to express their displeasure. Had we passed it the day after it was tabled, we would have been criticized for not sleeping the night before.

Come on; we may be in the opposition, but we are still elected, and we still have a job to do and a role to play. We need only look at what is happening around the world, in the United States, and in many places where institutions are being dismantled. In those places they could only dream of having an opposition like the one we have here to do the work that we are doing.

Beyond the rhetoric, the government should recognize that.

• (1145)

[*English*]

Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would simply like to make a comment for the hon. member's consideration.

One of the top issues I hear across northwestern Ontario is with respect to the rising cost of living, in particular the cost of food. We know that Canada has the highest grocery price inflation of the G7 countries. People are looking for a plan in this budget to cut taxes, cut inflationary spending and bring down the deficit in order to bring down the cost of living. Instead, we see the exact opposite, so the question I often hear is why the Liberals are going forward with \$90 billion of new spending and a \$78-billion deficit, which will only drive up the cost of living at a time when so many people are struggling to get by.

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, this gives me the opportunity to say the following. Once again, the government has completely changed the budget time frame. It announced a \$78-billion deficit in the fall. Since then, the Liberals have realized that people who could not afford groceries needed a cheque. Another \$4 billion was added between when the budget should have been tabled and when it was actually tabled. We may now be looking at a \$83-billion deficit. Not a single parliamentarian here knows the true figure for the deficit, because the Minister of Finance and National Revenue has decided, once again, to dodge the issue, to push public servants and to move too quickly, with all the unintended consequences that may entail.

My colleague's comment clearly demonstrates that.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first off, let me comment on the previous speaker's concerns. I was trying to quickly find the quote on this by the managing director of the IMF, a very important world organization. This is what the managing director had to say about Canada:

Both Germany and Canada recognize that in this very testing time, they need to use their fiscal space.

She continued:

In the case of Canada, the Canadian authorities have been very decisive to take action in the context of changing relations with their main trading partner. And one of these actions is indeed to reform—modernize the budget framework by...separat[ing] operating expenses in the budget from investment—that ability to then focus strategically on investment[s] that are progrowth, that can lift up productivity.

That was back in October.

I say that because it is important for us to recognize that, as of today, the Prime Minister has been elected for less than one year. Conservatives ask why we did not present a budget in the late spring. Election day was April 28. The Prime Minister and the government, I would argue, made a wise decision to put the budget off to the fall and reset the framework so all future budgets will be presented in the fall. It helps Canadians in terms of economic growth by supporting the beginning of the construction season, for example, among many other things. I would suggest that it has been widely accepted. As a provincial MLA, I remember having a desire to have the provincial budgets presented in the spring and the federal budgets presented in the fall. We finally have a Prime Minister who understands the benefit of doing so.

I raise that because of the question I asked the member from the Bloc. We need to go back to last fall, when the budget implementation bill was introduced. Opposition members had a choice. They did not have to wait until the new year, 2026, to allow it to pass it at second reading. There was opportunity for the official opposition and the Bloc party to pass it at second reading last fall. Nothing prevented them from doing that. Rather, we saw filibustering on the floor of the House.

That is one of the reasons that last fall, I stood in my place and suggested that the opposition agree to sit until midnight for a couple of weeks, if their concern was having more debate in the chamber. Not one government member disagreed with that idea. It was only opposition members who disagreed with it. It was not that they needed more debate on the budget implementation bill but that they did not want it to go to committee. If they had allowed it to go to committee and worked with the government House leader in a cooperative way as opposed to filibustering and preventing legislation from passing last fall, then maybe the committee could have had more opportunity to have more detailed discussions.

For those who say it could never have been enough, standing committees operate on their own. If members were concerned about the high-speed rail, the standing committee would have been able to conduct its own study on the issue. Instead, collectively, the opposition members found it easier to point fingers at the government and blame it for their inability to do what I would suggest they should have done last fall.

• (1150)

Yes, we have a very aggressive, proactive Prime Minister who has goals set for Canada in terms of building Canada strong. He made that commitment back during the last federal election, and this budget implementation bill is a major part of that. That means, as a legislature, we have to be prepared to move maybe a little more quickly than some might like, but it does not mean that there has to be less accountability. We still have a Prime Minister who is committed to ensuring accountability and transparency, and that is something we will continue to push for.

If members are suggesting that we should have more time to debate, it is not the government that prevents that. Members will often say that Liberals are filibustering something at the committee stage. I have not necessarily been at all the committees, but I would suggest that maybe we look at what motion was presented that might

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have caused the government some issues or concerns. That might be one of the reasons we see some filibustering taking place.

Equally, we see filibustering from opposition members, I would suggest. That is one of the reasons I would love to see changes to our Standing Orders that would better facilitate members who really want to get into the nuts and bolts of a wide spectrum of issues. We have over 20 standing committees in the House of Commons. I would suggest to members that there are lots of substantive issues. If committees want to debate and discuss those issues, there are plenty of opportunities for that, but when members try to come to the floor to say they have not had enough opportunity for debate, I have a tough time accepting that, especially on this particular piece of legislation.

That is because we need to remember that there was unanimous consent. The reason we are at the stage we are at today is that every member of Parliament actually agreed to have it go through this process. Do not get me wrong. I am grateful. In the last little while, we have seen some encouraging signs, coming particularly from the official opposition. I am grateful for that.

Let me go back to the quote I made reference to, in terms of what we have actually been able to do as a government within one year. To reflect on that, less than a year ago, we had an election. I am very grateful to the residents of Winnipeg North personally, in the sense that I have been one of their representatives for a number of years: five elections at the provincial level and now six elections at the federal level. One of the things that inspire me, besides my constituents, is the Prime Minister and the way in which he believes the government needs to move forward. I concur with the Prime Minister and the general attitude in terms of why we need to take a team Canada approach to build a strong Canada.

From day one, that is in fact what we have seen. We have seen a Prime Minister focused and concentrated on working with Canadians, in particular our premiers, territorial leaders and indigenous leaders. That is one of the reasons we have Bill C-5, the One Canadian Economy Act, which was supported and actually passed back in June, shortly after the election. The Prime Minister has met with all the premiers on numerous occasions. We can, in fact, recognize that working together we can accomplish a great deal.

We have the Major Projects Office that was established in Calgary, with the first five projects having been approved. Think of the investment, estimated to be \$60 billion, with a six and a zero. By working with the different stakeholders, we were able to achieve that.

• (1155)

This is not to mention the second announcement that came out sometime between September and November. I think it was closer to November. Those additional projects enhanced the total potential investment through those major projects to over \$125 billion. I think it is closer to \$150 billion. That is investing in Canada. It is supporting the people of Canada in every region, whether it is LNG in the province of British Columbia, copper in areas like Saskatchewan or nuclear power in the province of Ontario.

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We can talk about the port of Montreal. We can talk about initiatives and ideas that are being promoted through major projects in every region of the country. This is what the Liberal members of our caucus have been working on because we believe in Canada. We know investing in projects of this nature will grow Canada's economy and that is what this should be all about: creating jobs, creating opportunities and building a stronger and healthier country.

We see that in terms of the major projects, but it is not just the major projects. Let us take a look at some of the areas we have reinforced or put in for the very first time. I was very proud when the Prime Minister and the government made the announcement that we are making permanent the national school food program. That was a very important step. Making that permanent sure made me feel good because I know the children of Canada, 400,000 children in particular, are going to benefit from that particular program.

That is an issue that I have seen first-hand as a parliamentarian going back as far as 1988 when we had individuals like Sharon Carstairs, who was the leader of the Liberal Party in the Manitoba legislature, talking about how children cannot learn on an empty stomach. We now have a prime minister and a government that have made the commitment to make it a permanent program, working with provinces and territories.

We then have the dental care program being reinforced, and millions of Canadians are being served by that particular program. Our new Prime Minister and government have said we are going to continue to support that program, just like we are going to continue to support the pharmacare program. Never before have we invested as much money, real dollars, in health care as we are doing today. It continues to grow.

When we talk about infrastructure expenditures, there is even a pot of money put there to encourage capital growth in our health care system. I would love to see the Seven Oaks General Hospital get its emergency room. I can say that, in the province of Manitoba, the new premier talked about it in the last provincial election. There is now a pot of money that he could tap into, which the federal government is providing. Those types of health supports and the dialogue and discussions that are taking place around personal home care, hospice care and mental illness are all important issues that I believe we are continuing to commit to and move forward with. That is why we are investing the number of health care dollars that we are.

● (1200)

I want to go back to another question I posed earlier this morning to members opposite. If we listen to what the Conservative Party members are saying, one should be a little concerned about what their policy is on growth and on supporting the economy. I asked the member for Calgary Centre if he supports the agreement, the MOU between Alberta and the Government of Canada, the entire MOU. I would have figured that this was a pretty soft question. It is an easy question. The answer should have been yes, but instead he starts questioning whether or not the Premier of Alberta knows what she is talking about.

An hon. member: Oh, is that what he was saying?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, it was. The member can listen to it.

He was questioning the Alberta premier and the Canadian Prime Minister and whether the MOU they signed was of any real value. It is interesting that even the far-right Conservatives here are starting to criticize the Premier of Alberta. They opposed the MOU. On the one hand, they say they want pipelines, and then on the other hand, they do not support the MOU in Alberta. That was the one question I asked.

I asked another question about the high-speed train in Quebec and Ontario, and the member did not actually answer the question, but he addressed it in his speech. He did not answer the question. Apparently, he ran out of time and could not address it because he got so involved in why it was that he does not support the MOU. In his speech, as with other Conservatives, we get the impression that they do not support that because the question I asked him was very simple: Does the Conservative Party support high-speed rail?

On the one hand, the Conservatives do not like what we are doing and proposing with the Premier of Alberta and Alberta on the pipelines issue. They do not support that. Then when it comes to high-speed rail, again, they do not support it. They should be more honest and straightforward with the people of Ontario and Quebec in particular. This is a major project.

I look at the Conservatives in terms of economic development, and a good example is the Infrastructure Bank, which is referenced in the legislation we are debating today. I am still waiting for one Conservative member to stand in his or her place and say that they support the Canada Infrastructure Bank. I have never seen one. I have seen plenty of them, a lot of them, say they do not support the Canada Infrastructure Bank. I would encourage each and every one of us to skip the Conservative spin on it and do a Google search. The members all know how to use Google, I assume. If they do a Google search and look at the Canada Infrastructure Bank, what they will find is that there is literally tens of billions of dollars' worth and many projects that have been completed. Every region of the country has benefited from the Canada Infrastructure Bank, but every Conservative stands up and says it is a bad idea to have the Canada infrastructure program.

Unlike the Conservative Party of Canada, I can tell the House, whether it is the Prime Minister or any member of the Liberal caucus, we believe in Canadians. We understand the importance of investing in infrastructure. We are not going to travel around Canada and say Canada is broken. Why? It is because Canada is the best country in the world to call home. I only wish some of the Conservatives would understand that, appreciate that and start talking about the benefits of being in Canada and calling it home, as opposed to always trying to give the false impression that Canada is broken.

There is a lot within this budget. There has been a great deal since the last federal election. We are going to continue to move forward to build Canada strong.

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• (1205)

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate the volume of the member opposite's speech. With respect to the budget, one of the things I am hearing in my riding that people did not like was that the government put the Canada pension plan in the budget as an asset of the government. That is not an asset of the government. That is money that people and their employers have paid into it, which they are expecting to get back. They are worried that the government is going to do with it what it does with everything else, which is spread the money all over the world except where Canadians need it the most.

Why did the government do that when it is against Canadian accounting principles?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I am not going to concede that it is against Canadian accounting principles. I have more confidence in the Prime Minister of Canada, who has been the governor of the Bank of Canada and the governor of the Bank of England. He has impeccable economic credentials. We can contrast that to the leader of the Conservative Party, but it is probably better if I just leave it at that. I believe in the budget implementation bill in its entirety. There are many aspects of it that I could have talked about that are really there to support Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have repeatedly pointed out the lack of consistency in the budget regarding the tax credits that will be given to the oil and gas sector. The member for Winnipeg North is trying to tell us that this is the best thing since sliced bread.

However, one of his colleagues does not believe this. Just this week, on a podcast, the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie said that he has had many meetings with people from the oil and gas sector and that, each time, he had serious doubts about whether carbon capture and storage will be achieved. The member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, who is a former environment minister and former minister of Canadian identity and culture, even said that oil companies spend more on advertising than on their emissions reductions strategies. Not only that, but the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie says that the greenwashing that the government has just allowed directly responds to what the oil companies want.

What does the member for Winnipeg North think of his colleague's remarks?

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, let me suggest to the member that as a political entity in the House, it would appear at times that the only party that truly believes in sustainable development is in fact the party that happens to be in government today. We have, on the one hand, the Bloc, which wants to shut down all of oil. We then have the Conservatives, who say one thing, until it comes to dealing with things like the MOU with the Province of Alberta, to try to give the impression that they support oil pipelines.

At the end of the day, it is about sustainable development. We can have a healthy environment as we continue to grow the econo-

my and we can actually improve our environment. I believe we are on the right track.

• (1210)

Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask my hon. colleague if he could expand on the latter question he answered. I have listened to a lot of debates in the House about governments and who has the best record in providing the infrastructure needed to support Alberta and Saskatchewan's energy industry. I believe that our government has been the only one that has actually delivered substantive infrastructure that has addressed the issue, which simply was never addressed by the former Conservative government.

Could the member expand on the record of the two?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the question, especially from one of my Atlantic colleagues, because I can remember having discussions with some of my Atlantic colleagues in regard to the potential of legislation we passed that recognized wind and waves and how that could be converted into energy.

I believe it was two provinces, Newfoundland and Labrador along with, I think, Nova Scotia. Do not quote me on it. I can say there was a great buzz about the future of clean energy production that was coming from the east coast. The Conservatives actually voted against the legislation. It is the “we like to give a false impression” attitude that the Conservative Party of Canada has. In reality, when it comes to the environmentally sound economic development that we have seen literally from coast to coast to coast, they are found wanting. We are going to continue to move forward.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to make sure this is on the record, because the hon. member for Winnipeg North said clearly that everyone in the House was in favour of the process we are taking now because the motion received unanimous consent. The people who put it forward at that moment knew full well that I would object but that I was travelling with the Prime Minister to Tumbler Ridge. That is a choice I am very honoured to have made, and I am grateful to the Prime Minister for making it possible for all opposition party members to be on that flight. I did not know it would be to my disadvantage in saying no to the process we are now going through regarding the omnibus budget bill.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I believe the leader of the Green Party made the right decision to go to Tumbler Ridge. I would not question that particular decision.

In that situation, she was likely the only member of Parliament who did not support the process, because all other members of Parliament clearly supported it. If we had not had the unanimous consent motion, the filibustering would, in all likelihood, have continued. That would have been unfortunate, not unfortunate for the Liberal Party but unfortunate for Canadians.

There are benefits that Canadians deserve. The Prime Minister made commitments in the last election. One of the ways we are delivering on those commitments is through the budget. I, for one, am glad that it is finally coming to an end so we can deliver for Canadians.

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Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, speaking of the Atlantic coast, just today we learned that LNG was brought up all the way to Canada from Australia. What happened to the incredible LNG that Canada has, and the opportunity to take care of ourselves? It is Canada first, remember?

Which does the member across the floor think is more environmentally friendly: shipping LNG all the way up from Australia or bringing it across our own nation?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we can think about this: Canada gets a new Prime Minister and 70 new Liberal members of Parliament, and a few months later, we make a major project announcement in B.C. regarding LNG. I see that as a positive thing.

I was in a discussion just the other day, and we were actually talking about the Port of Churchill and saying that maybe it could play a role in LNG distribution. The Prime Minister, the government and, I can assure the member opposite, every single Liberal MLA understands and appreciates the importance of sustainable development. We want to build the strongest, healthiest economy in the G7. That is the goal that has been established.

• (1215)

[Translation]

Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, earlier, the member for Winnipeg North did not answer my question. He said we want to shut down all of oil. That is not an answer.

We never suggested shutting down the oil sector. What we are saying is that the federal government should not submit to the industry's will and use Quebecers' money to give very generous tax credits for carbon capture and sequestration. That is not all. A Liberal member said this is a crock.

I would like the member to comment on that. What does he think of the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, who does not believe in carbon capture and sequestration strategies? I do not want to hear him say that we want to shut down the oil and gas sector.

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the reason the member opposite did not get a very specific answer is that I do not know offhand the very specific answer. That is why I generalized by indicating that, at the end of the day, I do believe there are opportunities for us to grow, whether with clean energy or fossil energy, at this point in time. There are the ways in which, as a government, we have to make some difficult decisions. It is important that we make those decisions if it is in the best interest of Canadians as a whole, and that includes the issue of economic growth and the environmental concerns.

Colin Reynolds (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague, the member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

It is with great honour that I rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-15, the budget implementation act.

The bill is massive, over 600 pages long, and I have even heard some of my colleagues across the aisle call it a big, beautiful bill. These large bills, known as omnibus bills, often carry a lot of the government's priorities in a single document, including things that

make it virtually unsupportable. When in opposition, the Liberals condemned the practice of omnibus bills, only for them to put forward exactly the same thing. It is unfortunate that the Liberals talk out of both sides of their mouth. On one hand, the Liberals constantly criticized the Conservatives in the House for putting forward large bills, then on the other hand, they do exactly the same thing.

Given the size of the bill, I find it shocking that it missed the mark on addressing so many key issues. One of the biggest issues affecting every Canadian, which I will be drawing attention to, is the cost of groceries. Not only does Bill C-15 not address the rising cost of food, but the out-of-control spending in this omnibus bill would actually make food inflation worse.

Like so many Canadians struggling to make ends meet, I remember what life was like 10 years ago, before the Liberals took over. We had a prosperous economy that weathered the 2008 economic crisis, and a growing, stable middle class. At the time, I was working as a construction electrician, and my wife and I raised our three teenagers. If members have had the pleasure of feeding teenagers, they know that they can eat and that they eat a lot. I used to joke with my kids and tell them that I would be able to afford a brand new truck when they moved out with the money I would save from how much they ate.

In those days, Canada was doing well. Wages were high and steadily increasing. The cost of living was manageable, and most Canadians could even brag that we had a higher standard of living than Americans did. Unfortunately, those days seem to be long in the rear-view mirror. We are now seeing headlines in *The Globe and Mail* such as “Out of nowhere, Canada became poorer than Alabama. How is that possible?” It is shocking to think about it in these terms, but after a decade of economic vandalism by the Liberal government, this is where we are at.

Food banks in the country are seeing an unprecedented rise in usage. National food bank organizations, like Food Banks Canada, have sounded the alarm, highlighting that just last month there were 2.2 million food bank visits across Canada. That is double the monthly food bank usage recorded just six years ago. It is clear that the crisis in our food banks is only growing.

Young families looking to make ends meet while also providing nutritious meals for their family are feeling squeezed by rising costs. Just since the last election, the price of produce like peppers and lettuce is up more than 40%. The price of beef is up more than 27%. The price of baby formula has risen 13%. Canadians cannot keep up, and the rampant spending found in government policies like those in Bill C-15 will only make matters worse.

Back in the day, I used to enjoy working overtime because I knew that when I put in a little extra effort, it meant we would be able to afford something extra for our family, like a new TV, some furniture, a home renovation or just something nice that was outside the family budget. Now, after 10 years of the Liberal government's economic mismanagement, those days are gone. My friends in the trades tell me that they need to work overtime just to make ends meet. I cannot stress enough the word "need". The fact that a good-paying construction job does not even give Canadian families enough money to make ends meet is a travesty, and the government should be ashamed that it has let the cost of living crisis get so out of control.

A family's rent or mortgage used to be the biggest monthly expense, but now groceries are quickly becoming that. This is a direct result of Liberal deficit spending and debt accumulation driving down the value of our dollar and increasing the cost of literally everything Canadians buy. This is not a difficult concept to grasp: If a country owes more money, it prints more money, and when governments print more money, the dollar is worth less to investors.

Government members will tell us that it is not our fault and that it is the result of global economic challenges, but 70% of all the food that Canadians consume comes from right here in Canada. That is not a global economic problem; it is a Liberal government policy problem. This is not to mention that other countries are weathering global economic challenges better than we are, rather than using them as an excuse to ignore rising costs.

• (1220)

As I mentioned earlier, Canadians know what it was like when the economic crisis hit in 2008. Our government of the day did not make excuses. It took action, spurred the economy and came out of the crisis better than most.

Last weekend, I was sitting down with an electrician friend of mine. He said to me that he was having trouble making ends meet. I was floored. He is well-established in our trade, has a good-paying job, is married with two kids and has been living in his home for five years. He shared with me that he remembers shopping with his wife when they first moved into their home. Back then, one could get a shopping cart full of groceries and feed a family of four for \$250.

The grocery store he went to used to offer a promotion that if someone spent \$250 or more, they would get a free gift. He told me that many times when they were at the till after getting everything they needed to feed their family, his wife would have him run around to grab a couple more things so they could qualify for the free item. Their cart was full of good, healthy, nutritious food, including meat, vegetables and all the things a growing family needs, plus a few extra goodies they did not need but could afford. He says that now, after buying groceries and paying their utilities, there is no money left at the end of the month for savings, extras or even emergencies.

This story is all too familiar for so many families in Canada today, but the reality is that it never used to be like this. People are working two or three jobs just to get by, and those who cannot make it are forced to food banks.

Government Orders

The budget does not do anything to give hope to Canadians, and the massive spending will continue to increase food prices and push more Canadian families toward financial insecurity. We have the ability to feed Canadians good food at affordable prices. As I said, the vast majority of the food we consume is produced domestically and is not impacted by global economic instability, regardless of what the government claims.

I know what I will hear from my colleagues across the aisle. They will argue that global factors are responsible for rising costs and that Bill C-19 would provide relief for Canadians. To some extent that is true, and that is why we are helping fast-track it. It would provide much-needed relief to Canadians who have gone through so much, but it is still a half measure. Canadians need more help, and the Liberals can start by lowering spending and reducing the burden of inflation on Canadians. When the government put forward both Bill C-15 and Bill C-19, it took one step forward and two steps back.

Even my parents are struggling with the rising cost of food. A retired principal and a schoolteacher on a fixed pension, they are truly feeling the squeeze. The skyrocketing cost of food is quickly eroding their standard of living. They worked hard their whole life, educated the next generation and saved to set themselves up to enjoy retirement, only to have their standard of living taken away by the Liberal government's economic mismanagement.

When the government spends during an inflation crisis, it adds fuel to the fire, and in turn, goods cost more. My parents, as well as many seniors, are having trouble keeping up with the rapidly rising cost of living, and that is taking away from their lifestyle that they worked so hard for their whole life. We owe it to the people who had a hand in building our great country to do right by them and keep our economy in check. At the end of the day, the reality is that empty promises and Liberal slogans will not put food on the table for struggling Canadian families.

Life can be hard enough. The government should stop making it harder for working families, and instead give them a hand. Therefore, I am calling on the Liberals to do the right thing: Rein in their out-of-control spending and work to lower the inflationary burden on Canadian families.

Government Orders

• (1225)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 17 of this year, Conservatives sent out an email to thousands of Canadians. It said that the Prime Minister would be judged on prices in the grocery stores and that “Since then, food bank usage has doubled”. That is an outright untruth. The email then talks about food inflation and gives four examples. The number one example is a 37.4% increase for coffee. The reason coffee is expensive has more to do with the weather in Brazil than it does with Canadian policy, but these are the types of emails the Conservatives send out to get people upset.

Why did the Conservatives not tell Canadians that we have Bill C-19, the groceries and essentials benefit act, that is going to make—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Colin Reynolds: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that 70% of our food comes from Canada and coffee does not. Why is inflation on the 70% so high?

Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook—Brant North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona's excellent speech gave some excellent examples from the people of Winnipeg. This is in contrast to the speech of the speaker previous.

Let me ask a follow-up to the question my colleague was just asked, because we know that the Prime Minister was very clear that Canadians should judge him on the cost of groceries at the grocery store, and we now know that Canada is the food inflation capital of the G7.

I want to give my colleague a chance to elaborate a bit more, because as he indicated, we know 70% of the food is produced right here, and we know that 90% of agribusinesses have said that the industrial carbon tax and the Liberal bureaucracy are things that are adding to the cost of food and making those grocery prices higher. Maybe he can comment more on that.

Colin Reynolds: Mr. Speaker, Conservatives have put forth many policy proposals on what would make food prices better. As my hon. colleague mentioned, the industrial carbon tax on farmers has a big effect on the cost of food and on the people who are producing the food right here in this country, such as cattle farmers.

Why is the price of beef so high? It is because there is an industrial carbon tax. There is also the food packaging tax and the other Liberal hidden taxes. We have proposed that the Liberals remove them to bring down the cost of food, but obviously that is not in the budget and they are refusing to do that.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives continue to use imaginary food taxes. My question is a follow-up to the member. He himself honestly said that coffee is not produced in Canada. He said that. Why then would the Conservatives use the fact that coffee costs 37.4% more as their lead item to get people upset? Why are they saying that when they know that Canada has very little, if anything at all, to do with it? It has more to do with Brazil and weather.

Does the member support these type of emails that spread misinformation? Why do Conservatives not say to Canadians that they are going to support Bill C-19, the grocery and essentials benefit act, which would make groceries more affordable?

• (1230)

Colin Reynolds: Mr. Speaker, I realize the hon. member across the aisle wants to talk about coffee, which really just feeds his narrative.

Why do we not talk about beef? Beef is made right here in Canada, and it is 27% higher. Why does beef cost so much money? It is because of the industrial carbon tax and the packaging tax. We have beef right in Manitoba. Why does it cost so much?

[*Translation*]

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are here today to talk about Bill C-15, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget.

This was my first time participating in the review of a budget implementation bill as a federal MP and member of the Standing Committee on Finance. This is a 638-page omnibus bill with 606 clauses that amend hundreds of Canadian laws. This bill includes measures ranging from raising the debt ceiling to repealing the digital services tax.

Throughout the study, it was clear that our work as parliamentarians mainly consists of making choices, choices that improve the quality of life of Canadians today but also the quality of life of our children, our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren. Choices must be made. We have to determine which measures to include, we have to choose between an inflationary deficit and a balanced budget, and as part of Bill C-15, we also have to decide whether to keep power in the hands of Canadians or hand it over to Liberal ministers and the Prime Minister here in Ottawa.

In short, the Liberals tabled a bill granting cabinet ministers extraordinary powers. There were no provisions for consultations, guardrails, parliamentary approval or transparency. My Conservative colleague from Newmarket—Aurora explained this clearly. It is quite shocking that the Government of Canada thought it was appropriate to give itself such an extreme amount of power. Canadians made it clear that the Liberals' choice was an undemocratic power grab.

It is important to note that the Liberals have already proven that they are bad with power. When they have the power to award government contracts, they award them to their friends, which is what happened with GC Strategies and ArriveCAN. Members will recall that the ArriveCAN contract was initially valued at \$80,000, but it ended up costing \$60 million. When they have the power to upgrade a computer system, they go over budget. That is the scenario playing out now with the Cúram software. It was supposed to cost \$1.6 billion, but the budget is now \$6.6 billion. This is outrageous. The project is \$5 billion over budget.

I think it is important to acknowledge the choices that the Liberals are making. They are choosing to concentrate power in the hands of the Liberal elite in Ottawa, far from Parliament, far from local communities, and far from Canadians.

The Conservatives made a different choice. Under the leadership of my amazing colleague from Newmarket—Aurora, we introduced a number of amendments to place checks and balances on the power of Liberal elites and to ensure that Canadians ultimately have the power to curb government overreach.

With the amendments that were adopted, there now has to be a 30-day public consultation period before any exemption is granted. Dual approval from a cabinet minister and the President of the Treasury Board is now required. The government must table a report to Parliament within 90 days of any exemption and publish exemptions within 30 days to ensure transparency.

The Conservatives put guardrails in place to limit the Liberals' power and to ensure that exemptions serve Canadians' best interests. Let us not forget that every parliamentarian here is here to serve Canadians' interests.

As I mentioned, Bill C-15 is about choices the government makes or does not make. During the committee's study of Bill C-15, I had the opportunity to question several ministers about issues that, while important to my constituents, Quebecers and all Canadians, are not included in this bill.

Bill C-15 packs a considerable amount of content into its 638 pages, but it does not include measures to support regions of Quebec that rely on temporary foreign workers to fill vacant jobs. Those regions are struggling because of the Liberals' poorly designed immigration plan.

• (1235)

Page 96 of the budget states, in black and white:

The government recognises the role temporary foreign workers play in some sectors of the economy and in some parts of the country. To that end, the 2026-2028 Immigration Levels Plan will consider industries and sectors impacted by tariffs and the unique needs of rural and remote communities.

To reiterate, it states that the plan “will consider industries and sectors impacted by tariffs and the unique needs of rural and remote communities”. To be clear, this is from the Liberal budget; these are the words of the finance minister and the Prime Minister.

My riding and many parts of Quebec are facing a labour shortage, with an unemployment rate of less than 5.5%. Businesses are already facing an inflationary crisis and unjustified American tariffs. Now these businesses, which rely on temporary foreign workers to thrive and stimulate the economies of Quebec and Canada, must face this new challenge and the restriction on economic workers that is being imposed by the Liberals.

These people contribute to our economic development and have become part of our communities. Their children go to school, and their partners work for other businesses in the community, village or town. At the Standing Committee on Finance, I asked the minister three times whether he was in favour of a grandfather clause for temporary foreign workers in regions where the unemployment rate is less than 5.5%.

Government Orders

Three times, the minister refused to answer, but do members know what he said? He said that he agreed with my arguments and that temporary foreign workers who were already here and already part of their community, who had learned the job in their company and who were contributing to our economic development were important for the regions of Quebec. In that case, why will he not agree to include a grandfather clause?

The Liberal budget clearly indicates that the government will take into account the specific needs of communities in the regions. It seems to me that the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister are happy to say what Canadians want to hear in their budget but that they are not willing to take measures to actually support the Canadian economy and strengthen our communities.

Since Bill C-15 is an omnibus bill, it contains many measures, but I think it is important to remember that Bill C-15 implements the measures of a Liberal budget with a \$78-billion deficit. That is \$78 billion in new debt that our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will have to pay. It should be noted that when the Liberals came to power 10 years ago, the country's debt was \$700 billion. After 10 years of Liberal mismanagement, the debt is now \$1.4 trillion.

Although we approve of many measures in the budget, I disapprove of just as many. The Liberal government has continued to pursue its policy of endless deficit spending. It is extremely important to be vigilant when making budgetary choices. Every dollar added to the debt contributes to inflationary pressure, which makes essential items such as groceries, transportation and housing more expensive. Let us not forget that every additional dollar of debt means higher debt servicing costs for future generations of Canadians. That is \$55 billion in interest on the debt that we are paying and that our grandchildren will also pay.

In closing, as parliamentarians, we have to make tough choices to better serve Canadians. However, we must keep one thing in mind: The decisions that we make today will affect future generations, and we owe them respect.

• (1240)

Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also represent a rural region and my riding is also experiencing a labour shortage. I know that the Leader of the Opposition wants to put an end to the temporary foreign worker program. In my riding, it is really important to bring in people from different parts of the world to offset the labour shortage. My colleague spoke of a grandfather clause for people who are already here. I would support that. I want to know what my colleague would do to address the labour shortage in his riding through the measures set out in the bill.

Government Orders

Eric Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about regions where the unemployment rate is below 5.5%. There will be a grandfathering provision to allow temporary foreign workers to regularize their status within five years and obtain permanent residency so they can continue to work in our businesses, right here, and help develop Quebec and Canada.

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I salute my colleague, with whom I have the pleasure of serving at the Standing Committee on Finance. My Conservative colleague is no doubt aware that Bill C-15 will create two classes of citizens and abjectly take away the rights of people whose property will be expropriated as part of the high-speed rail project.

However, when Bill C-15 was being studied at committee, my Conservative colleague voted to continue to strip the rights of those whose properties will be expropriated. Yesterday, when amendments were being voted on at report stage, the Conservatives hid eight members in the lobby to ensure that the high-speed rail project would pass, even though it violates the rights of the people whose land will be expropriated.

I would like my colleague, whose riding is full of farming communities, to tell me what he has to say to the farmers of Quebec who saw all this happen.

Eric Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I have a great deal of respect for him and I enjoy working with him.

I am fortunate to have the opportunity to give speeches. For example, this evening, I will be speaking before a chamber of commerce in my riding, and several mayors and farmers will be present. When I give a speech, I always say that we are privileged to have farm products on our plates morning, noon and night. Without our farmers to do this important work seven days a week, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, we would not be able to function. I have a great deal of respect for our farmers.

As for the matter my colleague mentioned, we can discuss it together.

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that great speech.

I have four grandchildren. He spoke about grandchildren and the impact that the budget will have on the future. Could he elaborate on that?

Eric Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, today I am going to let you in on a secret. My greatest dream is to be a grandpa, and I hope that this happens in the next few years.

At the same time, I have to say that I am worried when I see that the national deficit has doubled over the last 10 years. When I see that the interest on the debt is equal to the total amount of GST collected across the country in one year, and that the GST will be used just to pay down the debt, I am worried for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

My hope is that the Conservatives will eventually be able to cross the floor and form government in order to manage the country effectively and efficiently for our grandchildren.

• (1245)

Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to point out to my colleague that he spoke at length about the temporary foreign worker program, which his leader wants to abolish it. Before criticizing our Liberal colleagues, whom we can criticize all we want on this issue, perhaps he should persuade his leader not to abolish the temporary foreign worker program.

Eric Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, in our Conservative election platform, specifically for the regions of Quebec where the unemployment rate is below 5.5%, there was the possibility of asking for temporary workers to stay. That is part of our election platform for Quebec.

[English]

Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook—Brant North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will note upfront that I will be splitting my time.

It is always an honour, of course, to rise in the House and speak on behalf of the great people of Flamborough—Glanbrook—Brant North.

At second reading of this bill, I spoke about affordability, housing, groceries and mortgages, but this afternoon I want to speak about something deeper, the foundation beneath it all: our economy. If a country cannot build, cannot attract investment, cannot grow productivity, then everything else becomes harder. That is exactly where Canada finds itself today.

Budget 2025 would add \$321 billion to the national debt over the next five years. It would spend \$55.6 billion on debt interest next year alone, which is more than we spend on health transfers to the provinces and more than the GST revenue collected. For all of this spending, Canada's GDP growth is projected at just 1.1%, the second-lowest in the G7. That is according to the OECD. Canada is on track to have the worst economic growth of all 38 advanced economies through 2060. It is dead last.

Canada's business investment per worker remains significantly below those of its peer OECD economies, and the gap is widening. Canadian firms invest less in machinery, technology and innovation per employee than their counterparts in other advanced economies. At the same time, new capital per worker in Canada is only about 66¢ for every dollar seen by workers in other OECD economies, a stark symptom of weaker long-term competitiveness. This is not just a blip. It is a structural decline, and budgets like this do nothing to reverse it.

Eight months ago, Parliament passed Bill C-5. As a member of the transport and infrastructure committee, I stood in the House three times and spoke in support of it. It was sold to Canadians as nation building, a turning point, a faster approvals regime and a new era of major projects, but eight months later what has actually been built? What major project has broken ground because of Bill C-5? What strategic corridor has been accelerated? What transformational piece of infrastructure is visibly under way? Canadians are still waiting.

Meanwhile, in Europe, when governments decided energy security was a national priority, Germany built a major LNG terminal in roughly seven months, Italy built the Genoa bridge in just over a year, Finland completed construction of its Inco facility in about four months, and the Netherlands brought its Eemshaven LNG terminal online in about six months. When these countries decided something mattered, they built it. Here in Canada, we pass bills, we hold press conferences, we have photo ops, and we announce frameworks, but we have not built anything. Eight months after passing Bill C-5, Canadians are still waiting.

In 2023, members of the transport and infrastructure committee conducted a national study on large port infrastructure expansion projects. We toured ports from coast to coast, and we heard clearly that we need faster approvals, greater financial flexibility and the removal of structural bottlenecks. That was three years ago. Today, we are hearing the same complaints. Nothing has changed. The Canada port authorities model is supposed to provide operational independence, yet federal constraints limit agility and competitiveness. They limit the ability to respond to global trade shifts, and we cannot move goods efficiently through our ports if we cannot compete.

The budget talks about investing in infrastructure, including ports and economic corridors, but the actual legislation before us contains no specific reforms to enable Canada's port authorities to operate with true agility or competitiveness. It does not remove constraints, modernize governance or give them new tools to respond faster to shifts in global trade. Even as the government talks about nation building, the bill does nothing to unlock the capacity of our ports.

Let me also talk about steel. Steel is not abstract. Steel is Hamilton. Steel is jobs. Steel is national capacity. In 2024, I filed an Order Paper question asking how much of the federally funded infrastructure in Canada uses Canadian steel. The response came back, and I was astonished to learn that the government did not even track that data. The government could not tell us how much of our own infrastructure spending was using Canadian steel production. That is billions of dollars with no central tracking. If we do not measure it, we cannot manage it.

● (1250)

Unsatisfied with this answer, I took it to committee. I asked the president of Alto how much Canadian steel was going to be used if the project were to proceed. Would it be tracked? Would it be reported? The answer was that it could result in 600,000 tonnes of steel, but we do not produce the right type of steel in Canada. That should not be foreign steel.

I asked the transportation minister if he would make the same commitment, to track not just steel but any Canadian content in all projects under his department. To his credit, he said that he would commit to reporting the volumes, the value and the origin of Canadian materials used in future projects and report that back publicly to Parliament. However, here is the problem. Why did it take pressure through Order Paper questions and committee hearings to get there? Why are we not tracking Canadian content as a standard practice? If we are going to spend hundreds of billions of dollars on infrastructure, Canadian workers should be part of that story.

Government Orders

Let me offer a contrast. The Hamilton International Airport, which is located in my constituency, is a success story. It is now Canada's largest overnight express cargo airport. In 2024, it handled over 750,000 kilograms of cargo. As a result of private sector commitment to that airport, it was able to secure a long-term investment. It continues to grow. It supports jobs, it strengthens supply chains, and it connects southern Ontario to global markets.

In fact, to give an example, DHL Express operates cargo across the world. Hamilton airport is its fourth-largest-volume facility in the entire world. The largest is in Hong Kong, then Leipzig, Germany, then Cincinnati, Ohio, and then Hamilton, Ontario. That is the result when there is a positive private sector investment that actually creates jobs and success. Completed in 2021, that particular facility met its five-year volumes in one year.

That is what trade-enabling infrastructure looks like. It is succeeding in spite of the endless red tape. Imagine a national infrastructure system that worked with the same real urgency. Imagine if approvals were predictable, if capital felt welcomed, if projects moved from announcement to construction to completion. That is how we reverse this productivity decline in our economy, how we attract investment and how we grow our economy.

Canada should be the easiest place in the world to build responsibly. We have skilled workers. We have resources. We have stable institutions. What we lack is urgency. The budget continues the pattern: high spending, high debt, low growth and no structural reform.

Nearly a year after the government was elected, Canadians still do not see the breakthrough that was promised. As long as investment lags, approvals stall and productivity falls, living standards will continue to erode. Canadians are not asking for miracles. They are asking for a government that understands that prosperity comes from building, producing and competing, not just borrowing and hoping.

Government Orders

Conservatives believe in clearing the bureaucracy that blocks projects, ensuring Canadian workers benefit from Canadian infrastructure, strengthening our ports and trade corridors, restoring fiscal discipline so capital flows back to Canada and rebuilding confidence that this country can once again get things done. On every one of those measures, the budget comes up short.

Ten years ago, Canada was described as having the richest middle class in the world. In fact, commentators noted that in 2014 the Canadian dream had replaced the American dream, after 10 years of Conservative government and strong fiscal management. That was not an accident. That was a result of discipline, investment and policies that rewarded work and encouraged growth. Today, the middle class is feeling squeezed. Stagnation should not be a destiny. With the right leadership, fiscal discipline and a government that understands that prosperity comes from building, Canada can again have the richest middle class in the world. With a new government, it will.

• (1255)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on a statement the previous speaker made, the member for Richmond—Arthabaska. He made the statement that in certain situations, which he described, the Conservatives do not have any problem with renewing temporary work permits.

Can the member give us a clear indication of whether the member for Richmond—Arthabaska was correct in his assessment of the Conservative Party's position, that it is prepared to allow temporary permit workers to remain in Canada after the visas have expired?

Dan Muys: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to speak on behalf of my colleague. What I will note, as I said in my speech, is that we had the richest middle class in the world 10 years ago, when we had an economy that was attracting investment from around the world. Prosperity is the answer to all of our issues.

The member opposite is part of a government that said no to Germany and Japan when they came for Canadian LNG. Germany built the facility, as I said in my speech, in seven months, and we lost the opportunity to diversify our trade, create those jobs and steal other jobs for all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to something that was said in the previous speech by the member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

I want to ask my colleague from Flamborough—Glanbrook—Brant North a question, because what was said was rather surprising. The member for Richmond—Arthabaska criticized the Liberal government because of measures implemented in the fall of 2024 that led to drastic changes for entrepreneurs and SMEs in Quebec's regions in terms of temporary foreign workers. He says that a grandfather clause must be introduced for people who are already here.

However, the Conservative leader said that temporary foreign workers are the reason young Canadians here are unemployed and cannot find work, so the program should be scrapped.

Does my colleague agree with his leader, or does he agree with the member for Richmond—Arthabaska?

[*English*]

Dan Muys: Mr. Speaker, I agree that we should create prosperity for young Canadians so they can actually have jobs. That is what Canadians had 10 years ago. After 10 years of a Conservative government, youth unemployment was not at the skyrocketing levels we are seeing now, and that is not fair. As well, 10 years ago, the average monthly mortgage payment on the average house in Canada was \$1,432. The average rent was \$973. Young people could go to school, save up, buy a home and start a family.

That was the Canadian dream. That is why we were the envy of the world and had the richest middle class. That does not exist anymore after 10 years of the Liberals. Conservatives will work to restore that dream and that promise.

Billy Morin (Edmonton Northwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if my colleague can reflect on a report that came out today that says one in four Canadians now works for government, whether that be the federal government, provincial governments, municipal governments or the public service.

The member reflected upon the middle class getting weaker. While the government is bloating up and expending, none of these dollars seems to reach everyday Canadians. Can the member reflect upon that in this budget?

Dan Muys: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question because that is the point. The reason we are now among the worst-performing economies in the G7 and the OECD, which we were not 10 years ago, is that we have the lowest private sector investment in our economy in the world. When we do not create the conditions for the private sector to invest here, investment will elsewhere. Capital is global, and we have seen that time and time again.

If we want to make sure we have opportunities for Canadians, we can do better than having one in four working for the government. We can provide excellent opportunities in the private sector so Canadians can prosper, save up, buy a home and live the Canadian dream.

• (1300)

[*Translation*]

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to participate in the debate and discussions on Bill C-15. I would like to focus briefly on the issue of the digital services tax, which I feel is very important, particularly for the cultural and media sectors. We have discussed it at length. I think it is important to highlight the significant consequences of abolishing this tax.

Government Orders

First and foremost, it is important review the context and acknowledge that, in order for the government to address a problem and find solutions to it, the government must first recognize that a problem exists. The government must acknowledge the problem, take note of it, analyze it and then put measures in place to address it and correct it to the greatest extent possible.

That is what this government and governments around the world have done. Take, for example, the OECD, which set up a working group a few years ago to study the issue of digital giants, the so-called GAFAM, and their impact on the public finances of the various countries in which they operate. The OECD looked into this. Many countries, including the European Union and Australia, which we have also talked a lot about, have legislated on tax issues relating to digital giants.

In 2024, Canada took a step in the right direction. Not only did it recognize that there was a situation that warranted its attention, but it also introduced the Digital Services Tax Act. Subsequently, as we know, it introduced the much-talked about digital services tax, a tax aimed at correcting the kind of tax inequity involving multi-billion dollar companies, generally American, that are making a fortune here in Canada by flooding our devices and our cultural market with content. In the vast majority of cases, this content is in no way representative of the cultural fabric of Quebec and Canada and, by extension francophone culture. I am particularly concerned about that.

The purpose of the digital services tax was to address this inequity and bring some fiscal accountability with regard to these businesses. The revenue that could have been generated from this tax was estimated at \$7.2 billion over five years. Let us be conservative and say \$1 billion, \$1.2 billion or \$1.3 billion in revenue per year. In our opinion, that was great news, except for the caveat that it was not directly intended to support the cultural and media sectors. Still, that money could have been well spent. It could have been added to the public purse and ultimately used to support those sectors.

We were all there just over a year ago when President Trump returned to the White House in the United States with his rhetoric, threats and tariffs. We saw all of the instability he was causing, not only in his own country, but also here and around the world. We needed some bargaining power. We needed to show Canada's goodwill. To that end, the Prime Minister made what I believe was a highly questionable decision. He decided to bend the knee, take his spine and stick it in a drawer, and do away with the digital services tax, hoping that would make Donald think he was a nice, easygoing, understanding, co-operative guy. He did away with a tax that Donald Trump hates because it penalizes the American companies that provide him with such generous support. Perhaps the Prime Minister thought that Donald would surely be convinced to strike a good deal with his dear friend, the Prime Minister of Canada, and scrap the tariffs. The Prime Minister thought that everything would work out. However, that is not what happened at all. The American President watched him do it. He did not react. He did not bat an eye. He did not lift a finger, and everything continued to go as badly as it had been going for months.

The Prime Minister did not consider that, by abolishing the tax on digital services, he was eliminating a potential revenue stream of

over \$1 billion per year that could have been used to save the cultural and media sectors of Quebec and Canada. If he had, he might have decided to reinstate it, but no, he decided to let it go.

The government introduced Bill C-15, and we thought that common sense would prevail and that the minister would decide to reinstate the tax, not eliminate it. By retaining this one tool, or the possibility of implementing it, he would have had leverage for his discussions with the American President when it came time to negotiate CUSMA.

• (1305)

At that point, we could have extracted major concessions had we had something worthwhile or a bargaining chip. However, the government decided to abolish that tax.

What does that mean? That means that our media, particularly regional news outlets, remain in the extremely precarious situation that they have been in for years without any glimmer of hope from the government that they might be rescued from their current predicament.

There was a measure proposed by the Bloc Québécois. In addition to preserving the digital services tax and turning it into a levy that would have been used exclusively to save and support the cultural sectors and the media, we asked that electronic news media outlets, namely radio and television, be granted the same tax credit that print media outlets already get. This is something that electronic news media outlets have been actively calling for. Newspaper newsrooms receive a payroll tax credit that gives them a bit of breathing room in an environment that is extremely competitive, extremely volatile and extremely difficult for them financially. Radio and television media are saying that they too have extremely expensive newsrooms to operate and that they should have the same privilege and right.

This is something that these media outlets have long been asking for, and the Bloc Québécois has supported it from the beginning. We even included it in our 2025 election platform. The Liberals refused to listen and rolled out a budget with hundreds of millions of dollars for culture that they have been bragging about, but there is nothing in the budget for these media outlets. The budget does not even include this small, inexpensive measure, this payroll tax credit for radio and television newsrooms. There has been complete radio silence on that front.

We can see that this government lacks the will to truly walk the talk. We hear it saying that the media is important, that news is important, but yet it is failing to implement small, simple measures. It is also failing to implement major measures, like the digital services tax, or DST, which could have been transformed into a levy and would have been extremely beneficial. I would remind the House that this tax would have provided a great deal of support for the cultural and media sectors. When it came time to put these measures in place, once again, the government failed to listen. That is unfortunate. It is unfortunate because we are missing a great opportunity to help an extremely disadvantaged sector.

Government Orders

In my opinion, there are serious problems with news coverage in regional communities in Quebec and Canada. Companies in the business of delivering regional reporting, of covering our regional realities, are finding it increasingly difficult to do so. Covering only big cities and national and international issues is not enough. We also need coverage of what is happening here at home, of our own realities, of what makes our regions tick, but these companies are finding it increasingly difficult to cover those things. Businesses and media are struggling. They have to make cuts. They have to cut positions, and reporters' positions are often the ones to go.

I was very relieved and pleased to hear CBC's announcement in January and Radio-Canada's more recent announcement about the creation of new journalist positions at regional stations. CBC/Radio-Canada is creating 29 new positions in Quebec and about 30 in the rest of Canada. I think that is good news, obviously, because CBC/Radio-Canada is our public broadcaster, and its mandate is to cover news everywhere, all across the country. However, CBC/Radio-Canada should not be the only media outlet with the means to do that. It should not be the only media outlet available in those parts of the country. People everywhere need diverse news sources.

In closing, I want to come back to the digital services tax. I believe that it was a mistake and an enormous lack of political courage on the government's part not to have kept the tax in place simply because Uncle Donald was not happy with it. At some point, the Liberals need to grow a backbone that is strong enough to withstand anything and that will not turn to jelly when the wind howls a little too much or when Uncle Donald blusters and sends out a mean tweet at two a.m. after a couple of burgers.

It takes courage, and this tax was a show of courage and a willingness to stand up for ourselves. Most of all, it maintained some leverage for the upcoming CUSMA negotiations. However, the Liberals are basically tipping their hand to Donald. We will pay the price at some point, and so will our media.

• (1310)

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, my colleague talked about the importance of consistency, but I am having a hard time understanding. If consistency is really that important, why do people say it is important to invest in infrastructure in Quebec, such as the Magdalen Islands airport runway, the Forillon shipyard in Gaspé and the Exploramer shark pavilion in Saint-Anne-des-Monts? These projects are important to Quebecers.

There are also housing needs. The federal government and the Government of Quebec have just agreed on a framework for the construction of affordable housing in Quebec. These are priorities for the people my colleague says he wants to represent in the House. However, he is voting against those projects.

I would like to know why he is opposed to them.

Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's question, even though we have heard the same damn arguments from the start. The Liberals do not seem to have very many other examples with which to counter the Bloc Québécois's arguments, but that is all right. I respect my colleague's points.

I just want to say that, because the federal government was dragging its feet, it took two years to negotiate the housing agreement that my colleague mentioned in his question. It took so long to negotiate that by the time the agreement was finally signed in January, it was too late for Quebec to get the funds to which it was entitled.

The Liberals need to be careful about which examples they choose to give and they should maybe switch things up now and then.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I would like to know whether “damn arguments” is a parliamentary term.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I thank the hon. member for his point of order.

It is hard to say whether that is a parliamentary term. However, it is important that everyone use respectful language in the House.

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

Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, I think that the word may have been borderline in terms of acceptable language, but regardless, it was unnecessary and my colleague was right to bring it up.

I apologize. I would like to withdraw that word from my response, because it was not at all necessary given the context.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I thank the hon. member for Drummond and the hon. member for Madawaska—Restigouche.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the substance rather than the form, unlike some of my colleagues.

I really liked my colleague's speech. Obviously, he focused on something that affects him personally: the vitality of the media and the digital services tax. He is responsible for that file.

I would like my colleague to explain something related to the Prime Minister's famous speech in Davos. Everyone praised him for it. In that speech, he said it was important to stand up to powers that are currently causing more instability in the world. He said it was important to have reliable, secure allies and to stand up to the ones causing instability.

Can my colleague reconcile what was said in Davos and what the government is currently doing with regard to the web giants?

Government Orders

Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean really hit the nail on the head. I emphasized this point in my speech, but it bears repeating. It is important to stand up for what we believe in, defend our position and back up our words with action. The speech at Davos was inspiring. However, that speech is over, the government is not standing up in the face of adversity and we are no further ahead. The government is not doing more, so it is losing credibility.

I think it shows a lack of courage to say that we need to stand up to adversity and yet come back here and fail to implement a strict regulatory tax framework for multi-billion dollar corporations that are getting rich off the backs of Canadians. There is still time to fix that, though.

There is nothing stopping the Prime Minister from implementing very strict tax measures for all businesses and creating fairness in this market. That has been a long time coming.

• (1315)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is in regard to the significant investments that are going into Quebec. I am thinking of the port of Montreal. Literally thousands of people are being affected. It is a wonderful development. We now also have the high-speed rail. If we put it in the perspective of investment, these are significant investments, and I believe that the people of Quebec would actually support them.

Could he provide his thoughts on those two issues?

[*Translation*]

Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, it is easy to invest, and that is the federal government's job. It is wonderful to talk about the high-speed rail project. My colleague from Mirabel has been talking about it for weeks. People in his riding and in other ridings that the high-speed train will traverse are concerned, very worried, afraid and angry, and we understand why. I think this is a good example of how the federal government has money but is out of touch when it comes to managing projects. It should hand these projects over to the appropriate authorities. At the very least, it should conduct adequate consultations to prevent tragedies like what happened in 1970 from happening again in Mirabel and to prevent families from being torn apart. It will take generations for people to recover from those brutal expropriations. I believe my colleague from Mirabel has already talked about this at length.

I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for raising this issue, particularly the high-speed rail issue given the current context.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley.

Our objective with budget 2025 is clear: We want to make Canada's economy stronger and more resilient. The first step is to work on our own economy, here in Canada. After taking office, we started by removing interprovincial trade barriers at the federal level. We introduced a buy Canadian policy in our budget because we know that we have to be our own best customer. The Government

of Canada has tremendous purchasing power, and we have to use it to stimulate our economy and support Canadian companies.

In budget 2025, we are also introducing a set of tax incentives to boost productivity. We want to encourage Canadian businesses to invest in new equipment right away. The message we are sending is that now is the time to invest in Canada. We have also enhanced certain incentives, such as the business research and development program. I have visited a number of businesses in my riding of Madawaska—Restigouche that are benefiting from this program. It is amazing to see the opportunities, especially when it comes to developing new products and penetrating new markets. Businesses might have a product that meets 90% of a potential customer's needs. Work-integrated research opens up new possibilities.

However, we have heard that the program can be problematic in terms of red tape. In budget 2025, we are addressing these issues. We will improve the program to make it easier for businesses to use, because we want to see businesses spending more time innovating and less time dealing with red tape.

Also, in the budget, we see consistency across the various investments that we are making to meet our priorities, because we are working to link this to our mandate of strengthening the Canadian economy. I will give a few examples.

We are launching Build Canada Homes, an investment of more than \$13 billion for the construction of housing here at home. With Build Canada Homes, we will promote the use of Canadian materials, such as softwood lumber. This will help us meet the need for housing while boosting our economy and supporting businesses here at home. It is somewhat the same with the defence industrial strategy. We have committed to significantly increasing defence spending, given the current context. We will do so in a way that supports businesses.

Internationally, strengthening the Canadian economy also involves diversifying our markets. The budget contains various incentives and measures to support Canadian companies looking to break into new markets around the world. The government is working hard to attract foreign investment and sign new trade agreements with countries around the world. In fact, Canada is the only G7 country to have a free trade agreement with every other G7 country. This is just the beginning.

Government Orders

When we talk about supporting innovation to increase productivity, that translates into investments in our regions, including the riding of Madawaska—Restigouche. Last week, I had the immense pleasure of announcing up to \$1 million in federal government support for three maple syrup producers in my riding through the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. The funding announced last week will primarily go toward modernizing these maple syrup producers' infrastructure to make it more productive, notably through the purchase of new reverse osmosis systems and automated systems to help detect leaks in the forest. This announcement was particularly important to me because the maple syrup industry is integral to my riding's economy. New Brunswick is the world's second-largest producer of maple syrup, and 80% of the syrup produced in my province comes from Madawaska—Restigouche. This is a direct investment in a key sector of the economy of the rural communities that I represent here in Ottawa.

In addition to the economic benefits, maple syrup is culturally important in my region, as we are very proud of the syrup produced in the riding of Madawaska—Restigouche. Maple syrup production is also a skill that is passed down from generation to generation. In fact, of the three sugar bushes I visited last week, one was recently handed down to the next generation, and another is run by a father and son. This is a sector that is well established, both economically and culturally, and that is part of the history of the Madawaska—Restigouche riding.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all producers and workers in the industry a successful maple syrup season. We know that preparations are coming to an end. The tapping is almost done, and sugaring season is just around the corner.

• (1320)

I am the member for Madawaska—Restigouche, a riding that is more than 80% francophone. In fact, my riding has the second-highest percentage of francophones outside Quebec.

As the member for Madawaska—Restigouche and an Acadian MP, I consider official languages to be a very important issue. In budget 2025, we are doubling funding for National Acadian Day and making that funding permanent. In addition, we are continuing to implement the action plan for official languages 2023-2028. I would like to remind the House that this plan provides \$4.1 billion over five years, which is the largest investment in official languages in Canada's history, even taking inflation into account. No other government has invested as much in supporting official languages in this country. It is a big deal.

This historic investment is having a real impact in my riding of Madawaska—Restigouche. For example, last year, Canada and New Brunswick signed an agreement for French language instruction that includes \$133 million for instruction in both our French-language schools and our immersion schools. In other words, that money is going to schools in my region so that our children in New Brunswick can learn French.

I am also thinking of the \$78-million investment announced last summer by the Minister of Health to improve access to French-language health services for francophone communities. Of this \$78 million, \$14 million is earmarked for the Université de Moncton for training more health professionals in medicine and nursing. In my

riding, the Edmundston campus of the Université de Moncton offers a bachelor's degree in nursing. So, the investments we are making here in Ottawa in official languages are helping to train people in the health sector back home in Edmundston.

I am also thinking of the welcoming francophone communities initiative, which aims to help our francophone communities settle newcomers. There are 24 projects across the country, and I am very pleased that two of them are in my riding: the welcoming francophone community of Haut-Saint-Jean and the welcoming francophone community of Kedgwick and Saint-Quentin.

The action plan also includes the community spaces fund, because vibrant and dynamic francophone communities need places to gather. I would like to talk about a project that was funded in my constituency last year through this fund. The Centre Maillet in the Saint-Basile area of Edmundston received \$2 million. Work is progressing well, and I am very much looking forward to seeing the Centre Maillet's facelift.

Through the action plan for official languages 2023-2028, we are also investing in a wide range of other areas, such as early childhood education, justice, arts and culture as well as research, to name a few. These are investments we are making here that have a real impact on the vitality of francophone communities across the country, including in Madawaska—Restigouche. I am very proud to be part of a government that is making the largest investment in official languages in Canadian history.

Budget 2025 also includes funding to support arts and culture. Money is earmarked to develop Canada's creative industries and help Canadian talent succeed in an increasingly digital and global marketplace. I will list some of the measures. The building communities through arts and heritage program will receive \$21 million. This program supports local festivals, community anniversaries and capital projects initiated by communities.

My riding actually hosts many, many festivals, and dedicated volunteers contribute to the community by organizing all kinds of activities. Just two weeks ago, I announced federal funding through the program I just mentioned for the Campbellton Sno-Fest. I know that a number of similar announcements will be made in the coming year for various festivals in the riding of Madawaska—Restigouche and across the country.

Government Orders

We have also earmarked \$46.5 million for the Canada arts presentation fund to support professional arts festivals and performance series. Once again, I know that several cultural societies in my riding benefit from this fund, which gives people in my riding opportunities to experience high-quality performances and make arts and culture part of their lives.

I am also thinking of the many investments that we are making in the Canada Music Fund, Telefilm Canada and the Canada Media Fund to support audiovisual content creators, and the list goes on.

I am very proud that our government is supporting the arts and culture sector because of its importance to Canada's economy. Artists not only make a significant contribution to our economy, they also help strengthen our Canadian identity. Their socio-economic contribution is vital.

I am proud that my government is supporting this sector. I still have a lot more to say about the budget, but I think my speaking time has come to an end, so I eagerly look forward to my colleagues' questions.

• (1325)

[English]

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on September 17 in this very House, the Prime Minister stated, “We are going to have a declining level of debt”, yet the budget, Bill C-15, shows a growing level of debt.

Who misinformed the public? Was it the Prime Minister or the member's budget?

[Translation]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to my colleague that Canada has one of the best net debt-to-GDP ratios in the G7. We have fiscal capacity, and we must use it to meet today's challenges. We are facing a tariff war that we did not ask for. We need to support the Canadian economy, and we must be there for Canadian businesses that are going through tough economic times.

Businesses need us to be there to support our economy. When people need help and various social measures, we are there, and we want to use our fiscal capacity to meet the needs not only of businesses, but also of Canadians.

In fact, for several years now, my colleague and all of his official opposition colleagues have been here in Ottawa opposing us every time that we put measures in place to help Canadians.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Before continuing, I will just remind members that, even when heckling, we should try not to use unparliamentary language.

[Translation]

Questions and comments.

The hon. member for Jonquière.

Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my optimistic colleague who told us that the government is there to help economic sectors that are struggling. He reminded me

of the former prime minister, who often said that they would be there to be there. Now that is what I would call really being there.

I would simply like to point something out to my colleague. He mentioned Build Canada Homes in his speech. Well, in order to build houses or dwellings with lumber, we need a forestry industry. However, that industry is currently the most heavily taxed sector with all the tariffs and countervailing and anti-dumping duties. We are talking about tariffs of 45%. Federal government assistance is still pending. The government announced a liquidity program last summer, but there are still people who have not yet seen a penny from this program, and the government continues to refuse to respond to people in the forestry industry, who actually have solutions.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Mr. Speaker, as recently as yesterday or this week, the minister announced another \$500 million to help the softwood lumber industry. We understand that the industry is going through a tough time and we are there to support it. Last summer, we announced a relief plan that we are currently implementing. We announced additional measures and we will continue to be there as the situation evolves.

My colleague mentioned that I was not being specific enough. I will give him a specific, down-to-earth example. The Bloc campaigned for months to extend the runway in the Magdalen Islands, an initiative for which his colleague from Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Listuguj even formed a citizens' committee. Then, when we finally agreed, they turned around and voted against it in the House. I do not understand that.

• (1330)

Braedon Clark (Sackville—Bedford—Preston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned that Bill C-15 includes an investment to make National Acadian Day permanent. I know that is very important to him. It is also important for New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and the entire Atlantic region.

Can my colleague explain why this holiday is so important?

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Mr. Speaker, National Acadian Day is a time when all Acadians come together to proudly celebrate our beautiful French language, our nation and our cultural commonalities.

For years now, the funding has not been permanent. It always had to be renegotiated when agreements expired. This is a long-standing Société nationale de l'Acadie ask, and they were heard. Several MPs who care about Acadia raised these issues during the budget consultations. We were heard.

On budget day, the Prime Minister himself came and told me that funding for National Acadian Day would not only be made permanent, but would also be doubled.

Government Orders

I see this as good news not only for New Brunswick's Acadian economy, but also for Acadians in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and everywhere people celebrate Acadia.

[*English*]

Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour and a privilege to rise on behalf of the great people of southwest and west-central Saskatchewan.

I will start my speech off today by acknowledging that the Saskatchewan Winter Games took place at the same time as the Olympics. I want to give a quick shout-out to all the kids who went up to Meadow Lake and to the Flying Dust First Nation to compete in those games. I say congratulations to those who won medals, but I also want to thank the kids who put in the hard work and tremendous effort to be able to compete in those games, and the parents who took time out of their busy schedules and lives to take their kids up there and spend some time up in the northern part of our province, which is a beautiful part of Saskatchewan. I congratulate all the athletes who competed.

I would also like to mention that I had the opportunity this week to meet with members of Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, or APAS. Its young leaders were out in Ottawa this week. I had the distinct privilege of meeting with them, and I really appreciated the opportunity to hear what they had to say. I can say that the future of agriculture in Saskatchewan and across Canada is in very good hands. They have brilliant minds and are putting in tremendous work. They have a skill set and a talent level that is befitting of what the next generation of agriculture is truly all about, which kind of gets at the basis of the speech I want to give today in regard to the direction the government is going and the way it is treating agriculture.

Over this last break week, I had a couple of meetings in regard to the government's plan to slash funding and lay off workers at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada research stations all across Canada. Some of that is affecting locations in my riding, as well as other locations in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Alberta and other places across Canada. It is really tragic that this is where the Liberals are choosing to make cuts.

The return on investment in agriculture is massive. Agriculture is the largest exporting element of the Canadian economy, particularly the Saskatchewan economy, and it plays such a key role in supporting our small towns, cities, communities and various organizations because of the strength of that industry.

When we look at the tone the government is choosing to set by cutting funding in agriculture, it is really backwards to the direction this country should be going. To take that at another level, we are going through the comprehensive expenditure reviews, and we are seeing department after department come back to the federal government saying that they will be able to lay off and make cuts with no impact to service delivery. However, I would say that the Department of Agriculture is the one department that is going to notice a substantial impact to the services that are being delivered to Canadians and Canadian farmers, but also to producers around the world.

We know that the research that happens in Saskatchewan and across the country not only benefits farmers here. It benefits farmers here first, but we are then able to export what we learn to the rest of the world. One such practice would be zero-till or low-till farming practices, which is something we changed on our farm when I was growing up. I jokingly say that it was something that put me out of a job on my parents' farm, because I used to do a lot of the cultivating and disking that we needed to do at that time. However, what we learned, which was aided by the research stations, was the value of doing continuous cropping to restore nutrients to the soil. It also helped build and maintain topsoil quality and moisture retention. It showed that we did not need to be plowing up our fields nearly as much as we used to. There are jurisdictions around the world that are still using that practice, and they could learn a lot from Canadian agriculture.

A lot of the research in that farming technique happened at the research stations across Canada. It was in partnership with some other regions in North America, but a lot of it was done at the research stations. However, that is just one firm example of some of the benefits we have seen from the research stations. Also, various crop varieties have been developed there, which have been cutting edge for being able to continue to grow crops in one of the most difficult places to grow crops in the world.

The area I represent is smack dab in the middle of what is called the Palliser triangle, which was designated by the explorer as an area unfit for humankind to live in, yet we are able to be the largest exporting area in the world of pulses. We grow a lot of grain, canola, other oilseeds and lots of cereal crops. We basically feed the world from an area that was deemed to be unfit for humans, so it is pretty remarkable what has happened.

● (1335)

However, it is because of the things that have happened at the research stations. They are strategically placed because of the various different soil types that exist in Canada, particularly Saskatchewan. My area is very sandy, very hilly and very rocky. A lot of it probably should have been left as native prairie grass, but it has now been turned into agriculture-producing land for crops. The research stations have been very key to making sure we have the crop varieties and also the right timing as to when we want to grow our crops in order to make sure we can maximize their output value. Things like research into fertilizer usage, pesticide applications and weed control are all done at these research stations, and they are put into the various different soil zones that exist in Saskatchewan and across the country. That is some of the most valuable research that has happened at these research stations.

To be fair, I know the government is trying to save money because it has been blowing the doors off the vault with the amount of money it is spending out there, so I want to show a few areas where the government would be able to save money.

Government Orders

The government was looking, over the next three years, to cut 665 staff and find about 15% in budgetary savings through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Over the next 10 years, it will total roughly \$150 million in cuts. We are currently also going through the supplementary phase of the budget, and in the supps we see one line item, alone, that would actually pay to keep the research stations open and staffed. There is \$150 million for the modernization of the CBC. That is on top of their almost \$2-billion budget, and they now need another \$150 million for modernization. It is quite ridiculous how much money the government continues to pump needlessly into the CBC, but it also shows where the government's priorities are and how it has no clue what actually runs the largest exporting portion of the Canadian economy.

On top of that, there is the Liberals' boondoggle of the tree planting plan they had. They were going to plant two billion trees. They spent about \$267 million to barely put a dent in that number. Now they have abandoned the plan, and they spent \$200 million just to end the two-billion tree program. It was going to be one of the cornerstone environmental commitments of the government, and it basically wasted close to half a billion dollars on that entire program. Back in the eighties, Saskatchewan farmers had a tree planting program. They would have planted as many or more trees than that program did, and they would have done it for a fraction of the cost.

When we look at the debt charges, for example, just the debt charges alone are over \$1,300 per Canadian per year as of last year, and that is in total \$53.7 billion more than all revenue collected through GST. We know there are other areas where the government can find savings. It spent between \$17 billion and \$19 billion on external consultants, because it basically admitted that even though it has massively bloated the public service, its employees are not even able to do the work that they were supposedly hired to do in the first place.

There are many places that the government would have been able to find savings. We know through the comprehensive expenditure reviews that there are many departments that can find savings without impacting service delivery, but we know that the research that is happening at these research stations is invaluable. It cannot be replaced, and the fact that the government wants to do away with that is absolutely shameful.

I have met with a lot of the producer groups over the last week. They have two very simple requests right now. If the government is not going to back away from these cuts, at the very least they are asking if the government can at least let the 2026 crop year and research year be completed before any of these cuts are rolled out and also if it could slow down the pace at which it is looking to sell off the equipment that the research stations have. There are very specific and very specialized pieces of machinery at those research stations. If there is any chance we could save the research stations, that equipment needs to be there. The producers' request would be that the government would back off on selling that equipment at this point in time.

I look forward to questions from the government.

● (1340)

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague points out a lot of valid ideas. We have been looking at

the expenditure review plan at the operations committee. Unfortunately, it actually requires orders of the committee to the government to release some of the details to the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

The member talks about agricultural research. In the past, we have seen the government spend \$7.4 billion on its green energy accelerator. Billions of dollars went to multinational U.S. companies that had not even applied for the money. It actually went to one company that has been convicted of subsidizing ISIS abroad.

What does the member think about the fact that the government is cutting vital agricultural research while at the same time funding foreign multinational companies that are violating international law?

Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, my colleague makes a terrific point about how the government is making it harder for parliamentarians to get access to the information we need to be able to do our jobs. He is right. We did have to compel departments to release information on the CER, not only so we could do our jobs, but also so the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer could properly do his job.

It is disgraceful, the way the Liberals are treating Canadians. We then see, on the other side of it, that they are funding, in some cases, illegal and criminal activity abroad. It is absolutely appalling. If they were truly focused on building Canada strong, they would focus on projects and initiatives that are happening in Canada, they would listen to what is happening in Canada, and they would prioritize those kinds of initiatives instead of groups that are funding ISIS.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will not address the silliness of making accusations about funding criminal activity internationally.

It is interesting, given the member is from the prairie region, that he does not recognize that when we go into an election, a major document we provide Canadians is our election platform. The Conservative Party had nothing in regard to agriculture in its own platform. That is an interesting point.

Does the member support the Minister of Agriculture's aggressive and very proactive approach to finding additional export markets that go beyond the Canada-U.S. borders? Does he support the travel that is necessary for the minister, the Prime Minister and others to secure future markets for our commodities?

Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, Canadian farmers know that the government has been in place for 10, going on 11 years now. They know it is not a new government. They know that when they look at the benches, they see many of the same faces that have been there for the last 10 years.

Government Orders

It was Stephen Harper and the hon. Ed Fast who did a tremendous amount of work on securing trade deals around the world. In fact, we are going to be working, during the next sitting week, on the CPTPP, which was negotiated and signed by Ed Fast. It took the government a long time to actually ratify it. There is an amendment coming forward to that deal.

Conservatives have long been the ones who have championed this, because of the legacy of great Conservative prime ministers like Stephen Harper and members like Ed Fast, who have done a tremendous job on trade. That is a legacy I am proud of.

• (1345)

Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, also offensive are some of the initiatives the Liberals have funded abroad. I think about the issue with the rice. I am not going to get into it on the rice, but can the member talk about some of the dollars that have been wasted in some crazy investments or expenditures overseas that would have been way better invested in increasing the stability of research stations in rural Canada?

Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, the general strategy of the government has been to pick all kinds of radical DEI projects around the world to fund, but it has also had those same policies in place here domestically.

The Liberals left a \$500-million maintenance backlog at the research stations, which has made those research stations vulnerable. The infrastructure is kind of crumbling around people while they are trying to do their work. In the meantime, to fill rabid DEI requirements, the Liberals went about a hiring spree.

If we look at what the Liberals are funding internationally, it just further cements where their priorities are. Rather than actually working for producers here in Canada, they are focused more on these international pet projects that have no benefit to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my turn to speak to Bill C-15, and therefore to the budget. I am sure that many of my colleagues reread it every night. Before beginning, I would like to sincerely thank all the members of the Standing Committee on Finance. After some challenging discussions and debates, we managed to finish our work earlier this week and send the bill back to the House. I really want to thank our colleagues from all the parties. I think that we fulfilled our duty as parliamentarians, and that is something that benefits all of us, the nation and the prestige of this institution.

Let us return to Bill C-15. As we know, the global context is rapidly changing, leaving economies, businesses and workers under a cloud of uncertainty. Quite frankly, a lot of people no longer know what to make of it. There is a great deal of uncertainty, volatility and ambiguity. That is why the Government of Canada is focusing on what it can control, which is building a stronger economy to make life more affordable for Canadians. We are doing this by forging new trade and investment partnerships abroad and strengthening our capacity at home. This allows us to provide Canadians with good job opportunities and better wages from coast to coast. Our government has a plan to ensure that Canadians have the support they need, and now is the time to implement that plan.

We heard many comments from various groups and analysts. We heard a number of opinions on the Government of Canada's fiscal framework. People ask us why we are doing this, why we are doing it at this scale and whether we really have the means to do so. We are taking action now because the time to act is now. It is not three years or five years from now. We must take action now to help us get through what our Prime Minister recently said in Davos is a rupture in the world order. This world order served us well in Canada for about 30 years. However, the world has changed and the time to act is now.

Obviously, there are no secrets in the budget: There is a deficit. This deficit is clearly indicated in the budget. The deficit for the 2025-26 fiscal year is \$78 billion, or 2.5% of GDP. We are not hiding it. We are not playing any tricks. It is clearly stated in the budget documents. Our friends across the way keep saying that we should have limited the deficit to perhaps \$40 billion or even less than that. However, they have never told us where they would have found \$30 billion or \$40 billion in savings. They have not told us what they would have cut in the budget to achieve that.

This also means that, with this deficit, Canada's public debt stands at 42% of GDP. Of course, 42% of GDP is no small amount. We all agree that it is a significant debt. We are talking about hundreds of billions of dollars, but it is 42% of Canada's GDP. We always need to keep in mind the order of magnitude. We are often presented with financial indicators of debt and deficit in absolute terms. A trillion dollars in debt, or \$1,000 billion, or nearly \$80 billion in deficit are really shocking numbers, but we must put them into perspective in relation to the size of the economy and the capacity of that economy to absorb such levels of debt.

• (1350)

What we have noticed and observed since the budget was tabled in early November is that the financial markets are not in distress at all. They are absorbing this deficit very well. Canada still has a AAA credit rating, one of the best credit ratings in the world, giving us privileged access to capital markets to enable us to implement our plan. I agree that our plan is ambitious, but we absolutely have the ability to implement it. I will say it again: The time to do it is now, and now is when we are doing it.

Statements by Members

At the end of the budget period, in fiscal year 2029-2030, we will still have a deficit of 1.5% of GDP. We are going from 2.5% to 1.5% of GDP. Once again, this is entirely manageable, and Canada's public debt will represent 43% of GDP. We are going from 42% to 43% of GDP. With numbers like these, I can assure the House that financial markets will continue to welcome Canada's debt. We will therefore be able to continue financing our activities without any issues, still with a AAA credit rating, one of the best in the world, which will allow us to achieve our objectives.

I want to come back to the budget. The government quickly introduced several new measures to lower costs, which included cutting taxes for 22 million Canadians, boosting residential construction and protecting and expanding crucial social programs. We believe that we must be able to foster and support economic development, while always taking care of our people.

We must always be able to provide the social programs that we truly value and that set Canada apart. What makes Canada what it is, in large part, is the range of social programs that we have had in place for a long time—these are not recent developments—and the fact that we continue to support these programs and make them more accessible. This continues to make life affordable for many Canadians.

That is another point of contention, so to speak, between our opinion and that of our friends across the floor, who believe that social programs are expensive. Of course, these programs are not free, but they help keep life affordable for millions of Canadians, whether through the Canada child benefit or affordable day care. Both of these programs help many families and enable many women to join the labour market. These programs cost money, but at the same time, they make life affordable for many Canadians. If we decided to make changes now and eliminate these social programs, it would be completely counterproductive, because it would make life much less affordable for millions of Canadians.

Members on the other side tell us that when we do these things, it creates inflationary deficits: Liberal inflation. I would need far more time than I have to explain why that is not the case.

First, inflation in Canada is currently well under control. I understand that many of my friends on the other side are not very fond of the Bank of Canada. In fact, their leader said in a somewhat reckless statement that he would have fired the Governor of the Bank of Canada.

● (1355)

It turns out that the Bank of Canada was one of the first major G7 central banks to successfully bring inflation back within the target range of 1% to 3%. The Bank of Canada's goal of controlling inflation without creating a recession was successful, even though many said that it was inevitable. That inflation was not the result of budget deficits; it was an international phenomenon. There was COVID-19, then the resurgence of COVID-19. There were a lot of factors, and it affected everyone, in Canada, the United States, Europe, Japan and Korea. All developed countries experienced a sharp rise in inflation, and we were the first to manage to bring it under control.

It is important to not confuse “inflation”, which is the rate of price increases, with “price levels”. The cost of living involves price levels. After a few years of high inflation, prices are very high, and there are indeed affordability challenges. There are cost-of-living issues, particularly with respect to food. However, as I said earlier, if we were to start cutting social programs now, we would be making life much less affordable for millions of Canadians.

The budget also includes measures to support consumers. Specifically, Bill C-15 includes a few measures to make life more affordable. For example, it includes measures to promote competition in order to support businesses and consumers. More competition is good for the economy. Healthy competition pushes businesses to operate more efficiently, to innovate so they can stand out and to reduce operating costs.

In budget 2025, we are also addressing structural issues that have held the Canadian economy back for far too long. We will increase competition in areas where it is weak. We will simplify regulations in areas where they are too restrictive. I want to say just one word on this matter. Yes, regulations can become burdensome. Regulations can become an obstacle, but often there are good reasons to have regulations. We must always find a balance.

I see that my time is up. I have a lot more to say, but I will close by saying that we tabled a very good budget.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[*English*]

WILLIAM HERBERT LOEWEN

Bruce Fanjoy (Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to honour the remarkable life of William Herbert Loewen, an entrepreneur and patron of the arts. Bill passed away in Winnipeg on February 4 at the age of 95. He was predeceased by his equally remarkable wife, Shirley, and is survived by their children, Ann, Howard, Louise, Peter and Jennifer, as well as many loved ones.

From modest prairie roots, Bill founded Comcheq Services Limited and built it into Canada's largest independent payroll service provider. Bill believed deeply in the power of the arts to enrich our spirits. He was a member of the Order of Canada and an honorary member of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the only person ever to receive that distinction.

Statements by Members

Bill had a profound impact on many lives, including mine when he hired me at the age of 23. Canada is better because of Bill's leadership in business, his love of country, his passion for the arts and the tremendous example of his life.

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VETERANS ADVOCATE

Colin Reynolds (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great privilege that I rise in the House to honour an outstanding member of the Elmwood—Transcona community, Peter Martin. Peter Martin is a tireless advocate for military veterans and the Transcona community in Winnipeg. He is a Métis veteran of the Canadian Army, a member of the Last Post Fund, the missing marker program, and the organizer of wreaths for veterans at the Transcona Cemetery Field of Honour.

Peter is also the Manitoba coordinator of the No Stone Left Alone ceremonies, which bring children and veterans together to place poppies on veterans' headstones. This program educates our youth about our military veterans and gives veterans the opportunity to share their stories with our local youth.

I would like to tell Peter, from me personally and from the House, that I thank him for everything he does in service to our community and in service to our country. From the bottom of my heart, I thank him.

* * *

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre—Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Black History Month and the vital contributions of Black Canadians to our nation. The 2026 theme of honouring 30 years of Black brilliance across generations celebrates both our history and the promise of the future.

This past Sunday, I had the honour of hosting a community Black History Month celebration in Scarborough Centre—Don Valley East. The event was inspiring, full of performances, reflections and recognition of the richness of Black culture, heritage and leadership. It reminded us that Black history is Canadian history. Black History Month also calls on us to continue addressing systemic barriers and creating a more inclusive society. I thank all the participants for sharing their stories and their talents.

Let us carry the lessons of this month forward, celebrating achievements, fostering understanding and building a stronger, more equitable Canada for all.

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TOURISM

Blake Richards (Airdrie—Cochrane, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the incredible performance of our tourism sector. Leading the way is my home province of Alberta, guided by the work of Travel Alberta under the leadership of David Goldstein. Alberta's tourism sector reached \$14.4 billion in visitor spending in 2024, receiving global recognition as a destination of choice from several leading international travel publications.

Alberta is creating and promoting new must-visit destinations, improving air access and attracting additional private sector investment. I congratulate the hard-working businesses, operators and workers, who are key to Alberta's vibrant visitor economy. Tourism is proving essential to diversification, job creation and growth and delivering new opportunities in every corner of the province.

Alberta's success shows what is possible nationwide if the federal government recognizes the power of tourism to diversify and grow our economy and create trade opportunities and prosperity for all Canadians.

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[*Translation*]

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF CLUB FONDEURS LAURENTIDES

Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the 50th anniversary of Club Fondateurs Laurentides. In 1975, physical education teacher Marc Desjardins decided that cross-country skiing was an excellent way to get our young people moving.

Over time, the club grew and now has 650 members from municipalities throughout the Lower Laurentians. Club Fondateurs Laurentides organizes nothing less than Canada's largest cross-country skiing competition for schoolchildren, bringing together more than 2,000 young people, in addition to hosting the Coupe Québec at Sommet Morin Heights in Les Pays-d'en-Haut.

I would like to congratulate all the parent volunteers, coaches, board members, and especially the president, Dang Thanh Bui, former president Daniel Roch, head coach Rémi Brière, and, of course, Marc Desjardins, who, 50 years later, is still bursting with energy and remains involved in all aspects of the club.

Congratulations to everyone and long live Club Fondateurs Laurentides.

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● (1405)

[*English*]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Kathy Borrelli (Windsor—Tecumseh—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the people of Windsor—Tecumseh—Lakeshore, who are counting on me to defend their jobs and their future. I am here to fight to protect our workers and the automotive industry that sustains our community.

On Monday, Liberals and the Bloc voted down the Conservative motion that would have strengthened Canada's automotive sector. For our community, that decision is deeply concerning. Windsor is highly dependent on a strong auto industry to keep a robust and healthy local economy. By defeating this motion, the House missed an opportunity to provide certainty and stability for our local manufacturing and our economic growth. The ripple effects will be felt across our community, in workplaces, in storefronts and around kitchen tables.

I will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with our workers and fight relentlessly to protect our industry and the livelihoods it supports.

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UKRAINE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we enter the fifth year of Russia's invasion of sovereign Ukraine, I want to bring attention to the ongoing abduction of Ukrainian children. Over 35,000 Ukrainian children have been abducted since the start of the war, stolen from their families through manipulation, coercion and violence, and relocated to Russia for ideological re-education, military training and abuse. Only 2,000 have been repatriated.

The United Nations demands their immediate and unconditional return. This forcible abduction of children to de-Ukrainize them is a grave violation of international law. The Geneva Convention is clear on this issue. No child should have their identity erased.

Russia is now bartering a child for the return of each Russian prisoner of war. This is a disgusting violation of the rights of the child. Canada must continue to lead on this issue. Ukraine's war is our war. Ukraine's children are our children.

* * *

HOLI CELEBRATION

Harb Gill (Windsor West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, around the world, there are few festivals as instantly recognizable as Holi. Streets become rivers of vibrant colour as music and dancing fill the air, but beyond the colour and celebration lies something deeper, the timeless reminder of the triumph of good over evil, of light over darkness, and the renewal for a brighter future.

As a proud member of the Indian diaspora who has made Canada my home for four decades, I know how meaningful this day is for Hindu families in Windsor and across our country. Holi is not just a festival of colours. It is a bridge between generations, connecting children through faith stories and teaching us all lessons in resilience, humility and hope.

I want to acknowledge the tremendous work of the Hindu mandir and the gurdwara in Windsor. They are pillars of service, charity and community. As spring arrives, may the vibrant colours of Holi help us carry forward the spirit of optimism and faith in our hearts as well as in our communities and our country. To all those celebrating, I wish them a happy Holi.

Statements by Members

DANICA HILLS AND KAYLA PEACOCK

William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am heartbroken by the tragic loss of two young ladies, Danica Hills and Kayla Peacock, following a fatal collision near Jasper, in my riding of Yellowhead. These two Harry Collinge High School students were dedicated hockey players with the Jasper Bearcats and were driving home after practice. Their passing has left an unimaginable void in the hearts of their families and friends in the wider Hinton and Jasper communities.

We are mourning the loss of these two beloved daughters, sisters, classmates and teammates. My deepest condolences are with their loved ones. No parent should ever have to lose a child. No community should have to bear such a loss. As a parent of two daughters, my thoughts are with them. In moments like this, being there for one another matters more than ever. May their memory be eternal. May their loved ones find strength in the days ahead.

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● (1410)

UKRAINE

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at this critical hour, Canada calls on Russia to cease hostilities and withdraw to Ukraine's internationally recognized borders. Canada condemns the deliberate Russian attacks on energy infrastructure that deprive civilians of both heat and electricity.

Canada recently announced \$2 billion in military assistance for 2026-27, including over 400 armoured vehicles and an additional \$20 million for the Ukraine energy support fund. Furthermore, Canada has sanctioned 21 individuals, 53 entities and 100 shadow fleet vessels and lowered the Russian oil price cap. I commend Canada's leadership in the international coalition for the return of Ukrainian children and support accountability before the International Criminal Court.

For four years, families have endured profound hardship, yet their courage endures. Canada stands firmly with Ukraine for freedom, justice and a durable peace with legally binding security guarantees.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after 11 years of the Liberal government, the cost of living crisis is crushing young Canadians and seniors alike.

Statements by Members

An RBC poll shows that 64% of millennials are anxious about their future, and 57% have nothing left at month's end. Four in 10 fear that they will never escape their debts. TransUnion Canada reports that household debts have surged to a record \$2.6 trillion, driven largely by mortgages as families take on staggering debt just to keep a roof overhead.

Today, the Financial Post reported that only 41% believe they will have enough to retire, with most worried they will not have enough savings to live securely.

Seniors in the communities in my riding are asking how they are supposed to survive with the ever-escalating costs of groceries and everything else.

When will the Liberals rein in their inflationary deficits, lower costs and restore an economy where Canadians can finally get ahead?

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WORLD OBESITY DAY

Hon. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, March 4 is World Obesity Day, and we should be aware of the serious situation that Canada is facing.

In 1981, just 9% of Canadians lived with obesity. Now, according to a recent study in the Canadian Medical Association Journal, this has risen to roughly a third of Canadians. We have one of the highest rates of obesity in the OECD.

What is troubling is that obesity is a strong predictor of health complications, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, liver and kidney diseases and cancer.

Obesity is a chronic disease that is placing enormous pressure on an already overburdened health care system, but by taking action to prevent and treat obesity, we can improve our health care systems. Personalized lifestyle changes such as diet and exercise and, when necessary, medical interventions like pharmacotherapy or bariatric surgery can all help to improve the health of Canadians.

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[*Translation*]

JACQUES TREMBLAY

Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on February 16, at 8:08 p.m., my friend Jacques Tremblay passed away.

Jacques was a cornerstone of the political world in the riding of Montcalm. He made his mark as president of the Bloc Québécois in Montcalm, but also as a municipal councillor for the City of Mascouche and as a political aide to the MP for Montcalm. Yes, in 2015, despite adversity, we joined forces to win back Montcalm, driven by a common cause: the Quebec nation. My friend and I travelled many kilometres to meet the people of Montcalm.

He was a man in search of social justice, a tad impulsive, but above all full of humanity. He was a man who deeply loved his family. He was so proud of his sons, Francis and Guillaume; his daughter, Émilie; and his grandchildren.

I want to wish my friend Jacques a safe journey. May he rest in peace.

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● (1415)

[*English*]

OLYMPIANS FROM SAULT STE. MARIE

Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie—Algoma, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize two outstanding athletes from Sault Ste. Marie—Algoma who have made our region and our country immensely proud.

From Thessalon, Shilo Rousseau reached the Olympic stage in the biathlon, a sport she has pursued since the age of 12. She was inspired by her father, himself a former member of Canada's national team. Her dedication to a demanding sport that combines cross-country skiing and precision marksmanship speaks to years of discipline and perseverance.

From the Soo Curlers, Brad Jacobs has once again earned gold for our men's curling team, his second after winning gold in Sochi in 2014. Brad has been a cornerstone of Canadian curling, with steady resolve, sportsmanship and a deep pride in his hometown.

Their achievements reflect not only talent and discipline but the strength of the communities that stand behind them.

I call on the House to “hurry hard” and congratulate these two athletes, as well as all of the Canadian athletes who did so well at these past Olympics.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week the Prime Minister stated that he had the immigration system under control. Well, let us review the facts: 86% of rejected asylum claimants stay in Canada, 25,000 have been let in without security screening, some of them from the most dangerous countries in the world, and right now, the CBSA has 33,000 non-citizens listed as wanted criminals in Canada.

At the end of this year, three million temporary residents will have their visas expire, but the government has no plan to remove them, and of the 1.5 million temporary residents whose permits expired last year, the Liberals assume they left, but they do not know.

This is not a system under control. It is a system out of control, because the Liberals destroyed the fair, compassionate and secure system that the Conservatives created, which was the envy of the world.

The Prime Minister needs to take accountability and finally fire his incompetent Liberal immigration minister.

BILL LOEWEN

Hon. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honour the life and legacy of Bill Loewen. For many years, he was a proud resident of St. Norbert and a true community builder in Winnipeg South.

Bill was a successful business leader whose entrepreneurial drive was matched only by his generosity. Through his philanthropy, he strengthened institutions across Manitoba, including the Behavioural Health Foundation, and quietly supported initiatives that continue to serve families to this day.

St. Norbert was at the heart of his life. He understood its historic significance and worked tirelessly to preserve its distinctive character. As a co-founder of Heritage Saint-Norbert, he helped safeguard its history and championed projects like the St. Norbert Farmers' Market, which is now a cherished gathering place for so many.

I extend my sincere condolences to Bill Loewen's family and to all those who had the privilege of knowing him. Canada has lost a remarkable community leader, and his legacy will endure for generations.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the immigration minister could not get up in her chair and defend her record. She cannot tell us how many rejected asylum seekers remain in Canada or how many thousands of people came here without a proper security screening, or even give the most basic answers about her job. Her signature bill, Bill C-3, could give citizenship to millions of people abroad with the click of a button, and she has no details and no explanations.

I have a simple question for the minister: How many people, under this piece of legislation, would become Canadian?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this has not been a good week for the Conservative Party of Canada. This has been a week when the Conservatives put in question our constitutional, to say nothing of humanitarian, obligation to look after people who are sick or injured on our territory, including children who are fleeing war zones, including in Ukraine, or Syrian refugees or others. It is a shameful thing that the Conservative Party members have decided, of all the issues, to come back to the House and talk about these things.

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister still will not get up in her chair and answer basic questions about her job. Nearly three million temporary visas are nearing expiry without the department having a clear plan, and potentially millions more people are going to become citizens, but nobody over there can stand up and answer a single detailed question about legislation in the House. The only response the Liberals give to this side is to call us bad people for asking questions about the legislation.

Oral Questions

Does anybody over there truly believe that the minister deserves her job, or is there somebody on the backbench who can do it better?

• (1420)

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me just say at the outset that the Minister of Immigration is doing an outstanding job. If we look at the numbers, we see that asylum is down by one-third, the number of temporary foreign workers is down by 50%, and the number of international students is reduced by 60%. We are taking control of our immigration system.

As of last year, 2025, we have removed 22,000 individuals who are ineligible to be in Canada. This is work that we are doing, and we will ensure that Canada remains an open and free society for immigrants and refugees.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised us affordable groceries, but he has given us the highest food inflation in the G7. He promised to spend less, yet the deficit is now double and Canadians are now paying more in interest than for health care. He promised homes people could afford, but the prices have never been worse. RBC is now reporting that it is the hardest on young Canadians, who say at the end of the month that there is nothing left to save.

When will the Prime Minister reverse his Liberal inflationary spending, so young Canadians can finally save for a home in this country again?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know it is Thursday, but I have good news for the House. Canada has received the highest level of foreign direct investment in 18 years. Yes, we should all applaud and rejoice in this House. Even the Conservatives should be happy. I know it is Thursday, but in their hearts I know that they are happy that Canada is attracting investment, that Canada is leading in the world and that Canada is building a country that everyone will want to be in, because on this side of the House, we believe in Canada.

Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just listen to the minister and his high-flying friends. They think everything is great, but we know that inflation is good news for the wealthy and for the bankers. I can tell them that young Canadians are being the hardest hit by this inflation. TransUnion is reporting that Canadians have now taken on a record-breaking \$2.6 trillion in household debt. This debt is attached to mortgages. Canadians are breaking the bank just to keep a roof over their head.

Oral Questions

When will the Liberal Prime Minister end his inflationary spending?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will take no lessons from the Conservatives. On this side of the House, we have taken affordability measures. When it was the time not to speak and not to ask questions, but to vote, the Conservatives voted against dental care. They voted against pharmacare, and they voted against the national school food program. They voted against every measure that will help Canadians.

Canadians at home know who stands with them. We have their back. We are going to build this country. We will have the strongest economy in the G7. We believe in Canada.

[Translation]

Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we have other things to talk about. After 11 years of Liberal government, young adults are at the end of their rope. An RBC survey shows that 64% of them are experiencing financial anxiety and 57% of them do not have a penny left over after paying their bills.

Meanwhile, Canadian household debt is breaking records, primarily because of the cost of housing. Our young people are stuck between crippling taxes and inflationary deficits. They are barely surviving.

When will the government show some common sense?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, common sense would be for the Conservatives to vote for measures that will promote affordability. Where was my colleague when it was time to vote, for example, for the Canadian pharmacare program? Where was my colleague when it was time to vote for the Canadian dental care plan? Where was my colleague when we were voting for subsidized spaces in child care programs or for the national school food program?

On this side of the House, my colleagues know that we will always be there for Canadians. We will support Canadians with affordability measures—

• (1425)

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

* * *

SENIORS

Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, where is his minister when it comes to taking care of seniors? At 81, instead of enjoying her retirement, Jeannette Larivée has to look for work because she is short \$500 every month for housing and food. Her pension is gobbled up by inflation. In Lanaudière, the number of job seekers over the age of 75 has risen from 3% to 14%.

The Liberals do not need to tell us where the ministers are. They are never here and they are not taking care of anyone. Who is taking care of seniors?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the seniors watching at home today understand one thing: There is a difference between rhetoric in the House and government action. We have taken action with the Canada groceries and essentials benefit, for example. That is a meaningful measure that will help families across the country, that will help seniors and that will put more money in seniors' pockets. That is precisely the type of measure seniors expect from a responsible government.

I hope my Conservative colleagues will go to their ridings this week and talk about the benefit and how it will help families across the country.

* * *

PENSIONS

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we would like to revisit Cúram, the Liberal Party's success story that is causing problems for 85,000 retirees. Yesterday, the Minister of Jobs and Families said that this is not a big deal for those who are not receiving their old age pension. She said it does not matter because these are not payments that people depend on every month since they are new applicants.

All retirees include their pension in their financial planning. For some, it is their only source of income. What world do the Liberals live in to think that this is not a big deal?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we had an outdated system that dates back to the 1960s or 1970s. It was a system that made a lot of errors and was unreliable, so the government acted responsibly and undertook a major transformation project.

Today, we have a new system that works, that allows people to self-register and that will serve some 7.7 million Canadians. Even today, it is serving Canadians.

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals say that it works, and that it does not cost a lot. That is exactly why the National Assembly unanimously called for an independent public inquiry. If we relied on the Liberals we would never get a clear picture of Cúram's problems because they do not see a problem.

For them, it is not a problem if 85,000 pensioners receive OAS cheques containing errors. For them, \$5 billion in cost overruns is no problem because they are not overruns anyway. Things just cost more than initially planned.

Each of their answers only proves the need for an inquiry. When will they call one?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will get up again and explain exactly what we are doing here, which is exactly what Canadians expect. They expect modern systems that provide benefits, in a seamless way, that they can actually apply for online. Those are exactly the programs that we are designing for seniors. There are 7.7 million seniors already on the new system. There are two more benefit plans to go: employment insurance and CPP.

We are confident that Canadians know this is exactly what they need for the next generation.

* * *

*[Translation]***PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all the parties in Quebec City want this government to stop squandering Quebecers' money. As proven by Phoenix, Arrive-CAN and Cûram, every time Ottawa touches IT, it turns into a scandal. The Liberals have wasted more than \$10 billion in cost overruns on those three projects alone.

Meanwhile, the folks in Quebec City are wondering whether there is enough money to continue funding our children's cultural outings at school. Quebec is unanimous. Quebec is fed up.

When will there be an independent public inquiry into federal IT contracts?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the question is about old age security, so I will stick to that program. In fact, that 60-year-old program, which was fraught with problems, was something the Government of Canada sought to modernize because Canadians now expect to be able to apply for their benefits online and have more control over how they apply for their benefits. In fact, 7.7 million Canadians have transitioned to this new program.

For some particular cases with difficult information, we have seen some delays, and as that member knows, we are seeing a decline in—

● (1430)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Parkland.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the situation out there is dire. After 11 years of Liberal inflation, housing unaffordability and job insecurity, Canadians, particularly young Canadians, are facing the consequences.

We used to take pride in this country when we said that the next generation would be better off than the one before, but for young Canadians today, that just is not the case. Under the Liberals, the

well-off are better off than ever before, but people struggling to get ahead are falling further and further behind.

When will the Liberals finally get off the backs of Canadians for a change?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is squarely focused on opportunity. Opportunity means good job opportunities and affordable homes.

As members might know, Bill C-4, our bill, is in front of the Senate right now, and it would eliminate GST for first-time homebuyers on homes up to \$1 million. We have a bill in front of the House right now, Bill C-20, for Build Canada Homes, because we are focused on making sure that this generation of Canadians, millennials in particular, can get into the housing market and have an affordable home to build.

The Conservatives seem to want to stall our housing agenda every step of the way. They should get on board.

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberal spin cannot avoid the facts. Under the Prime Minister, the rich are getting richer while working Canadians are falling further and further behind. Liberal inflation has made the bankers rich, but the cost of food, vehicles and housing is out of reach. Young people are facing record-high unemployment, and even those who are lucky enough to have a job cannot even afford to pay their bills, let alone save for the million-dollar homes the Liberals are talking about.

We need to restore jobs with powerful paycheques to ensure that the next generation can be better off. Conservatives are fighting for that future. When are the Liberals going to get on board?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians are tired of is rhetoric that says that Canada is broken and that we are not getting ahead.

Canadians elected a government with a plan that is cutting taxes for 22 million Canadians, delivering a groceries and essentials benefit to put much-needed money back in the pockets of many Canadian families, and is committed to affordable child care, saving families upwards of \$10,000 a year. Those are measurable plans to make life better and more affordable for Canadians.

We are proud of that. I wish the Conservatives would stand with us.

Oral Questions

Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all five of my children are married and raising a family of their own. Like so many young Canadians, they are working hard just trying not fall into debt. Home repairs, music lessons, cadet uniforms, gas to drive kids to activities, and the everyday cost of raising a family all add up. Saving is nearly impossible right now, and 64% of millennials are worried about their future. Parents are doing everything right yet still falling behind.

When will the government lower costs so Canadian families can stop worrying about just staying afloat and start planning for their future again?

Jennifer McKelvie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government cares deeply about affordability for young Canadians. That is why we have the first-time homebuyer GST relief before the House. It is also why we are improving the cost of housing. We are bringing it down by investing in housing-enabling infrastructure and by investing in modern methods of construction. Importantly, this is going to create good-paying, highly trained, skilled jobs for young Canadians.

We are going to build careers, and we are going to build homes.

Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I look at my grandchildren, I think about the life they should be able to build: going to university, buying a first home, raising a family of their own and believing that hard work will allow them to get ahead. However, today their parents are struggling just to cover everyday costs, and saving for their own future is slipping out of reach, with household debt now at \$2.6 trillion.

How can the Liberal government justify spending today in ways that will fundamentally limit the future of our grandchildren?

Jennifer McKelvie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives claim they care about young people, yet they voted against the national housing strategy. They voted against the home savings account. They voted against expanding mortgage criteria. They are voting against the GST cut. They are voting against Bill C-227 to establish a national strategy for housing for young Canadians.

A vote against these measures is a vote against young Canadians.

● (1435)

Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, young Canadians face rising food costs, rising debt and rising house prices. What else is rising? Their fears about their future are. The Liberal government provides only more excuses, more deficits and more broken promises.

In my hometown of Steinbach, the price of a single-family home has gone up 8% this past year. This generation should be building wealth, but instead they are falling further behind despite everything they are doing.

With millennials squeezed between rising costs and their desire for home ownership, when will the Liberal government finally lower the costs and make living in Canada affordable again?

Hon. Adam van Koeverden (Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are sick and tired of the alternative Conservative facts from the opposition.

We all know that food costs too much, but instead of exploiting the challenges that are facing Canadians right now, the Conservatives should do a little bit of reading and look into why food costs too much. All the research indicates that 85% of food inflation is due to imported factors like war, tariffs and extreme weather due to climate change, something Conservatives refuse to acknowledge and do not believe in.

The groceries and essentials benefit will help 12.6 million Canadians. Why will the Conservatives not get on board and help a Canadian for a change?

* * *

HOUSING

Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is reckless government spending, hidden carbon taxes and red tape.

After 11 years of the Liberals, there is an affordability crisis. Household debt alone is now a record \$2.6 trillion. A recent poll found that 57% of millennials are nearly broke after paying monthly bills. A generation that should be building wealth is draining savings. This week, several university students told me they fear they will never afford a home.

It is a Canadian dream to own a home, but under the Liberals, it is now just a pipe dream. Why is that?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is quite something to hear the Conservatives talk about household debt and the real concerns of middle-income and low-income Canadians but, at the same time call for, over the years, and I think it is still their position, the Canada child benefit to be eliminated and say that the school food program has no place in Canada. They do not want child care for kids. The list goes on and on, including dental care and pharmacare. This is not a serious approach.

What we do have on this side is exactly that: an opportunities agenda seized with jobs in this country, building the country up, making sure we get our resources to market and building the infrastructure to do it. That is what we need.

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a recent RBC survey reveals that 64% of millennials are anxious about their future, and that four in 10 millennials fear they will never be able to pay off their debts. Meanwhile, TransUnion has confirmed that Canadian household debt has reached an all-time high of \$2.6 trillion. After years of Liberal inflationary deficits, young Canadians are going into debt just to survive.

How many more failures will it take for the Liberals to admit that they have destroyed affordability in Canada?

Caroline Desrochers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a plan on this side of the House to help families and young Canadians buy their first home. Build Canada Homes will increase the supply of housing and help reduce pressure on the market.

I have to say that it is ironic to hear the Conservatives talk about this when they voted against the tax credit for first-time home buyers, against the first home savings account, against expanding mortgage eligibility criteria and against all the affordability measures we are implementing to help young Canadians and put money back in their pockets.

On our side of the House, we are in problem-solving mode. That side of the House is offering nothing but obstruction.

* * *

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Ottawa promised to apologize to the expropriated residents of Mirabel, but it also promised to never again carry out abusive expropriations.

In Bill C-15, the Liberals, with help from the Conservatives, are giving Alto exceptional expropriation powers for the high-speed train. They are doing away with the right to be heard by a hearing officer. They are doing away with community impact studies. They are preventing a farmer who has suffered a disaster from rebuilding. There is not a single other citizen in Canada who is subject to this.

Why are the people from the north shore being treated like second-class citizens by the federal government?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we note the objection, even opposition, from the Bloc Québécois to the major project that is the high-speed train between Quebec City and Toronto, a project that is eagerly awaited and coveted by all Canadians.

We will be diligent about this project. We will show respect for elected officials, respect for farmers, respect for the people who live along the route. This high-speed train is for all Canadians, and we will deliver it with the utmost sensitivity.

• (1440)

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, whether the minister likes it or not, the Liberals are not going to get their high-speed train built by giving Alto abusive expropriation powers. It will require social licence. For now, it almost seems as though the

Oral Questions

Liberals are deliberately trying not to get it. The towns of Mirabel, Mascouche and Terrebonne want to have their say on the route. The region wants economic benefits. Farmers and communities feel that they are not being respected.

When will the Liberals go back to the drawing board with all the local stakeholders to ensure that they have social licence?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Alto is mandated to hold consultations on the ground with people and to listen to their ideas, demands and concerns about the entire corridor. That is what Alto did this week, and that is what they did in Mirabel.

We will continue to listen, to be sensitive and to champion this great national project. Will the Bloc Québécois do the same?

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government told Canadians its new benefit software program would cost \$1.75 billion and that it would not be launched without conditions of success being met. Estimates have the actual cost at almost three times as much, \$6.6 billion, and reports confirm that the government's own service standards are not being met. In fact, last month there was a backlog of 85,000 new benefit applications. These are Canadians who need these benefits for basic essentials like food and shelter.

Can the minister explain to seniors who are forced to pay the price of yet another failed Liberal program why it is way over budget?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us start with the difference between an estimate and an expenditure. An estimate is what things might cost. In fact, we are way under the estimate as it stands, and we have just started. We have transformed a very old system, 60 years old.

I would point out that this is something the Conservatives let decay during their 10 years of government. We took action early on, in 2017, to modernize a system that Canadians depend on day in and day out. In fact, the caseload backlog is going down. We have dedicated staff working day and night. Finally—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Oral Questions

Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister should do her research. She should be well aware that the Auditor General confirmed in 2023 and 2025 that program costs had increased significantly and would continue to rise. A review by the Treasury Board in 2022 came to the same conclusions, and her own department had to push back the OAS migration three times. In fact, three years ago, her bureaucrats admitted that the costs had already doubled for the new program, even though no benefits had yet moved to the new system.

Can the minister explain to seniors who are forced to pay the price why yet another failed Liberal program is way over budget?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if 7.7 million migrations to a new system is a failure compared to 85,000 cases with missing information on paper applications, I am not sure how the Conservatives are doing accounting. Quite frankly, Canadians expect modernization of legacy systems that serve them every day, day in and day out. We will not tolerate the risk of aging systems failing and creating a disaster for seniors. This is why we are taking action, and we are seeing success.

Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Cúram software has cost Canadians \$5 billion more than what was originally budgeted. To add insult to injury, hundreds of seniors have been delayed in receiving their benefits. An overdue update to an outdated technology has turned into a nightmare for Canadians, with tens of thousands of cases backlogged.

Why is it that Liberal programs always massively exceed their projected costs, and why are seniors forced to pay the price for the Liberals' incompetence and yet another failed federal software system?

• (1445)

Hon. Stephanie McLean (Secretary of State (Seniors), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is taking action on a critical software program. It is a program that was launched in 1966. Let us wrap our heads around that for a moment. My mother was 10 years old. Many of the members on the other side had not been born yet. That is what the Conservatives are suggesting the government move forward with: a system that the Auditor General flagged as a high risk for failure.

We need to modernize our systems. This system has already brought 7.7 million seniors on board, and more will come.

Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals continue to deny that there are any cost overruns for Cúram, even though the Auditor General herself reported four in 2025. Canadian seniors deserve better than denial.

I will ask the same question, and I would like a serious answer from the minister. Why can the Liberals not stay on budget, and why are seniors being forced to pay the price for yet another Liberal failure?

Hon. Stephanie McLean (Secretary of State (Seniors), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would be nice to be asked a serious question, one rooted in facts or one rooted in numbers. To date, \$1.5 billion has

been spent. I do not know where the Conservatives' numbers are coming from. Perhaps it is la-la land.

However, let us stay in reality here. This benefit system is modernizing something from 1966. We have 7.7 million seniors who are better serviced today. We are modernizing it and bringing it online, things the Conservatives do not give a crud about.

Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the system meant to help our seniors has become another expensive disaster. The government continues to hire incompetent consultants that massively overrun their budgets, in this case by \$5 billion. The president of the public service criticized the government and said, "If the system had been designed by public servants...it would have been easier to maintain and understand, as the experts would have been in-house."

Why does the government not trust our public servants to do a better job than the rich consultants?

Hon. Stephanie McLean (Secretary of State (Seniors), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just cannot tolerate the Conservatives talking down the good work of our public servants. Our public servants are over-seeing the management of a specialized software program.

I know that the Conservatives might not have any interest or desire to know about IT systems, but this requires specialized training and expertise. These are not jobs that last forever in the government. These are jobs we need to procure for specific reasons. That is what we are doing to make sure that Canadians' dollars are well spent, spent on ensuring we—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Finance would say, it is already Thursday, but we still have good news.

[*Translation*]

In my home province of New Brunswick, the forestry industry accounts for 25,000 jobs and contributes more than \$1.5 billion to our economy every year. The United States has imposed unjustified tariffs on our softwood lumber. To support the industry, our government has already announced \$2.5 billion, but we know that it still needs help.

Can the Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs tell us about the new support measures announced for our forestry sector?

[*English*]

Hon. Rebecca Chartrand (Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Acadie—Bathurst for his leadership in fighting for forestry workers. I fully agree that the forestry sector is essential to our country.

Yesterday, the government announced the reopening of four programs to support the forestry sector, as well as funding to strengthen forestry companies in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. These programs will deliver \$500 million to support innovation, market diversification and the competitiveness of our forestry companies.

Our government will always stand for forestry workers in the face of American tariffs.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, any time the Liberal government touches a major IT system, it is a disaster. Let me remind the House what happened with ArriveCAN. It was supposed to cost \$80,000 and ended up costing \$59.5 million. Now, with Cúram, the cost has ballooned from \$1.6 billion to \$6.6 billion. That is \$5 billion more, and \$5 billion down the drain. That is what the Liberals do.

Why are the Liberals incapable of managing spending properly?

• (1450)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I sometimes wonder about the premise of questions from the opposition, but in this case, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk is well aware of the situation. He knows that this program is within budget. He knows that this program is replacing an outdated system from the 1960s that did not accurately pay OAS recipients. Today, we have a new, updated, modern and open system that is delivering payment to some 7.7 million Canadians.

I know that the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, in his heart—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk.

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these are 85,000 people, 85,000 seniors, who are among the most vulnerable in our society. These are people who live off their old age pension, and the minister knows it.

Unfortunately, that minister said that the program is a success, and 85,000 people are still waiting. He said that it was just a few cases, but it is 85,000 people that are hurting.

Why is the minister being so arrogant?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, being arrogant would be to keep using a system that made more mistakes than that in just one month. It would have been arrogant to ignore this outdated system, a system that lacked accuracy and that constantly made mistakes. We assumed our responsibilities. We set a budget and we came in under budget to give Canadians a system that will pay dividends and pay amounts accurately.

As for the cases of the people affected, we are going to fix them. In fact, there are fewer of these cases every day.

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Champlain Bridge in Montreal is used by close to 60

million vehicles every year and was built 75 years ago. Rebuilding it cost \$4.2 billion. Then there is the Cúram software. The legacy system was 60 years old, and rebuilding it resulted in a \$5-billion cost overrun.

How is it possible to be off by \$5 billion, a cost higher than that of rebuilding one of the busiest bridges in North America?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Cúram is a software system. In fact, it is going to serve three separate—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. minister may continue.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, let us take a step back. Cúram is a software system. It is used around the world for benefit payments in countries all over the world. In fact, each country needs to specialize that system because, of course, benefit rules vary in different countries. In fact, the number the member opposite is quoting is the total envelope that it could take for three separate benefit systems.

[Translation]

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing confusing about Cúram: It is the federal SAAQclie. The software was supposed to cost \$1.6 billion and ended up costing \$6.6 billion. That is money from taxpayers' pockets.

This week, the Prime Minister tells us that everything is fine, that a \$5-billion cost overrun is par for the course, a success story even. Meanwhile, 85,000 pensioners are not receiving their payments and the government's answer to us is to have them give them a call.

Will the Liberals admit that their new approach is to spend like there is no tomorrow, to downplay their failures and to congratulate themselves on their deficits?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, I have been in front of committee talking about these numbers and being very transparent with Canadians. In fact, here is a number: 7.7 million recipients of OAS on the new system received their benefits on time and without a hitch. There are some cases that are more complicated. They are paper-based applications. We have dedicated staff working with these individuals. If the member opposite has a person in their riding who needs urgent help, we can also do that. These payments can be processed within 24 to 48 hours.

Oral Questions

● (1455)

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the agriculture minister gave his word to farmers that he would support a request for emergency use of strychnine. Prairie farmers were devastated last season, with some losing 20% of their yield. Denying the request from Alberta and Saskatchewan is another Liberal broken promise when farmers needed help the most. It is also further proof that the agriculture minister does not have clout at the cabinet table.

Will the minister keep his word to farmers? Will he reassess this decision with a lens on economic impact and food security?

Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is an extremely important question for the prairie provinces and Alberta. I am certainly disappointed, and I have said publicly that I supported the application. I am disappointed in the PMRA's decision, but ultimately it is an independent agency.

We will keep working with the provinces and farmers to find an effective alternative. It is crucial that our farmers and producers have the tools they need to feed Canadians, and we will do what we can to help them.

John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he is disappointed. The agriculture minister gave his word to farmers. He gave his word to the provinces. He broke that promise again when farmers needed him the most.

This summer, and I cannot understate this, if we do not have access to strychnine and the gopher population continues to explode, the damage on the Prairies will be catastrophic. Again, will the minister keep his word to farmers? Will he reassess this decision, or will he see another disaster on the Canadian Prairies?

Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I went before committee and this hon. member asked me a question relevant to whether I would advocate on behalf of the farmers about strychnine in the prairie provinces and Alberta. That is exactly what I did. He is exaggerating the facts. It was in committee. It is in the Hansard. Anybody can go and look at it.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: It is getting a little loud over there.

We are going now to the hon. member for Bow River.

David Bexte (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, prairie farmers have warned that uncontrolled Richardson's ground squirrel populations have surged since the loss of strychnine, causing millions of dollars in losses. For decades, farmers used strychnine safely and effectively. Today's alternatives are far less effective. On multiple occasions, the Liberals committed to supporting emergency-use approval. That promise has now been broken, perhaps by the health minister.

Alberta and Saskatchewan have called for urgent action and proposed reasonable risk mitigation measures, measures the Liberals have rejected. When will the Liberals approve emergency access to strychnine for provinces that request it?

Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, this is an extremely important issue for the prairie provinces and Alberta. I have been there. I have seen it.

We are working very closely with the Department of Health, which is in charge of the PMRA, and we will continue to advocate on their behalf.

Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that answer does not deal with the crisis of bad Liberal policies in my province. There is an emergency. Farmers across my riding have been sounding the alarm bell for years. The ban on strychnine has led to uncontrolled gopher populations devastating crops.

The Government of Saskatchewan, rural municipalities and farmers have called for emergency access to strychnine. The Liberal minister committed to farmers in my province that he would support emergency-use application. Will the government listen to farmers and for once keep its promise?

Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, it is a very important question. We seem to be on a roll today on strychnine.

We will continue to advocate on behalf of the prairie provinces and Alberta. I have had consultations with both ministers responsible for those provinces, and I will continue to communicate and collaborate with those ministers.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Jonathan Rowe (Terra Nova—The Peninsulas, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Liberals voted against my bill that would allow Newfoundlanders and Labradorians access to the recreational food cod fishery seven days a week, like the rest of Atlantic Canada. Now they are fishing for excuses. They wrongfully stated that we never did any consultation, and they are spreading misinformation and imagining new fees.

Why do one of these Newfoundlanders not stand up and tell us why they do not put political parties behind them, add amendments to address any of their concerns and work with us to make better policies for Newfoundland and Labrador?

● (1500)

Ernie Klassen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, fisheries management decisions must be rooted in science for the long-term economic prosperity of coastal communities. Our government will continue to make evidence-based decisions through meaningful consultations.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

FINANCE

Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budget 2025 and its accompanying budget implementation act are a bold plan to respond to unprecedented economic uncertainty with a speed, scope and scale not seen in generations. I am pleased to see that the House is also responding at this crucial time with the same sense of urgency. Earlier this week, the Standing Committee on Finance completed its clause-by-clause review of Bill C-15, which we voted on last night.

Can the Minister of Finance remind us exactly what we voted on?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question, and I thank my colleagues for their work on the Standing Committee on Finance.

Yesterday, my colleagues and I were truly proud to vote on behalf of Canadians for a generational budget. This budget will make significant investments in housing, infrastructure and competitiveness. It will also ensure Canada's sovereignty. On this side of the House, we will always be there to build Canada strong, to ensure that we have the highest growth in the G7, to ensure that we build the strongest economy in the G7 and to ensure that we create jobs—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Oshawa.

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said that Canada's immigration system is "under control". In the GTA, a man in his thirties arranged to pay \$140 to sexually exploit a 15-year-old. That is my daughter's age. He was arrested with cash in hand, went to court and, because of his immigration status, will not even receive a criminal record. How is that under control?

When will the Prime Minister take responsibility and finally fire his immigration minister?

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since we have taken government, we have implemented many changes to the Criminal Code of Canada to strengthen it. There are over 80 different changes to the code in Bill C-14 alone.

It is heinous what I am hearing from the other side. The provincial courts should be handling these cases. They are tried in the provincial trial courts, which should deal with these situations adequately. It is really upsetting to hear of these types of outcomes. I think the provinces should really be looking into this.

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this case is not a one-off, but good job by the Liberals to blame the provinces. It is one of several cases where serious crimes are met with soft consequences because of loopholes in our immigration system. Canadians are tired of hearing the Liberal government say that everything is under control while headlines prove the opposite. There

is a 3,000% increase in asylum claimants, and 25,000 admissions without an in-person interview.

How many more failed immigration ministers will it take before the Prime Minister admits that his system is broken?

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the Criminal Code of Canada, people who engage in criminal activity like this should be punished. There are high penalties in place. This is a failure in the administration of justice, which is a provincial issue. If the administration of justice had worked properly, then this case and this incident would not have occurred.

[Translation]

Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have to recognize that there are issues with immigration. Honest citizens are being deported while people who abuse the system are being given shortcuts: eighty-six bogus asylum seekers remain in Canada; 33,000 are still wanted by the Canada Border Services Agency; and 25,000 asylum seekers have been admitted without any screenings or checks. That is not acceptable.

Is the Prime Minister going to make the necessary decisions?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite is well aware that asylum claims have dropped by a third since this Prime Minister took office. He knows that the number of international students in Canada has also dropped by a third.

From July to October 2025, Canada's population fell slightly after several years of growth. This system is sustainable. Canada's immigration system is the envy of the world. It meets Canada's labour needs and attracts talent to Canada. The member knows that full well.

* * *

● (1505)

[English]

INDUSTRY

Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the world is changing rapidly and Canadians gave the government a strong mandate to protect our workers and industries, all while building Canada strong. Last week, we announced the defence industrial strategy, designed to transform our defence industry and make Canada more secure.

Can the Minister of Industry please share what this strategy means for Canadian workers and industries across Canada?

Oral Questions

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed, at a time when we are investing 2% of our GDP in defence, going towards 5% of our GDP by 2035, as other NATO countries are, we are also creating jobs. That is why, through our new defence industrial strategy, we will build the ships, the drones, the planes, the right tech and the right AI. While doing so, we will create 125,000 jobs across the country.

This is good news. This is good news for Canada. We will stop being in dependency mode. We will be in control mode here at home.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Aaron Gunn (North Island—Powell River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three weeks ago, the Minister of Natural Resources claimed that the decision to allow Brookfield Renewable Partners to send Canadian hydroelectricity out of Powell River to the United States, with almost no benefit to Canadians, was out of his hands and instead rested with the Canada Energy Regulator. The only problem is that the regulator told me that it made its recommendation to reject the permit two months ago. Since that time, it has been sitting on the minister's desk.

Will the minister commit to accepting the regulator's recommendation and to denying Brookfield this permit?

Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the digging for conspiracies about Brookfield is just exhausting. I think this entire House is tired of it. We trust our regulators to make decisions, and we work on the political level to make sure that the framework supports good decision-making. I think we just have to put aside some of this searching for conspiracies on the other side.

* * *

*[Translation]***HOUSING**

Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Build Canada Homes program is a gimmick that is not going to work. The Prime Minister promised to build 500,000 homes, but according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Build Canada Homes will build only 5,000 per year. At this rate, it will take a century to reach the target. This is an insult to our intelligence.

On top of that, there is no definition of affordable housing, there is no target for social or co-operative housing and there are no rules on the percentage of income that can be spent on rent.

When are Liberals going to start taking care of people instead of insulting their intelligence?

Caroline Desrochers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the NDP do not have much of a budget for information, but I really encourage its members to do more research.

We held information sessions. We have given all members of the House a very good idea of how Build Canada Homes is going to

work. It includes affordable housing, co-operatives and social housing. We will do this in every community across Canada. We are going to build, we are going to reduce wait times, and we are going to increase the capacity to issue permits. We will work with all levels of government. We are going to build homes for all Canadians across the country.

* * *

*[English]***HEALTH**

Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 33% of people in Manitoba seeking abortion care must travel to access it. Where is the federal government? Is it fast-tracking projects of national interest without protections for indigenous women and girls? Check. Is it blaming international students, migrants and asylum seekers for the housing crisis? Check. Is it ensuring women and gender-diverse people can access their right to health care? Crickets.

If the Prime Minister supports the right to safe health care, will he fund access to that care?

• (1510)

Maggie Chi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question. For too long, women's health was a blind spot in our health care system. Even today, women's unique health needs continue to be misdiagnosed, misrepresented and misunderstood. While we have made real progress in advancing gender equality and women's rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, too many people around the world are rolling back these improvements.

Our government will always work to remove these barriers and close the gender gap in research, ensuring equitable health care for everybody, including women.

* * *

*[Translation]***PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Patrick Muyaya Katembwe, Minister of Communication and Media and spokesperson for the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!*[English]*

The Speaker: I would also draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of Chimwemwe Undi, the 11th parliamentary poet laureate.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as it is customary in the House that every Thursday we ask the question as to what the government has planned for next week, I will ask that, with the understanding that next week members of Parliament will be returning to their homes to meet with their constituents. We have a break week.

During question period today, we had an admission from the agriculture minister, an embarrassing admission, that unfortunately he is going to break his promise to the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. For the benefit of the House and for the benefit of farmers in Saskatchewan and Alberta who are desperately in need of a pest control management emergency solution, specifically the allowance of strychnine to be used in emergency situations, I wonder if the House leader of the Liberals will commit to working with us over this next week.

I know the member for Foothills has committed to work throughout the week to draft legislation that would allow the minister to not have to break his promise to farmers in Alberta and Saskatchewan. In the coming week, would the House leader commit to working with the official opposition to draft legislation that we can work expeditiously to pass in the week we return, to allow for farmers to use strychnine in certain circumstances in Alberta and Saskatchewan to ensure that a huge economic emergency does not develop over the Prairies, as we have seen over other springs in previous years?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, I cannot think of anyone better or anyone who listens more attentively and regularly to farmers than the current Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. The minister, I know, will be continuing his extremely hard work in representing their interests and reassuring them about the coming planting and growing season on the Prairies. We are going to absolutely look after our farmers from coast to coast to coast, including those very hard-working farmers on the Prairies. We will, of course, be addressing this issue as we return to Parliament after the break week next week, when members will be in their constituencies serving their constituents.

[*Translation*]

This afternoon, however, we will resume debate at third reading of Bill C-15, budget 2025 implementation act.

Tomorrow, we will begin debate at second reading of Bill S-2, with respect to new registration entitlements.

[*English*]

When we return from our constituency week on Monday, March 9, we will consider Bill C-20, the Build Canada Homes act, at second reading, and on Tuesday and Wednesday, we will consider Bill C-13, an act to implement the protocol on the accession of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, and Bill C-18, which would implement the comprehensive economic partnership agreement between Canada and Indonesia.

Government Orders

With that, Mr. Speaker, I wish you and your constituents a very good constituency week.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1515)

[*English*]

BUDGET 2025 IMPLEMENTATION ACT, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-15, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025, be read the third time and passed.

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise again on Bill C-15.

Before I start, I will mention that I am sharing my time with my Edmonton neighbour, the member for St. Albert—Sturgeon River.

There is a lot to cover in Bill C-15. It is another omnibus budget bill from the government, covering about 75 different pieces of legislation. Obviously, in just 10 minutes, I cannot get into everything. I would love to talk more about the massive debt it would be adding. I would love to talk about the added deficit and the current finance minister. We like to tease him because he stands in the House all the time, yelling at the top of his lungs that he will “take no lessons from the Conservatives.” I just wish he would take lessons from the previous finance minister, who delivered a deficit that was \$40 billion lower than the current finance minister and actually resigned over it. Perhaps he could take some lessons from her on how to deliver a proper budget.

I am going to cover a few themes today, mostly around openness, following the rules and just being honest with Canadians about the budget. The first issue is openness.

King Edward I, when calling the model Parliament, and I call him the godfather of the estimates process, stated, “What touches all should be approved by all, and it is also clear that common dangers should be met with measures agreed upon in common.” This is basically the whole purpose behind Parliament in general and, also, the estimates process.

In the most recent estimates, the supplementary estimates (C) just came out. For those at home wondering what the estimates are, estimates are, basically, like writing the cheque for something. We can compare it to someone's rent at home; they know that at the end of the month, they will have to budget for \$2,000, or perhaps \$3,000 under the Liberal government. They have to budget for \$3,000 at the end of the month to pay the rent. That is the budget. Cutting the actual cheque is the estimates process, the actual paying for that.

Government Orders

In the supplementary estimates (C), which is the government coming to Parliament looking for approval of spending, the government has in the Treasury Board \$1 billion under what is called the vote 50 for, ostensibly, defence spending. There is no explanation of what this \$1 billion is for. The Liberals are basically coming to Parliament and saying, “Give us \$1 billion, and we’ll tell you about it later.”

We just heard in the operations committee earlier today that we will not know what the government spent the \$1 billion on until the public accounts come out over a year from now. We will not get the details of what the \$1 billion is for for about 18 months.

This came up years ago, in 2018, when the Liberal government brought forward the vote 40 slush fund scandal. The Liberals came to Parliament saying, “We need \$15 billion. Approve it in advance, but we are not going to tell you what it’s for. We’ll tell you after the fact.”

When we pressed it on this, we were told by the government that it was presumptuous of parliamentarians to ask what the money is for before approving it. Here we have it again. The government can say it is for defence spending, but the Liberals are so sclerotic in their defence procurement, it boggles the mind that they would put out the supplementary estimates saying, “Give us a billion now. It’s desperately needed now. We don’t know what it’s for right now, but give it to us so we can spend it immediately.”

It takes 10 years for these guys to procure a simple pistol for the army and seven years to procure knapsacks. We were able to prosecute the Second World War in a shorter period than it took the Liberal government to procure knapsacks, and yet somehow it needs the \$1 billion approved now without telling us what it is for.

It does not stop there. The main estimates that came out, which was the approval for the coming year, had another \$1 billion. The Liberals want \$2 billion of taxpayers’ money approved by Parliament, and they will not tell us what it is for. We reached out to the Department of Defence, asking what this money is for, and it said it does not know either. It did not have the details of what the \$2 billion would be for, but the government says, “Give it to us now.”

It is the same issue with Canada Post. The government lent it \$1 billion, and in the most recent estimates, it has asked for \$1 billion more, so \$2 billion.

• (1520)

We know that Canada Post is in trouble. For five years running, the government has refused Canada Post’s annual submission for its strategic plan to address the structural problems going on with Canada Post. The government ignored it for political reasons, and now it is saying it has to spend taxpayers’ money to bail Canada Post out with a loan.

The Kaplan report on Canada Post states that one would need a “complete suspension of disbelief” to believe that Canada Post will ever return this money. The Canada Post Corporation Act, 32(2) says that writeoffs for such a loan must show in the very next set of estimates. Those are the estimates that came out today, and there is nothing. The government is now coming back to us and saying that

it will not show the writeoffs until supplementary estimates (C), which will come out a year from now.

Even though Canada Post has burned through the first \$1 billion and will not return it, it has asked for a second billion. We know from the Kaplan report that it will not be repaid, but the government is not being honest with Canadians about this loan and the fact that it will be a writeoff.

That is all I am asking: Make it a policy. That would be fine. We could debate the policy, but be honest with parliamentarians and Canadians about where the money is going.

I have asked repeatedly that the government follow the rules. We actually have rules around government spending on advertising, as well as internal Treasury Board rules about how the government writes up its communication. We are right now debating Bill C-15 for a budget called “Canada Strong”. It is right on the budget itself. This is the exact wording of the Liberals’ campaign slogan. This is right from the Treasury Board guidelines. These are not my guidelines:

In the context of all Government of Canada communications products and activities, non-partisan means:

objective, factual and explanatory;

Good luck getting objective from the Liberals, and I would say the same thing about “factual”. It continues:

free from political party slogans

The Liberals actually wrote their party slogan as the budget. Again, I just ask the government to follow the rules.

The public accounts is the accounting of last fiscal year’s spending. Last fiscal year is before the current Prime Minister became Prime Minister. The Liberal government wrote in the public accounts, on page 8, for those following at home, “The government is moving toward a new capital budgeting approach that distinguishes its day-to-day operational spending... [This] budgeting framework will improve transparency”.

The government wrote, in last year’s accounts, propaganda for the current policy. Public accounts end on March 31 of the previous year, but the Liberals are talking about future government policy. They wrote, “the elimination of the...carbon tax on fuel products further contributed to lower inflation in early 2025.” The carbon tax was cancelled April 1, but the public accounts ran up to March 31. Again, the government is violating Treasury Board rules.

Government Orders

We confronted the deputy minister about this. He said he would not have anything else to say on it. We further pressed the assistant deputy minister, Evelyn Dancy, and she spent time trying to explain that the low growth shown in the budget does not reflect all the great work being done by the current government, even though, of course, the Bank of Canada also shows the same lack of growth. Here we have assistant department heads shilling for the government and violating Treasury Board rules.

We just ask for transparency, for parliamentarians to be given the information so we can vote properly, and for the Liberals to follow the rules the government itself sets out to protect democracy and the rights of parliamentarians.

• (1525)

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 says, “Follow the rules.” He might want to reflect on his own leader and the advertising he did. In fact, one incident was brought to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. The minister at the time, the leader of the Conservative Party, was found guilty, that is with respect to following the rules.

Yes, there has been a great deal ambition and progress on many different fronts. The member cited, for example, the investment in the Canadian military. I could go from the major projects to major pieces of legislation, all forms of activities, and I would suggest that we have probably done more in less than a year than Harper did in 10 years.

Does the member opposite believe that the government is going too fast for him to keep up?

Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, whenever I need a moment of comedy or mirth in the House, I can always count on the member for Winnipeg North to deliver it.

It is ridiculous. Only the Liberal government would say, “Give us \$2 billion so we can hurry up spending for military. Oh, by the way, don't look at our record of taking seven years to buy knapsacks. Don't look at our record of taking over 10 years to buy handguns. Don't look at our record of delays around the shipbuilding project, and don't look at our record of incompetence and interference with Irving Shipbuilding and the supply ship debacle, but give us the money, and you can worry about it later.”

The member should get on board and understand what Parliament is about. It is about approving expenditure, not writing corrupt Liberals a blank cheque.

William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question regarding whether my colleague thinks it is incompetence or actually skullduggery in the Liberals' trying to get the money without actually coming up with the ideas and the transparency of where the numbers are.

The Liberals want to keep producing the GST break for first-time homebuyers, but there are no statistics out there. It looks like they are coming up with a program that exists for nobody, so maybe sometimes they are just guessing at what they want for money because they do not really know what they actually have, as opposed to something that might be a plan that we do not understand.

Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, Hanlon's razor says to never attribute to malice that which is more appropriately attributed to incompetence. I think both apply to the Liberal government in this case.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I go back to the end of last year, when the Conservative Party was doing a considerable amount of filibustering and did not even want the current bill to go to the committee stage, where maybe we would have had more discussion and more accountability with respect to asking and answering questions.

I wonder if the member has any regret or remorse that there was so much filibustering being conducted by the Conservative Party, which prevented the legislation from going to committee earlier, late last year.

Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, there is so much fiction in the member's comment that it should be a Netflix special.

The reality is that we had to drag the government, kicking and screaming, to deliver a budget. Does the member not remember when the government actually said it would not be tabling a budget until around this time of the year? The media, for once doing its job, and the opposition had to drag the government, kicking and screaming, to deliver the very documents we have now. If it were up to the Liberals, we would just be starting debate on the budget.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague's comments on scrapping the Digital Services Tax Act, which made it possible to tax large digital companies with sales figures greater than \$750 million. That was supposed to bring in about \$1.5 billion a year for culture and regional media.

Does my colleague agree that this much-discussed digital services tax should be reinstated?

[*English*]

Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, the issue is not whether we should bring back the digital sales tax but whether the government should, as the Prime Minister has promised twice, strike a deal with the United States. Twice he stood publicly and said he would have a deal, the best trade deal, struck with the United States. He has not delivered that for Canadians. That is what the issue at hand is.

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-15, the budget implementation act, at third reading.

The Prime Minister often bills his government as Canada's new government. It is a clear public relations effort to distance himself from 10 years of failure under Justin Trudeau. Consistent with that, the Prime Minister promised that he would take, in his words, a “very different approach” than Justin Trudeau when it comes to Canada's finances.

Government Orders

It is true that the Prime Minister has a very different style from Justin Trudeau, but, putting aside the facade that the Prime Minister puts on, the more that things change with the Liberals, the more they stay the same. When it comes to the policies and priorities of the Prime Minister, he is nothing more than Justin Trudeau 2.0. In some respects, he is performing worse than Justin Trudeau, as tough as that is to believe.

One area, amazingly, in which the Prime Minister is performing worse than Justin Trudeau is Canada's finances. He is a Prime Minister who promised to spend less. It turns out he is spending more, an eye-watering \$90 billion more. He is a Prime Minister who has managed to double the deficit. He is presiding over a \$78.3-billion deficit, up from a massive \$36.3-billion deficit, which was Justin Trudeau's last massive deficit. In fact, the Prime Minister now has the record of presiding over the largest deficit in Canadian history outside COVID.

It is not as though the Prime Minister can say that this is a one-off or a one-time deal, because when one looks at the government's fiscal outlook, what we see over the next three years are deficits that are projected to average \$62.3 billion, double what Justin Trudeau's government forecast.

What about fiscal anchors? Justin Trudeau's government touted its fiscal anchor, and it was quite an unambitious one, as being to keep the deficit below 1% of GDP. What has the Prime Minister done with respect to that fiscal anchor? He has blown completely past it, because the deficit-to-GDP ratio has doubled to more than 2%. The government is on course to have a deficit-to-GDP ratio double that of Justin Trudeau's fiscal anchor in the coming fiscal years.

Speaking of fiscal anchors, what is the Prime Minister's fiscal anchor? He claims he has one, which I will get into momentarily, but in substance, I would say, the Prime Minister's fiscal anchor is nothing more than smoke and mirrors in an effort to create the mirage of balancing the budget, all the while hiding massive deficits and massive debt.

The Prime Minister has created a fiscal shell game by creating two budgets: an operating budget and a capital budget. The operating budget ostensibly deals with day-to-day government spending, whereas the capital budget deals with so-called investments. One of the problems is that the government's definition of an investment is quite elastic. That is not by accident. It is quite deliberate, to give the Prime Minister and the government the flexibility to move spending from the operating budget to the capital budget and say that actually it is not spending but is investing. Again, it is smoke and mirrors.

After creating this fiscal shell game, the Prime Minister has come out and announced his big fiscal anchor, which is to balance the budget by 2028-29, but not the federal budget, the operating budget.

● (1535)

Here is the bottom line. Whether we look at the operating budget or the capital budget, if we call it spending or we call it investment, it all relates to the fiscal finances of Ottawa and Ottawa's bottom line. As such, when we look at the fiscal projection for fiscal year

2028-29, the year the Prime Minister is going to meet his fiscal anchor of balancing the operating budget, and we look at total revenues projected versus total spending projected, the overall deficit is projected to be a staggering \$57.9 billion, which would be one of the largest deficits in Canadian history.

In short, the Prime Minister is not balancing anything. All that he is doing is making the budgeting process more complex and less transparent, all to make it more difficult to see the state of federal finances. What is the Prime Minister's spending plan between now and when he balances the operating budget? The Prime Minister is planning to rack up a quarter-trillion dollars in new debt, double the amount of debt that Justin Trudeau's government was planning to rack up during the same period of time.

The bottom line is that the Prime Minister has separated operating and capital budgets to hide from Canadians the fact that he is presiding over more spending than Justin Trudeau, and with bigger deficits, and accumulating significantly more debt. It is straight-up budget trickery by the Prime Minister.

When the Prime Minister promised that he would take a very different approach to Canada's finances than Justin Trudeau, most Canadians expected that the Prime Minister meant he would be more fiscally responsible. That is certainly what he was hoping Canadians would think. By the way, this would not be that difficult to achieve, given 10 years of fiscal vandalism under Justin Trudeau. However, the Prime Minister has not taken a very different approach. He has taken the same approach as Justin Trudeau. Just like Justin Trudeau, the Prime Minister is presiding over out-of-control spending, massive deficits and massive debt.

Here is the deal: He is a Prime Minister who is not as advertised. He calls it Canada's new government, but it is not a new government. It is the same old Liberals with the same failed and reckless fiscal policies. It is Justin Trudeau 2.0, except worse.

● (1540)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, the member opposite has to take in the reality that there was an election and Canada does have a new Prime Minister. As much as they might want to go back, that is not the case.

Let me give a quote. This comes from the IMF's managing director. The IMF represents 190 different countries, and this is what the managing director has to say:

Both Germany and Canada recognize that in this very testing time, they need to use their fiscal space....

In the case of Canada, the Canadian authorities have been very decisive to take action in the context of changing relations with their main trading partner. And one of these actions is indeed to reform—modernize the budget framework [separating] operating expenses in the budget from investment—that ability to then focus strategically on investment that are progrowth, that can lift up productivity.

This is what the IMF is—

The Deputy Speaker: I have to give the member for St. Albert—Sturgeon River a chance to respond.

Government Orders

Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, let us look at the definition of what constitutes an investment. It includes so-called incentives. It includes things that support the formation of capital or which meaningfully raise private sector productivity. In other words, the government's definition of investment includes handouts and corporate welfare. It is all part of a scheme by the Prime Minister to blur, to hide and to make it more difficult to understand the massive deficits and massive debt he is presiding over, which, as I noted, is double the deficits and double the debt of Justin Trudeau, one of the most—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton.

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering about something. I have a hard time understanding the Conservatives' position on Bill C-15. They were enthused about Bill C-5 last June; they supported not only Bill C-5, but the different closure motions as well, including the super closure motion imposed that week. Furthermore, what kind of official opposition would support the closure motion of a government that wants to give itself free rein, proceed without consultations and circumvent existing laws? What kind of opposition is going to give a blank cheque to a government it spends all its time criticizing?

I want to understand why Bill C-5 was acceptable when today, in their estimation, Bill C-15 is not. Both are similar in almost every respect.

[*English*]

Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, we are standing in opposition to a budget implementation bill that is reckless, that doubles the debt of Justin Trudeau. We are not the only party that is opposing this budget implementation bill. I believe all opposition parties oppose this budget implementation bill. We are not going to support this bad legislation coming from the government.

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is funny to hear the member for Winnipeg North quote—

The Deputy Speaker: There is so much noise in the courtyard. It is really distracting. I am going to invite those people in the courtyard to leave the area. It is part of the downside of the courtyard. There is a lot of noise when people circulate there.

I will let the member for Edmonton West resume and complete his question or his comment.

Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North was quoting the IMF, which was funny because the deputy minister of finance just two weeks ago stated in the public accounts committee that anything the IMF says should be taken “with a grain of salt.” This is from his own government, but I will quote from the exact same report that states, “Directors encouraged steps to improve the transparency and accountability of public investment”. This is regarding the capital versus operating. The IMF wants transparency and accountability. It continues, “and to clarify the debt-to-GDP ratio as a formal fiscal anchor”.

I am wondering if the member can comment on the Liberals' choosing only to hand-pick and cherry-pick a few items from the IMF report and not some of the more important items.

Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I guess it is politics as usual from the Liberals. That would be the explanation. I spoke about the fiscal anchor. The Liberal government had, previously, a pretty weak fiscal anchor, but it was at least a clear fiscal anchor. The Prime Minister has a convoluted, complicated fiscal anchor that is nothing more than a shell game, as I noted, to hide massive deficits and massive debt.

• (1545)

Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Larnak—Frontenac, who is diligently working on his speech right now.

The government will say it has a revenue problem, and it does. It will say it has a spending problem, and it does. What it will not say is that it has a priority problem. I served. I know what it means to trust that one's country has one's back. Bill C-15 is where we find out what that trust is actually worth. It is 600 pages that inflate savings that do not exist, that retroactively change the law to avoid compensating veterans who were quietly overcharged for decades, and that demand repayment from disabled veterans who can least afford it. Serving this country is not a liability to be managed, but this bill treats it like one.

I want to mention that the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs is currently studying barriers to entrepreneurship among veterans. That study will likely conclude with a recommendation for a new grant program. That is the predictable result. However, while ACVA studies barriers, the \$6.6-billion defence industrial strategy, the largest defence investment in a generation, contains zero veteran business set-asides. There is not a single line.

In the United States, veteran status opens economic doors. The GI bill's boots to business program, a 3% federal contracting carve-out for veteran-owned businesses, is a deliberate policy choice. Deliberate policy choices are important. Canada is studying barriers while actively building new ones. We do not need a new grant program. We need to treat the veterans who built this sector as qualified and important partners in its future.

Government Orders

The government is now claiming that Bill C-15 will generate \$4.23 billion in savings by reducing cannabis reimbursement rates for veterans. Let us look at the actual numbers. VAC spends roughly \$200 million a year on medical cannabis. The government is cutting the reimbursement rate by about a quarter. That is roughly \$50 million in annual savings. Even over many years, the math does not come close to \$4.23 billion. It would take over 30 years. The government has not explained the gap. We have asked and veterans organizations have asked repeatedly. The \$4.23-billion figure relies on public sector accounting that recognizes estimated life savings all at once today. Many veterans will face higher out-of-pocket costs for products currently covered under their plan. If the government is willing to present inflated numbers when it benefits it so that it looks like it is doing what it says it is going to do, veterans and Canadians should ask what else in the bill is being measured the same way.

While this bill was being drafted, thousands of veterans were receiving letters from the government telling them to repay immediately. We are not talking about small amounts. My colleagues have documented cases exceeding \$100,000 being demanded from disabled veterans. The government is clawing this money back directly from disability pensions and other payments. These are not veterans who cheated the system. My office heard from one veteran directly who has 21 years of service, a 100% disability designation and a spotless record with VAC going back a decade. When he applied for the income replacement benefit in 2015, he declared every source of income on his application, including his military pension. VAC reviewed it, accepted him into the program and sent him a letter confirming it had accounted for that pension. He kept every document.

• (1550)

In January of this year, the veteran received a letter from VAC telling him that he had failed to report that same pension and that he now owes over \$42,000. He and his wife live on that pension income. His words to my office were that he is afraid they are going to lose their house.

He is not alone. Veterans across this country have contacted MPs to report the same pattern of repayment demands for income they had properly disclosed, with VAC's own acceptance letters sitting in their files as proof. This is not an overpayment recovery program, but an administrative failure being downloaded onto the most vulnerable people in the system. The government is demanding repayment from disabled veterans who received benefits in good faith while at the same time refusing to pay veterans who have been overcharged for 28 years. This is not fiscal policy. It is a double standard.

It never ends with the Liberal government. For nearly 30 years, Veterans Affairs Canada overcharged veterans in long-term care across the country. What was the error? When calculating care rates, VAC excluded the territories from the formula. The Interpretation Act is explicit: The definition of province "includes Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut". VAC ignored this, which affected the formula applied to veterans, wherever they live, by roughly \$260 per month, or \$3,130 per year, for nearly three decades.

A class action lawsuit was launched in October 2024 on behalf of veterans and their survivors. Bill C-15 would make that lawsuit go away.

I want to highlight that, on December 8, 2025, the Senate Standing Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs heard testimony from VAC officials on exactly that issue. Senator Patterson asked a simple question, knowing that costs increase significantly the further north one goes, she said, "So can we not include 'and territories'?" The VAC official answered plainly, "That would change the intent of the program." Senator Patterson's response was, "Wow. Thank you."

In my experience working with Senator Patterson, I have learned that she is a strong advocate for veterans and serving members. Her response says it all. She cannot believe it.

Bill C-15 makes this dire situation even worse. Sections 373 to 375 of the bill do not fix the problem, but erase it. The government is using budget implementation legislation to retroactively rewrite the law back to July 15, 1998, making that VAC deal legal in hindsight. This is not an administrative correction. Parliament is being asked to authorize the government to keep money it should never have collected from veterans in long-term care, some of whom are no longer alive to see it returned.

The Veterans ombud, retired Colonel Jardine, testified at the Standing Committee on Finance that she wrote directly to the minister on this issue calling for her to admit the mistake. She correctly points out that the bill is unprecedented, patently unfair and is calling for amendments to Bill C-15. The minister could not find the courtesy to reply to the ombud, but her department found time to write collection letters to thousands of disabled veterans.

The real issue here is that these veterans are not in their prime. They are often in long-term care. They are elderly, disabled and at their most vulnerable. They were overcharged because their government misread its own law. They had no way of knowing it. They had no way of fighting it. A class action lawsuit was their only recourse. The bill closes that door.

The question is not whether the government can find the money, but whether the people who wore the uniform deserve to be treated fairly for the country they served. This bill answers that question, and the answer is no. This is a shameful use of Parliament's powers.

When one serves, they learn that the person beside them will not leave them behind. That is not a policy, but a promise. Veterans deserve better. I will not be supporting this.

Government Orders

• (1555)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to thank my colleague for his service to our country. I would also to thank his family, because when a member serves, their family serves with them.

My colleague talked a bit during his speech about deliberate policy choices. I am wondering if he could elaborate on why the Conservative government, in 2014, closed nine Veterans Affairs offices, slashed the jobs of Veterans Affairs staff who provided direct services to veterans and cut the benefits budget.

I am just wondering if the member could elaborate on the deliberate policy choice that was made at that time.

Fraser Tolmie: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out, and let us state the facts, that many of the offices were streamlined into Service Canada offices and were not closed, as my colleague has said. We are putting veterans here.

The questions I am getting from veterans are not from 2014; they are from now. The questions I am getting are from now, and the Liberal government is in power. It has had 10 years, almost 11 years, to fix the problem, and it has done nothing. It has ignored the problem, and now it is trying to hide it.

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know whether my colleague agrees with the carbon capture and sequestration tax credit increase and extension for oil and gas companies. Our Conservative colleagues often object to spending public funds this way or handing out subsidies.

However, do they consider this direct subsidy to oil companies, owned in large part by Americans already making billions in profits, to be acceptable?

[*English*]

Fraser Tolmie: Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax is a hot button for me because I have seen the carbon tax being downloaded to provinces in hospitals when we were having a health care crisis. I have seen it downloaded to provinces when we have had an education crisis, where school boards are struggling to make ends meet. I have also seen it downloaded to municipalities when kids are going to learn how to swim, where the recreation fees are going up and parents are drowning in taxes. This is what I have seen from the Liberal government. Money is not getting to the people it needs to get to, and that is just wrong.

Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his service. I would like to mention that, in my riding of Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, Base Borden is very close to me, and I have been getting the same calls that he is getting.

Knowing that my colleague has served and been there, why does he feel that the Liberals have been so negligible in their attitude toward veterans, and what can we do as the opposition to try to help them out through this cause when they need it the most?

Fraser Tolmie: Mr. Speaker, I have visited the base in my colleague's riding, and I know there are a lot of veterans who are retiring in his area. I thank them for their service.

It is true that Conservatives are getting phone calls. Even the Liberals are getting phone calls about veterans and the way they have been treated. It is being ignored and can no longer be ignored. As the Conservative Party, we need to be raising the standard for veterans and letting them know that we are here to support them and that they deserve the basic rights they are entitled to.

They should be allowed to have that money. It should be flowing into their accounts. They should not be getting letters in their mailboxes telling them that they owe \$42,000 and that their homes are on the line. That is not the way a country repays its veterans for the freedoms we have in this nation.

• (1600)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member was wrong when he made the assertion that veterans offices were not closed. There were nine veterans offices that were in fact closed.

The government has worked and will continue to work closely with veterans to ensure we are there for them, not only for the short term but also for the long term.

Can the member confirm and will he admit that there were nine offices that were actually closed?

Fraser Tolmie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his service.

In the four years that I have been here, we have had five ministers of this department, and there have been nine ministers over the last 10 years. The government clearly does not care about veterans.

It is time to stop. It is time to thank the veterans, repay them and let them know that we care.

Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am going to be talking about two themes: the first is property rights and the second is the economics of the Alto project. My comments on both are in the context of the part of the budget implementation act that deals with the proposed high-speed rail network and the Al-to train, which would run 1,000 kilometres from Quebec City to Toronto at a cost estimate of \$60 billion to \$90 billion.

I am going to start with property rights because the proposed corridor of 1,000 kilometres would run through my constituency. There are two proposed routes that would go through my constituency: a northern route and a southern route. Whichever one is chosen, people who live on that route would be negatively affected, and I thought I would talk a bit about how they would be affected.

Government Orders

Let me start by telling members my own position on property rights. This is an issue that is near and dear to me. It is an issue on which I proposed a constitutional amendment, an amendment to the Charter of Rights, to include property rights. The formula which I suggested, because one speaks in general language in bills of rights and charters of rights, is to say that, when property is taken or its use infringed upon for a government purpose, the owners ought to have a right to full, just and timely compensation. All three of those principles are violated by the expropriation and land use restriction regime proposed under the budget implementation act for Alto.

Alto has published a plan of rough estimates for where the corridors would be. These rough estimates show corridors roughly 10 kilometres wide. It varies along the route. I assume Alto is in the process of doing some geological work to determine where it wants to go. The process that has been outlined for us says that, at the end of this year either the northern or the southern route will be chosen, and additionally, the corridor for the potential rail line will be narrowed to about a kilometre wide. I am not sure if that is actually what will happen, but that is what it has planned to happen.

Within that one kilometre-wide corridor, a thousand kilometres long, and therefore a thousand square kilometres, Alto would have the power to expropriate. This expropriation would occur with a Crown corporation, which includes private investors, and it would do this using expropriation powers normally only exercised by government. That is an extraordinary shift. Additionally, a series of protections for property owners would be stripped away.

The first thing that would happen is that Alto would look and then say it might run along a certain part within that kilometre-wide corridor. It might not, but it is not sure, so it is going to put a property development freeze on all properties that it might go through. Will that be every property within the kilometre-wide corridor? We do not know yet, but a freeze on property, that is to say that someone cannot develop or improve their property, has a real financial impact.

Under the Expropriation Act, this kind of freeze is permitted, and it can be for up to 120 days. Under the new legislation, it would be for up to two years. During those two years, someone would not be able to do anything to their property. If they tried to, they could be fined through what are called administrative monetary penalties, and they can be ruinous penalties.

It is a bit difficult, from the legislation, to determine exactly what those penalties would be. It appears to me that they could be as high as \$20,000 per offence, and individual offences that continue over a period of time could result in multiple fines. That, I think, is enough to ensure that anyone would, indeed, not develop their property.

After Alto has built its rail and decided which properties it actually wants, someone's property might be released, at which point they have the right to seek compensation for the loss in value. However, that is a long, slow process, and this would affect thousands of properties, maybe tens of thousands of properties. I actually do not know how many there will be in the as yet undefined corridor.

All these properties would be involved, with people trying to seek compensation, and each one would have to be a negotiated settlement. I think it is safe to say that, for many people, the payback would be less than it was worth or they would simply give up and never actually seek the money that was taken from them. That is for the people who would have a property freeze placed on them.

● (1605)

Will there be any compensation for people whose property value is diminished because the Alto line runs through, cutting the community in half? No, there will be no compensation for those folks. It will significantly affect property values, landlocked properties, properties that can no longer be accessed with ease, properties where formerly people could get to them by simply crossing and driving down the road, where now the road is bisected. Presumably hundreds of roads will be bisected.

Alto will have a strong incentive to try and make it as minimal as possible, the number of roads on which overpasses are built. There is a reason for that: Overpasses cost money. I have heard estimates that a single overpass is as high as \$50 million, but I have found some evidence that it may be as low as \$20 million. Whatever the case is, multiply that by a few hundred, and we can see that Alto, which is trying to be a profit-making company, is going to finance this money through floating a bond. It is going to have a very strong incentive to be as ruthless as possible and have as few overpasses as possible.

I was wondering: How many overpasses might there be? It is hard to estimate exactly, but I did take some highway construction for property near places where I live or have lived. I used to live on Phelan Road in what is now part of the extended city of Ottawa. Highway 416 was built south of the city. That road was cut off, and so where people could have crossed and talked to their neighbour within a five-minute walk, they now have to drive seven kilometres in one direction, cross over the highway and go seven kilometres back, 14 kilometres in total.

Similarly, east of Ottawa, there is a spot where I go camping. My mother-in-law owns a campground there. To get across Highway 417, people have to drive seven kilometres in one direction, cross over and drive six kilometres back. I have several other examples I could give, but I think the point is made. This is going to divide communities, slow down emergency response times and so on.

Government Orders

Now, in the three remaining minutes I have, I want to talk about the costs of Alto. I do not think we grasp just how badly costed-out this really is. A cost range was given. These were stabs in the dark, frankly. Let us say it is \$90 billion. There are 40 million people in Canada, 10 million families of four, and \$90 billion divided by 10 million is \$9,000 for every single Canadian family of four across the country. It does not matter if they live in Nunavut and will never even see this rail, because every Canadian family is paying \$9,000. Every Canadian family across the country is paying for something that is going to service people only in that narrow corridor. The people whose properties will be sliced up are paying \$9,000 too. Is that number to be taken seriously? That, in itself, is mind-blowingly high. It is higher than our entire national deficit this year.

As it turns out, there is a fascinating paper written by Prof. Bent Flyvbjerg, who is the professor and founding chair of program management at the Saïd Business School at Oxford University. He writes this, in a recent paper about megaprojects in general:

Performance data for megaprojects speak their own language. Nine out of ten such projects have cost overruns; overruns of up to 50% in real terms are common, over 50% are not uncommon.

Then he provides a list. I will just read some of the rail projects:

The Shinkansen Joetsu high-speed rail line in Japan is somewhat comparable, at a 100% cost overrun; the Boston–New York–Washington Railway, U.S.A., a 130% cost overrun, the Copenhagen Metro, Denmark, a 150% overrun; the Montreal Metro Laval extension, Canada, a 160% overrun; the Minneapolis Hiawatha light rail line, U.S.A., a 190% overrun; and the Troy and Greenfield Railroad, U.S.A., 900%. That, perhaps, is an outlier, but it makes the point.

He says shortfalls of 50% are also not uncommon:

Combine the large cost overruns and benefit shortfalls with the fact that business cases, cost–benefit analyses, and social and environmental impact assessments are typically at the core of planning and decision making for megaprojects and we see that such analyses can generally not be trusted. For example, for rail projects, an average cost overrun of 44.7% combines with an average demand shortfall of 51.4%.

I will stop there and go to questions.

• (1610)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, you know, as the government moves to build Canada strong, there are members of the Conservative Party who have made it very clear that they oppose the Canada Infrastructure Bank in every way and that they oppose the fast-train project, which is a very important project for Ontario and the province of Quebec. Based on what the member has said in regard to that particular project, I am interested in knowing whether he actually supports pipelines in the province of Alberta being expanded. In particular, does he support in full the MOU that was signed off by the Premier of Alberta and the Prime Minister of Canada?

Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, I lack the expertise to give an intelligent response to that question, which is clearly designed just to divert me from the issue of this mind-blowingly expensive project that would destroy lives, ruin property rights and ruin communities that I represent. It would destroy people's lives. That is what is at

stake here. The costs of this would be just insane for every single Canadian, including the member. He gets a nice big salary for his \$9,000.

However, for people who are never going to be around this, how would this be beneficial to them? Why on earth should people in British Columbia, Alberta and Newfoundland pay for this, so that people who live in downtown Toronto or Montreal can get back and forth and shave 90 minutes off their travel time?

If I lived beside the train station and I could get that benefit tomorrow, not 10 years out, and it is \$9,000 for my family, I would not go for it. It is a terrible cost proposition for someone in that situation, and it is an insane cost proposition for someone who happens to live somewhere else. Worst of all is being a property owner and seeing one's property destroyed and one's life destroyed and then being told, "Now here is the tax bill for this thing we have done to screw you over."

Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke a lot about the problems with the budgeting for the train, and that is the capital budget alone. I wonder if he could educate us a bit as well about the subsidy the government would have to give, on an ongoing annual basis, in order to run that train, and how much it would cost per Canadian or per rider in order to have a high-speed train with no passengers on it.

Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, in the end, the cost is going to be zero, because there is no way that this insane project is actually going to make its way through. We do not have the money to spend \$90 billion, which is the estimate. We do not have the money for that. We will spend \$3 billion or \$4 billion, do a series of expropriations and destroy lives, and then, like the Pickering airport, it will be shut down, unfinished, with no benefit except to the consultants. That is what is going to happen.

However, in the event it actually went through, there is a fascinating estimate. Alto projects 24 million riders per year, which turns out to be significantly higher than the number of people travelling between Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto right now by rail, air and road combined, so somehow, people who are not travelling at all would start travelling because of this amazing transportation hub.

We have a pretty good idea that, in practice, if the costs are not very low and the speed is not high, people do not tend to shift to rail unless the travel time is under two hours. Therefore, it is not likely to generate the expected ridership. That means that revenues would be very low and the subsidies would be in the multiple billions of dollars every year. Again, we cannot afford this.

I suspect that if anything does get built, it will be the Ottawa to Montreal part, at which point the low ridership would show that the whole thing was a catastrophe and we would stop halfway through, much like we did with the Mirabel airport. It was going to be a giant airport, but once we saw the insane costs and the low usage, the whole thing was shut down.

Private Members' Business

• (1615)

Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook—Brant North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's excellent analysis on the ROI of the high-speed rail, and particularly the passenger levels, which are unrealistic, and of the fact that there is a lack of a business case here.

Obviously, this is one of the major projects that have been designated. When we were at committee, and we supported Bill C-5 with strong Conservative amendments to improve the bill and pass it through, we heard from a witness who said that if we actually want to increase our GDP, the fastest and best way to do that is to build pipelines to tidewater and get our energy resources to tidewater. In contrast to this investment that is proposed, which would benefit very few people, what are the member's thoughts on that?

Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, I think the answer is that those are projects that would actually generate expansion to the GDP, because we would be exporting product, whereas this is not going to achieve that goal.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Speaker: 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.

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, is there no way that there could be a recorded vote on an issue as important as this?

The Speaker: Calling for a vote would have to be done by a member of a recognized party.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we request that it be carried on division.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent at this time to call it 5:30 p.m., so we could begin private members' hour.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes, CPC) moved that Bill S-228, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sterilization procedures), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill S-228, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding sterilization procedures.

Before I begin remarks, I want to recognize one of the most important aspects of this bill: how it was developed. This is survivor-

centred, indigenous-led legislation. This legislation exists because survivors had the courage to speak when silence might have been easier. I want to recognize and thank those who came forward, shared their truths and stood not only for themselves but for so many others.

As I read the names, I ask for leniency if I mispronounce any: Jackie Kistabish, Algonquin, from Val-d'Or, Quebec; Kahsenniyo Kick, Mohawk, from Six Nations, Ontario; Sylvia Nepinak, Anishnawbek, from Minegoziibe first nation, Manitoba; Sylvia McKay, Cree, from Peepeekisis, Saskatchewan; Heather Bear, Cree, Saskatchewan; Germaine Henry, Cree, from Chacachas, Saskatchewan; Chasity Kyplain, Cree, from Yellow Quill, Saskatchewan; Nicole Rabbit, Kainai Blood Tribe and Blackfoot, from Treaty 7, Alberta; Lois Cardinal, Cree, from Saddle Lake, Alberta; Nilak Ironhawk-Tommy, Inuit, from Cowichan, British Columbia; Susan Anderson, Métis, from Region 6; and so many more. Their strength, leadership and willingness to relive painful experiences have made this moment possible, and because of them, Parliament will hopefully act.

I would also like to express my deep gratitude to Harmony Redsky, executive director of the Survivors Circle for Reproductive Justice, and to the staff, volunteers and supporters whose tireless advocacy has ensured that survivors' voices are heard and respected and that their calls for justice could no longer be ignored.

They are not alone. People First of Canada and Inclusion Canada, formerly the Canadian Association for Community Living, are two other organizations that are standing up for persons with intellectual disabilities, like Roy Skoreyko, a People First self-advocate and member of the Inclusion Canada board, who was also sterilized at an institution at the age of 16 and who now continues to advocate for other survivors.

This legislation addresses a profound injustice, one that Canadians assume belongs to a distant past, but it does not. Forced and coerced sterilization is not historical. It is not theoretical. It is happening in Canada today, and that is why Parliament must act.

Bill S-228 builds on earlier legislation first introduced by Yvonne Boyer in the Senate as Bill S-250. Its purpose is clear: to strengthen the Criminal Code so that forced or coerced sterilization is explicitly recognized within the law as a serious form of aggravated assault. The bill would create a legislative framework that acknowledges this practice as part of Canada's broader legacy of systemic discrimination, colonization and racism, which has disproportionately affected indigenous peoples and other marginalized communities.

This issue has also been recognized at the national level. The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls documented the history of forced sterilization as a tool used to control and diminish indigenous populations with lasting and intergenerational impacts.

Private Members' Business

For decades, Canada has carried the painful legacies of eugenics and reproductive control. Beginning in the 1920s, sterilization policies emerged across the country, targeting those deemed unfit. These practices were formalized in provincial law in Alberta and British Columbia until their repeal in 1970. However, the repeal of those laws did not end the mindset that made them possible.

• (1620)

The practice persisted after formal eugenics policies ended and continues to be reported today. Media reports in 2015 prompted an external review in Saskatoon, which confirmed that indigenous women had been subjected to coerced sterilization and called for reparations, cultural safety measures and legal reform. That review helped bring national and international attention to the issue and contributed to multiple ongoing class action lawsuits.

Survivors continue to report being pressured, misled, threatened and sterilized without full and informed consent, often during the most vulnerable moments of their lives: during labour, immediately after childbirth or while under medication and distress. Some were told their babies might be taken away if they refused. Others were told the procedure was reversible, but it was clearly not. Some did not understand the forms they were asked to sign, and some of them were never told at all. This is not informed consent. Consent obtained through pressure, fear, misinformation or exhaustion is not consent. It is coercion.

The consequences of forced sterilization extend beyond physical harm. Survivors describe lifelong grief, trauma, the loss of identity and a profound sense of violation. For indigenous women, the harm is even deeper. In many indigenous world views the ability to bring children into the world is not only personal but also cultural, spiritual and connected to the survival and continuity of community.

This issue does not affect indigenous women alone. The committee has heard evidence that other groups were also at heightened risk levels, such as women with disabilities, women living with HIV and institutionalized persons, among so many others. In each case, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination increase vulnerability to reproductive rights violations. Preventing a woman from having children without her consent is not simply a medical violation. It is an assault on dignity, autonomy and self-determination. It disrupts families. It fractures the trust in the health care system, and its effects echo across generations.

Forced and coerced sterilization does not occur in isolation. It is rooted in systemic racism, colonial assumptions and harmful stereotypes such as the belief that some women are unfit to be mothers, that some lives are less valued or that some communities should be controlled rather than supported.

While much of the testimony and evidence we have heard focuses on the experiences of women, particularly indigenous women, it is important to recognize that this issue is not confined to one gender. Sterilization procedures affect people of all sexes, and the principle at stake is universal. Every person has the right to bodily autonomy and to make free and informed decisions about their reproductive future. Historically, men and boys were also subjected to sterilization under eugenic policies, and today individuals across diverse communities, including intersex persons and others facing

medical vulnerability, may be at risk when power imbalances and inadequate consent policies exist.

At its core, this is not just a women's-only issue. It is a human rights issue. It is about the fundamental right of every person in Canada to control their own body, free from pressure, coercion or discrimination. When survivors speak of being judged, dismissed or pressured by authority figures, they are describing not individual failures but systemic ones, and when people lose trust in the health care system, the consequences extend far beyond reproductive health. Care is delayed, services are avoided and health care outcomes worsen.

The bill is therefore not only about criminal law but about rebuilding trust. Some have asked why new legislation is necessary. Do existing criminal code provisions not already cover assault? Technically, they might, but in practice, they have not. Despite years of reports and testimony, the Standing Committee on Human Resources found that forced and coerced sterilization is continuing today and is both under-reported and underestimated. The committee also found that these practices disproportionately affect indigenous women, women with disabilities and racialized women, and the list goes on, including institutionalized persons. The problem is not simply the absence of law; it is the absence of clarity.

• (1625)

When the Criminal Code does not explicitly name a harm, enforcement becomes uncertain and investigations unfortunately stall. Prosecutors hesitate and survivors lose confidence that the system will take their experiences seriously. This bill, Bill S-228, would make it explicit, for greater certainty, that performing a sterilization without consent constitutes aggravated assault under section 268. It would not create a new offence, but would strengthen the application of the existing law. It would send a clear message that the conduct is criminal, serious and unacceptable.

The legislation would also clarify the legal consequences. Anyone who performs or participates in coercive actions to cause a sterilization without consent would be guilty of an indictable offence carrying a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison. At the same time, the bill would establish clear safeguards to protect patient autonomy and ensure ethical medical practices.

Let me also address a concern that has been raised. Bill S-228 would not restrict access to voluntary sterilization. It would not interfere with reproductive choice. It would not criminalize legitimate medical practice or emergency care performed in good faith.

Private Members' Business

Where sterilization is requested, medical practitioners must ensure that consent is truly informed, truly voluntary and free from external pressure. Patients must be informed of alternative contraception options, must understand that consent can be withdrawn at any time and must be given a final opportunity to withdraw immediately before the procedure. Consent would also be deemed invalid if the individual is under 18, incapable of consenting or has not initiated a voluntary request. The bill targets only one thing, sterilization without consent, nothing more and nothing less.

Survivors asked for criminalization. They testified before Senate committees. They shared their stories, often at great personal cost, so that this practice could be recognized and stopped. The Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights studied the issue. Its first recommendation was clear that legislation should be introduced to prohibit forced and coerced sterilization. Bill S-228 is Parliament's response to that recommendation.

When survivors tell us what justice requires, it is our responsibility to listen and to act. Some have suggested that education and policy reform alone would be sufficient. Yes, education, cultural safety and health system reform are essential, but education without accountability does not prevent abuse.

Clear legal consequences matter for three reasons. The first is deterrence. Providers and institutions know there are serious consequences for violating consent. The second is accountability. When harm occurs, there is a clear legal pathway to investigate and prosecute. The third is recognition. Survivors see that the law acknowledges what happened to them as a serious violation of their rights, and for many survivors that recognition matters deeply. It tells them that their voices were heard, that what happened to them was wrong and that they will not be ignored.

Passing Bill S-228 will not undo the harms of the past, but it is a concrete step forward to ensuring that such harm does not continue. Reconciliation requires accountability and action. This bill I feel is both.

The urgency of this legislation could not be overstated. Cases have been reported as recently as this year. Every day that passes without clear legal protection is another day when someone could face pressure, coercion or violation at one of the most vulnerable times of their life. This is not an abstract policy debate or about whether a woman leaving a hospital will still have the reproductive future she chooses for herself, but about whether our health care system can protect someone's autonomy or override it.

I understand my time is coming to an end, so I ask members to understand that Bill S-228 would affirm that no one's reproductive future can be taken from them without consent. Forced and coerced sterilization is one of the most serious violations of bodily autonomy and human dignity. It is time to act, and we should do it now.

• (1630)

Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for bringing this very important issue to the House and making sure that he acknowledged those victims. I share with the member opposite the sense of urgency in getting this legislation through as quickly as possible. I have talked to Mi'kmaq

people who have been impacted by this. They have asked that we move speedily to ensure we get this through.

The member and I have had good conversations at the INAN committee. He is a respected member of that committee. I am wondering if the member sees any value in potentially seeking unanimous consent so that we can move this to the indigenous and northern affairs committee to ensure that we get this done within the next few weeks, potentially months, for these survivors, so this never happens again.

Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, the member and I are good friends on the INAN committee. To those survivors who may be in Ottawa today, I think this is welcome news. I do not think the member could see because he was looking this way, but by the looks on their faces, it meant a lot. I think that is a fantastic idea.

I want to thank every party in the Parliament. Every party has jumped on board to support the legislation. I welcome the member's offer.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for tabling this bill before the House. Does he agree that the full and active participation of organizations representing first nations is an essential condition and a fundamental prerequisite for any reform?

[*English*]

Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, I would like to also thank the Bloc side for, from what I hear, its support on the bill. Like I said, all parties have been deeply involved in this and have given it a lot of thought. The back and forth between all parties has been very respectful. I think we all agree that harm has been done in the past.

I agree with the member. There was intense consultation done across the country by the Survivors Circle for Reproductive Justice, among others who reached out. It seems there is widespread agreement that the legislation is a good thing and needs to happen as quickly as possible.

Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his tireless effort on this incredibly important topic. He and I have shared a number of conversations about not just the importance of the legislation but the importance of talking about it here in the House of Commons and bringing attention to this issue, because this is something that a lot of people think lives in a far distant past.

Private Members' Business

I do not believe he had an opportunity to finish all of his speech. I wondered if he could perhaps share with the chamber some of the hard work he performed that he did not get to share with us earlier.

Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, I did run out of time. I had a lot more to say, but most of it was just to thank the members of the Survivors Circle for Reproductive Justice. They have been amazing to work with. The friendships I have gained, the people I have gotten to know, have been absolutely incredible. It is unfortunate the journey had some wrongs done in the past. I am glad they saw the strength in themselves to come forward and bring it into the public, to ensure that this does not happen to anyone ever again. I thank everyone who raised their voice, shared their stories and worked with us across the aisle.

Again, I thank the member for Cape Breton—Canso—Antigonish, who is an indigenous person himself, although a member of the opposite party. I think his offer of unanimous consent would be an amazing way to get the bill moving as fast as possible through the parliamentary system.

The Deputy Speaker: 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 Calgary Centre, Industry; the hon. member for Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, Housing; the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, Taxation.

Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our government in support of Bill S-228, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding sterilization procedures. This important piece of legislation addresses coerced sterilization. The bill would address this abhorrent practice by clarifying how the existing law of assault applies when sterilization procedures are carried out without valid consent.

Coerced sterilization constitutes a profound breach of bodily integrity with enduring effects on survivors, their families and their communities. Evidence has shown that these harms have been experienced in a disproportionate way by indigenous women and girls, and two-spirit and gender-diverse people in Canada, as well as by racialized and disabled women, which underscores the need for clear legal protections that affirm the centrality of consent in all medical decision-making.

Bill S-228 would respond to that need by clarifying for greater certainty that a sterilization procedure constitutes a wounding or a maiming for the purposes of the offence of aggravated assault in section 268 of the Criminal Code. Aggravated assault is the most serious assault offence in Canadian criminal law. It applies where an assault “wounds, maims, disfigures or endangers the life” of the victim, and it carries a maximum penalty of 14 years' imprisonment.

Because all surgeries, including sterilization procedures, necessarily involve wounding or maiming of the body, they already fall within the scope of aggravated assault when performed without legally effective consent. The bill would make explicit what is already implicit in the law. This clarification is critically important because it focuses the legal analysis where it properly belongs. The relevant legal question is whether a particular sterilization proce-

dure amounted to a non-consensual application of force, that is, whether an assault occurred.

Both the Criminal Code and long-standing jurisprudence provide an established framework for answering that question. Assault was originally a common-law offence, but it is now codified in subsection 265(1) of the Criminal Code. That provision establishes that an assault occurs where a person applies force to the body of another person, directly or indirectly, without a person's consent, or while being reckless as to whether the person consents. The concept of applying force is broad. It simply means bringing something into contact with another person's body. With that definition, any medical procedure performed on a person without their consent plainly constitutes an assault because it involves intentional application of force to the body.

This principle was affirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada in its 1988 Morgentaler decision. The court clarified that the law of assault applies to any medical procedure carried out without the patient's legally effective consent, and because surgeries necessarily involve wounding or maiming the patient, they constitute aggravated assault if they are performed without legally effective consent. Bill S-228 therefore underscores the fact that sterilization procedures fall squarely within the established framework.

This brings us to the core concept that governs the lawfulness of any medical procedure: legally effective consent. Under Canadian criminal law, the application of force does not constitute an assault where legally effective consent is present. However, consent in law has a precise meaning. Legally effective consent must meet three fundamental criteria: It must freely be given, it must go to the nature of the act and it must be given by a person with the ability to understand what is being done.

These requirements have been developed through the common law, some of which are reflected in subsection 265(3) of the Criminal Code. That provision sets out circumstances in which the law will not recognize any consent given.

Specifically, the provision states that consent is not obtained in law “where the complainant submits or does not resist by reason of” violence, threats of violence, “fraud” or “the exercise of authority”. The requirement that consent be freely given means there must be no fraud or duress. If a patient agrees to a sterilization procedure because they have been misled about its purpose, pressured by authority figures or made to believe that they have no real choice, the law will not recognize that agreement as legally effective consent.

● (1640)

Consent also must go to the nature of the act, and the requirement implies a foundation of knowledge. Courts have described this as knowledge of the purpose of the operation, knowledge of the events that will occur and an understanding of the character of what is about to take place. In the context of sterilization, this means that the patient must be informed that the procedure will permanently prevent reproduction. Without that information, there is no legally effective consent.

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Finally, consent must be given by a person who has the ability to understand. Any consent provided by a patient who is unable to appreciate the nature of the consequences of the act is not valid in law. This issue may arise where the patient is a child or where the patient has a cognitive impairment that affects their capacity to comprehend the procedure and its implication.

These principles of voluntariness, knowledge and capacity are consistent with the consent standards applied in provincial and territorial health law across Canada, such that compliance with these standards protects health care providers from criminal liability. The Supreme Court of Canada further clarified the contours of consent for assault law purposes in its 1991 Jobidon decision. The court explained that the list of violating factors set out in subsection 265(3) is not exhaustive. The common law may continue to recognize additional circumstances in which consent will not be applied for public policy reasons. Depending on that fact, at the same time, the court affirmed that the assault law will recognize consent for application of force that has social value, such as appropriate in consensual, surgical interventions.

This balance is essential. The criminal law does not criminalize medical care; it is freely chosen and properly consented to. Indeed, it expressly recognizes the social and therapeutic value of appropriate surgical procedures, including sterilization procedures performed with valid consent. Bill S-228 preserves that distinction. It does not restrict access to voluntary sterilization procedures. Rather, it clarifies that, when sterilization is performed without legally effective consent, that conduct constitutes our most serious form of assault.

The bill also must be understood in the broadest context, which is that the disproportionate impact of coercion on indigenous women and diverse people has been documented and acknowledged. Clarifying the criminal law is therefore not only a matter of legal precision, but also part of Canada's broader efforts toward reconciliation. In respect to that, Bill S-228 is consistent with Canada's commitments under UNDRIP, which call for concrete measures to eliminate forced and coerced sterilization and to strengthen protections for productive autonomy and bodily integrity. By enforcing the central concept of consent in criminal law, this bill contributes to the objective in a concrete, legally meaningful way.

Ultimately, Bill S-228 would ensure that our criminal law speaks clearly where clarity is required and reinforces that legally effective consent is the dividing line between lawful medical care and criminal violence. Where such consent is present, the law recognizes the procedure as legitimate. Where it is absent, the full protections of the Criminal Code will apply.

Bill S-228 affirms the central role of consent in Canadian criminal law, clarifies the application of aggravated assault provisions, acknowledges the disproportionate harms experienced by indigenous women and girls, and supports Canada's commitment under the UNDRIP action plan. For these reasons, I urge all hon. members to support its swift passage.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I freely admit that until very recently I

was convinced that forced sterilization was already illegal, as it seems to me to be a matter of basic common sense. No one should be subjected to such an inhumane and degrading practice.

Despite a legal framework that is already strict in Quebec and Canada and despite multiple safeguards that protect patient consent, this requirement can still be compromised in certain clinical contexts, particularly when indigenous or minority women are in vulnerable situations. By explicitly banning forced or coerced sterilization in the Criminal Code, victims would have a clear recourse for launching investigations or taking legal action. Depending on the circumstances, these actions may constitute aggravated assault. That is why we support Bill S-228. The Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of it. This ban would also act as a deterrent for health care professionals. It would also encourage hospitals, medical associations and professional bodies to adopt policies to ensure that medical practices are fully in line with the law.

The bill specifies that “a sterilization procedure is an act that wounds or maims” a person for the purposes of subsection 268(1) of the Criminal Code, that is, aggravated assault. It also defines what constitutes sterilization, which is helpful. The bill states:

sterilization procedure means the severing, clipping, tying or cauterizing, in whole or in part, of the Fallopian tubes, ovaries or uterus of a person or any other procedure performed on a person that results in the permanent prevention of reproduction, regardless of whether the procedure is reversible through a subsequent surgical procedure.

Historical data shows that the forced or coerced sterilization of indigenous women in Canada was part of a eugenic and colonial attitude that persisted until the 1970s. It is estimated that between 1966 and 1976, more than 1,200 sterilizations were performed, including approximately 1,150 on indigenous women and 50 on men or people whose gender was not documented, with more than 70 additional procedures performed on women in Nunavut. In Alberta, under the Sexual Sterilization Act, 74% of indigenous people referred to the Alberta Eugenics Board were actually sterilized, compared to 60% of all people referred, illustrating a clear overrepresentation of indigenous people in these programs.

In her work on these practices, researcher Karen Stote documented 580 sterilizations performed in federal Indian hospitals between 1970 and 1975 alone, which suggests that the already high numbers available are just a minimum, given the destroyed archives, incomplete records and the lack of systematic data by community or identity. Little data seems to be publicly available on sterilizations that may have taken place before the 1960s. However, make no mistake: These numbers are alarming. In my community, as a member of the Huron-Wendat Nation, I have not heard of any such instances. I am not aware of any. Some may have occurred, but I have not heard anything about it. However, all first nations stand in solidarity with each other.

In the more recent past, the magnitude of the issue is reflected more in class actions and investigations than in official administrative statistics. A class action filed in Saskatchewan in 2017 includes more than 100 indigenous women from various regions alleging coerced sterilization or sterilization without free and informed consent, including tubal ligations performed between 2008 and 2012. At least 55 women had already contacted lawyers by the late 2010s.

Across the country, organizations such as the Native Women's Association of Canada and various reports mention at least five ongoing or announced class actions involving institutions and doctors in several provinces. In Quebec, a university study cited in the media and by indigenous groups identified at least 22 instances of forced or coerced sterilization of indigenous women between 1980 and 2019.

• (1650)

Approximately 30 Atikamekw women are currently participating in a class action against the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de Lanaudière and three doctors for sterilizations performed without consent from 1980 to the present.

Forced or coerced sterilization has no place in a free and democratic society. It must come to an end once and for all. The bill is an important step toward explicitly prohibiting forced or coerced sterilization. Its passage will provide vulnerable women with greater legal protection and affirm the primacy of free and informed consent in the face of forced sterilization.

During the last parliamentary session, the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs expressed concern that tensions might arise between obtaining consent for sterilization and intervention during medical emergencies or other situations requiring sterilization. A number of amendments were made to Bill S-250, which became Bill S-228, the one before us today. It now offers clearer and more precise language that could have a significant impact on the importance of free, informed and prior consent, as well as on the importance of informing patients of the medical risks associated with procedures, including the possibility of sterilization when a doctor must act to protect the patient's health or life from a medical standpoint.

Furthermore, some inclusion groups have criticized the bill for the limited scope of the definition of "sterilization procedure". They would like to include transgender, non-binary and intersex individuals, as well as men. However, it should be noted that the current definition remains inclusive, as it encompasses "any other pro-

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cedure performed on a person that results in the permanent prevention of reproduction".

In any case, adopting legislative provisions is not enough. For them to have a real impact, they need to be accompanied by specific regulations, rigorous enforcement mechanisms and strategies that respect the cultural realities and autonomy of indigenous nations. Without this, the Canadian government risks repeating its usual ineffective centralizing practices. The full and complete participation of indigenous organizations is an essential condition for the legitimacy and effectiveness of any reform. Only through this collaboration can we guarantee the real protection of the rights of indigenous women and all those who may be exposed to these unacceptable practices.

In addition, any legislative or regulatory action in this area must fully respect the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces in health care. Ottawa cannot impose one-size-fits-all measures that circumvent Quebec's autonomy. Otherwise, it would repeat the historical mistakes of centralization. Protecting women's rights and overseeing medical practices both fall primarily under provincial jurisdiction. Any reform must fully involve Quebec, its institutions and indigenous organizations in its design and implementation.

One specific example of this is the Collège des médecins du Québec. Following the report of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission, the college put in place an action plan and added a preamble to its code of ethics recognizing the realities of first peoples, respect for all identities and the fight against systemic inequalities. What is more, the ALDO-Québec training program was updated with a new social responsibility unit on equity, diversity, inclusion and global health.

That is what we need to keep an eye on and put in place. However, for now, we fully support this bill.

• (1655)

[*English*]

Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill S-228, an act to amend the Criminal Code on sterilization procedures. Bill S-228, formerly Bill S-250, would criminalize the act of forcing or coercing a person to become sterilized without proper consent. It would amend the Criminal Code of Canada by adding section 268.1, which would clarify what a sterilization procedure is and add clarity that a sterilization procedure is an act that would fall under subsection 268(1).

I want to thank Senator Yvonne Boyer for her leadership in bringing forward this bill. This is not an easy topic to talk about, but it would bring an important solution, so that forced or coerced sterilization would never happen again.

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Forced or coerced sterilization is a form of eugenics, and Canada has a troubling and well-documented history when it comes to its practice. In 1928, Alberta enacted the Sexual Sterilization Act, which established a eugenics board empowered to authorize the sterilization of patients in mental hospitals who were being considered for discharge. If the board determined that an individual might pass on a perceived disability to their children, it could approve the procedure.

At first, the act required consent, either from the patient or from the parent, guardian or spouse. However, in 1937, the legislation was amended to remove the requirement for informed consent for those labelled “mentally defective”. During the 44 years in which this legislation was in effect, the eugenics board approved 4,725 cases for sterilization, of which 2,834 were carried out.

One of the survivors was Leilani Muir. In 1955, Ms. Muir was admitted to the Provincial Training School for Mental Defectives in Red Deer. She was told she was undergoing a routine appendectomy when doctors decided to sterilize her without her knowledge, much less her consent. It was only years later that she found out, while trying to conceive, that her sterilization had occurred. In 1996, Ms. Muir became the first person to successfully sue the Alberta government for wrongful sterilization. Ms. Muir's case opened the door for similar class action lawsuits, and by 1999 the Province of Alberta had paid \$142 million in settlement costs to over 700 victims.

The Sexual Sterilization Act was repealed in 1972 by Premier Peter Lougheed's Progressive Conservative government, and in 1999, former Premier Ralph Klein made an historic formal apology for the forced sterilization of more than 2,800 people. British Columbia enacted a similar law that was in place between 1933 and 1973, yet it was narrower in scope than Alberta's legislation and therefore impacted a lot fewer people.

Both Saskatchewan and Ontario debated bringing forward this type of legislation, but ultimately the legislation did not pass. As a result, many assume that forced sterilization belongs to some troublesome but distant past. This assumption, however, is completely inaccurate. Reports of forced or coerced sterilization have surfaced as recently as last year, 2025. For those affected, this is not history. It is lived experience.

To date, it is estimated that somewhere between 12,000 and 15,000 indigenous women and men have experienced forced or coerced sterilization in Canada. Evidence also shows that other marginalized groups, including women living in poverty, women with disabilities, African Canadian women, racialized and ethnic minority women and women living with HIV, have been particularly vulnerable to coercive sterilization practices within Canadian health care settings, where their autonomy and informed consent were compromised or, worse yet, completely disregarded.

This week, I had the opportunity to attend an information session, where survivors of forced and coerced sterilization bravely shared their stories. One survivor, Chastity, really touched my heart. She recounted her experience to me, saying that during the birth of her daughter, she had been scheduled for a Caesarean section. Upon her arrival at the hospital, doctors began discussing complications from her previous pregnancy and then shifted to the

topic of tubal ligation. She made it clear that the doctors were speaking among themselves but not including her in the conversation, as though the decision had already been made.

● (1700)

She explicitly told the doctors that she did not want to have a tubal ligation, and instead she asked about having a five-year contraceptive implant. She was handed documents to sign, and she believed she was consenting to the implant. Throughout this time, she was drifting in and out of consciousness and experiencing disorientation. She was not informed of her options, nor was she in a condition to provide meaningful consent. Despite this, during her C-section, Chastity remembers the smell of burning flesh. To this day, she does not know exactly which procedure was performed on her.

The trauma of this experience has had lasting impacts and effects, yet tragically, Chastity's story is just one of thousands. She was 22 years old at the time. She is now in her early forties. She is only a couple of years older than me. This clearly is not a problem of the past, and we must do something today to stop it once and for all.

Forced or coerced sterilization is a profound violation of human rights. It strips individuals of bodily autonomy, personal freedom and fundamental dignity. As Chastity stated, “This isn't theoretical. It happened to real people, Indigenous women, racialized women, and vulnerable women. Survivors were harmed without consent. A law is required because human rights should never rely on goodwill.”

In my view, forced and coerced sterilization constitutes aggravated assault and should be prosecuted under the Criminal Code. While existing provisions of the Criminal Code may, in certain circumstances, allow for this to be prosecuted, it really leaves a gap and a hole. It is clear: The Senate committee, expert witnesses repeatedly testified that these provisions rarely actually resulted in meaningful accountability.

The absence of explicit language creates uncertainty for law enforcement, prosecutors, health care administrators and survivors alike. When the law lacks clarity, investigations falter, prosecutions stall and the people harmed are reluctant to come forward. This is just one more example of our medical system that mistreats and misunderstands women, especially women in these vulnerable times.

Private Members' Business

The legislative gap leaves grave violations insufficiently addressed, and the resolution is Bill S-228. I am so proud to be able to second the bill. The legislation, at its core, is about justice for every person who has endured the profound violation of forced or coerced sterilization. Indigenous women have been disproportionately targeted, reflecting a painful and well-documented history of discrimination and systemic racism, but we also have to recognize that this abuse has not been confined to one community. This abuse has afflicted women, gender-diverse people, and men throughout our entire country. It has harmed individuals from coast to coast to coast. This is something that truly just has to end today.

Let me reiterate: Forced sterilization is not just something in the past. It is happening now, today, to somebody's daughter or son, perhaps to someone we might very well know. Passing the bill would not undo the suffering already inflicted, but it would tell the survivors that we hear them, we see them and we will make sure that never again will this happen in this great country of ours. I would urge every member to support the bill.

● (1705)

Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I am very pleased to represent Nunavut in supporting Bill S-228.

First, I would like to thank the very strong people, who may or may not be in this room, who are sharing their strength with us today: Jackie, Sylvia, Heather, Germaine, Chasity, Nicole, Lois, Nilak, Susan, Harmony, staff and volunteers. I also thank the MP for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes, and I thank Senator Boyer for her decades of commitment to this work.

Survivors of the horrific procedure of forced or coerced sterilization against first nations, Inuit and Métis have endured so much, and this is another example of a genocidal policy that has tested our strength.

I thank Senator Boyer for her decades of commitment to this work. I was her student in law school when I first heard about just how deep this issue was across Canada. I thank the Survivors Circle for Reproductive Justice for their years of work.

Finally, I thank the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, who studied this important issue and tabled a report entitled “The Scars That We Carry: Forced and Coerced Sterilization of Persons in Canada—Part II” in July 2022.

Far too many Canadians are still ignorant as to how Canada treated indigenous peoples. Senator Boyer has worked since around 2017 bringing this to light. At least 12,000 indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people were forcibly or coercively sterilized between 1971 and 2018. This practice is reported as far back as the 1920s. This bill is important because if passed, it would criminalize sterilization procedures in the Criminal Code.

Today, I met Dr. Margot Burnell, president of the Canadian Medical Association. The CMA supports Bill S-228, which would make it clear that performing medical acts without free, prior and informed consent constitutes aggravated assault. The bill would define a sterilization procedure as any intervention that permanently prevents reproduction, regardless of whether it is technically reversible. The offence would be serious and could carry a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison.

Unfortunately, sterilization of indigenous women is not a practice of the distant past, as others have said in this room. There are ongoing class action lawsuits representing hundreds of indigenous women who were sterilized without their consent, and reports of forced and coerced hysterectomies and sterilizations performed on Black women, people with disabilities and intersex people.

The Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights reported:

In Igloodik, 26% of women between the ages of 30 and 50 were sterilized. In Naujaat, formerly known as Repulse Bay, almost 50% of women in the 30 to 50 age group were sterilized. In Gjoa Haven, 31% of women had been sterilized. More than 25% of women in Chesterfield Inlet and Kugaaruk had been sterilized. Those are the only ones that were well documented, but we know that there were a lot more.

● (1710)

I share as well the story of Louise Delisle from the report, “The Scars That We Carry”. Louise shared:

I was very young when I had my daughter. I was 15 years old. My parents were not parents whom I could come to and tell them that I was pregnant, so this was a traumatic time for me in my life, and I told no one. I had to leave school because I began to show, and actually my principal was the one who informed my mother that I was with child.

Because I was so young, I had no idea what this all meant and how to handle this. Of course my daughter was taken away because I was so young, and I was the eldest of seven children living in a very poor home.

I remember her birth. I remember the pain during her birth. I also remember a Black woman being in the room with me as a nursing assistant. I remember, through all the pain, that she got into an argument with the doctor who was delivering my daughter. I remember her voice to this day and the sternness in her voice when she said, “You can't do that. You need permission to do that.” The doctor said, “Too late. I don't want to see this girl back here again having kid after kid and going through this and maybe worse. We won't be in this position again,” he said. I had no idea what he was talking about. I was in labour and I was 15 years old, but what I found out was he had done something that would prevent me from having any more children. This was never discussed with me or my mother, who was my guardian while I was in hospital. It was never discussed.

My mother was not allowed in the room with me when I was giving birth, which was also something traumatic. The hardest thing for me was to come home without my daughter. Because I was 15 years old, like I said, I had to give her away. I couldn't provide for her.

Whatever the doctor did to me, I was not able to have children again in my life... So when I became 29 I married, and my husband and I wanted to have children. I was not aware what had happened until I was seeing a doctor in a fertility clinic to find out why I wasn't getting pregnant.... That's when I was told I had had a partial hysterectomy.

That is the story of Louise Delisle.

We have a responsibility to prevent obstetric violence. We have to make sure we see the link between racism and the forced practice of coerced sterilization in Canada that exists. Much work has been done by Senator Boyer that must be honoured. We must continue to stand with survivors. To all Inuit, first nations and Métis, I say to speak up. Their voices matter. They can help make a difference. They can help make sure that we have a better future.

Adjournment Proceedings

Having said this, *Uqagtittiji*, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion that, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, Bill S-228, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding sterilization procedures, be deemed read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

• (1715)

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

An hon. member: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There is a point of order from the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent, as discussed with the official opposition, to allow the bill to pass unanimously but to allow it to go to committee. This way, individuals that might want to present at committee are afforded that opportunity.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

INDUSTRY

Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in September 2025, the Government of Quebec ordered the removal of 1,200 so-called zero-emission buses from Quebec roads. These were school buses, and it was because one had caught fire. The company involved was a local champion called Lion Electric. It was the poster child, if we will, of a government program that the Government of Quebec said it needed a local company for to provide the electric buses to transition its bus fleet from diesel to electric. It was a failed experiment, a rushed transition, but it was something that cost the Government of Quebec over \$230 million.

This past spring, the Government of Quebec undid that requirement because of the failed experiment. Nevertheless, if we talk to the people who were actually involved in arranging these vehicles, people like Andrew Jones, they say that the problem with these buses was that an electric bus costs triple what it would be for a diesel equivalent for insurance, costs a whole bunch more in maintenance and is not worth it at the end of the day.

More costs were going to be visited upon society, and not just for the purchase price, which went from \$175,000 per vehicle to \$230,000 per vehicle just because they cost so much more than

the vehicles they were replacing. The government could subsidize the initial part of it, but it did not subsidize anything further. The Government of Quebec lost a significant amount of money, but being the local champion is, of course, the only reason Lion Electric received the contract. The buses had to be bought in Quebec, so 1,200 of those were bought.

After going through more than half a billion dollars of investor funds, Lion Electric entered into CCAA protection last year. This was enough of a failed vehicle electrification experiment that the Government of Quebec scrapped its whole experiment.

This is an indication that it was bad policy, but here is where the Government of Canada was involved in that whole scam. The problem with it is that it is actually a financial crime called a pump and dump. Some promoters in the financial industry got a hold of this flavour of the day and that the Government of Canada was in on the green technology. They got a hold of a marginal production company in Quebec. In the process of raising half a billion dollars on public markets that benefited a whole bunch of insiders, including people who are well-connected with the Liberal government, they cashed in their own shares.

The president of Lion, Marc Bédard, took out \$33 million and put it in his pocket before it went bankrupt. This is, like I say, a pump and dump financial arrangement. Investors became very poor in the process and all the management became very rich.

The problem here is with the Government of Canada, because it assisted in this by giving \$50 million to this fraud from the strategic innovation fund. It gave \$480 million to arrange these vehicles through the Canada Infrastructure Bank. The third leg of that stool is that the Government of Canada gave an unwritten and unquantified guarantee to the lenders to Lion through Export Development.

I have asked, through an Order Paper question, to find out how much Export Development has underwritten lenders like BMO Capital Markets, which provided part of the pump up on this in its reports to get this over the line. This has cost Canadians an enormous amount of money. We need to find out how much it is.

Will the government please indicate how much it has lost on this—

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry.

[*English*]

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to respond to comments made by the hon. member for Calgary Centre regarding contributions to Lion Electric and, more specifically, how much these contributions have cost taxpayers.

Adjournment Proceedings

In March 2021, the Government of Canada announced supports to Lion Electric, which included a \$49.95-million contribution through the strategic innovation fund for Lion's automated battery-pack assembly plant project. At the time, the SIF program administered the net-zero accelerator initiative, which supported investments to establish Canada as a global clean technology leader, enabling decarbonization and industrial transformation while capitalizing on new growth opportunities.

As is done for all SIF projects, rigorous due diligence was conducted to ensure that Lion Electric's project aligned with federal objectives before a contribution was committed. Since that time, the company has faced a number of financial challenges, which have resulted in the company's seeking credit protection in late 2024 and ultimately being sold to a group of Quebec-based investors in 2025. SIF has committed to a partially repayable contribution for Lion, of which \$31 million has been disbursed according to the public accounts of Canada. The Government of Canada has been monitoring the situation closely and has worked with Justice Canada and the court-appointed trustee to evaluate the next steps.

Electric vehicle and battery supply chains are complex and require considerable investment to bring as much of this value chain as possible to Canada. Responsible risk-taking is an inherent part of supporting innovation in a competitive global economy.

Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, I heard my colleague on the other side say "responsible risk-taking". Well, this was not responsible at all. It pushed a whole bunch of money into their friends' pockets along the way.

However, I am going to bring up one thing in particular. Export Development Canada will guarantee BMO loans to companies working to lower emissions. The Bank of Montreal, BMO Capital Markets, threw a whole bunch of money behind these companies, with zero risk. This is what is known as privatizing profits and publicizing, or making public, all the losses that these companies have, so profits are going to their friends and profits are going to the insiders, and the people bearing the cost at the end of the day are, of course, Canadian taxpayers.

I am asking the government again. EDC, Export Development Canada, funded all of this mess. It is a vast fraud, and I would like the government to explain how much it has lost through Export Development Canada in this electrification fiasco.

Carlos Leitão: Mr. Speaker, the project is currently being managed by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, ISED, and its grants and contributions centre of expertise, the team responsible for managing all contribution agreements that are in breach or in default. The department has worked closely with a court-appointed trustee to validate the outstanding debt and to ensure continuous oversight of this situation.

As mentioned, strategic and well-informed risk-taking plays an important role in securing investments. Calculated risk is a fundamental driver of innovation. I can speak only for ISED, but it will continue to evaluate risks and benefits to Canadians when making strategic investment decisions. Electric vehicle and battery supply chains are complex and require considerable investment to bring as much of this value chain as possible to Canada.

• (1725)

HOUSING

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after a decade of Liberal promises, housing prices have doubled, down payments have doubled, and now CMHC is projecting that housing starts will decline through 2026, 2027 and 2028. CMHC says we need nearly 500,000 homes per year to end the housing crisis. Instead we are headed toward fewer than half that. The government says 800,000 homes may be permitted over a decade. That is not a housing plan. That is a housing backslide.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer says the new Build Canada Homes program will build just 5,000 homes per year. That is just 1% of what the Liberals promised Canadians. Private homebuilding itself is slowing as well. New home sales are down 45% in our major cities, the lowest level in 45 years. They are down 56% in Vancouver. Permit applications are down 26% compared to last spring. Why is that?

Government-imposed costs now account for 30% to 50% of the price of a new home. Development charges have exploded. When it costs more to get permission to build than it does to build, we do not have a market failure; we have a government failure. The Liberals will stand up and list the billions of dollars they have spent. The Liberal government has indeed created the most expensive housing program in history, but if those billions of dollars in announcements actually built homes, Canada would not be in a housing crisis.

The housing accelerator fund was supposed to remove gatekeepers. Instead, cities are raising development fees after receiving federal money, while communities like mine have submitted numerous applications for the accelerator fund and have had all their proposals rejected.

The Liberal government's housing failures are increasingly evident. Many Liberals stood on a promise in 2021 to end chronic homelessness by 2030. Can we find a single Liberal who thinks that they will keep that promise? It will not happen, when the PBO is reporting that the number of chronic homeless people has increased 38% and unsheltered homelessness increased by 300% between 2018 and 2024.

Adjournment Proceedings

Residents in communities in my region do not need Ottawa to tell them this, though. Penticton and the regional district are buckling under the strain of homeless encampments and people living in their vehicles on forestry roads. I recently spoke with a senior in Castlegar, living across the street from a growing encampment that did not exist just a couple of years ago. Not surprisingly, she feels increasingly unsafe in her own neighbourhood amid rising crime and reports of fires.

Local services are overwhelmed, and the problem of homelessness is only increasing. That is why Conservatives are calling on the Liberals to stop making promises they cannot keep and start building homes. We asked them to cut the GST on all new homes under \$1.3 million to save families up to \$65,000 and make projects viable again, to tie federal infrastructure dollars to municipal results and reward communities that are building more, and to end capital gains tax on reinvestment in housing to unlock private capital.

The Liberals say their plan is working, so why are housing starts falling, sales collapsing, and young Canadians giving up on home ownership? Why are people living in tents?

• (1730)

Jennifer McKelvie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's housing system is facing complex problems that require targeted solutions. Far too many Canadians, especially younger generations, are struggling to find homes they can afford. Housing costs continue to rise, while supply is not keeping pace with growing demand. In response, the Government of Canada is taking immediate action.

Budget 2025 is making generational investments of \$25 billion over five years for housing and \$115 billion over five years for infrastructure. These strategic investments will build major infrastructure and homes and create lasting prosperity, empowering Canadians to get ahead. That is also why the Government of Canada has launched Build Canada Homes.

Build Canada Homes is Canada's new federal agency with the mandate to scale up the supply of affordable housing across Canada. By leveraging public lands, deploying flexible financial tools and acting as a catalyst for modern methods of construction, Build Canada Homes is driving a more productive and innovative homebuilding sector.

On February 5, Bill C-20, the Build Canada Homes act, was introduced in Parliament. This legislation, if passed, will establish Build Canada Homes as a Crown corporation dedicated to building affordable homes in communities across the country. Build Canada Homes is accelerating delivery of the housing Canadians need, faster, smarter and more affordable.

This new agency is working in partnership with non-profits, indigenous organizations, private developers and all orders of government. Build Canada Homes will partner with builders and housing providers that are focused on long-term affordability. This includes non-profits, co-operatives, community housing providers and organizations that support a variety of housing options for Canadians. It will also work with provinces, territories, municipalities and indigenous governments to help fight homelessness by

building supportive and transitional housing. Through Build Canada Homes investments, federal governments and provincial and territorial governments are partnering to deliver affordable homes to Canadians.

The Government of Canada has also made significant investments in affordable housing through programs like the affordable housing fund. As of September 2025, over 54,000 new units have been committed through the affordable housing fund. The Government of Canada has also provided an additional \$1.5 billion in loans to the affordable housing fund's new construction stream. This will lead to thousands of affordable housing units being built and brings the total federal investment in the fund to approximately \$16 billion. Additionally, to help new homebuyers enter the market, we are delivering savings of up to \$50,000 for first-time homebuyers by cutting the GST on new homes at or under \$1 million and lowering the GST on new homes between \$1 million and \$1.5 million.

The federal government, through a wide range of measures, is restoring affordability, expanding housing options and ensuring that every Canadian has a place to call home.

Helena Konanz: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals promised to build at speeds not seen since the Second World War, when returning veterans were in desperate need of housing to start young families. Back then, we provided it in mere months. The Liberals today are proud of the billions they are spending, but the fact is, more young Canadians than ever are delaying, if not abandoning, important life goals like home ownership and starting a family. Too many end up homeless as a result.

An average home in Canada costs roughly \$700,000. Down payments have doubled. Housing starts are falling. Builders are not building. Tent communities are a common sight. After 10 years and billions of dollars, where are the homes?

Jennifer McKelvie: Mr. Speaker, budget 2025 includes generational investments in housing and infrastructure that will accelerate housing construction and grow Canada's economy. We are taking the next step forward with the introduction of Bill C-20, the Build Canada Homes act. Now is the time to build upon the progress being made by Build Canada Homes and get homes built for Canadians across the country.

Build Canada Homes will partner across the housing ecosystem to drive the development of affordable housing. It will support a mix of income needs and catalyze a more productive housing sector. This is part of our national effort to increase housing construction, restore affordability and reduce homelessness. The government is focused on building more affordable housing while creating jobs and growing our economy at the same time.

• (1735)

TAXATION

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am here tonight to speak about the issue of affordability.

Women in Canada are only half of the population, but they are really struggling. We are talking single mothers. We are talking single seniors. These are some of the poorest people in our country. They cannot afford to eat, heat and house themselves. It is the disastrous policies of the Liberal government over the last 10 years that have led us here.

If we look at food, we know that food inflation is the highest in the G7. It is double what it is in the U.S.A. There are specific items. Lettuce is up 40%. Coffee is up 33%. Beef is up 27%, and baby formula is up 50%. All of these things are making it difficult for people to survive in this country, especially women.

The reason for the food inflation is clear. It is the industrial carbon tax. It is the fuel standard tax. It is the fertilizer tariffs, the fertilizer regulations and the new packaging requirements that are driving costs up. We then see that when it comes to heating our homes or driving our cars to take our kids to soccer, the fuel standard has driven things up 7¢ a litre. That is just piling on to an already unaffordable life.

Housing is difficult as well. The disastrous immigration policies of the government have let millions of people come in without keeping up with the housing supply. I heard the member before me talk about how we have to build 500,000 homes a year, every year, for a number of years, to get out of this housing crisis. What that has done is double the price of housing. It has doubled the price of rent. People who are working hard cannot afford to live.

It so disproportionately affects those who can least afford it, like single mothers and single seniors. The government has a responsibility. I know the status of women minister, of whom I originally asked this question. I have worked with her. I know she cares about the women in Canada. I am the chair of the status of women committee. I care about the status of women in Canada. We are addressing issues that are important, like femicide and intimate partner violence.

However, when people cannot afford to live and put a roof over their heads, then we are not really hitting all the priorities. I think it is becoming of everyone in the House to bring forward corrections to the policies that have led us to this place and to make sure that we can make life more affordable, that we can bring food prices down, that we can take the taxes off gas and home heating and that we can make sure we have a housing supply that brings the housing costs down so that mothers can afford to feed their children, single seniors are not forced to eat cat food, and we can have a better country.

Adjournment Proceedings

I am counting on the minister to answer my question. What is she going to do to address the affordability crisis that is facing women in Canada?

What policies will the government reverse in order to bring the costs down so that women in this country can afford to eat, heat and house themselves?

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, affordability pressures are indeed very real, and the Government of Canada takes concerns about food prices in particular very seriously. It is a real issue for women and for all Canadians.

Families, farmers and businesses are facing global challenges, from supply chain disruptions to geopolitical instability and climate impacts, that are affecting prices here at home and around the world. It is important, however, to be clear about the facts of Canada's climate policies.

Industrial carbon pricing systems do more than any other policy to cut greenhouse gas emissions, with next to no cost for consumers. Canada's system applies only to large industrial emitters. It is designed to improve performance, drive investment and keep Canadian industries competitive as global markets increasingly reward cleaner production. It does not apply to individuals, and it is carefully designed to protect against carbon leakage, safeguard jobs and keep production here in Canada.

This market-based approach is not just efficient; it is important in positioning Canada to be competitive in a global market that values low-carbon production. It is simply where the world is going. Repealing industrial carbon pricing would introduce uncertainty, discourage investment and risk exposing Canadian exports to foreign carbon border measures that are being adopted now by key trading partners at a time when we want to diversify our exports.

Adjournment Proceedings

The clean fuel regulations are an important part of Canada's commitment to taking action on climate change, including to protect the environment and human health to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The clean fuel regulations do not set or impose a price increase at the pump. Fuel prices are shaped by many global factors, and domestic clean fuel measures represent only a very small piece of that picture. Independent analysis shows that the expected impact on gasoline prices is modest, even at the full impact later this decade. These regulations are designed to keep costs low, protecting households while making the industry more resilient. The price noted by the opposition of the effect at the pump is not accurate, unfortunately.

At the same time, these regulations are delivering real economic co-benefits. Removing the regulations would directly hurt canola farmers. Forty thousand growers now have a market for 2.5 million tonnes of their canola from one Alberta biofuels plant alone. Fifty per cent of canola produced in Alberta meets the demand for the Strathcona plant at full capacity. That is 10% of all Canadian canola. Why is that a problem for the Conservatives? I think they should applaud it.

In closing, climate action and affordability are not competing goals. Well-designed climate policies help reduce long-term costs by limiting the growing impacts of climate change.

• (1740)

Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I am happy the parliamentary secretary for industry showed up, but I am very disappointed that the Minister of Women and Gender Equality, to whom I addressed my original question, did not take the time to prioritize answering these questions that are so important for women in Canada.

The parliamentary secretary talked about climate change being the cause of all this. Well, that is not true, because food inflation is

twice as high here as in the States, and the climate is not that different in our two countries.

We know that the climate actions that the government is taking, in terms of industrial carbon taxes and the clean fuel tax, all get passed on to the consumer eventually. It is not that organizations and businesses are going to be charitable and just suck up those costs themselves. They are going to pass them on, and that drives up the price of food. The reality is that the government's emissions continue to go up, so it is not even working.

What is the government going to do to make food, housing and heating more affordable, so that women in Canada can afford to live?

Carlos Leitão: Mr. Speaker, the government will not take actions that undermine investment certainty, weaken competitiveness or put Canadian jobs at risk. Industrial carbon pricing and the clean fuel regulations are key pillars of Canada's climate competitiveness strategy, driving investment and ensuring emissions reductions and the protection of human health, in addition to allowing our producers to compete in global markets.

These policies are flexible, evidence-based and designed to protect competitiveness while driving innovation. Rather than retreating from proven tools, the government will continue working with provinces, industry and indigenous partners to strengthen affordability and support economic growth.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 5:43 p.m.)

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