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Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 9, 2026

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

• (1100)
[English]

IRAN AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That a take-note debate on the hostilities in Iran and the Middle East, and the impact for Canadians abroad, be held later this day, pursuant to Standing Order 53.1, and that, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House: (a) members wishing to speak during the debate may indicate to the Chair that they will be dividing their time with another member; (b) the time provided for the debate be extended beyond four hours, as needed, to include a minimum of 12 periods of 20 minutes each; and (c) no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

EXPORT AND IMPORT PERMITS ACT

The House resumed from November 19, 2025, consideration of the motion that Bill C-233, An Act to amend the Export and Import Permits Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by acknowledging the sincere intention of my NDP colleague, the member for Vancouver East. Above all, bill C-233 is based on a completely valid concern, that of ensuring that Canadian exports do not contribute to human rights violations or armed conflicts. I think that everyone here in the House can agree on this fundamental objective of defending human rights and upholding international law.

That said, recognizing that legislation is well-intentioned does not necessarily mean that the proposed measures are the right ones.

As I said, it is completely valid to ensure that the weapons, ammunition and military equipment produced in Canada, including dual-use equipment, are not used against civilians. The Bloc Québécois is concerned about the situation in Gaza, which is why we proposed several realistic measures that could help to improve it, including repeatedly calling for a complete moratorium on arms exports to Israel.

The Bloc Québécois has always been critical of arms export to countries that violate human rights, such as, for example, Saudi Arabia. We also strongly oppose the export of light armoured vehicles to that country, which is known for its systematic human rights violations. While the Bloc Québécois has never hesitated to denounce Benjamin Netanyahu's deadly policies, the question is whether Bill C-233 would have a real impact on the situation in Palestine or elsewhere in the world. The Bloc Québécois believes that it is preferable for the government to have some discretion, which promotes predictability and allows for pressure to be applied on rogue countries.

The Bloc Québécois recognizes the importance of better regulating military exports to avoid any complicity in human rights violations. However, we believe that the current wording of the bill is too rigid and too broad to achieve its objectives. As a result, we unfortunately cannot support it. Bill C-233 primarily seeks to address a sobering international situation, but in our view, it adds overly restrictive conditions and limitations.

Although well-intentioned, Bill C-233 raises a number of concerns. We are obviously aware that the situation with the United States is unique because of the agreement under which Canada is considered a domestic supplier. Indeed, under American law, since 1956, Canadian manufacturers have been considered domestic suppliers, allowing them to integrate the Pentagon's supply chain and to participate in research and development projects in America's defence apparatus.

In reality, it seems this bill would have two possible outcomes: Either the United States will stop procuring from Canada or it will simply not comply. Indeed, the United States could simply circumvent the restrictions in this bill. The idea that the United States would start asking for Canada's approval to ship small arms and light weapons is wishful thinking.

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Since the tariff crisis began, it has become quite clear to us that we have little, if any, control over the decisions that are made by the United States. If Canada and Quebec stop supplying the United States, it will change suppliers, and Israel will still receive arms and munitions from the United States. Passing this bill would not even achieve its intended goal, and chances are that its greatest impact would be to weaken a number of our industries, which are already suffering from American tariffs, and I think everyone in this House wants to avoid that. As I said earlier, the intent of the bill is certainly more than respectable, but we feel that, in its present form, it would only yield mixed results. I believe that we should rather keep working at improving existing mechanisms in partnership with our allies and with all the relevant stakeholders.

The measure proposed under Bill C-233 is also unenforceable because it stipulates that Canada should prevent arms and munitions exports if there is any risk of misuse. Let us face it: There is no such thing as zero risk. It is also a difficult term to define.

Indeed, while genocide is obviously enough to justify the denial of an export licence, the threshold of attacks directed against “civilian objects...protected as such” is rather vague. Moreover, I have serious doubts about Canada's ability to quickly obtain the information needed to make a decision without relying on in-depth investigations by recognized organizations that often have much better knowledge of the situation in the various war zones.

• (1105)

Thus, in our view, it would be best to leave government some discretion rather than opting for an approach that seems difficult to apply, like the one proposed under Bill C-233. That does not mean, however, that we should abandon our commitment to a responsible approach that respects international human rights and is based on a balanced legislative framework. I would like to reiterate that we appreciate the intent of the bill. Unfortunately, however, we believe that passing this bill would miss the mark regarding military exports.

It should also be noted that Canada has one of the strictest arms export control systems in the world, particularly since its accession to the Arms Trade Treaty. That framework already imposes on the government a duty to assess the risks associated with military exports, including the possibility that the equipment may be used to commit serious violations of international humanitarian law. I acknowledge that it is far from perfect, but in our attempt to close certain perceived loopholes, I fear that we may complicate a system that is already governed by rigorous control mechanisms.

I believe we have a collective responsibility to find the right balance between coercion, protecting human rights and honouring international commitments. For these reasons, while we sincerely commend the dedication of the member for Vancouver East, we cannot support Bill C-233 in its current form. That is why we will not support it as written by the New Democratic Party at this time. Again, this does not mean that we do not commend the member for Vancouver East's objective.

• (1110)

[English]

Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre—Don Valley East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of Bill C-233, the no more loopholes act. Introduced by my colleague the hon. member for Vancouver East, the bill seeks to amend the Export and Import Permits Act to close dangerous loopholes in Canada's arms export regime, loopholes that leave us complicit in human rights abuses abroad.

At its core, the bill is about consistency, accountability and conscience. It is about ensuring that Canada lives up to its international obligations and that our industries act responsibly within the global defence trade. The bill is not anti-industry, and it is not anti Canada's defence sector, but it is anti complicity in violence against civilians. It is pro human rights, pro social justice and pro principled global leadership.

Let us be clear that Canada already has strong export controls intended to prevent military exports from contributing to human rights abuses or violations of international humanitarian law. Under the Export and Import Permits Act, exporters are generally required to obtain a permit after a risk assessment. If a substantial risk exists that an export could contribute to human rights violations, the export must be refused, but there is a loophole and a large one, which is that Canada's current system exempts most exports destined for the United States from meaningful permit requirements.

Because of this, hundreds of Canadian-made military components, ammunition, aircraft parts and explosive materials cross the border with no individual risk assessment, no transparency and no public reporting. Once in the U.S., these Canadian components can be, and have been, incorporated into weapons systems used in conflicts where civilians have been killed or injured. Independent reports have traced Canadian-origin components into U.S. facilities and then onward to militaries engaged in hostilities with documented civilian harm, notably in the Middle East. The so-called U.S. loophole thus enables a pipeline by which Canadian arms can travel into contexts that we as Canadians would never knowingly support.

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This is not political theatre; it is a documented reality. Canada is a signatory to the Arms Trade Treaty, which prohibits exports of conventional arms if there is a substantial risk that they will be used to commit serious violations of international human rights or humanitarian law, yet our regulatory framework, with its blanket exemption for U.S.-bound shipments, is out of step not only with Canada's international obligations but also with global standards. We have legal obligations under international law, not just of intent, but of due diligence, risk assessment, end-use monitoring and transparency. Without these safeguards, the very values we espouse, such as human dignity, the protection of civilians and international justice, are hollow.

Let us be honest. We should not profit from war, repression or attacks on civilians anywhere in the world. Whether the suffering is in Gaza, Yemen or elsewhere, it matters. Human rights are not situational, and they should least of all be overridden by an arbitrary geographic exemption. Opponents of Bill C-233 have claimed that closing the loopholes would decimate Canada's defence industry or jeopardize our economic relationships. I reject that framing. Bill C-233 would not impede production, innovation or legitimate defence trade. It would simply ensure that Canadian goods destined for the United States receive the same due diligence of permit requirements, risk assessments and reporting as goods going to other destinations.

Industry thrives on predictability, trust and a reputation of integrity. Strengthening our export controls and aligning them with international partners would enhance confidence in Canadian products. Many of our allies already apply similar controls to U.S.-bound exports. Canada's current practices are the outer, not the global, norm. Jobs are not at risk here. What is at stake is our moral authority and Canada's global brand as a principled exporter. There is room in this Parliament to simultaneously support both Canadian industry and human rights, and this bill strikes that balance.

- (1115)

Let me bring this principle closer to home. Recently, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement awarded a contract to a Canadian firm to buy 20 armoured tactical vehicles built to withstand bullets and blast effects, and there was no robust Canadian oversight of their end use.

This is more than an abstract trade detail. ICE is not a combat military force. It is a law enforcement agency with a documented history of enforcement practices that harm civilians, including migrants and vulnerable communities. These armoured vehicles have been deployed in ways that raise serious human rights questions, yet under our current framework, these sales can proceed with minimum transparency or human rights scrutiny.

This example illustrates the broader point that Canadian products should not be exported in ways that contribute to violence, repression or human rights abuses, whether abroad or within communities in North America. We are a country that has historically championed refugee protections, human dignity and equitable justice. That legacy is undermined when our goods are put to harm in contexts that we ourselves would reject.

I want to underscore an important point about context. The political, economic and security environment in which Canada's arms

export regime was first structured has shifted dramatically. As the Prime Minister has noted, "The old relationship we had with the U.S. based on deepening integration of our economies and tight security and military co-operation is over."

In other words, the assumption that we can treat U.S.-bound military exports differently from all other reflects a bygone era, an era that predates the protectionist trade actions and broader geopolitical shifts under the current U.S. administration. This raises a vital question: Is the America of today the same America that justified this exemption? If it is not, then surely Canada should not anchor its export control policy on absolute premises.

Closing this loophole would strengthen Canadian sovereignty and align our foreign policy instruments with contemporary realities. Bill C-233 would help ensure that Canadian exports, including those that could find their way into law enforcement operations abroad, are subject to meaningful human rights, due diligence and end-use monitoring.

Another core strength of this bill is its commitment to transparency. Right now, data on U.S.-bound military exports are not publicly reported and are tracked only when permits are required, leaving large swaths of the Canadian arms trade opaque. There is no public record of end-users or risk assessments for most of the U.S.-bound exports.

Bill C-233 would require elimination of country-based exemptions and ensure meaningful risk assessments on all exports, end-use certificates to prevent diversion to human rights abuses and increased parliamentary reporting on Canada's compliance with the Arms Trade Treaty. These are not radical reforms; they are responsible governance. They are reforms that would enhance public trust and ensure that Parliament has oversight over how Canadian goods are used around the world.

In supporting this bill, we are affirming that Canada will not consign its moral compass to convenient legal loopholes. We are saying that human rights matter more than trade loopholes, that social justice matters more than export exemptions and that Canadian industry can and should flourish without being implicated in violence against innocent civilians.

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We are also strengthening Canada's credibility on the global stage, particularly among other nations that have already implemented similar safeguards and view human rights compliance as integral to defence trade. This is not about isolationism. It is about principled engagement. It is about making sure that when Canada says never again, we mean it, not just in rhetoric, but in law.

• (1120)

Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, today we are considering a bill that would amend the Export and Import Permits Act, which governs Canada's defence exports. If passed, this bill would see the removal of allowing exemptions for specific countries.

The bill would change the current legal framework by:

- (a) clarifying that parts, components and technology necessary for the assembly or use of arms, ammunition, implements or munitions of war are included in the meaning of those terms;
- (b) preventing exemptions from the Export Control List for arms, ammunition, implements or munitions of war based on their country of destination;
- (c) preventing the issuance of general export permits for arms, ammunition, implements or munitions of war;
- (d) preventing the issuance of general brokering permits for arms, ammunition, implements or munitions of war;
- (e) enhancing the considerations that the Minister must take into account in issuing a permit to export or broker arms, ammunition, implements or munitions of war;
- (f) providing that the Minister must require end-use certificates from the government of a country to which arms, ammunition, implements or munitions of war are being exported if doing so would sufficiently mitigate a substantial risk of war crimes or violations of international humanitarian law or international human rights law; and
- (g) requiring the Minister to prepare and table in Parliament an annual report on the export of arms, ammunition, implements or munitions of war and Canada's compliance with the Arms Trade Treaty.

I wish we lived in a world where there was no war, where there was no need for military or the weapons to arm them. I grew up in a nation at war. It was a bloody 15-year battle from which the country of my birth has not fully recovered, even with the passage of decades.

We now live in a world at war. Bombs are falling in Iran and Ukraine. Conflicts are going on in Yemen, Sudan and Gaza. There are other smaller conflicts around the globe, ones that rarely get noticed. If there were no weapons, maybe those conflicts would not happen, or maybe people would still kill each other with sticks and stones. If those were not available, they could use their bare hands.

Since the Suez crisis in 1950, Canadians have thought of ourselves as peacekeepers. We see ourselves as standing between those in conflict, keeping warring armies apart. We hope that our presence will allow time for a cessation of hostilities. Our desire is to create a buffer zone that can lead to talking instead of fighting. With this in mind, with that image of Canada as a peacekeeper, we do not see ourselves as manufacturers or importers of weaponry. The truth, though, is that we have a thriving defence industry.

The defence industrial sector in Canada was worth about \$14.3 billion in 2022, roughly one half of 1% of the GDP. As members can imagine, a lot of that involves supplying the United States with Canadian technology and expertise.

We live in an ever-changing world where, sadly, hostilities seem to be on the increase. It would be foolish to not examine how we can better defend ourselves from outside threats.

Defence is a primary responsibility of national government. We need to support our defence industry, which provides the means to keep all Canadians safe. Canada's defence industry is tightly integrated with the U.S. defence industrial sector. That makes sense. Our militaries have been working together for years. Our soldiers have fought and died together in the First World War, the Second World War, Korea and Afghanistan. Our troops have served together in countless UN and NATO missions. We are partners in NORAD and numerous training exercises.

With the government's commitment to increase defence spending, significant growth is expected. It is only to be expected that with that growth, our relationship with the United States will continue to be important. That is something important to consider. What would be the ramifications of the passage of this bill on the Canadian industry, Canadian jobs and our country's relationships with our closest ally, the United States?

• (1125)

It is popular in some segments of society to maintain that the relationship between the United States and Canada is at some point irreparably broken. Some people are willing to cast aside more than two centuries of friendship and partnership because they do not like what they hear coming from Washington. I would suggest that this is short-sighted. Canada and the United States have far more binding us together as peoples and as nations than things that divide us. Our common, undefended border is a tribute to the closeness we have.

At the present time, the United States is the only country subject to exemptions under the Export and Import Permits Act. The bill would bring the U.S. under the provisions of that act by removing the current exemption. This would result in a ban on Canadian defence exports to the U.S. if those exports are re-exported to another country on which Canada has implemented a defence export ban. In essence, the bill is an attempt to impose Canadian foreign policy on our closest ally, with those working for our defence industry paying the price.

Certainly, if Bill C-233 becomes law, it would create problems in the Canada-U.S. relationship. How could the U.S. not see this as a significant threat to its defence and security sector? Why would we want to put Canadian jobs in jeopardy? Why would we want to tell the Americans that we are a less than trustworthy defence partner?

Private Members' Business

While the Liberal government may be vacillating on the number of new F-35 fighter jets it will ultimately purchase, we are committed to purchasing some, spending millions of dollars. The decision to select the F-35 comes with benefits for Canadian industry and Canadian workers, as some of the components of the plane are being manufactured here. What do we tell the workers in Winnipeg making horizontal tail assemblies, who could lose their jobs if the bill passes, or workers making weapons bay door inserts in Lunenburg? The F-35's engine sensors are made in Ottawa, while outboard wing assembly is being done in Delta. Will those jobs remain in those communities if Canada shows itself to be an unreliable partner?

It seems to me that the bill is not about arms exports so much as it is about bringing an end to an enduring partnership that has benefited Canada. To do that does not make sense to me. It is important that the House send a clear message that this piece of legislation is not acceptable. I encourage all hon. members to vote no.

Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians have not seen this level of global chaos and instability since the Second World War, with a level of death and suffering due to the conflicts in the Middle East, Ukraine and Sudan that is staggering and horrifying. Right now, civilians in a dozen countries in the Middle East are facing daily air attacks from drones and missiles. Every member of the House has a duty to join with their colleagues to encourage the protection of civilians in these conflicts.

In that spirit, I want to salute the member for Vancouver East for her concern not only in these conflicts but more generally for those who fight for justice and protecting the most vulnerable.

When I read the bill, Hansard from the fall debate on the bill, correspondence from my constituents on this matter, and the outside research and advocacy on it, both for and against, I hear a real concern about the proliferation of weapons of war, especially those that are used against civilians. I share the concern, especially when those weapons are used by leaders from countries to which we are closely allied.

While there are few good ideas in the bill, it is so broad in scope that it would fundamentally damage a regime that is already functioning at a high level to honour Canadian values, a regime that we strengthened when we signed the Arms Trade Treaty and passed further legislation to go further than the treaty.

The bill would limit and even damage Canada's ability to confront the many defence challenges facing us and our allies. It would limit Canadian sovereignty at a time of great conflict, while playing no meaningful difference on the conflicts that are of such justifiable concern to those who support the bill.

First I want to acknowledge one source of the bill: the horrifying war on civilians in Gaza perpetuated by the Israeli war cabinet. It is a war that was started by Hamas, killing and kidnapping almost 2,000 innocent Israeli civilians, who still need their own justice, but a war that has resulted in a disproportionate response by the current Israeli government and its military: a prolonged attack on a vulnerable and defenceless population, in which access to aid and food was itself weaponized.

Both Hamas and members of the Israeli war cabinet have been very clear that they do not just dehumanize the other side but that they also want to wipe it out. Some members of the Israeli war cabinet clearly intend to go further, with the widespread and illegal expansion of settlement activity in the West Bank. The question is how to slow or stop it and how to get justice. After all, these leaders have used not just weapons and bullets but also starvation, torture, arbitrary collective punishment, denying of aid and preventing civilians from leaving the war zone. The killing continues on occasion, even after the ceasefire agreement last year.

At least 75,000 people, most of them civilians, have met violent deaths in Gaza. On top of the deaths on and since October 20, 2023, an additional approximately 2,000 Israel Defense Forces soldiers have also been killed in action. The indictments of members of the Israeli war cabinet at the International Criminal Court on charges of criminal conduct in this war are richly deserved, and it is my hope that they and the surviving Hamas leaders will be held accountable for their actions. We need justice for the victims.

Canada cannot stop this war alone nor stop the killing alone. A well-intentioned vote for the bill may feel good. It may even feel right, but it would weaken our sovereignty without changing the facts on the ground in that war, and it would not prioritize what has the best chance of affecting the facts on the ground.

Our caucus and our government have been acting to affect the facts on the ground. When it became clear that Canadian-made lethal munitions were potentially finding their way into the armouries of the Israel Defense Forces for use in Gaza, our government took action to stop this with an arms embargo. No lethal weapons or ammunition exports to Israel have been permitted since January 2024. This is a sign that our regime, our current legislation and our participation in the Arms Trade Treaty are working.

We have been playing a key role in opening access to aid, including \$300 million in humanitarian aid. We also know that a two-state solution with a reformed democratic Palestinian Authority guaranteeing the security of Israel is the only path out of this long, deadly struggle, and our government intends to push for this result at every chance.

I am under no illusions; this solution has been put at risk by both the Hamas terrorist attacks on October 7 and Israel's attack on Gaza civilians in reprisal, but, and more importantly, we recognized the State of Palestine last September, joining other leading democracies in that recognition. We can draw a direct line between that recognition and the ultimate ceasefire, a ceasefire that, while by no means perfect, has at least slowed the killing.

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As we know, arms exports can sometimes evade restrictions, and there are tools available to the federal government in the current regime to help curb this. As I said to my community in July, if Canadian weapons are being used in this war despite our embargo, then our arms embargo needs to be strengthened in a targeted way. In particular, the provision in the bill under clause 6 that would require an end-use certificate in certain cases, as recommended by the minister of foreign affairs, could be a valuable addition to our regime. We can also do more to sanction, and to seek justice for the victims using the International Court of Justice process and ensuring that it does its work in a timely fashion, and considering extending sanctions to more people who are responsible for war crimes.

• (1130)

However, the bill is mainly about something else. It is about curbing arms exports to the United States. Canada already has robust arms export restrictions under the Export and Import Permits Act and the Arms Trade Treaty. The examples of loopholes that my colleague, the member for Vancouver East, mentioned in the previous debate were mostly before Canada's accession to the ATT and before Bill C-47 of the 42nd Parliament.

Indeed, our regime is stronger than the ATT, with its focus on weapons used against women and children, yet this war and other wars have killed many civilian women and children. Does that mean there is a loophole? It is a tragedy, yes, but it is not due to a loophole in Canadian law.

At its heart, the bill seeks to end legitimate trade and deny export permits with a single country, the United States. That would not be closing a loophole; that would be blowing up a critical defence and trade relationship with a NATO ally. If that were to happen, tens of thousands of Canadian jobs in the defence industry would be put at risk, our defence industry's access to North American supply chains to provide critical material to international allies would abruptly end and Canada would be frozen out of other trade partnerships in retaliation. Instead of working with our allies, we would be turning our back on them.

Every single one of these impacts would lead to a body blow to our sovereignty and our economy, further isolating us from our allies in North America and Europe at a time when, for the first time in living memory, Canada faces actual threats to its own territorial and economic sovereignty. In this moment, we need to build up Canadian sovereignty, not give it up.

Our allies in NATO and Europe are facing actual threats to their mere existence, especially in Ukraine. Ukraine's struggle for freedom from its Russian invaders is our struggle. In my riding of Taia-iako'n—Parkdale—High Park, we have a large and vibrant Ukrainian community whose friends and relatives back home have been living a nightmare since the 2022 invasion. Canadian firms work with those in other countries, including the United States, to fill production orders for items such as artillery rounds for the Ukrainian armed forces. The bill would disrupt such cross-border supply efforts that Ukraine relies on for its survival.

If Ukraine falls, it would lead to a catastrophic security crisis in eastern Europe, including the possibility of a wider war that could end up on Canada's doorstep in the Arctic and would bring grievous

concern to millions of Canadians. The legislation would undermine these efforts and make both our countries less secure, with greater threats to our sovereignty and stability.

I want to stress that I am deeply concerned that weapons of war from Canada and around the world can and do end up in the hands of fighters who use them against civilians. It is a problem that can be solved only by adherence to the Arms Trade Treaty, legislation such as our current legislation, and further international co-operation and engagement.

The Prime Minister recently spoke eloquently at the World Economic Forum about how middle powers such as Canada need to stand together to hold the large powers accountable. Arms proliferation is one area where Canada's moral authority has already led to effective multilateral action to prevent lethal weapons from targeting civilians. In 1997, the Ottawa Treaty was implemented to prohibit the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, which largely maimed and killed civilians over the 20th century. Over 160 states signed that treaty. The result has been astonishing, with over 48 million stockpiled land mines designed to kill humans having been destroyed.

We can, in this new order, work anew to stop impunity and to use the existing regime to curb the shipments of arms through enforcing the current legislation and working with our allies to establish new international rules to hold countries accountable for their actions. In doing this, we honour civilians, Canadian sovereignty and Canadian values.

• (1135)

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-233, an act to amend the Export and Import Permits Act. In presenting this bill, my hon. colleague from Vancouver East has argued that Canada must ensure that our domestic laws live up to our commitments under the Arms Trade Treaty, or ATT. She has raised serious concerns that are worthy of thoughtful consideration. Indeed, I believe all members of the House share the fundamental goals behind Bill C-233: making sure that Canada acts responsibly on the global stage, ensuring that our exports reflect Canadian values and aligning our policies with both international law and humanitarian principles. The question before us today, therefore, is not whether those goals are worthwhile, because they clearly are, but whether Bill C-233, as drafted, is the best way to achieve them.

I have followed the debate on this bill closely and want to thank colleagues from all parties for their contributions to the legislative record. Their remarks have been well researched, and their arguments have shaped my own position on the bill, which does not actually target any particular country or conflict but seeks to constrain Canadian policy and practice across the board. Because of that breadth, it is crucial for us to think carefully and practically about the impact that passing this bill would have on our sovereignty, our security and our global relationships, and we must be vigilant about avoiding unintended consequences, because the new world order the Prime Minister is fond of speaking of is a complex and dangerous place. Getting that balance right matters if Canada is going to realize its potential as a leading middle power, especially in the context of our geographic location, our obligations to NATO and our other allies, and our international commitments.

When determining whether Canada's export approach should change, as proposed by Bill C-233, we must first examine and evaluate the strength of Canada's existing export control regime. In my preparation and research for these remarks, I was pleased to learn that Canada already has one of the most stringent systems in the world for regulating the export of military goods and technology and that our standards not only meet those set out in the ATT but in many respects exceed them.

In his detailed speech explaining why the Liberal government will not be supporting this bill, the parliamentary secretary for foreign affairs explained that Canada's export control system already places human rights considerations at its very core and that Canada has gone above and beyond the requirements of the Arms Trade Treaty. Canada already applies exemptions more narrowly than any other ATT signatory. We control a wider range of items than the treaty requires, including dual-use goods and nuclear, chemical, biological and missile technologies. Canada imposes stricter denial criteria than those specified under the ATT, including risks of contributing to transnational violence, terrorism and organized crime. Canada also already has and enforces strict controls on Canadians involved in transfers of military goods abroad, even when those goods never actually enter Canada.

There is a measure of transparency already in place, in the sense that the government has been tabling annual reports to Parliament on exports governed by the ATT since the 1990s, even before the treaty was ratified. As an issue this important should be, our approach to Canadian military exports has been serious and largely non-partisan. To verify these assertions, I reviewed some of the government's recent reports that are available to the public on the Global Affairs Canada website. Current law and practice require Global Affairs Canada to assess whether proposed exports would contribute to peace and security or undermine it and whether they could facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian law. I was encouraged to see that export permits are not rubber-stamped. Applications have been denied, suspended or cancelled on occasion according to the established criteria.

• (1140)

However, our analysis of the bill and its potential should not stop there. Every system can be improved, so we must also consider the broader economic and strategic context in which Canada operates. Our defence sector is deeply integrated with those of our closest al-

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lies. A significant portion of Canadian defence exports consists not of finished systems but of components and specialized technologies that form part of multinational supply chains. This integrated industrial base supports thousands of highly skilled jobs across our country, enabling Canada to collaborate with partners that share our values in areas ranging from aerospace engineering to advanced manufacturing.

During the debate, both the parliamentary secretary, for the government, and the shadow minister for foreign affairs, along with numerous other speakers with expertise in defence and international relations, have warned that Bill C-233 could have significant unintended consequences for that co-operation at a critical moment for global security. They argued, and I agree from my own experience in international affairs, that the exemptions within the current regime are not loopholes but rather necessary pathways for co-operation grounded in shared security commitments, continental defence and decades of military integration.

My colleagues have warned that this legislation could disrupt defence co-operation, strain alliances and ultimately make Canada less secure. They have cautioned that the legislation has the potential to reshape an entire industrial sector and that those changes could place Canadian suppliers at a competitive disadvantage and hinder Canada's ability to support crucial international partners that are under threat at a critical time. These concerns are not mere hypotheticals in the current international landscape.

Canada's export policies operate within a broader framework of alliances, trade relationships and co-operative defence arrangements. Prudence requires that we approach changes to these relationships with care and a clear understanding of the downstream effects. We must consider how the bill could affect Canada's credibility as a reliable participant in joint industrial and security initiatives. Legislation always produces some consequences beyond its stated objectives. Even well-intentioned measures can have unintended side effects in sectors as interconnected and technologically complex as defence manufacturing.

During the debate, a member of the Bloc Québécois made an observation that captures the nuance required here. While acknowledging the motivations behind the bill, he argued that the goal of stronger oversight does not automatically mean that every proposed mechanism for achieving it will work. This is where Bill C-233 falls short. It attempts to address legitimate concerns, but it does so through sweeping legislative changes that could unintentionally disrupt economic stability, industrial co-operation and strategic partnerships.

Private Members' Business

Rather than rewriting the law in ways that could destabilize existing arrangements, we should take the more balanced path of improving transparency, enhancing reporting requirements and strengthening oversight within the current framework. GAC could expand the detail of annual export reports. We could improve parliamentary review of export decisions or invest in additional monitoring of supply chains, addressing concerns about accountability while avoiding unnecessary economic or diplomatic disruption through broad changes in law. We must weigh the moral aspirations behind the proposal against its practical consequences. We must ask not only whether a bill reflects our values but whether it would function effectively in the real world. In the case of Bill C-233, that balance has not been achieved. The mechanisms proposed raise significant concerns about economic stability, industrial co-operation and international partnerships.

Let us commit to continuing the conversation about how Canada can strengthen oversight, improve transparency and uphold the highest standards of responsibility in our export policies while preserving the partnerships, jobs and institutions that Canadians depend on.

• (1145)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I recognize the hon. member for Vancouver East for her right of reply.

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, let me begin by addressing the central claim we have heard repeatedly, which is that Bill C-233 would somehow decimate Canada's defence industry and disrupt integrated supply chains. That assertion is simply incorrect.

Bill C-233 would not prohibit exports. It would not restrict production. It would not alter the list of controlled goods. It would standardize permit requirements for items already listed under group 2 of Canada's export control list by applying to U.S.-bound exports the same permit review that already applies to exports to every other destination. Canada already administers a global export permitting system. Extending permit review to U.S.-bound exports would not create a new regulatory regime. It would remove a destination-based exemption.

Regulatory oversight is not prohibition. Conflating the two is simply misleading. Other state parties to the Arms Trade Treaty manage highly integrated defence supply chains while still applying oversight mechanisms, including open and general licences where appropriate, and the United States is part of that regime. Administrative efficiency and legal compliance are not mutually exclusive.

We have also heard that this bill would weaken Canada's role in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and delay support to Ukraine. Nearly all members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization are state parties through the Arms Trade Treaty. Aligning Canada's export controls with our treaty obligations would strengthen our credibility within the alliance. Military assistance to Ukraine is transferred through Department of National Defence mechanisms, not through the commercial export permitting processes that Bill C-233 would address.

This legislation would concern commercial exports primarily to the United States. It would not impede direct government-to-government military aid. In fact, ensuring that Canadian-origin compo-

nents are assessed before entering the U.S. supply chain reduces the risk of diversion to high-risk end-users. That objective is entirely consistent with NATO's collective security framework.

There is also the claim that Canada already exceeds the ATT requirements. Yes, Canada applies vigorous human rights criteria when issuing permits. That is not in dispute. The structural issue is that most conventional arms exports to the United States require no permit at all. That means no individual risk assessments and no comprehensive reporting.

Annual reports tabled since the 1990s do not capture the majority of U.S.-bound transfers because those exports are exempt from permits. A reporting framework cannot be considered complete when most of the exports fall outside of its scope. We are told that the U.S. exemption is not a loophole and that it reflects a long-standing bilateral defence relationship. That may be true, but its practical effect is that most conventional weapons exports to the United States proceed without permit, without assessment and without detailed transparency. This is, by definition, a regulatory gap.

Canada and the United States do not apply identical risk thresholds. The United States may authorize transfers to end-users that Canada would deny directly. Without a Canadian permit requirement, Canadian-origin components can enter the U.S. system and be transferred onward without Canada ever conducting its own risk assessment. We have seen this concern in reporting by CBC News, which documented that Canadian-origin military goods moved through the United States and onward to Israel during a period when the Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that Canada was not exporting arms to Israel. This example underscores the oversight gap that Bill C-233 is designed to address.

Former Liberal cabinet ministers Allan Rock and Lloyd Axworthy recently argued in a *Globe and Mail* op-ed that Canada's credibility as a champion of the rules-based international order depends on aligning practice with principle. They reminded us that Canada played a leadership role in building global arms control norms, from the Ottawa Treaty to the Arms Trade Treaty. The exemption shields the majority of our transfers from scrutiny and undermines that legacy. They were clear: The issue is not whether we trust the United States but whether Canada exercises its own sovereignty and responsibility to assess the risk that Canadian-origin arms could contribute to serious violations of international humanitarian or human rights laws.

• (1150)

I urge all members to look at the facts and vote in support of Bill C-233.

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

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Salma Zahid: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 11, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

SITTING SUSPENDED

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The House will now suspend to the call of the Chair.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:53 a.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 12 p.m.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1200)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 6—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-9

Hon. Wayne Long (for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda, hate crime and access to religious or cultural places), be disposed of as follows:

- (a) it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights that, during its consideration of the bill,
 - (i) the committee shall have the first priority for the use of House resources for committee meetings,
 - (ii) at the next meeting of the committee, following the adoption of this order, the committee shall immediately resume clause-by-clause consideration of the bill whereupon all remaining amendments submitted to the committee shall be deemed moved, the Chair shall put the question, forthwith and suc-

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cessively, without further debate on all remaining clauses and proposed amendments and subamendments, as well as each and every question necessary to dispose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, and the committee shall not adjourn until it has disposed of the bill,

(iii) the Chair shall report the bill to the House no later than two sitting days after the completion of clause-by-clause consideration;

(b) the bill may be taken up at report stage at the next sitting of the House following the completion of the provisions of subparagraph (a)(iii) of this order;

(c) not more than one sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the bill at report stage, and 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders that day, or when no member wishes to speak, whichever is earlier, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment, and, if a recorded division is requested, it shall not be deferred, except pursuant to Standing Order 76.1(8); and

(d) not more than one sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the bill at the third reading stage, and 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders that day, or when no member wishes to speak, whichever is earlier, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment, and, if a recorded division is requested, it shall not be deferred.

Patricia Lattanzio (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, partisan politics is failing our most vulnerable communities. Partisan politics is failing our response to hate-motivated crimes and violence in this country, and when it prevents Parliament from acting to protect Canadians, then partisan politics is failing Canada itself.

The motion before us today is a response to that failure. Bill C-9, the combatting hate act, was introduced by the Minister of Justice on September 19, 2025, and was referred to the justice committee on October 1, 2025. Today is March 9, 2026. Nearly six months have passed since the bill's introduction. Since then, the House has debated the bill and the justice committee has studied it. Well over 30 witnesses have appeared and testified. Communities have spoken, both in person and via briefs, and amendments have been discussed among committee members.

Parliament has done its job of scrutinizing this eight-page bill, but there comes a moment when scrutiny must lead to a decision. After half a year of debate and study, the time has come for Parliament to act. The time has come to bring the combatting hate act to a vote, yet the bill remains stalled, not because Canadians are uncertain about confronting hate but because today's Conservative Party of Canada is divided on this issue. I say this with sincerity. When this bill finally comes to a vote, I believe many Conservative members will stand with us and support it. I believe that because many of them understand something fundamental, which is that Parliament has a duty to confront a specific form of violence that is rising in our communities: hate-motivated violence.

Bill C-9 is not a complicated piece of legislation. In fact, it is only eight pages long. However, those eight pages carry an important message: that in Canada, hatred and intimidation have no place in our public lives.

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The bill does three straightforward things: First, it creates offences to stop people from blocking or intimidating others who are trying to enter places such as synagogues, mosques, churches, schools or community centres. Second, it creates a stand-alone hate-motivated offence so that when someone commits a crime of hatred toward a person's identity, the law recognizes it right from the start. Third, it addresses the wilful promotion of hatred through the public display of hate or terrorist symbols used to target and intimidate vulnerable communities.

I know many Conservatives support these measures because they themselves called for them. In fact, in December 2024, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights released its report on fighting anti-Semitism in Canada. That report, which was supported by the Conservatives, recommended measures that are now reflected in Bill C-9: defining hate more clearly, creating a stand-alone hate crime offence and criminalizing intimidation directed at religious communities.

That is why it is difficult for Canadians to understand what has happened since then. The Conservatives of 2024 called on Parliament to act. The Conservatives of 2026 are delaying the very measures they once supported. Canadians are left asking a simple question: Which position reflects the Conservative Party's true position on the issue of hate crimes?

More importantly, this debate is not only about parliamentary process but about Canadians themselves. In the last federal election, our party made a clear commitment to confront the rise of hate-motivated crime, which appears on page 19 of the 2025 Liberal platform. I will remind Conservatives that Canadians, including the people of Carleton, supported our platform to address hate crimes at the ballot box. They asked us to act. Bill C-9 is part of fulfilling that promise.

I have a great respect for the role of the opposition. Opposition parties play a vital role in strengthening legislation. Their job is to challenge, question and even improve bills through committee work, but not to paralyze Parliament simply because a bill creates internal divisions within their own caucus. Unfortunately, this is what Canadians have been witnessing.

• (1205)

For example, the Conservative member for Elgin—St. Thomas—London South spent hours in committee speaking about issues that had absolutely nothing to do with the bill, including his admiration for cats and dogs, while witnesses endured countless hours of filibustering and patiently waited to discuss this legislation designed to confront hate. The Conservative member for York Centre used valuable committee time talking about sandwiches he had for lunch instead of debating how Parliament should respond to threats that Jewish communities are facing in his own riding. This is not serious parliamentary work. Canadians expect so much better from all of us.

Let me be clear. The government has made every effort to constructively work with colleagues across the aisle. When concerns were raised that Bloc Québécois amendments proposed in committee might create uncertainty around the freedom of religion, we listened. We worked with colleagues to introduce a “for greater certainty” clause, making it absolutely clear that preaching, teaching

one's faith, reading scripture, delivering sermons, praying and discussing religious texts in good faith would never be criminalized by this legislation.

Religious organizations from across the country welcomed that clarification. Groups such as the National Council of Canadian Muslims, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, the Canadian Hindu Alliance and the Christian Legal Fellowship, pretty much all religious groups, expressed their satisfaction with this additional clause to Bill C-9 and are now waiting for it to move forward. In other words, when legitimate concerns were raised, we addressed them. This is how Parliament is supposed to work, but even after that collaborative effort, the obstruction has continued.

Parliament has already spent more than 35 hours debating and studying this bill. Witnesses have testified, amendments have been examined and every clause has been reviewed. For a bill of eight pages, that is thorough scrutiny, by any reasonable standard. At some point, debate must give way to decision. Democracy does not function if legislation can be delayed indefinitely. The communities affected by hate cannot wait forever while Parliament argues about procedure.

That is why the motion before us is necessary. It would simply ensure that the committee can complete its work and that the House can finally vote on Bill C-9. Let the legislation come to a vote. Let every member of this House make their position clear to Canadians. Those who support confronting hatred will stand up and vote for it. Those who oppose it will have to explain their choices to the communities that are asking for protection.

Here is what is at play. Across this country, people at synagogues have been shot at. Those at mosques have been threatened. Churches have been burned, people at temples have been harassed and children have arrived at school with hateful or terrorist symbols waved outside their school gates. These are not isolated incidents. They are part of a troubling pattern that communities across Canada are experiencing. Law enforcement, community leaders and human rights organizations have told Parliament clearly that the measures in Bill C-9 would give them stronger tools to address these threats.

After six months of delay, it is time for Parliament to move forward. It is time to rise above partisan politics. It is time to listen to the voices of Canadians and send a clear message that hatred and intimidation will never define our country.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Before we continue, I would like to read to the House a segment of the motion that I omitted in subparagraph (a)(ii): “as well as each and every question necessary to dispose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill”.

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I thank all members for their attention.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations.

[*English*]

Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to my colleague across the room, and something that struck me was rather unique. She talked about how, when the Bloc introduced this motion to remove a 50-year-old-plus defence in the Criminal Code, the Liberals listened, the government listened, and she and other Liberal committee members listened.

I am going to ask her now whether she can identify which witnesses were called to the committee on Bill C-9 by the Liberal government to support the removal of the religious defence? It is a very simple question, and I would like a simple answer.

Patricia Lattanzio: Madam Speaker, there were many issues discussed at committee, and I remember very clearly that when the Bloc Québécois, in the House, at second reading, proposed the removal of such an exemption, the colleague who asked me the question said that everything was on the table. Therefore, everything was on the table at committee, and we disposed of that very same issue at committee.

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, in my opinion, it is illogical for anyone to be able to invoke religion as a reason for inciting hatred. That seems obvious to me. I think it is a very good thing that the amendment was accepted.

I would like to know what my colleague has to add.

Patricia Lattanzio: Madam Speaker, the fact is that there was a debate in committee, like there is for every bill. After debating the removal of this exemption, all members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights voted in favour of removing it. In our opinion, it was the right thing to do.

• (1215)

[*English*]

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture said before the justice committee that there is “clear hatred” in some verses of the Bible and Torah, and that quoting these scriptures should invite “discretion for prosecutors to press charges”.

Does the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice agree or disagree?

Patricia Lattanzio: Madam Speaker, we are here today discussing the process. The reason we have presented this motion is that we at committee have been trying very seriously to get the bill studied so it can come to a conclusion, but we have been unable to. As a matter of fact, the member who asked the question has done nothing but filibuster and obstruct the work of the committee, invoking his love of cats and dogs.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments the member has put on the record in terms of why it is so important that Bill C-9 pass and

on her frustration with the official opposition and the manner in which they feel they have an absolute entitlement to be a destructive force inside the House of Commons and at times in standing committees. As the member has pointed out, this is an issue that was raised during the last federal election. It was a ballot question, as she put it.

My question to the member is this: Would she not agree, given the very nature of the issue, that it is time for us to recognize that the Conservative Party seems to be more interested in the Conservative Party agenda, which in part includes fundraising on this issue, than it is in the public interest of Canada? We can see that through the filibustering they put forward on Bill C-9 at committee.

Patricia Lattanzio: Madam Speaker, we have seen a rise in incidents of anti-Semitism, including two shootings at synagogues just last week. It is literally a reminder that Bill C-9 needs to pass, and to pass quickly, to send a strong message to Canadians that hate crimes are heinous and must be denounced. That is why we are acting on Bill C-9, to make it illegal to block or impede someone's access to their community or religious centre, and to create a new stand-alone hate offence so that these crimes are treated seriously.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Madam Speaker, today we are debating a motion to curtail debate on Bill C-9 in its entirety. That strikes me as odd.

This is happening because the religious right wing of the Conservative Party has been filibustering the committee. They do not like that the Liberals and Bloc Québécois passed an amendment to remove the religious exemption from the Criminal Code. I must say, this is right-wing obstructionism, and I find it illogical. People cannot claim religious goodwill while allowing hatred to be propagated and spread in the name of religion.

Could my colleague elaborate on that?

Patricia Lattanzio: Madam Speaker, there has been hour after hour of filibustering in committee. We see that the Conservative members are divided. Some support the bill, which is a good piece of legislation, while others do not.

Unfortunately, Canadians are the ones who are paying the price because we must address the reprehensible acts that we are seeing. We need to take action. We need to go ahead and pass this bill, which will protect Canadians. That is why we had to proceed in this fashion. We hope that the House will adopt this motion so that the committee members can continue their work.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations, CPC): Madam Speaker, I hate to be the bearer of bad news to the parliamentary secretary. Early in her intervention, she indicated that she had confidence that every member of the Conservative Party of Canada would support the swift passage of Bill C-9. While that may be true in principle, we do not support the method by which they wish Bill C-9 to move through the process. We do not support their ability to censor debate, and it is rather ironic that the member speaks about censoring debate on a censorship bill.

I am also aware that there are some deep divisions within the Liberal Party itself. Is there an expectation that the party will whip the vote, or will the party allow a free vote for those members who voice their displeasure with removing this religious defence?

- (1220)

Patricia Lattanzio: Madam Speaker, what is unacceptable are the hours and hours of filibustering and obstruction by the members of the justice committee to not move forward with the bill.

It is also a shame to hear the member opposite talk about the combatting hate act as a censorship bill. What does the member opposite call censorship? Does he think it is okay to target synagogues? Does he think it is okay to threaten LGBTQ+ people because of who they love? Does he think that it is okay to wilfully call for the extermination of women and racialized Canadians while waving a Nazi flag in public?

Which form of hate is the member opposite trying to protect?

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, today, we are discussing Bill C-9, not so much in terms of its substance but more in terms of time allocation.

It is important to remember that, in committee, as long as the Conservatives decide to keep speaking to any amendment or clause, we are no longer able to work. They can read the telephone book, a novel or the Old Testament. It can be long and and it can be painful.

I would like my colleague to explain what she thinks will happen with Bill C-9 if we do not adopt this motion today.

Patricia Lattanzio: Madam Speaker, we witnessed a committee meeting that lasted from 4:30 p.m. to about two o'clock in the morning and that was one long filibuster.

It was a fine example of reading whatever passage inspired members but had absolutely nothing to do with the bill. This is a tactic used to prevent the bill from moving forward. It is therefore essential that the House adopt the motion so that we can move forward and protect Canadians.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. Secretary of State for the Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions is rising on a point of order.

CERTIFICATES OF NOMINATION

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 111.1 and in accordance with subsection 79.1(1) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the certificate of nomination and biographical notes for the proposed appointment of Annette Ryan as Parliamentary Budget Officer for a term of seven years.

I request that the nomination and biographical notes be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

* * *

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 6—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-9

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations, CPC): Madam Speaker, at the outset, I wish for unanimous consent to split my time with the member for Elgin—St. Thomas—London South.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, it is always an absolute pleasure to rise on behalf of the exceptional residents of my riding and Canadian faith leaders, as well as Canadians coast to coast to coast, from whom we have heard, through emails, telephone calls, town halls and stakeholder meetings, a whole litany of pieces of communication, that they are extremely disappointed with the Liberals and their attempt to challenge and stifle freedom of religion and freedom of expression.

Let me make something abundantly clear. Unlike the parliamentary secretary, who wanted to frame a very false narrative to support what the Liberal government is doing with this closure debate, Conservatives will always support, unequivocally, churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and cultural centres from all forms of intimidation, obstruction and violence. Canadians of every faith must be able to gather and worship without fear from terrorists, from those individuals who would wish to intimidate and, more importantly, from the Liberal government.

Today's debate is not about protecting places of worship, as the parliamentary secretary wishes to frame this. This debate is about a Liberal censorship motion designed to unequivocally shut down all forms of debate and ram through a controversial change to the Criminal Code.

It is very clear that Canada has been witness to a deeply troubling surge in anti-Semitism, heightened by the October 7, 2023, events, and targeted violence against Jewish communities from coast to coast to coast. In recent days, sadly, there have been targeted shootings at Jewish places of worship in the GTA. In at least one incident, people were inside the synagogue at the time of the shooting. Jewish Canadians are increasingly feeling that their communities are under siege.

There were a number of newspaper articles, and I am merely drawing attention to a few that I read yesterday and today. Today's headlines in the Toronto Sun are "Jews 'Under Attack'" and "Anti-semitism out of control". I am aware, as well, of a social media post by B'nai Brith, "Synagogues under attack. Enough words. Government must act now!" There was another article that I read in the Toronto Sun that talked about the typical responses from all political leaders, particularly the Liberal government, that anti-Semitism has no place in Canada. The article made it abundantly clear that Jewish Canadians and members of all religious denominations and faiths who are facing intimidation and attacks do not want hollow words from their political leaders. They want action. Jewish Canadians, in particular, have wanted action for almost two and a half years, while the Liberals sat in their seats and did not address this rising level of anti-Semitism in a fashion worthy of a federal government.

These attacks are not the result of a missing clause in the Criminal Code. They are a symptom of the rising anti-Semitism that the Liberal government has failed to confront with clarity and strength. Let me be abundantly clear again, as I wish to be on the record to correct this parliamentary record. Bill C-9, if it were law today, would not have prevented the attacks that the GTA saw over the past weekend. Canadians need real leadership against anti-Semitism, not rushed legislation designed for political headlines.

We recall the government House leader saying "put up or shut up" when we returned to start our 2026 legislative calendar. I believe that phrase perfectly captures the government's approach to Parliament. Instead of answering legitimate questions about the bill or listening to concerns raised in committee, the government has chosen to shut down debate through this motion.

• (1225)

This motion would force the justice committee to immediately resume clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, whereupon all remaining amendments submitted to the committee shall be deemed moved. Then the chair would put every remaining question immediately without debate. Debate in the House would also be restricted. There would be only one sitting day at report stage and one sitting day at third reading. Votes are to be forced immediately after further debate.

Now, let me have this next phrase really sink in. I know that the parliamentary secretary did not like my choice of words, but I am going to reference it again: The Liberal government is censoring debate on Bill C-9, its own censorship bill.

Clause-by-clause consideration of the bill began on November 27, 2025. However, the study of the bill began earlier, on October 9 of that same year. Since that time, the committee held eight meetings on Bill C-9. Amendments were debated. Amendments were adopted. Some amendments brought forward by Conservatives were even adopted by the committee as a whole.

It is also important to understand how the government handled that process. Three scheduled committee meetings on the bill were cancelled without explanation. At least two meetings were gavelled out early, again without explanation. The reality is that this committee was engaged in active debate on the bill on the implications of removing the religious defence. In fact, during committee hearings,

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Liberal ministers even raised questions about religious texts and the scope of the defence.

The current Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture, when he was the chair of the committee, stated the following:

I want to dig a bit into the concept of good faith....

In Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Romans, there are passages with clear hatred... I don't understand how the concept of good faith could be invoked if someone were literally invoking a passage from, in this case, the Bible, though there are other religious texts that say the same thing. How do we somehow constitute this as being said in good faith? Clearly, there are situations in these texts where statements are hateful. They should not be used to invoke...or be a defence.

Here is the real interesting commentary by the minister and former chair: "There should perhaps be discretion for prosecutors to press charges."

The moment that minister uttered those words at the justice committee, we received a flood of concerns right across this country, because those words sent a chill down the spine of every religious leader in this country and those who practise their faith. This was, and still is, a direct attack by the Liberal government on freedom of expression and freedom of religion.

The Liberals had no business at all making a side, backroom deal in the middle of clause-by-clause consideration to support the Bloc amendment when the clause-by-clause consideration was progressing very well. There was every expectation that we would have come to an agreement, save and except this poisonous amendment by the Bloc Québécois, but no, the Liberal government chose this not because it was in Canada's best interests, not because it was in the best interests of religious leaders across this country, not to stop the rising levels of hatred and not to stop the attacks on the Jewish communities. It did this for purely selfish political reasons.

As I indicated, this was a 50-year-old defence, entrenched in the Criminal Code and brought in by Pierre Elliott Trudeau himself. It has been used sparingly and not successfully, but that in and of itself does not give licence to this hypocritical Liberal government to remove it for political reasons.

I will wrap it up here. I look forward to questions and will probably elaborate a little more in my responses.

• (1230)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the reality is that there is no attack by the government on our faith communities. Members of the opposition know that. When we look at the amendment that was brought forward for greater certainty, it provides assurances so that those faith communities have a higher sense of comfort, in part because of the misinformation constantly being pumped out by the Conservative Party of Canada.

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My question for the member is this: Does he not feel, whatsoever, given that there was an election mandate on this issue of dealing with hate crime, any obligation or responsibility as the official opposition to at least allow for debate to continue and come to an end so that legislation can ultimately be passed by a majority?

Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, in typical Liberal hypocritical fashion, they are making the statement that Canadians and faith leaders have nothing to worry about once they remove this religious defence. Although it has been around for 50 years, they are going to take it away from them and then tell people not to worry because their charter rights are still protected.

Where did we hear that before? We heard it during the invocation of the Emergencies Act. It was charter-compliant. We heard that from the former prime minister and the ministers. We heard it from David Lametti, who very arrogantly told Justice Rouleau that he was not going to provide him with his legal opinion and that he would just have to take his word for it that it was charter-compliant. They should tell that to the Federal Court of Appeal and the Federal Court trial judge who came to different conclusions.

Canadians will not believe the Liberal government. If they do, I have a plot of swampland they can build a dream house on in Florida.

• (1235)

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I noticed in the earlier intervention by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada that there was a lot of historical revisionism on what actually happened at the justice committee, specifically regarding the Bloc's amendment to remove the long-standing protections for religious speech. She indicated that there had been robust debate and that the committee heard what was at stake there.

I wonder if my colleague, who is the vice-chair of the justice committee, could speak to his recollection of how much the Liberal members intervened and how much testimony we got to hear from witnesses on it.

Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, for all those who have a fond recollection of some great comedy movies from the 1970s and 1980s, the simple answer to my colleague's question is "zero point zero", which is a reference to Dean Wormer in *Animal House*.

We heard from numerous witnesses. Not one Liberal committee member, including the parliamentary secretary, ever asked one question to support whether the removal of a five-decade-long religious defence was appropriate at this point in time in order to deal with the rising levels of anti-Semitism.

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola.

I would say to my colleague from Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations that the Liberals talk about historical revisionism and things like that, and then the parliamentary secretary from Winnipeg had the audacity to say that people should not worry as it is all fine and they have nothing to worry about. I have had faith leaders from my community of Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola come

and speak to me about their concerns with respect to this bill. Where we hear the concerns is on the ground.

Will the Liberals get out of their ivory tower and actually address these things, or are they just going to plow through with a bill that faith communities have serious concerns about?

Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, the justice minister promised Canadians that he was going to listen to them and that he was going to embark on consultations.

I know, because my inbox is flooded with thousands of emails of concern, that hundreds of thousands of Canadians have written to Liberal MPs right across the country asking them to back off on supporting the removal of the religious defence. The Liberals are refusing to listen to Canadians, pure and simple.

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege, as always, to rise on behalf of the people of Elgin—St. Thomas—London South.

I said in my maiden speech in this chamber that I came to Ottawa with the goal of making Canada a freer place. Indeed, one of the motivations I had for getting into politics was seeing our fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of expression, under threat. This has been done largely by the policies and decisions taken by the Liberal government over the last few years.

It was in that spirit that I rose to the task of combatting this very dangerous bill, Bill C-9, from the get-go. When the Liberals put this bill forward, I read in the text of the bill language that would not be used to protect marginalized communities but would actually inflict harm on the very people the Liberals claim it would protect.

Let me say, first and foremost, that hate is real. It is a scourge in society. I have seen the brazen anti-Semitism unleashed on Canadian streets since October 7. London is a part of my riding. We saw, five years ago, the brutal slaying of the Afzaal family, a Muslim family targeted by a man who had hate and evil in his heart purely because of their faith. We have also seen 123 Christian churches burned or vandalized in the last five years. When Justin Trudeau, the former Liberal prime minister, was asked about these actions, he said they were "understandable".

Hate is real, and sometimes it can come from a political leader, but Bill C-9 is not an antidote to hate, which is a problem that was allowed to fester on the Liberal government's watch. Much of what Bill C-9 would do, such as criminalize obstruction to a house of worship or prohibit the display of hate symbols, would tread over ground that is already covered by existing laws. These laws have been unenforced for the last several years because of a failure of political leadership in the Liberals.

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We can then look at what Bill C-9 would do to actually change things. It would create a new definition of hate. Every witness who testified before the justice committee said that it would lower the threshold and make it easier to charge people for the words they say than it is now. The bill would remove critical safeguards for overzealous prosecution.

Of course, we have the removal of the religious defence, the removal of long-standing religious safeguards for political speech, and that decision became especially significant when we looked at a transcript of the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture's comments. In his view, there is clear hatred living within the holy texts that millions of people across this country read, cite and pray over from a place of love. The minister said there is clear hatred and prosecutors should be able to, in his words, press charges against those who cite them.

That is why all of the declarations and claims from Liberals that they will protect our charter freedoms, the freedom of expression and religious freedom ring hollow. They have been abundantly clear in their language that they do not protect those things. They do not value the role that faith plays in society.

I want to give a perfect example of why the Liberals cannot be taken at their word that they will protect charter freedoms. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice said before committee, "Freedom of religion is already fully protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms." She said that to assuage concerns that Bill C-9 would lead to the further erosion of these freedoms.

Does it sound familiar? It should because Justin Trudeau said something very similar when he was defending the invocation of the Emergencies Act. He said, "I want to reassure Canadians that when the Emergencies Act is invoked, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms continues to protect their individual rights." The Federal Court later determined that was a lie. The Federal Court of Appeal later affirmed that was a lie. A government that claims it is protecting charter rights is not sufficient enough to actually protect those rights. This is coming from a government that has a long history of censorship bills.

Now, on Bill C-9, when Conservative members of the justice committee wanted to bring forward the testimony of people who are among the millions of Canadians of faith who would be directly affected by this change, the Liberals moved the motion before us today to shut down debate. The Liberals are censoring debate on their censorship bill.

● (1240)

The Liberals are denying us the opportunity to read letters from imams, pastors, rabbis, civil liberties advocates and individual Canadians. They have been flooding members of Parliament's inboxes, voice mailboxes and phone lines with their concerns about Bill C-9. The denunciation of Bill C-9 has not come from some far right conspiracy, as some of the members in this chamber have alluded to today. It has come from the left and the right, including the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Constitution Foundation, the rabbinical council of Toronto, the National Council of Canadian Muslims, the United Church of Canada, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and Egale

Canada. Groups representing almost every faith tradition in this country, as well as civil liberties organizations and social justice organizations, all believe that Bill C-9 would harm the very groups the Liberals claim it would protect.

Why is this so fundamental? I will go back to my comments in my maiden speech that freedom of expression has always been, and will always be, my hill to die on.

There is a line from James Madison that comes to mind, which is "the advancement and diffusion of knowledge...is the only Guardian of true liberty." Put simply, if all other freedoms were stripped away except the freedoms of expression and speech, we would be able to use those fundamental liberties to fight back for all the others.

Removing the freedom of expression takes away a vital tool Canadians have against an overzealous and authoritarian government. It is fitting that the Liberals are laying their intentions out so barely that they are prepared to censor the very debates and discussions we need to have in this chamber to justify legislation that would censor the thoughts and expressions of Canadians.

The best remedy, even for offensive speech, is more speech, not enforced silence. The best antidote to someone abusing scriptures is the freedom for all Canadians to freely discuss and debate those scriptures, share their true intention, read their holy texts and demonstrate that these texts came from a place of love. This lies at the heart of the guarantee of the freedom of expression.

Censorship is the confession of a society that it no longer trusts truth to win and that it no longer trusts people to be the arbiters of what should be discussed, debated and freely disseminated in society. When the state dictates what words can be uttered and what scripture verses can be read, it polices the ideas that can be shared and even what can be believed, at a fundamental level, by Canadians.

In the absence of the freedom of expression, there are only official lies. A society that fears words has already begun to fear thoughts themselves. That is why the groundswell of opposition to Bill C-9 has been so robust. The freedom of expression was not enshrined in the charter to protect the easy or the popular; it is there precisely to protect the difficult and the unpopular. Those are the ideas, the sentiments or, as some Liberal members need to be told, the scripture verses that need protection the most.

When we stand up for the freedom of expression, it is not a guarantee that every voice will or should be welcomed. Instead, it is to say that no voice should be silenced because of the dictates of a state that wants to draw an arbitrary line on what constitutes hate to silence those it hates. That is, to be perfectly frank, what is at stake today. The Liberals not only want to silence in our society certain viewpoints, ideas and people, but also to silence those voices from being heard in the legislative process.

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I will close on this: Freedom of expression is the covenant of a free people that no idea is so dangerous it must be buried and no citizen so small that their voice may be denied the light. The Liberals may wish to be the arbiters of what we say, and even what we think, but they do not have or deserve that licence.

• (1245)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, through time, Canada has evolved and adhered to values that are envied around the world. Part of that means that legislative changes have taken place, both at the national and provincial level, because they were deemed necessary based on a reflection of Canadian values.

For example, hate-motivated assaults take place in Canada today. I truly believe that the values Canadians have reflect very negatively on that aspect of society. This legislation would incorporate the value that someone should not be assaulted because of a faith they may belong to. Does the member oppose that?

• (1250)

Andrew Lawton: Madam Speaker, not only do I not oppose it, but I am also very proud that it is already illegal, and nothing in Bill C-9 would change that. Perhaps the member should spend less time talking and more time reading the legislation he talks about.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague. The matter before us today, what we are debating, is not necessarily the substance of Bill C-9, but the process of getting it passed.

I know that my colleague is newly elected, and I was able to admire his skill as a speaker in the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, where he was able to fill a lot of time by filibustering the consideration of Bill C-12.

After 50 hours of debate, does he not think it is normal for us to be able to stop and agree to move forward and pass Bill C-9?

I know that my colleague is not happy with the amendment on the religious exemption, but democracy has to take its course at a certain point. Today, we are talking about speeding up the work because of excessive filibustering by the Conservatives.

[*English*]

Andrew Lawton: Madam Speaker, I will choose to appreciate and thank my colleague for her compliment.

The challenge is that, while we have had some time at committee to look at Bill C-9, the most contentious part of it, which is the removal of the religious defence, had no witness testimony and no opportunity to freely discuss it with the people who would be most affected.

It is in that spirit that even our efforts to rectify this were met by denunciation from the Liberals, who on one hand claimed co-operation and collaboration, but on the other hand slapped our hand away when we offered to give them a legislative safeguard that did what they claimed they wanted Bill C-9 to do.

When we, as a committee, are looking at a bill, we do not, as members of Parliament, have the moral or legal right to bargain away Canadians' fundamental rights and freedoms.

Steven Bonk (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned in his speech that this was a hill for him to die on. This is something he takes very seriously. I am wondering if he could expand on that and explain why our caucus and he, personally, feel so strongly about this matter.

Andrew Lawton: Madam Speaker, to respond, I would like to share a quote that I did not have time to include in my speech. It is from John Stuart Mill in *On Liberty*, who writes, "If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind."

We all, as free people, have the right to express who we are and express our values. We respond to that with other values, with debates, and we do not respond with censorship. Attitudes change over time. Indeed, slavery ended because of the religious convictions in the British Parliament of Wilberforce. It is a position that was unpopular but was morally correct, and history bears that out. Only when we allow free speech do we have the opportunity for truth to win.

[*Translation*]

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with my distinguished colleague from Mirabel. In fact, I would even go so far as to say that I will be delivering a preview of, or a preamble to, my colleague from Mirabel's speech, which I am sure will be particularly entertaining. I will not say any more, but I hope my colleagues enjoy this teaser.

Before I begin, I would also like to highlight two events that affected deeply me over the weekend and this morning.

First, my thoughts go out to the family of the young cadet who passed away in an accident involving a school bus in Sainte-Rose-de-Watford. I can only imagine the pain that his parents and loved ones are going through. My thoughts also go out to the wider cadet family across Quebec. It is a tight-knit family, and I know this big family is in mourning. I am keeping them in my thoughts.

Second, before I get into the subject matter of today's debate, tragedy struck in Drummondville this morning when a woman was found dead in a residential neighbourhood. We do not have any details or context at this time, but when things like this happen in a peaceful area, in another tight-knit community, the whole community is shaken. My thoughts go out to the people in Drummondville who were affected by today's events.

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Let me get back to Bill C-9. This circus will soon come to an end because at some point, we have to call a spade a spade. We are witnessing a manipulation of the facts and the truth, as well as the spreading of disinformation and a manipulation of these facts and this truth for financial gain and for dishonest purposes.

I will start by reminding members of the Bloc Québécois's demands, which I think were very reasonable in the context of a bill like Bill C-9.

First, we proposed reinstating the requirement to obtain consent from the Attorney General before initiating prosecutions for inciting hatred, which adds another layer of security aimed at reassuring people who say that this measure could be misused and that anyone could wake up one day and decide to launch a case. It would not be something that would become automatic just because the religious exemption was removed from the Criminal Code. There is another layer of security, even though Quebec already has its own independent institution, the director of criminal and penal prosecutions. In our opinion, this guarantee, which would apply across Canada, would strengthen this kind of religious freedom of expression.

Another very important element at the heart of the whole circus that the Conservatives mounted in committee is obviously the elimination of the religious exemption that allows someone to sidestep criminal charges for fomenting hatred. It is okay to have a religion and to practise that religion. It is okay to have faith and to live that faith, that belief system. That is completely legitimate. That is just fine. We have always respected that. It is a fundamental right that the Bloc Québécois will never attack, contrary to what the Conservatives claimed while putting on that circus in committee.

I know of no religion that does not claim to be a religion of love and peace. I know of no religion that says its followers must spread hate and violent messages. Once again, let me remind my colleagues to listen closely to what my colleague from Mirabel has to say because he might have a different point of view. As I said, I know of no religion that does not claim to be a religion of love. Therefore, I do not see why anyone who is committed to a religion and practises their faith would disagree with the idea of eliminating the possibility of using religious conviction as grounds for inciting hate or calling for violence against a particular group.

People often cite the infamous Adil Charkaoui, who called for the wholesale murder of Zionist Jews in a speech he delivered right in downtown Montreal a few years ago. People often use him as an example, but letting people use religion as a shield in order to call for such acts of violence is abominable.

● (1255)

I do not know anyone—not personally, anyway—who would say that that particular protection should remain in place. I do not know anyone who would say that our priests, our pastors, our imams or our rabbis should be allowed to call for the elimination of a segment of society or a group on the basis of religious texts. No one is saying that. I have certainly never seen anyone say it. The way the Conservatives have manipulated the facts around this issue is disturbing. Frankly, I find it appalling.

A few years ago, the Bloc Québécois tabled a motion to abolish the religious exemption. That was before Bill C-9 came along. The

Bloc Québécois's position goes back a long way, because this issue speaks to a core Quebec value. At the time, a Conservative member stopped me in the hall and asked me to tell him a little bit about our proposal and to explain what it was all about. I told him that it was simply aimed at preventing someone from calling for violence or promoting hatred under the pretext that their religion allows or commands it. I told him this did not mean that a person could not quote a text. It would still be permissible to quote texts that may be particularly violent or texts that feel odd and unsettling to readers in 2026 without promoting hatred. I explained that to him. I told him that it was simply a way of not providing a refuge under the Criminal Code to somebody promoting hatred. His response was that he did not agree with that because if this measure was adopted, his pastor would not be able to speak out against homosexuals if he wanted to.

I was dumbfounded. I asked him whether he was telling me that his pastor could call for violence against the LGBTQ community because of some religious text. He told me that his pastor ought to have the right to this freedom of expression. My first thought was: What kind of pastor would call his flock or his followers to hate or rally against any community? I said to him, “Man, you should change pastors. You should change religions and find one that is actually a religion of peace, or at least find another messenger because that messenger is broken.”

Given everything we saw in committee during the Conservative filibuster, we all understood that they were probably getting a huge financial boost and that money must be pouring in. All MPs from all parties have no doubt received dozens of emails from citizens across Canada asking them not to attack this provision of the Criminal Code. I am sure it made for an extraordinary windfall. I am sure it was fun for them to feed the flames and keep the money rolling in, but it has to stop.

We have reached the point where MPs are showboating with Bibles in their hands and bashing the Bloc Québécois. Enough is enough. The parliamentary process, and democracy, must be allowed to take its course, as my colleague stated earlier. Enough is enough. We need to be able to work and move forward. There are important things in these bills. We may not agree on certain things, but at some point, members will have to realize that they are filibustering, that they are going nowhere and that they will end up looking crazy if they keep hammering away at the same nail over and over.

In fact, there is something that I am still not sure about. I know that we sometimes need to give people the benefit of the doubt and that some of these members may truly believe that removing the religious exemption is an attack on their fundamental right to practise their religion. There may be some who sincerely believe that. However, I wonder which is worse: that a federal member of Parliament fails to understand the scope of an amendment like the one proposed by the Bloc Québécois, or that they understand the amendment perfectly but choose to abuse their constituents' trust by leading them to believe that it will limit their religious freedom? I actually do not know which is worse: to be downright incompetent or downright evil. There is a fine line between the two.

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As my colleague said earlier, at some point, a little hype and sensationalism is all right, but disinformation must never be tolerated, much less manipulation of the facts or truth. I think it is time for that to stop, which is why the Bloc Québécois supports this motion to limit debate and move on to something else so that this Parliament can actually do its job and we can discuss other important issues.

• (1300)

[*English*]

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I apologize that my question is not in French, but I really appreciated the speech from the member opposite.

The combatting hate act was developed in close consultation with impacted communities, with faith communities and with police across Canada.

The member made some important points, including that the show, the performance, we are seeing from the members opposite is extremely unfortunate. I really question the motivation for what the Conservatives are doing. I would like the member opposite to comment on what he sees as the damage of this performance, of building the bill up to be something it is not, in a purely cynical way, to fundraise and gain followers, likes, clicks and subscriptions.

[*Translation*]

Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, this is not the first time we have seen this kind of behaviour from the Conservatives. They also misrepresented the facts regarding Bill C-11, which they described as an attack on Canadians' freedom of expression, when that was not at all the case. That was not part of the bill's substance or intent.

I will respond to one aspect of my colleague's question. What this does is fuel Quebecers' and Canadians' cynicism about our system, about Parliament and about the work we do. There is nothing wrong with disagreeing. There is nothing wrong with having a different point of view. It is okay to express and debate differing viewpoints, but this must not turn into disinformation and manipulation for purely partisan purposes.

• (1305)

[*English*]

Steven Bonk (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member accused the Conservatives of being cynical and of spreading misinformation and disinformation about the Liberals' religious exemption. How can he say that after the minister said at committee that pastors who cite the Bible should be charged criminally? This is exactly why the Conservatives are against this. We do not trust the Liberals to be the arbiter of our thoughts, decisions and what we believe in. How can he square that circle?

[*Translation*]

Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I do not have the minister's exact words in front of me, but I would be extremely surprised if a minister had said in committee that a pastor who quotes a passage from the Bible could be tried or prosecuted. I cannot imagine in what kind of medieval world something like that could have

been said. I will refrain from answering the question because I do not have all the facts.

What I do when I do not have all the facts is I get all the information I can before taking a stance.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Drummond for his speech.

I have a lot of concerns about Bill C-9, but that is not what we are talking about today. I do not like the idea of putting so much importance on using motions like these to study a bill quickly.

I have a problem with the part of Bill C-9 that makes it possible to break the law during a demonstration for being too close to a building. A demonstrator might not realize that there is not enough space between the demonstration and the building.

What does the member think about this problematic aspect of Bill C-9?

Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I would say that, in any bill, there is an opportunity for parliamentarians to debate, discuss, clarify and amend. However, this could not be done as effectively because of Conservative filibustering in committee.

There are always protections in a bill. There are always safeguards that are put in place. What is more, there are always remedies available afterwards if a bill is found to infringe on charter rights and freedoms.

As they say, there are safeguards in all circumstances. That is what I would say to my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands at this time.

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, in Quebec, there is a strong consensus in favour of this amendment. In Quebec, there is a strong consensus against using this exemption to incite hatred. However, the people I am seeing today on the Conservative benches are from western Canada: Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. They represent the Conservatives' extremely radical religious wing.

Why does my colleague think that the Conservative members from Quebec are afraid to speak up about this?

Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I have the great privilege of serving as a Bloc Québécois member, so I am not faced with that dilemma. However, if I belonged to a party that had members across Canada and that had to cater to all Canadians on an issue like this one, I would likely also be hiding behind the curtains.

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will read a quote:

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When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labor and shall work for you. If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city. When the Lord your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it. As for the women, the children, the livestock and everything else in the city, you may take these as plunder for yourselves. And you may use the plunder the Lord your God gives you from your enemies. This is how you are to treat all the cities that are at a distance from you and do not belong to the nations nearby. However, in the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—as the Lord your God has commanded you. Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the Lord your God.

When you lay siege to a city for a long time, fighting against it to capture it, do not destroy its trees by putting an ax to them—

Indeed, it is important not to cut down trees.

—you can eat their fruit. Do not cut them down. Are the trees people, that you should besiege them? However, you may cut down trees that you know are not fruit trees and use them to build siege works until the city at war with you falls.

I was raised in a very religious family. Both of my parents are theologians. I decided to highlight Deuteronomy, chapter 20, which is in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament, which is also the Devarim in the Torah.

This reminds us of one thing. Most religious texts were written before medieval times. These texts were written by humans at a time when the killing of ethnic or religious opponents or those with a different way of life was the norm. Of course, military leaders at the time were careful to include, as needed, whatever moral guidelines suited them. However, these texts all include passages that clearly constitute hate speech and calls for massacre. In any case, that is clearly the case for the three Abrahamic faiths.

Does that mean people do not have the right to read them? I just read them in front of everyone for educational purposes. Will I be put in jail? No. Did I commit a crime? No. I want to reassure everyone that I do not know any Hittites, Amorites or Hivites. I do not know any Jebusites either. However, I do know that some interpretations or explanations of these texts in the hands of rogue prelates or pastors could lead to a crime being committed. If I were a believer who thought these texts had historical value, the last thing I would want is for them to be used by malicious people. I actually think these texts do have historical value, but there is no doubt they can be used for such purposes.

That is how those texts could be used, because the last thing a reader would take away from them is that they should mend fences and spread love. Religions have evolved, but most religious texts are legislative texts that have not been amended as we are going to do with Bill C-9. With the amendments to Bill C-9, with the way they are written, with the protections included in the amendments, with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms—which Bill C-9 and its amendments will be subject to—and with the case law that calls on us to adopt these amendments and clarify the law, we are protecting religious speech.

We are protecting religious values. We are protecting peace. We are protecting love. We are protecting the best parts of religions without allowing certain people to use them to their own end. That is what Bill C-9 is all about. I will say one thing: There is a reason we are discussing Bill C-9.

• (1310)

The Conservatives are making noise on the other side.

I listened to the Conservatives. I am a respectful guy, most of the time. I listened to them and I want to tell them that no one has a monopoly on faith-based hate crime. In 2023, a total of 1,284 hate crimes were committed against a specific religion, 516 more than in 2022. These crimes were not necessarily triggered by a cleric's remarks. That is not what I am saying. However, each of these crimes was an attack on freedom of religion, freedom of worship and the freedom to go to a mosque, church or synagogue. These crimes are also a much more serious attack on freedom of religion than what the Conservatives are claiming about Bill C-9.

The 45% increase in hate crimes in 2023 worries me a lot more. It was largely the result of the increase in hate crimes reported by police against Jewish populations. Jewish communities experienced a 71% rise in hate crimes. For Muslim communities, the increase was 94%. This is what needs to be addressed.

What does this bill do? I want to remind the Conservatives that we have a time allocation motion before us. Earlier, they said that that the committee dragged its feet at until two in the morning and that it had wasted everyone's time because it did not hear from enough witnesses.

Personally, I watched the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights meeting. People may not know how patient I am. The member for Rivière-du-Nord asked all the witnesses who appeared before the committee a question about the religious exemption. Some people agreed with it, while others did not, but the question was asked. However, getting on everybody's nerves does not count as debate. Spreading disinformation does not count as debate. Wasting time does not count as debate.

What does this bill do? It reinstates the requirement for the Attorney General to give consent before charges can be laid for the offence of inciting hatred. It aligns the definition of hatred with the definition in Keegstra to be consistent with case law. It abolishes the religious exemption in the Criminal Code for the offence of inciting hatred. According to Keegstra, it does not in any way interfere with the freedom to read and teach religious texts.

It is not normal to hide behind a particular provision of the Criminal Code in order to commit crimes. If I were a deeply religious person, the last thing I would want would be to be associated with someone who uses and exploits my religion to commit crimes. The case of Adil Charkaoui in Quebec is well known. That is why there is a consensus in Quebec for the kind of amendment we are proposing to Bill C-9. There is a consensus, and that is why the Quebec Conservatives are hiding in the sub-basement.

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In 2017, Imam Sheikh Muhammad ibn Musa Al Nasr stated that Jews were the worst of mankind and that they should be slaughtered on Judgment Day. An arrest warrant was issued against him. In August 2024, in his mosque in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia, Imam Adnan Abyat called for the death of Jews and Christians. Is that what love and kindness look like? In October 2024, Adil Charkaoui prayed for the death of Jews during a protest. Praying at a protest is a loophole. He is so good at loopholes that he would make a good tax lawyer. Quebec's director of criminal and penal prosecutions was unable to prosecute him, concluding that he had taken refuge behind the problematic Criminal Code provision. If we had said the same thing, we would have had to face justice.

Priest Calvin Robinson was defrocked by the Anglican Catholic Church after giving the Nazi salute at a pro-life rally associated with Trump. Wow, this religion of love is so nice. Islamic preacher Uthman Ibn Farooq was denied entry to Canada, where he was planning to give a lecture. This was thanks to, among other things, the intervention of the Bloc Québécois and my colleague who is now the House leader. This preacher was banned from coming to give his lectures because he believed that members of the LGBTQ+ sexual minority did not have the right to live.

These are crimes, and these actions and words must be treated as crimes.

• (1315)

[*English*]

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I must commend the Bloc Québécois for so successfully enlisting the Liberal government in its assault on religious freedom in this country. I know the Bloc has long tried to do what Bill C-9 would do. Good on the Bloc for getting the Liberals on board.

My colleague from the Bloc Québécois has once again misrepresented the facts of the Adil Charkaoui case to justify removing the religious defence. Will he acknowledge that the religious defence does not apply, and has never applied, to Criminal Code provisions dealing with violence or the threat of violence, and acknowledge that prosecutors did not invoke the existence of the religious defence when they did not proceed with charges against Mr. Charkaoui? Will he clear the record and stop misrepresenting the record?

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, let us come back down to Earth. The list of cases I gave are obvious cases where so-called religious freedom was used to commit a crime by calling for murder, hate and excretion. The fact that the director of criminal and penal prosecutions, after consulting in-house lawyers, decided to use another technique to lay charges does not change anything.

What are the Conservatives waiting for? Are they waiting for one, two or three serious crimes to be committed? Are they waiting for more hate, more attacks on mosques and synagogues? This problem has to be addressed with amendments that are perfectly

logical and consistent with case law, and that is exactly what we are doing.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate many of the member's comments. What we often hear about are the hate crimes that get publicized. There are literally thousands of hate crimes that take place in Canada.

Could he provide his thoughts on that and on why it is so important to have legislation of this nature?

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, there is a fairly simple mathematical reality to crime statistics. The statistics we read always skew low because they reflect crimes that are reported. That is what happened with sexual crimes at one point. When people started talking about sex crimes and awareness grew, the number of crimes reported went up because victims knew they would be listened to.

How many people have been in situations that went unreported, situations involving social coercion? We do not know. However, one thing we do know is that the statistics for religious hate crimes are alarming. All Quebecers and Canadians must be made aware of this situation.

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Mirabel on his speech, which was as principled and relevant as it was entertaining.

The Conservatives talk a lot about Adil Charkaoui and the fact that no charges have been laid against him. Picking up on that, I would like my colleague from Mirabel to tell me whether, as far as he knows, the Attorney General of Quebec or Quebec's director of criminal and penal prosecutions typically explains the reasons for which they do not lay charges in a particular case and include the Criminal Code provisions upon which they base their decision in that explanation.

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I am not a lawyer, but from what I understand, the Crown always has a strategy. When charges are laid or a decision is made to not lay charges, authorities always try to use the strategy that is most likely to lead to a conviction.

However, there is one thing we are seeing. We are legislators, and what we are seeing is that this is a hate crime. It is hate speech based on a religious text. Sometimes a prayer is said at a protest just to hide behind the law. I personally am convinced that that was the intention.

I was protesting with local farmers about the Alto high-speed rail project two weeks ago, and no one said any prayers. We obeyed the law and did not hide behind it.

I firmly believe that Adil Charkaoui deliberately used that protection in the Criminal Code to push things a lot further than any other citizen could, and I think that, as legislators, we really need to focus on the intentions of those individuals.

Government Orders

[English]

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

Madam Speaker, to start off, I will make it very clear that I truly believe, as I know my colleagues believe, that no one in Canadian society should feel unsafe because of who they are.

Bill C-9 deals with a critically important issue that was raised in the last federal election: a commitment that today's Prime Minister made to Canadians less than a year ago to come forth with legislation that would actually have a real and tangible impact on dealing with the issue of hate crime.

As indicated in the question I just posed to the member from the Bloc, we are all aware of many horrific hate-motivated crimes that have taken place in Canada. Many of them get publicized to the nth degree, but there are a whole lot more that take place that we never hear about. I believe that the passage of Bill C-9 would raise the profile of the issue in a positive manner.

There are two things I would like to divide out in terms of the debate. The first is to deal with the motion we have before us and the purpose of the motion. The second is to deal with Bill C-9 itself.

We have before us a motion that would ensure that the legislation actually gets voted upon. Even though we have a minority of members of Parliament in the House, we believe we have a majority of MPs who clearly support Bill C-9. Our problem is that the Conservative Party of Canada has made the decision to prevent the legislation from passing, at all costs.

I have said in the past that with any group of 12 students at a public high school in Canada, I would be able to put up a filibuster that would prevent legislation from passing unless a government were able to bring in some form of time allocation. It is not because the Conservatives are outstanding parliamentarians that they are able to frustrate the system, but rather there is a motivation within the Conservative Party that does not want the legislation to pass.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, some are saying, "hear, hear", and another is saying, "free speech".

I will add something else. The Conservatives are more interested in the Conservative Party of Canada and what is happening internally within their party than what is in the best interest of Canadians, and I will expand on that. With respect to Bill C-9, there is a great deal of misinformation out there, and a lot of that misinformation is rooted in the Conservative caucus of Canada, the official opposition. I will clearly demonstrate some of that.

I do not know how it is, but I get fundraising emails from the Conservative Party of Canada. The Conservatives can take me off the list, and I have told them before that they can take me off it whenever they want.

I will read a couple of emails. This is really important, because I believe there is a split in the motivating factor in the Conservative Party. It has the far right, but many others will be quiet on the issue because of the leadership of the Conservative Party. What is the

motivation? In good part, it is about building up a data bank and raising money. That is a real issue for the Conservative Party.

• (1325)

It sees Bill C-9 as a way in which it can promote fear, spread misinformation and raise money. Let me quote from a couple of emails. This is what the Conservative Party of Canada has sent out to thousands of Canadians: "Kevin, the Liberals are waging a war on religious freedom. Their goal is to expose people of faith to criminal prosecution for a simple act of quoting their own sacred texts. These attacks on freedom of expression and freedom of religion are shocking and completely unacceptable. This must be stopped at once."

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the far right members in the Conservative caucus applaud the comment. Sure they would. They are the authors of the letter. It goes on: "Conservatives will fight tooth and nail to stop this reckless and unprecedented attack on our freedoms and defend the Canadian Charter of Rights." What a joke this is. This is actually ridiculous.

What is the purpose of sending the letter out? It is all about raising money. The Conservatives are sending out thousands of emails across the country, spreading misinformation and fear in order to raise money. That is what that email is, and it is coming from the Conservative Party.

Another email says, "The Liberals and Bloc want to prosecute people quoting Scripture. They are trying to push laws that could criminalize passages from the Bible, the Quran, the Torah and other sacred texts." In this one, they are not looking for money, but rather they are building a data bank.

We wonder why we finally got the bill through second reading and to committee, months ago, and the Conservative Party is continuing to filibuster at committee stage. The Conservatives do not want the legislation to pass, even though the essence of the legislation is sound, it would make a difference and it was a part of an election platform from Canada's new Prime Minister and 300-plus Liberal candidates from coast to coast to coast, dealing with the issue of crime. I am not surprised.

We have a substantial legislative agenda dealing with crime. If the Conservatives would only recognize what Canadians even in Conservative ridings are hearing, which is that people want legislation. They want action. They want co-operation on the floor of the House of Commons and its standing committees so we can make and pass good, sound public policy. That is what Bill C-9 is, but it is not alone. For this bill, we finally got the okay by getting an opposition party, in particular the Bloc, onside, which would allow our minority Liberal government to ultimately get it through committee and pass it to become law.

Government Orders

All we have to do is read the propaganda that comes out of the Conservative caucus and listen to what the members say inside the House or in committee, and we will understand that the Conservatives have no intention of passing the legislation. Then if we say we have a motion before us that would guarantee its passage, they try to link it to democracy and freedoms and so forth.

I sat in opposition for over 20 years. There is a time when the Conservatives have to really reflect on just how effective they are being and question the motivations even within their own leadership. The leadership of the Conservative Party today is an absolute disaster.

● (1330)

When we have good, sound public policy to deal with issues that Canadians want us to be dealing with but we continue to have the type of filibustering that we see coming from the Conservative Party, I say shame on the Conservatives who continue to promote that type of behaviour. They should not try to say that we as a government are trying to be anti-democratic. I stood in my place, as I have highlighted before, and asked for the leave of the House to be able to sit until midnight for weeks.

It is the Conservatives who say no to that, even though they will say they want more time. When they are provided with the opportunity for more time, what do they say? They say no, because it would mean they would have to put in a bit of extra work. They talk about how they want to be able to debate things. That is not the reality. The reality is that they want to use the argument in order to justify their poor behaviour in terms of delivering for Canadians. They have to be dragged kicking and screaming for us to actually get Bill C-14, bail reform legislation, through the House. They have to be shamed into doing it.

Let us reflect on what is happening with Bill C-2. The Conservatives cry about certain issues, but when it comes time to actually do something, such as pass legislation, they want to filibuster. Let us take a look at what is happening with Bill C-2. Again, it is an absolute dead end because the official opposition, the Conservative Party, has made the determination that it does not want to deliver for Canadians. It wants to deliver for the Conservative Party alone. That is what its motivation is.

Let us take a look at some of the substance of the bill itself, if I could get off the motion and look at what Bill C-9 would do. There are some substantial changes that are being proposed in it. Let us think in terms of obstruction and intimidation that are used in order to prevent individuals from having access.

The Conservatives talk about religious freedom. What about having the freedom to be able to go unimpeded to a church, a mosque or a synagogue? They do not understand it. These are stand-alone hate offences that we would be creating. These are offences—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1335)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Order. All members will have the opportunity to speak when the time for questions comes. Let us allow the hon. member to finish his speech.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, let us look at the aspect of the legislation that would enable people to have a higher sense of comfort in knowing that they cannot be denied an opportunity to practise their faith and do not have to worry about issues of intimidation and obstruction, such as blocking an entrance to a church, a mosque or a synagogue. Having a stand-alone hate offence is a positive thing.

In terms of stand-alone offences, again, a hate-motivated offence would deal with, for example, assaulting someone because of who they are. That is why I started my comments by saying that no one should feel unsafe because of who they are. This legislation would deal with that particular issue. It is substantive. It means a great deal.

Then, we have the Conservatives, who say, “Well, we want to stick to the issue of being able to quote scriptures, from whatever faith it might be.” I stood and spoke to this at second reading, and I quoted from the Charter of Rights. Do members remember one of the emails that I read out? The Conservatives try to say that they are the defenders of the Charter of Rights. It was the Liberal Party in government, years ago, that brought in the Canadian Charter of Rights. We are the party of the Charter of Rights. If we look at the beginning of the Charter of Rights, we see that it guarantees religious freedom. It is in our charter.

Show me a Supreme Court ruling that has actually not allowed what many members of the Conservative Party are telling people that their party would change. Show me something regarding a leader within a church, a mosque or a synagogue. Of course, they are not going to be able to do that, because, at the end of the day, when we listen to what they are saying, they want to give the sense that a person who belongs to a Bible club or wants to sit around in a small group and talk about their faith could end up going to jail.

An hon. member: Yes they could, under your law.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, someone says, from across the way, “Yes, they could.” That is absolutely ridiculous, and this is the type of propaganda that we get coming from the Conservative Party.

They talk about the chamber. It is only a faction within the Conservative Party. I would like to believe, at least I hope, it is not all of the Conservative Party. Here in Ottawa today, in a minority government, a majority of MPs want to see this legislation ultimately pass through. That indeed is what is being proposed here before us today, recognizing the value and importance of the legislation and saying to the Conservative Party that enough is enough already. We finally have an opposition party that is actually onside and prepared to see this bill ultimately become law.

I would suggest that in many ways there are other pieces of legislation as well. Extortion, as an example, is a very serious issue, whether for the Prime Minister or for every member of the Liberal caucus. The police, law enforcement agencies and security agencies of Canada want to have lawful access. They are asking for lawful access. We could actually have lawful access today, but that is just another example of the filibustering that takes place in the Conservative Party today, because they do not want to see legislation pass.

Government Orders

• (1340)

If the Conservatives are serious about the issue of extortion, then why would they not allow for lawful access to become part of Canadian law? To those from the far right, let me suggest that there are all forms of stakeholders who agree to it. This is just like when the Conservative Party members say that something is their primary concern.

The Minister of Justice, in introducing the legislation, made reference to the fact that we want to work with members. This is a serious issue, and we want to work with members. Ultimately, there was a great deal of consultation. Yes, there were concerns raised by faith communities. The minister met with representatives of the different faiths, and more, and that ultimately led to an amendment being proposed in committee by the government.

An hon. member: That is false.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: No, it is true.

Madam Speaker, what happens now is that the amendment is sitting in committee, yet we still see the Conservatives wanting to continue the filibuster, even though there is a general consensus that we are moving forward in addressing the issues that have been raised. True to form in terms of what the justice minister has indicated from the beginning of the debate is that if there are ways we can improve the legislation, we are prepared to do that. However, it is time for the Conservatives to realize that we should not need to bring in motions of this nature in order to pass legislation that is for the good of and in the best interest of the public.

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola. The moment we stop discussing and stop debating and that this place is not where we have difficult conversations is the moment that we might as well pack it in.

To listen to the member, one would think it was offensive that Conservatives and Canadians even question this. I invite him to my riding, and I would actually like him to address this and meet with faith-based leaders to talk about these things. I have met with faith leaders, as have so many of my colleagues.

Will the member take me up on that? If he says nobody is opposed, he should come to my riding and talk about it, so he can hear the real-world fear that people have about this bill. Will he do it, yes or no? I will even pay his way.

• (1345)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I have had the opportunity to challenge Conservative members and to have debates in different areas. I would be more than happy to have a debate in Winnipeg on this and on how Conservatives filibuster the crime agenda, which would include this. I look forward to the member opposite accepting that challenge. I would be happy to work with the member and make the arrangements necessary in Winnipeg, where we can have that debate. I can assure him that there are many people of faith in Winnipeg too.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like our colleague opposite to clearly explain why we are debating Government Business No. 6 today. What purpose will that serve? How has it come to this? Why are we being forced to debate a time allocation motion? Is it because the Conservatives are filibustering in committee?

Can my colleague tell us more about that?

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, to the credit of members of the Bloc, they have recognized the true value of Bill C-9. They have recognized that the Minister of Justice was serious when he said that he is open to making the legislation stronger and working with opposition members or faith leaders so that we have good legislation here in Canada.

A vast majority of the members of Parliament in today's Parliament actually support us moving forward and ultimately passing the legislation. The reason we are having this debate on Motion No. 6 is that the Conservatives have absolutely made it a mission of theirs to continue to raise more money, spread more misinformation and prevent Bill C-9 from passing. The only way we can get it passed is if we have support from some opposition members, and I appreciate that the Bloc has stepped up to the plate.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, as I come to my feet today on this legislation and on the programming motion, it just has to be said that we are shaken to our core and, as Greens, horrified by the acts of violence directed at synagogues just within the last day or two in Toronto.

We are debating legislation and wondering if it would make things better, and I do not know, because I agree with the civil liberties reviews of the legislation, saying that the definitions around motivated crimes against places of worship are so indistinct that they could end up criminalizing legal protest. I ask the hon. member to please reconsider the nature of the government's attempt over and over again to bulldoze things through this place without adequate study.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, with the exception of that last statement, I am in concurrence with the leader of the Green Party. Having said that, if we were to do what the leader of the Green Party is saying, we would not be able to pass any legislation. Bill C-9 would die. There is no reason Bill C-9 could not have passed at the end of last year. We could have passed it. It could be the law today. The reason it has not passed is that the Conservative Party refuses in many ways to pass legislation, and ironically they will then go out in the media and say that we Liberals cannot pass our own legislation and cannot deal with our own legislative agenda.

My Conservative friends should look in the mirror. If they want to do what is in the interest of Canadians as a whole and in the public interest, as opposed to the Conservative Party's best interests, I believe they would recognize the value of legislation and at least allow it to come to a vote. It does not take much to filibuster legislation, and that is what we have witnessed, day in and day out, coming from the Conservative Party of Canada, sadly.

Government Orders

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is already illegal to intimidate or harass people on their way to worship, or to utter death threats to Jews, but none of these laws are being enforced. In this country, 30 million people of faith have expressed concern about the amendment that the Liberals would make with the Bloc to remove the religious exemption, and they know that the amendment that the Liberals have proposed would do nothing to actually address people's ability to freely read scripture.

Why does the government not care what 30 million people of faith in this country think?

• (1350)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I do care about what they think, and that is one of the reasons I have to dispel many of the untruths that are put out through social media by the Conservative Party of Canada. At the end of the day, I suspect that once all the filibustering comes to an end, and it will, because of the motion, there are going to be a lot of Conservatives voting in favour of the legislation. We will have to wait and see.

I remember what happened with Bill C-14. For weeks, the Conservative Party, and maybe some of the criminals, were the only entity in Canada that was actually opposing the passing of Bill C-14. We finally shamed them into allowing it to pass, and when it actually came to its third and final reading, I do not think any Conservatives voted against it.

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am listening closely to the discussion this morning on the combatting hate act here in the House of Commons, and I have to say that the comments and the approach in the talking points of the Conservative members are absolutely shameful, from the countrywide circus, the show that they are putting on, to the mobilization of communities of faith and the division and hatred.

My question for the member is this: What I am seeing here is the MAGA wing of the Conservative Party of Canada. On the heels of shootings at synagogues in Ontario, I was on the phone this weekend with members from my community who were asking when the combatting hate act is going to be passed. That is what this is about. The discussion from the members opposite is absolutely shameful. Have they no shame?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is a tough question. The best way for me to answer that would be to recognize what the Conservative Party is today and contrast that to a Progressive Conservative Prime Minister, Joe Clark. Joe Clark has indicated that he never left the party, but the Conservatives left him, in essence. We have witnessed through the current leadership of the Conservative Party that there is a very far right Conservative attitude. We have already seen that in some of the comments this morning and in some of the propaganda that they pump out. It is indeed a far right Conservative Party, to the degree that there are many progressive Conservative voters in the past who are now coming over to support different political entities because of how far the Conservative Party today has shifted to the right.

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciated the parliamentary secretary's reminiscing about political parties of yore, and I wonder where the Lib-

erals who used to stand up for free speech are. The parliamentary secretary claimed that Canadians gave the Liberals a mandate for this legislation. Where did they ever say to Canadians that they would be removing long-standing protections for religious speech? Earlier on, I asked the parliamentary secretary if she agreed with the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture that prosecutors should be able to charge people for quoting certain scriptures, and she would not give an answer.

Does the member agree with the minister that certain scriptures should be illegal to quote? That was not in the Liberal platform.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, upon reflection, it was the Liberal Party of Pierre Elliott Trudeau that brought in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, freedom of religion and its practice are very clear. We are not going to censor people sitting in a Bible club or practising their faith. The arguments the Conservative Party has brought to the floor on Bill C-9 are absolutely ridiculous. I would ultimately argue that the Conservatives are being motivated by the idea of raising money as opposed to protecting the interests of Canadians.

Hate crime is a serious issue. The government is going to deal with—

• (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for York Centre.

Roman Baber (York Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, the “guiltotone” or the “hammer” is generally how these motions are referred to when the government shuts down debate. It is shutting down speech, ironically, on a bill that deals with speech and the issue of free speech. The Liberals are saying there has been enough debate on Bill C-9. Yes, there has been a lot of talk between politicians on it, but the Liberals are refusing to hear from witnesses and from Canadians.

I want to tell Canadians not just about Bill C-9, but about what the Liberals did to shove this terrible piece of legislation down our throats to the point that today they have to drop a nuclear bomb to stop me from doing my job at the justice committee.

We have heard from a handful of witnesses on one of the most consequential pieces of legislation this Parliament will take up. We were supposed to hear from B'nai Brith and Simon Wiesenthal. They were scheduled to testify, but the former head of the committee suspended witness hearings before they were able to testify and ordered the committee to proceed to clause-by-clause consideration. I had witnesses calling me personally. Canadian Women Against Antisemitism called me. I had Imam Tawhidi call me to ask why he was not permitted to testify on this piece of legislation. The former committee chair, the same committee chair who asked how certain scriptures could not be hate speech, is the same committee chair who refused to hear from multiple witnesses who wanted to make submissions on this piece of legislation even before the amendments.

We proceeded to the clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-9. I was there and had a front row seat for all of it. We were working in good faith. I worked with my Liberal colleague from Mount Royal. We agreed to fix the definition of “hate speech”. My concern with respect to the removal of the consent of the Attorney General was also dealt with. Even better, I was surprised to see in the proposed amendments that my private member's bill, Bill C-257, against the wilful promotion of terrorism, in one form or another, made it into the proposed amendments by the Liberals. That was one of the best days of my career.

We could have potentially fixed this bill. Then I learned about the Bloc's amendment from the news media. The Liberals did not have the courage to tell us what they were doing. They had agreed to the Bloc's amendment to remove the religious defence to hate speech from the Criminal Code. The entire exercise had been a fiasco.

However, the amendment that the Bloc passed with its Liberal friends is predicated on false pretenses. By moving this amendment, the Bloc is saying that people should not be able to hide behind a religious exemption to hate speech. As we know, it is because an imam in Montreal named Charkaoui called for the extermination of the enemies of Gaza. The Bloc is saying that because he was not prosecuted, we need to remove this religious exemption. That is just not true. To avail oneself of the religious exemption, the words one utters need to be in good faith. When one calls for the extermination of people, that is not in good faith. If we look at the law, the religious defence does not apply to incitement. It applies to the second category of hate speech, which is the wilful promotion of hatred. One cannot hide behind the religious defence when one is inciting violence as incitement is not protected.

I read a statement at committee from the Quebec prosecutors that said that they did not lay charges against Charkaoui not because of the religious defence, but because the “enemies of Gaza” was not an identifiable group of people. Apparently, one can call for their extermination, according to the Quebec prosecution, but this had nothing to do with the amendment or the religious defence. The Bloc knows this. The Liberals know this. This is a charade.

I will be splitting my time.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[English]

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF MOSAIC

Wade Chang (Burnaby Central, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the 50th anniversary of MOSAIC, an extraordinary organization that has shaped the story of inclusion in Canada. For half a century, MOSAIC has stood beside newcomers, welcoming immigrants, supporting refugees and helping families build new lives with dignity and purpose.

In communities like Burnaby and across B.C., MOSAIC's work has turned challenges into opportunity through language training, employment support and settlement services. MOSAIC has empowered tens of thousands of people to find a place to call home.

Statements by Members

That is the Canada we believe in. Its mission reflects the very best of our country: compassion, diversity and the belief that when newcomers are supported, all of Canada benefits.

Canada is not defined by where people come from, but by how we welcome one another. Fifty years ago, MOSAIC planted a seed of hope for newcomers. Today, that seed has grown into a thriving forest of opportunity. In celebrating MOSAIC, we are reminded that Canada's strength lies in every hand we hold, every life we lift and every story we welcome, because when we rise together, we all succeed.

* * *

DOMINION CRIBBAGE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, the best of the best cribbage players from across Ontario descended upon the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 614, Scarborough Centennial, to duel it out for the Ontario championship and a spot at nationals.

I am proud, although not surprised, to inform the House that the winning team and provincial cribbage champions are from my home branch, Branch 383, Tara. I give a huge congratulations to my parents Tom and Mabel Ruff, my brother Andy Ruff and long-time family friend Terry Galbraith on their masterful performance, with a record of 15-3, that crowned them Ontario champions. Now heading to Windsor, Nova Scotia, to Hants County Legion Branch 009 for the Dominion Cribbage Championships on April 24 to 26, I trust the member for Kings—Hants will be there to welcome all the participants.

On behalf of all the constituents of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, I wish Tom, Mabel, Andy and Terry the best of luck and may the cards fall in their favour. Go, team Tara!

* * *

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Sima Acan (Oakville West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in recognition of International Women's Day, I joined SAVIS and Halton Women's Place to honour the strength, resilience and contribution of women in my riding of Oakville West and across Canada.

Statements by Members

The role women have played in our Canadian story has always been one of strengthening our communities, driving innovation and shaping a more inclusive future. A key pillar of that is women's economic participation. That is why our government is investing, through the women's program and WAGE, to support projects that break down barriers to women's economic equality. Since 2018, the program has invested over \$266 million in more than 700 completed projects across the country. These investments have supported over 400,000 participants, while strengthening and creating over 4,500 partnerships between community organizations, employers and service providers.

I am proud to be a part of a government that recognizes and supports women's success, economic opportunities, growth, participation and equality. When women succeed, everyone benefits.

* * *

RICK SINNAMON

John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the motto of the Lions Club is “We Serve”. Rick Sinnamon truly lived that motto. He served for 33 years with the Ontario Provincial Police. He was involved with countless service clubs and community organizations, including the Mount Forest Lions Club, the Mount Forest Legion, the Mount Forest Minor Hockey Association, the Louise Marshall Hospital Foundation, the Mount Forest Patriots, the England Funeral Home, and the Mount Forest United Church and choir.

Rick was a community builder in both the literal and figurative sense of the word. He not only worked to ensure that the high school stayed in Mount Forest, but also saw the construction of the new Wellington Heights Secondary School. He played a key role in building the Mount Forest and District Sports Complex.

We lost Rick far too soon. Our hearts go out to his family: his wife Patty, their three children and their seven grandchildren. We can be thankful for Rick's life of service because where there was a need in the community, there was Rick.

* * *

[Translation]

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF FARNHAM

Louis Villeneuve (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, I rose to acknowledge the 150th anniversary of Cowansville. Let us just say that the message reached Farnham, since I was gently reminded that this town on the other side of the Yamaska River is also celebrating its 150th anniversary.

Today, I want to pay tribute to Farnham, which is guided by the vision and commitment of its mayor, Patrick Melchior, and its municipal council. Farnham is celebrating a century and a half of history, resilience and commitment.

It is a community that is deeply rooted in the military history of Quebec and Canada. Since 1910, it has been home to a major military training centre that has helped to train generations of soldiers and support the country's defence efforts. The presence of this military base has helped to shape the town's identity and remains a great source of pride for the region.

Above all, Farnham is a vibrant community that is proud of its heritage and motivated to build the future. I want to wish a happy 150th anniversary to all of Farnham's residents, volunteers and elected officials. Brome—Missisquoi is proud of them.

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● (1405)

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been running the country for close to a year, and so far he is turning out to be another Liberal disaster, just like Justin Trudeau. First, his ag minister promised an emergency use for strychnine, to control gopher infestations. With spring on the horizon, the time to act is now, before the land gets destroyed. Instead, the Liberals ignored science and common sense and denied the emergency use application.

It does not stop there. Then came the ridiculous traceability regulations that no producer wants and no trading partner has asked for. Ranchers are rightfully outraged. The last thing they need is added uncertainty while CFIA waits for a new chance to impose more costs and red tape. It does not stop there, either, because the same ag minister is shutting down research centres that are vital to the future of the industry. They brought high returns for a century, and their loss will jeopardize the next generation of farmers.

The Prime Minister is just another politician in a long line of Liberals who fail to understand the west and respect the hard-working farmers driving our national economy. The buck stops with the Prime Minister, and Canadians deserve better than Justin Trudeau 2.0.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Amandeep Sodhi (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, International Women's Day celebrates the leadership, resilience and achievements of women and girls across Canada and the world.

Nearly a century ago, five determined women, known as the Famous Five, asked a question that today may seem obvious: Are women considered “persons” under Canadian law? At that time, the answer from Canada's highest court was no. Refusing to accept that, they carried their fight to the British Privy Council, leading to the historic decision that finally recognized women as persons under the law. It was a turning point that reshaped our democracy.

Statements by Members

Soon after, Agnes Macphail made history as the first woman elected to this House. Today, that progress continues. In this Parliament, 104 women serve as members of Parliament, and 17 serve in cabinet. While we celebrate these milestones, we must also recognize that there is still important work to be done to achieve true equality.

I wish all members a happy International Women's Day.

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Connie Cody (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in recognition of International Women's Day, I rise to speak not only as a member of Parliament but as a mother to two daughters and a grandmother to five granddaughters. Watching the women in my family grow has taught me that strength does not look the same in every season of life. Sometimes it is bold and confident. At other times, it is quiet, steady and carried through long days and hard moments.

I think of the women who came before us, who pushed through barriers, so often without recognition, and built the foundation that allows so many of us to stand here today. I also think of the women around us now, raising families, leading workplaces, caring for loved ones, volunteering in communities and holding everything together in ways that are rarely seen but always felt. I think of the girls growing up now, including my granddaughters, who deserve to grow up knowing they are valued, respected and capable of shaping their own future.

International Women's Day is about recognizing the women who shape our lives, our communities and our country every single day. My thanks go to women everywhere.

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[Translation]

JACQUES MICHEL

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers have a rich, diverse and unique culture. Our creators have produced music, movies, literature and performing arts unlike any others. All these extraordinary works are the fruit of wonderful and visionary pioneers who have captured the spirit of our people. We should thank them every day and celebrate their creations every chance we get.

Unfortunately, it is often when they leave us that we appreciate their contributions and pay tribute to them. We have lost another one of our giants, Abitibi-Témiscamingue-born Jacques Michel, creator of universally popular and distinctly Québécois songs, such as *Pas besoin de frapper*, *Un nouveau jour va se lever*, *Amène-toi chez nous* and *Salut Léon*. These works marked Quebec's entry into the modern world. They are monumental.

We thank Mr. Michel for his works, his love of Quebec, his kindness and generosity. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I offer our condolences to his family and to all those who loved and admired him. Now, I invite everyone to take five minutes to listen to his music again. Members will thank me for.

• (1410)

[English]

TIBET

Karim Bardeesy (Taiaiko'n—Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to congratulate Penpa Tsering on his decisive re-election as Sikyong, or leader, of the Central Tibetan Administration, Tibet's government in exile. More than 51,000 Tibetans in 27 countries voted in this election, a testament to the strength of Tibetan democracy.

The hunger of Tibetans for self-determination, a right unanimously recognized by this House in 2024, will also be on display on the streets tomorrow morning in Taiaiko'n—Parkdale—High Park. Tibetan Canadian youth, students and women's activists will begin a walk from Parkdale to the Chinese consulate to mark the Tibetan national uprising.

On March 10, 1959, tens of thousands of Tibetans in Lhasa rose up in peaceful opposition to occupation and were met with a brutal crackdown, claiming countless lives and forcing His Holiness the Dalai Lama and generations of Tibetans into lifelong exile. Inside Tibet, Tibetans are suffering a new form of oppression through colonial-style residential boarding schools, which are depriving as many as one million young Tibetans from connection to their family, language and culture.

Canada joins Tibetans and supporters around the world, guided by the Dalai Lama and his middle way approach, in steadfast support of Tibetans' right to self-determination.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Roman Baber (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week three different synagogues were shot at in the Toronto area. There was always conflict abroad, but it never spilled onto Canada's streets like it has under this Liberal government.

The Liberals politicize the Middle East; add to that their soft-on-crime agenda, and it is no longer safe for Canada's Jewish community. They can, please, save the tweets, the empty platitudes and Bill C-9, which will do nothing for the Jewish community, and instead deal with the terrorists in our streets and enforce existing laws.

Now an Iranian activist is missing, and police fear that he was murdered. Hundreds of IRGC agents safely reside in Canada. That is because Liberal immigration minister after Liberal immigration minister fails to protect our borders, and Liberal public safety minister after Liberal public safety minister fails to deport them.

When will this Liberal government start protecting Canadians and finally deport those who are connected to the Iranian regime?

*Statements by Members***STEPHEN WRIGHT**

Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a cornerstone of the Thunder Bay community, a great Canadian and a friend, Stephen Wright. Stephen used to say that his hobby was people, and he led his life that way. It was all about service to the community.

He worked with Hockey Canada. He created PRO Kids to support underprivileged kids' participation in sports. He led no fewer than five winning political campaigns. Stephen was a tireless advocate for health care in northwestern Ontario. He was chairman of the board of Thunder Bay Regional and helped to bring it both a medical school and a cardiac care unit.

To every endeavour, Stephen brought his characteristic wisdom, patience, compassion and sense of humour. Stephen represented the very best of Canada. His impact on Thunder Bay and those who knew him will be felt for many years to come. We thank Stephen for all he did, and we miss him.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with rising oil prices, Canada should be well positioned to supply energy to ourselves and our allies.

However, a decade of Liberal policies has chased away investment and production. Despite the rhetoric, the Prime Minister has not approved a single new pipeline to tidewater, and the Major Projects Office has not approved a single project. Now another \$8-billion project has been put on hold, citing the Liberal industrial carbon tax and regulatory barriers.

Canadian consumers used to have some protection when oil prices went up because our dollar did too, but today we produce less oil, and that protection is gone. Canada has the resources to supply our allies and strengthen our economy. Why will the Prime Minister not get out of the way so we can fuel our allies and power paycheques at home?

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with International Women's Day celebrations still front of mind, let us take a moment to reflect on how far we have come.

The advances that we celebrate today were never a foregone conclusion. They happened because one generation of women after another had the courage to challenge what seemed unchangeable. International Women's Day is more than simply a time to look back. It is an opportunity for us to look at the world as it is today, and the current context calls for clarity.

In many parts of the world, conflict and crises are hitting women and children hard. Even in our societies, certain realities remind us that more work needs to be done on the road to equality. Women's rights cannot be taken for granted. They exist, advance or regress depending on the choices we make. Ultimately, equality is not built

only on great strides forward. It is built every time we decide to take—

• (1415)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we cannot control what happens abroad, but the Liberals do control the policies that are imposing an affordability crisis on Canadians here at home. Right now, we have the worst food inflation and the only shrinking economy in the G7.

The Liberal Prime Minister is going ahead with his newly re-named carbon tax, the clean fuel standard. This policy now costs seven cents a litre but will rise to 17¢ a litre. This makes everything more expensive for our farmers, fishermen and those who deliver food to our tables.

The industrial carbon tax, which the Liberal Prime Minister will continue to increase, only makes steel, aluminum, plastic and farm equipment more expensive as well. These costs are imposed at home, not abroad.

When will the Liberals accept responsibility for what they can control, and remove their out-of-touch policies to make life more affordable for all Canadians?

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[Translation]

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in these times of great geopolitical upheaval, I am particularly committed to celebrating a multilateral association in which I place a great deal of hope.

[English]

Today, around the world, 56 countries are celebrating Commonwealth Day, an occasion to remind us of the commitments we have made to democracy, peace and sustainable development.

As chair of the federal branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, I am delighted to invite all hon. members to a reception being held at 6 p.m. today in the Speaker's dining room.

I also want to express the delight of Canada's delegation when MPP Catherine Fife, a remarkable parliamentarian from Waterloo, Ontario, was elected as chair of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians in October 2025, in Barbados, after earning the support and admiration of a very demanding electorate.

Catherine's unapologetic certainty that women are part of the solution, and one can insert all manner of challenges here, makes her a formidable voice in the Commonwealth family. As a fellow parliamentarian, I want to formally congratulate her and assure her of her federal colleagues' staunch support.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we cannot control what happens abroad, but the Liberals do control the policies they are imposing that make life more expensive, like the Liberal fuel standard. This is effectively another kind of carbon tax, which adds seven cents a litre and will rise to 17¢ a litre, meaning more costs for drivers, farmers, fishermen and those who transport our food.

The Liberal Prime Minister is also hiking the industrial carbon tax on steel, aluminum, plastic and farm equipment. These costs are imposed at home, not abroad, and paid for by Canadians.

When will the Liberals accept responsibility for what they can control and cancel their policies that make life more expensive for Canadians?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is an energy superpower. Last year, Canadian oil production reached a record high. No one can predict the future of energy markets, but our allies are looking for stable, reliable energy supplies in an increasingly uncertain world. That is why we are fast-tracking projects like the Taylor to Gordondale pipeline. That is why we are fast-tracking projects like the Sunrise expansion. That is why the TMX optimization is moving forward. We are helping solve the world's affordability problem.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us look at the facts. As for the G7, under the Liberal Prime Minister, Canada now has the worst food price inflation and the only economy that is shrinking. All of this has gotten worse since he became Prime Minister.

Instead of helping lower prices by cancelling Liberal taxes, he is driving them even higher. When companies that process, transport, store or sell food pay more, who does he think all those costs get passed on to?

We cannot control what happens in other countries, but we can absolutely control whether to drive prices higher with tax increases. Why not at least give Canadians a break from Liberal taxes and cancel the fuel standard tax and the industrial carbon tax?

• (1420)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems that my colleague

Oral Questions

was missing in action. In fact, we are taking back control. The first thing we did was cut taxes for 22 million Canadians. That is the very first thing we did. Just to correct the record, Canada is projected to have the second-fastest growth in the G7. This morning, we had the G7 finance ministers' call. We are coordinating our actions. We are going to take action together to make sure that we can bring energy to the world.

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, meanwhile, here at home, Canadian families, seniors and businesses are still dealing with ideologically flawed economic policies, regulation and legislation that have seen the cost of everything, including food prices in Canada, rise 7.3% in January alone.

Taxes imposed on our farmers, fishers and those who transport our food, as well as the industrial carbon tax, which the Liberal Prime Minister keeps in place, have raised prices on everything made with steel, aluminum and plastic.

Why can the Liberal Prime Minister not do the right thing and remove these failed policies that have caused unnecessary hardship and make life more expensive for our people and our businesses?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when my colleague talks about ideological programs, I sure hope he is not talking about the national child care plan, which has actually reduced costs for Ontario families by \$16,000 per child, per year, here in Ontario. I sure hope he is not talking about the school nutrition program, which families, experts and educators have all sung the praises of for ensuring that kids get good food. I sure hope he is not talking about the dental care plan, which is helping low-income Canadians get their teeth fixed. I do not know what he means when he says “ideological”.

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I am talking about is our businesses and our people dealing with self-inflicted wounds, because they are. From failing to eliminate these ideological taxes, causing cascading affordability impacts, to the ideological, almost hate-driven attacks on our wealth-creating natural resource sector, every problem we have started here at home in 2015 and continues today under the Liberal Prime Minister.

Our nation has the worst food inflation in the G7 and the only shrinking economy in the G7.

Oral Questions

When will the Liberals accept responsibility for what they can control and for what they caused by removing policies that have made life more expensive for our people and businesses?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me correct the record again. I know my colleagues like to say things in the House, but they have to be credible. Canada will have the second-fastest growth in the G7. That is what is reported by international agencies.

When we are talking to Canadians, because it is Monday, they should talk about the good news for Canadians. The good news is called the Canada groceries and essentials benefit. On this side of the House, we understand that we need to help people now. It is really interesting to see the Conservatives' criticism, because they have voted against every program, whether it is about—

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is Monday and we are hearing the same old thing from the finance minister.

Yesterday evening, I was at the grocery store and the price of food items, such as fruit, vegetables and meat, keeps going up. Eating should not be a privilege, especially not a privilege that millions of Canadians do not enjoy. The cost of food has skyrocketed.

Is the Liberal dream to see a small family at the grocery store buying two cases of ramen noodles? We have the worst inflation in the G7. The government needs to take action. When will it eliminate the Liberal fuel tax?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague likes to repeat himself, so I will tell him about something that he can repeat to all of his constituents. It is called the Canada groceries and essentials benefit and it helps 12 million Canadians. That is something that he can repeat to people throughout his riding. He is talking about hearing the same old thing, but the news about this benefit bears repeating because it will help Canadians.

What is more, when we consulted the Union des producteurs agricoles, people asked us to take structural measures. That is exactly what we did with a \$500-million fund that will be managed by my colleague to strengthen resilience and ensure food security in Canada. That is what taking action looks like.

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about taking action, since the minister mentioned it. Canada cannot control what the heads of other countries do, but we can control our own destiny. We have energy; let us develop it. We have critical minerals; let us develop them. We have housing issues; let us build homes. We have issues with food costs; let us eliminate the carbon tax. Those costs are imposed here at home, not abroad. I encourage the Liberal government to take our ideas and put them into action. We want to give Canadians some breathing room.

When will the Liberal government finally take action?

• (1425)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the more I listen to my colleague, the more I think he has read our game plan, because apart from what he said at the end, he just repeated everything we say every day. If my colleague wants to join us, there is still room on our benches, and we are ready.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us come back to the Cúram software. It is causing problems with the old age pensions of 85,000 seniors and has racked up \$5 billion in cost overruns. All of this could have been avoided had the Liberals done their homework because Cúram has caused these sorts of problems all over the world. Australia experienced problems with Cúram in 2006, North Carolina in 2012, Minnesota in 2013, Ontario in 2014 and Maryland in 2019. Cúram has not been working properly and has been costing more than expected for 20 years.

Why did the Liberals not make sure that all the bugs were fixed before launching Cúram?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the program that the member opposite is talking about, Cúram, is used in 20 countries around the world. This is a wild goose chase, and she knows it. Seven point seven million Canadians have been successfully transferred to this system. In fact, we are working through the backlog. These are complicated cases, often with paper applications. There is a hotline for urgent cases. Urgent cases are getting dealt with within 24 to 48 hours.

Canadians expect responsible, reliable delivery of benefits, and that is what this modernization provides.

[*Translation*]

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals could have avoided the Cúram fiasco by looking at the problems it has caused all over the world, because this has been going on for 20 years. They also could have listened to the Auditor General who noticed that the costs were skyrocketing in 2023. Perhaps they could have also listened to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, which looked into this in 2023, and especially to Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné, the former and future member for Terrebonne. The Liberals did not listen to anyone, and now they are embroiled in another IT fiasco.

When will they launch an independent public inquiry?

*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, if the member says that 7.7 million seniors' getting reliable, modern delivery of benefits is a disaster, I am not sure what the member opposite is talking about.

She would have us go back to a system that is 60 years old, paper-based and hackable. It would fail. In fact, the Auditor General said that the old system was so frail that Canadians could not count on it. Is that what she wants to keep delivering for Canadians?

We are about moving forward with the future, and Canadians expect benefit delivery that is reliable and safe.

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals say that Cúram is a success story, they fail to mention that it is a global success.

La Presse reported that five other governments have installed Cúram and are facing the same problems and cost overruns. This has been going on for 20 years in Australia, since 2006. However, the Liberals did not learn anything from that. As a result, 85,000 seniors are suffering, and there are \$5 billion in cost overruns.

The Liberals are systematically filibustering at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to prevent us from shedding light on this issue. When will there be an independent public inquiry?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. However, I see that there are some really far-fetched assumptions being made here. I invite him to attend a technical briefing to fully understand what this is about.

The Bloc Québécois has been talking about about the Auditor General. In 2014, the Auditor General sounded the alarm, saying that the 60-year-old system was a recipe for disaster and that the country needed to modernize the way benefits are distributed. That is exactly what we did, and 7.7 million seniors are now getting their benefits on time, in a reliable and secure manner.

That is our commitment to seniors. The status quo and the Bloc's inaction are completely unacceptable.

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*[English]***THE ECONOMY**

Sandra Cobena (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has the worst food inflation and the only shrinking economy in the G7, and it is no wonder. The Liberals' increasing fuel standard is already costing Canadians seven cents per litre today, and it will rise to 17¢ per litre by 2030, hitting the farmers, fishermen and truckers who put food on our tables. These costs are entirely made in Ottawa by the Liberal government.

If the Prime Minister is so focused on what we can control, then why does he not stop pointing fingers and scrap the taxes that are making life so unaffordable for Canadians?

• (1430)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know it is Monday, and on Monday we expect good news, but what I think we should tell Canadians is what this government has been doing in order to make life affordable and this economy competitive. This government has presented one of the most ambitious budgets in our history, with generational investment in infrastructure, generational investment in housing, generational investment in productivity and competitiveness, and generational investment in our defence.

Instead of talking the Canadian economy down, they should celebrate our workers, celebrate our Canadian industries and celebrate our country.

Sandra Cobena (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister should know better. Those huge generational deficits are what is driving inflation up in this country.

Going back to the cost of food, which was my initial question, they have also failed to drive competition. Instead of keeping these countless taxes on the building blocks of our food supply, they should address them. The reality is that Canada is falling behind, not because of global forces but because of their choices.

Will the Prime Minister finally take responsibility and remove these policies, which are driving up the cost of food for every Canadian?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the aisle, we will take responsibility for building the strongest economy in the G7. That I can say we will do, and we will do that with Canadian workers. We will do that with Canadian industries. We will do that with our partners around the world. We just came back from a mission in India and Australia. I can say that the world wants what Canada has to offer. We have highly skilled workers, and we have strong industries. We build boats, we build cars, and we build ships. We have critical minerals; we have energy in abundance, and we are the only G7 country with free trade with all G7 nations.

We believe in Canada on this side of the aisle.

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberals like to blame global pressures, but the policies driving up the cost of living in Canada are made right here in Ottawa. Canada now has the worst food price inflation in the G7 and the only shrinking economy in the G7. In Newfoundland and Labrador, nearly all groceries arrive by truck or ferry, yet the Prime Minister is pushing ahead with the newly renamed carbon tax, the clean fuel standard, which adds seven cents a litre, climbing to 17¢. That will drive up the cost of transporting food right to the grocery shelf.

Oral Questions

When will the Liberals take responsibility for their policies and stop making life more expensive for Canadians?

Hon. Joanne Thompson (Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to follow my colleague next to me and talk about good news on a Monday. The Bay du Nord project, for example, in Newfoundland and Labrador is getting workers on the job in our province, building our economy and building our infrastructure.

This is a good news project, and I invite my colleague in the opposition from Newfoundland and Labrador to get on board.

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a complete deflection, but if that minister wants to talk about Bay du Nord, she knows it was the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador who fought to see that project move ahead. The government spent years creating barriers and now that minister is trying to take credit, but that does not answer the question about the costs the Liberals are imposing today. Someone recently called my office and said that he has been heating his room with his oven because he cannot afford to put oil in his tank.

When will the Liberals take responsibility for the policies they are imposing that are making life more expensive for Canadians?

Hon. Joanne Thompson (Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that member to speak with the CEO of Equinor to know who made that project possible, and then I am going to say to her that I will never politicize the challenges that people have in our province and in this country in food security. That is why the programs that we have in place are so important: actual supports for families and seniors. I am happy to bring this member up to speed on the programs that exist, but do not politicize what is so important to people's lives.

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we cannot control what happens abroad, but the Liberals do control the policies that they are imposing that make life more expensive for Canadians. Today we have the worst price inflation and the only shrinking economy in the G7. Policies like the fuel standard that adds seven cents a litre, rising to 17¢, will apply to those who bring us our food, while the industrial carbon tax raises the price on steel, aluminum, plastic and farm equipment.

When will the Liberals accept responsibility for what they can control and remove their policies that make life more expensive for Canadians?

• (1435)

Hon. Evan Solomon (Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the opposition talks the economy down, we are building it up. We have a plan to make life more affordable. We cut taxes for 22 million Canadians. We eliminated the consumer carbon tax. We cut the GST for first-time homebuyers. We also have the Canada groceries and essentials benefit, which will provide about \$1,890 to an average family of four this year.

Instead of talking the economy down, which is all they do, why do opposition members not join us and build this country up?

[Translation]

TAXATION

G rard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2016 in Laval, former mayor Vaillancourt was found guilty of stealing \$7 million from the people of Laval. All that money was returned and is back in Laval. Guess what? This Liberal government is now asking the City of Laval to write a cheque for \$1 million. Who is it for? It is for Mr. Vaillancourt. That is appalling. Not only were the people of Laval robbed once, but they are being robbed a second time by this government.

Today is Monday. Can the Minister of Finance, who also happens to be the revenue minister, tell the people of Laval that the government made a mistake and that they do not have to pay?

Hon. Fran ois-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Give me a minute. It was a bit loud. I did not see the person who did that, but I suspect certain members. Members should not yell like that during question period. Question period belongs to those asking the question and those answering the question.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Fran ois-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague. That is a serious and complex question.

I can inform him and the people of Laval that I contacted the mayor of Laval this morning, that I have summoned the Commissioner of the Canada Revenue Agency and that we are working together on finding a solution that will be in the best interests of the people of Laval.

G rard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend Thomas Gerbet, the Radio-Canada journalist who made the situation public because the mayor of Laval had already spoken to the revenue minister who did nothing.

The Minister of National Revenue should have followed the Government of Quebec's example. In 2016, a Quebec finance minister said, "For our government, this is a matter of fairness to the people of Laval who were the primary victims in this case".

Has the Minister of Finance consulted the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, who made the decision in 2016 without being prompted by a Radio-Canada news story?

Oral Questions

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, I thank my colleague for the question. It is a serious question about a complex issue. I would advise him to be a bit more careful because the situation is much more complex than how he is presenting it today.

However, what I can say is that I contacted the mayor of Laval myself this morning. I summoned the Commissioner of the Canada Revenue Agency. As I said, we are in problem-solving mode. We will find a solution that will be in the best interests of the people of Laval.

* * *

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, expropriations will not make the high-speed rail project a success. What is needed is social licence.

However, let us look at how the CEO of Alto responded to concerned farmers. He confirmed that there will be expropriations but said that he hopes that they will not be the primary tool. He hopes that expropriation will not be the primary tool. He confirmed that Alto has the means to expropriate land and that it will do so, if necessary. At this point, that almost sounds like a threat.

When will the government show some respect for the people of the north shore and hold meaningful discussions with them?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is very sensitive to what is happening in Mirabel. Of course, we will work with the mayor, the reeves, the farmers and the UPA. Our Quebec lieutenant is working on this issue, as is my colleague, the Minister of Transport.

Having said that, we know that high-speed rail is a good project. However, as my colleague said, social licence is important, and we can do both.

• (1440)

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us put ourselves in the shoes of the people of Terrebonne, Mascouche and Mirabel. Alto's CEO is confirming that there will be expropriations, but he is hopeful that it will not be the primary tool that is used. So he is confirming that it could happen.

Our people want respect. The towns of Terrebonne, Mascouche and Mirabel want real consultation on the route. They want real local economic spinoffs. The north shore is not going to lie down and be bullied into accepting the high-speed rail.

Will the Liberals finally demand that Alto seek social licence?

[English]

Tim Louis (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs and One Canadian Economy (Intergovernmental Affairs and One Canadian Economy), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know we need to work together to make major projects happen, and that is what our government is doing. We are maintaining an open dialogue with other levels of government, with farmers, with unions and with all community

stakeholders. We need to build this country together, and we are looking forward to the co-operation that is going to happen.

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OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a global surge in oil prices should be a good chance for Canada, home to the fourth-largest oil reserves on earth. However, despite the PM's rhetoric and photo ops, there is not one new cross-border export pipeline to anywhere. The costly Major Projects Office has not approved one yet, and the federal industrial carbon tax drives away Canada's producers like CNRL, which just paused an \$8-billion project due to regulatory uncertainty.

Canada can and should be the world's top energy choice. Why will the PM not get out of the way so Canada can fuel allies and power paycheques at home?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is Monday, so there is good news. We recently approved the Taylor to Gordondale pipeline. More good news is that we announced the sunrise pipeline expansion project. TMX just announced the first of three optimization projects to grow our energy exports.

Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, none of those are new pipelines for exports. Usually, high prices mean a high dollar, but Canadians are paying the price.

The Liberals promised a Pacific pipeline, to remind them, but they keep their unlawful, "never build anything anywhere" Bill C-69, their drilling and tanker bans, and their federal industrial carbon tax that drives away investments. The more these Liberals say they are different, the more things stay the same.

Canadians want pipelines now more than ever, but wait for the Liberals to keep their word. When will the PM, who helped Trudeau kill billions of dollars in projects and thousands of jobs, get that Pacific pipeline done for Canadian unity, sovereignty and accountability?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Province of Alberta officials are really excited about working with us. They are working with us on the MOU and they have said that by the summer they will be coming forward with a proposal for a new pipeline. It would be great if the Conservatives got on board and started working with the Government of Alberta and the federal government to build Canada strong.

Oral Questions

Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, despite the government's claim, the Prime Minister has not approved a single new pipeline to tidewater. Even with sweeping new powers, the Major Project Office has yet to approve a single major project, let alone one in Canada's oil sands. Canada's energy sector could help supply our allies, strengthen our economy at home, diversify our trade and provide greater economic certainty in an uncertain world. Why will the Prime Minister not support responsible energy development so Canada can help our economy and our allies?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I invite the Conservatives to work with us to grow our energy exports. The Province of Alberta is doing that. Why can they not get on board?

Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are on board. Rising oil prices should be a major opportunity. Canada is home to the fourth-largest oil reserves, yet Canada's leading energy companies have been clear that it is the Liberal anti-energy laws that are killing economic growth in our country. Instead of building, we are seeing projects stall. Last week, CNRL paused an \$8-billion project because of Liberal anti-development policies and laws. This would have been thousands of jobs in Fort McMurray—Cold Lake and right across Canada. Why will the government not just get out of the way so that we can get pipelines built?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working with the Alberta government, and Canadian oil production reached a record high last year. We are helping with the TMX optimization. We are helping with the Taylor to Gordondale pipeline. We are helping with the sunrise expansion. Why do the Conservatives not get on board?

• (1445)

Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, rising oil prices should be an enormous opportunity for Canada's economy, but Liberal anti-energy ideology blocks this sector. Despite grand speeches and meaningless MOUs, the Liberals have failed to approve any pipeline to tidewater, and their Major Projects Office has done nothing and approved nothing. Canadian energy should stabilize global markets, support our allies and strengthen our own economy. When will the Prime Minister get out of the way and unblock our resources so we can fuel our friends abroad and power paycheques here at home?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, hopefully the Conservatives will be supportive of our putting the Ksi Lisims project to the Major Projects Office. Maybe they would be supportive of our putting LNG Canada 2 to the Major Projects Office. Maybe they would be supportive of the TMX optimization. Maybe they would be supportive of the Taylor to Gordondale expansion. Maybe they would be supportive of the sunrise expansion.

We are building Canada. They should get on board.

Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week thousands of investors, workers and innovators gathered in Toronto for the PDAC convention, the world's largest mining conference. Canada has the critical minerals that the world needs for electric vehicles, clean technology and national security.

Last week our government announced new investments to accelerate mining projects and strengthen our supply chains with allies. Could the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources update the House on how Canada will help build mines faster, attract investment, create jobs and build a strong, resilient Canadian economy?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her strong support of the mining sector. At PDAC last week, our government showed that Canada is leading our allies to secure critical mineral supply chains. We announced investments in 22 new projects to help connect mines to markets. Through the critical minerals production alliance, Canada has secured 30 new deals with 12 different allies to bring \$18 billion of new investment to the Canadian critical minerals sector.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been four years since the war in Ukraine began, and it has been four years since we called on the government to expedite Canadian LNG exports for allies like Germany. It has been eight months since Parliament gave the government power to expedite new oil and gas projects for exports to Europe and Asia. In eight months, not a single new export project like that has been approved.

When will the government get serious about Canadian energy policy? Do we have to wait for another four years of inaction?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Conservatives were not here last week. We just approved the Bay du Nord project to export our energy to the world.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question was about LNG exports. When the war began in Ukraine, it took Germany only 194 days to approve and build a new LNG export facility, and another four new facilities were quickly brought online shortly thereafter. Over 194 days ago, this Parliament gave the government unprecedented powers to expedite new gas projects to expedite LNG for Europe and Asia. Now we have a war in the Middle East. When is the government going to use these new powers and approve new LNG exports for Europe or Asia?

Oral Questions

Hon. Maninder Sidhu (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is focused on attracting foreign direct investment to this country. Last year alone, close to \$100 billion was attracted to Canada, which is the highest it has been in close to 18 years. That is something to celebrate. People are looking to our LNG projects. There are over a handful in various stages of development. LNG Canada 1's first shipment is out to Asia. LNG Canada 2 will be the second-largest LNG facility in the world. We are there. We are going to export our energy to various places around the world.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada now leads the world in shootings against Jewish institutions. We have heard countless condemnations and been offered endless thoughts and prayers from the Liberal government. It has failed to address the fact that terrorists live in Canada, that institutions cannot access security funding and that there is zero enforcement of the laws that are already on the books.

I am going to give the Minister of Public Safety an opportunity to get up in his chair, say that it is terrorism and tell the House what he is going to do, when he is going to do it and how he is going to do it.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me extend my condolences to the communities at Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto, as well as the Shaarei Shomayim synagogue and Temple Emanu-El, which were shot at last week.

I have had the opportunity to meet with many members of the Jewish community. I can tell the House that we absolutely condemn these acts of violence and we will take every effort to ensure that this does not happen. We are working with law enforcement. We are working with the province, as well as the municipalities, to ensure the safety and security of all Canadians, particularly Jewish Canadians.

● (1450)

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister still has not said a thing. The community does not need the empty condemnations. They need action from a government that has let this spiral out of control for more than two years. They have taken every side of the issue except for the side that protects Canadians.

Fund the security programs, hunt down and lock up the people who perpetrate the violence, enforce the law and deport the terrorists the minister knows live here in Canada. When is the minister or anyone in the government going to say any of those things?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me just say that since last November, we have funded over 108 projects relating to Jewish community institutions.

Let me also say that this is a moment when all Canadians need to come together, including the Conservative Party. There is a bill right now, Bill C-9, that is meant to support and ensure the safety and security of institutions, particularly those that are serving the Jewish community. I have heard from communities across this

country. It is time for the Conservative Party to act and to ensure that Bill C-9 becomes law.

[*Translation*]

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2018, we moved a motion calling on the Liberal government to immediately designate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the IRGC, as a listed terrorist entity. It took the Liberals six long years to wake up and do it. Right now, an estimated 700 members of the IRGC are living the good life here in Canada.

I am reluctant to ask the following question. If it took them six years to accomplish a simple task, how much longer will it take them to remove those terrorists from Canada? Can the Prime Minister tell us whether he is going to take action immediately?

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite that the IRGC is listed as a terrorist entity in Canada. People who are members of the IRGC are facing consequences. They have been removed already. There are a number of members who are going through our process to be removed. We will ensure the safety and security of Canadians. This past week, I have had a chance to speak to members of the Iranian community who have highlighted the need for collaboration to ensure that we work together to ensure that the people who belong to terrorist entities are addressed and are removed from Canada.

[*Translation*]

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Iranian Canadian community is talking to us, in fact. Iranian Canadians are telling us that the presence of IRGC members on Canadian soil is a huge problem for their community. We are not talking about one, two or three people. We are talking about hundreds of people linked to this terrorist group. They have been banned for years now.

Can the minister confirm that there are still 700 of them on Canadian soil and that he will do whatever it takes to remove them immediately and rid the country of these terrorists?

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me share some information with the member opposite. First and foremost, over 18,000 applications for inadmissibility have been reviewed by the Canada Border Services Agency. We have opened over 170 investigations, and approximately 240 visas have been cancelled by IRCC.

We will continue to ensure the safety and security of Canadians. Our system works. We have listed the IRGC as a terrorist entity, and CBSA is taking efforts to ensure that people who are inadmissible are removed.

*Oral Questions***IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister just claimed that they have deported Iranian officials, yet news reports say they have deported one out of 700. Worse, today the head of the IRB said that she could not answer why they agreed to keep a deportation hearing of an Iranian regime official secret. I do not understand this.

When will the Liberals start deporting Iranian regime officials?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the CBSA is working to ensure that people who are inadmissible to Canada who are members of the IRGC, who have held ranks within the IRGC, are removed expeditiously. We have already started that process. As members know, we listed the IRGC as a terrorist entity. We have started the removal process. Others are continuing.

I want to highlight that over 240 visas have been cancelled by the IRCC in anticipation that membership in the IRGC can constitute inadmissibility to Canada.

• (1455)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is a problem. Mahdi Nasiri was a propaganda distributor, political deputy of the Iranian regime of the Friday imams' policy-making council and a deputy at the Supreme Leader's Office of the U.A.E., yet he is still in Canada.

It does not seem like the CBSA or the minister is doing a very good job. Why have they deported only one of these thugs?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. Members of the IRGC are ineligible, inadmissible, to be in Canada. The CBSA is taking—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I lost the sound on the mic, and there was other ambient noise as well.

It was a very important question. Could the hon. minister start from the top, please?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. Members of the IRGC are inadmissible to Canada. The Canada Border Services Agency is removing those individuals who are deemed to be inadmissible who are members of the IRGC. There are also processes being undertaken to ensure the expeditious removal of those individuals.

Let me also say that the IRCC is taking proactive steps with people who are ineligible to be here, including 240 individuals who have been refused visas for their alleged involvement with the IRGC.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, conflicts have always existed overseas, but under the Liberal government, we are now seeing those conflicts spill onto our streets here at home. Last week alone, three synagogues in the GTA were targeted with gunfire, and now an Iranian dissident has gone missing,

possibly a homicide, while members of the community fear that the regime in Tehran may be involved. After years of Liberal open-border failures and soft-on-crime policies, hundreds of IRGC regime agents are believed to be living safely here in Canada.

When will the Liberal government finally enforce the law, start deporting Iranian regime officials and protect Canadians here at home?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me at the outset say that if my colleague opposite feels that we need to ensure the protection of Canadians, he will support the passage of Bill C-9 and the Conservative Party will pass Bill C-9 today. That is how we protect Canadians. That is how we protect communities. That is how we ensure the safety and security of Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the new defence industrial strategy is a testament to our confidence in the industrial capabilities—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Orléans will have to start over because there is too much noise coming from both sides.

The hon. member for Orléans.

Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, the new defence industrial strategy is a testament to our confidence in Canada's industrial capabilities and our strength on the international stage. We are allocating \$81 billion to rebuild, rearm and reinvest in our Canadian Armed Forces. The government has taken meaningful action, including a \$900-million investment in innovative dual-use technologies.

Can the Minister of Industry explain how the defence industrial strategy will increase Canada's presence on the world stage and support our industries?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Orléans for her excellent question.

We presented our new defence industrial strategy about two weeks ago and we are already taking action. My colleagues, the Minister of National Defence, the Secretary of State for Defence Procurement and I announced \$900 million for a new drone innovation hub and for a new Bombardier aircraft built here in Canada. We will create jobs in Mississauga, Saint-Laurent and Abbotsford, British Columbia. We will create jobs across the country.

Oral Questions

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Liberals, foreign conflicts have spilled onto our streets. Their politics and soft-on-crime agenda have made Canadians unsafe. Three GTA synagogues were shot at, and 700 IRGC agents are roaming our streets. We have heard only condemnations and thoughts and prayers. An Iranian dissident has now gone missing, with police probing a possible Tehran-linked homicide.

Liberal ministers failed to secure borders and failed to deport hundreds of IRGC agents. Decide today. Deport these agents of terror today.

• (1500)

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, shame on the Conservatives. We have a bill in the House that they could vote for. It was exactly what the Jewish community had asked for to make sure that it was safe, that we are safe where we pray. They are voting against. By voting against it, they are also voting to keep it legal to display swastikas on our streets.

Shame on them if they are talking about safety.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: We are almost at the finish line for question period.

The hon. member for Calgary Heritage.

Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no action, no details and no surprise. Shame on the Liberals.

The Prime Minister is all over the map, with four positions in four days. He supported the decisions of our allies in confronting the Iranian regime at first, as legitimate and lawful. Then he regretted the strikes. Then he would not rule out Canadian military action. Even his own caucus does not know what his position is. All this is with a regime that has killed 150 Canadians on a passenger plane and continues to intimidate Canadians.

Our people want to know what the Prime Minister is doing to secure us here at home. When will the Liberals finally deport IRGC officials?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify the government's position for my hon. colleague—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I would like to hear the clarification.

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of my hon. colleague, allow me to clarify that successive Canadian governments have held that Iran is the principal source of terror in the region. That is why, more than 18 months ago, Canada declared the IRGC a terrorist entity. That is why Canada supports all efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. That is why we have declared Iran a state sponsor of terrorism.

All parties have to comply with the rules of international law, and we will work to bring Canadians home safely.

Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have successively failed to address the fact that we have terrorists on our streets, and there has been zero enforcement of the laws that are already in place.

This is happening because the seven Liberal immigration ministers in the last 10 years have failed to protect our borders, and now hundreds of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps agents safely reside in Canada, many in my community in Richmond Hill. This is because Liberal public safety minister after Liberal public safety minister has failed to deport them.

When will the Liberal government finally start to—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the department at IRCC has a rigorous process for vetting all applicants who are applying for a visa. In addition, we encourage the opposition to vote in favour of Bill C-9, which it is refusing to do.

Finally, let me clarify again that on this side of the House, the Iranian regime is a terrorist entity. It is a state sponsor of terrorism. We encourage all parties to respect the rules of international conflict and engagement, and we will work to bring Canadian citizens home safely.

* * *

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Hon. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our national parks are national treasures that all Canadians take pride in.

Two years ago, Canadians across the country watched in horror as a monster fire ripped through Jasper National Park, causing thousands to evacuate and leaving many without their homes and businesses. In this crisis, the town has shown all of us how strong, united and resilient Canadians are.

Can the minister responsible for Jasper recovery speak to the whole-of-government co-ordination that is moving critical recovery and rebuilding projects forward?

• (1505)

Hon. Eleanor Olszewski (Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience and Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as an Albertan, I understand the special place that Jasper holds in the hearts of Albertans and Canadians.

Routine Proceedings

Last week in Jasper, I announced that our government provided more than \$14 million for new housing units to support the people who live and work there. This is in addition to the over \$380 million that our government has already provided for recovery.

As ministerial lead for Jasper, I will ensure that Jasper, a place of unparalleled natural beauty, remains a place that Jasperites continue to—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Oshawa.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week a convicted first-degree murderer was released unescorted in Oshawa for 72 hours. This man tortured, raped and murdered a 14-year-old boy and then threw his body in a garbage room. Durham Regional Police said that he is currently “a significant risk” and told Oshawa residents “to stay vigilant”.

Will the Prime Minister condemn this decision by the Parole Board of Canada and work with Conservatives to ensure that child killers serve their full sentences and are not released and walking our streets?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the matter this member brings up is a decision that was made by the Parole Board of Canada, which is an independent entity from government.

Let me also say that in order to ensure the safety and security of our children and those who are exploited, we need lawful access as law in Canada. This is why I am concerned when the Conservative Party absolutely does not move forward on important legislation, such as Bill C-2 and Bill C-9, yet pontificates here, because they are doing it for clickbait. What is important is that we pass legislation that is critical for—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, on February 28, the United States and Israel launched illegal attacks against Iran.

Lloyd Axworthy, former foreign minister of this country, wrote in the Toronto Star that day, “Canada once rejected America's aggressive, unlawful foreign policy. Today [the Prime Minister] embraced it”. He went on to say, “Under the [United Nations] Charter, cross-border uses of force are prohibited except in two narrow cases”. He points out that Operation Epic Fury applies to neither.

I will ask today, will the Prime Minister belatedly—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while we support Iran's never obtaining a nuclear weapon, this support is not a blank cheque.

Canada reaffirms that international law binds all parties. All actors, including the United States and Israel, must respect the rules

of international engagement. There are established international processes for making determinations about international law, and our immediate priority is going to be on de-escalation, the safety and security of civilians, and working to bring Canadians home.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1510)

[English]

CANADA POST CORPORATION ACT

Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-262, An Act to amend the Canada Post Corporation Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to introduce a bill, seconded by the member of Parliament for Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, that brings long overdue modernization and national consistency to how Canadians can buy and ship Canadian wine, beer and spirits across provincial borders.

As the Prime Minister often reminds us, we should focus on what we can control, and Parliament can control this. Canada should be our own best customer, not a place where our producers face some of their toughest barriers. Right now, it is still easier for a B.C. winery to ship to Texas than to Toronto. That makes no sense for consumers, small producers or a modern Canadian economy. This bill creates a simple national framework for direct-to-consumer shipping. It ensures that Canada Post provides consistent interprovincial service and allows trusted carriers that follow the same standards to compete and offer Canadians more choice and better service. It replaces a patchwork system of outdated provincial rules with a single predictable coast-to-coast system.

This matters for small wineries, craft breweries and distilleries that want to reach customers across the country. It matters for Canadians who want access to the best of every region. It matters for Parliament, because this is something positive, practical and long overdue.

I hope we can move past the prohibition era and the interprovincial trade barriers that still dog our country by working together across all parties to modernize a system Canadians have waited for for far too long. I would gladly work with all parties on accelerating this private member's bill or have the Minister of Finance include this framework in his next budget implementation act. If Parliament can pass this bill, then we can finally free the grapes and raise our spirits to a glorious pan-Canadian toast from coast to coast to coast.

Let us free the beer.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

DISABILITY SUPPORTS

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, this is an issue of deep concern for the people of Saanich—Gulf Islands and across Canada. Every MP in this place knows of this scandal, that people living with disabilities in this country are far more likely to be living in poverty. We voted and worked in this place to get the Canadian disability benefit through. However, at this point it is not lifting people out of poverty. Therefore, the petitioners are asking the House to look at the reality that the financial pressures from rising costs are disproportionately falling on these same people with disabilities across Canada. Any disability and emergency supports they receive end up occasionally being clawed back and are not treated as benefits they can keep.

The petitioners are very specifically relying on all of these facts and calling on the government to fix the Canadian disability benefit, alleviate the financial pressures and ensure that every person with disabilities across Canada receiving any disability support receive a one-time emergency support of \$5,000 tax-free that is not means-tested and cannot be clawed back by any order of government.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a petition from Canadians who are concerned that the Liberal-Bloc amendments to Bill C-9 could be used to criminalize passages from the Bible, the Quran, the Torah and other sacred texts. The state has no place in the religious texts or teachings of any faith community. Freedom of expression and freedom of religion are fundamental rights that must be preserved. Therefore, the petitioners are calling on the Liberal Government of Canada to protect religious freedoms, uphold the right to read and share sacred texts, and prevent government overreach into matters of faith.

• (1515)

Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition that comes from many Christians across the country who are concerned about the effects of Bill C-9 and that its effects could criminalize passages of the Bible.

Petitioners say that the state has no place in the religious texts or teachings of any faith community and that freedom of expression and freedom of religion are fundamental rights that must be preserved. Therefore, the petitioners call on the Liberal Government of Canada to protect religious freedom, uphold the right to read and to share sacred texts, and prevent government overreach into matters of faith.

Chak Au (Richmond Centre—Marpole, CPC): Mr. Speaker, residents from Richmond Centre—Marpole and hundreds of thousands of Canadians across the country are standing against Bill C-9 and for the protection of religious freedom in Canada.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners note that the Liberal-Bloc amendment adopted at committee would remove the good faith religious defence from the Criminal Code. They warn that this change would allow the state to persecute individuals for sharing passages from sacred texts, such as the Bible, the Quran, the Torah and other religious teachings, if they are deemed offensive.

Canadians understand that freedom of expression and freedom of religion are cornerstones of a free society. People of faith should never have to wonder whether expressing their beliefs will bring the power of the state to their—

The Speaker: Is the hon. member doing a summary, or is he reading a statement? The point of this part of the day is to summarize petitions, and I know there is a tendency to go a little further, so I would ask the member to summarize the petition rather quickly.

Chak Au: Mr. Speaker, therefore, the petitioners call on the Government of Canada to withdraw Bill C-9 and protect the rights of Canadians to read, share and speak their religious convictions freely.

I have another petition to present.

The petitioners are seriously concerned about Bill C-9 and amendments adopted at the justice committee. The petitioners believe that these changes remove long-standing protections for good faith religious expression. They fear that this would allow the state to intrude into religious teachings, sacred texts and the peaceful expression of deeply held beliefs. They affirm that freedom of expression and freedom of religion are fundamental rights in Canada, and they should be protected from government overreach.

Therefore, the petitioners call on the Government of Canada to withdraw Bill C-9 and to uphold and protect religious freedom, including the right to read, share and teach sacred texts without fear of criminal sanction.

The last petition I am presenting is on the same theme.

Petitioners warn that removing the good faith religious defence from the Criminal Code risks criminalizing the reading and sharing of sacred texts, including the Bible, the Quran and the Torah. They believe that this opens the door to persecuting Canadians for expressing deeply held religious beliefs. They remind the House that freedom of religion and freedom of expression are fundamental rights of a free and democratic society.

Therefore, the petitioners call on the Government of Canada to withdraw Bill C-9 and to protect religious freedom by preventing government intrusion into matters of faith.

Routine Proceedings

Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to table two petitions on behalf of Canadians who are concerned about the implications of Bill C-9.

The petitioners believe that freedom of expression and freedom of religion are fundamental rights that must be preserved. They believe that Liberal Bill C-9 is an infringement on those rights. As such, they call on the House to withdraw Bill C-9 and prevent government intrusion into matters of faith.

[*Translation*]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table a petition from the people of Saint-Martin, in Beauce, who are concerned about the persistent failure of the cellular network in the region. The petitioners note that a number of areas in Saint-Martin have a weak or even entirely unavailable cellular network. The difficulty they have in making reliable phone calls to their families, businesses and emergency services has created social, economic and public safety challenges that are affecting the quality of life of the people of Saint-Martin.

The people of Saint-Martin are asking telecommunications providers and relevant authorities to take steps and concrete measures to improve their cellular network. They are calling for this issue to be treated as a regional priority.

• (1520)

[*English*]

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition directed to the Government of Canada. The petitioners are concerned that the Liberal-Bloc amendment to Bill C-9 would potentially criminalize the reading or the teaching of certain passages of the Bible, the Quran and the Torah. Petitioners want the government to take note of that, immediately withdraw the amendment and also shelve Bill C-9.

Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition, as many people have reached out to my office and contacted me repeatedly from various faith communities concerned about Bill C-9. This petition calls for there to be free expression, and the protection of freedom of expression, freedom of religion and freedom of belief, which are fundamental rights.

I cannot help but think of Canada's 13th prime minister, Sir John G. Diefenbaker, when he said, "I am Canadian, a free Canadian, free to speak without fear, free to worship God in my own way, free to stand for what I think right, free to oppose what I believe wrong, free to choose those who shall govern my country. This heritage of freedom I pledge to uphold—"

The Speaker: Is the member quoting from the petition?

Richard Bragdon: Mr. Speaker, it is in the spirit of the petition.

The Speaker: Mr. Diefenbaker was a great orator; that is for sure.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

WILDLAND AND FOREST FIREFIGHTERS

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to table a petition that was collected by the National Union of Public and General Employees.

The petition first highlights that wildland and forest firefighters across Canada perform life-threatening public safety duties, including wildfire suppression and evacuation. They protect communities, ecosystems, property and critical infrastructure during increasingly severe wildfire seasons. The petitioners also highlight that climate change has led to longer, hotter and more destructive wildfire seasons, placing wildland and forest firefighters at a growing risk to their physical and mental health. However, they routinely deploy across provinces and territories, and internationally, to provide emergency response. Despite performing the same dangerous work as other firefighters, wildland and forest firefighters are excluded from the firefighter category in the national occupational classification, which is a misclassification that limits their access to recognition, benefits and protections available to other firefighters and public safety workers.

The petitioners therefore call on the government to immediately correct the miscalculation of wildland and forest firefighters in the national occupational classification by recognizing them as firefighters. They also ask the government to remove any and all federal barriers that prevent wildland and forest firefighters from being recognized as the firefighters and public safety workers that they are.

ARMS EXPORTS

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a petition from the residents of Victoria. They asked me to table this petition because the MP for Victoria would not do so.

The petitioners note that Canada acceded to the Arms Trade Treaty in 2019 and that the promise was made to Canadians that Canadian arms, components and weaponry would not be used in human rights violations and against humanity. However, they note there is a significant loophole, in that exports to the United States do not require any permitting. In fact, the vast majority of the exports to the U.S. do not require any permitting and therefore do not require risk assessments. There have been credible reports indicating that Canadian arms have been used in various conflicts, including in Gaza, Israel, Sudan, Yemen and so on, killing civilians, which is in violation of international humanitarian law.

Therefore, the petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to enact legislation to close the existing loopholes in Canada's arms export laws, including removing exemptions for the United States, strengthening oversight and ensuring that Canadian arms are never used to commit or facilitate human rights abuses.

• (1525)

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise and table a petition on behalf of my constituents. I have had the honour of doing so on behalf of hundreds of constituents already, and today I am adding hundreds more names.

The petition is on protecting the religious freedom in Bill C-9, which is very topical here today as the Liberals and the Bloc attempt to ram through that legislation. Canadians are concerned that the Bloc-Liberal amendments to Bill C-9 could be used to criminalize passages from the Bible, the Quran, the Torah and other sacred texts. The petitioners mention the state has no place in the religious texts or teachings of any faith community.

I hear from residents over and over again about all the challenges we face in this country. Putting through this amendment, with all the effort that the Liberal and Bloc members are putting into it, is something I am not hearing. We need to protect religious freedom, and I am glad to add my voice and these petitioners' voices to that effort.

RECREATIONAL SALMON FISHERY

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, petitioners in Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford are concerned about the recreational fishery, specifically related to coho and chinook. They are imploring the Minister of Fisheries to listen to both Conservatives and Liberals, scrap her policy proposal and maintain recreational access for all British Columbians.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola. On this occasion, I rise to present a petition that cautions that the way Bill C-9 is proceeding, it would silence people when it comes to their religious texts and lead to persecution.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Burton Bailey (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present this petition on behalf of my constituents calling on the government to support Bill C-218. The petitioners write that Canadians with mental illnesses should be provided with treatment and support, that mental illness is complex and can include suicidal thoughts as symptoms, and that the lives of Canadians with mental illnesses will be at risk when they are eligible for medical assistance in dying on the basis of mental illness alone, especially when treatment and support are not readily available.

Therefore, the petitioners call on the House of Commons to support Bill C-218, which would reverse the law extending eligibility for MAID to people with a mental illness as their sole medical condition.

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RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition today on behalf of the residents in my community on Bill C-9 and the proposal by the Liberal and Bloc members of the House to remove long-standing safeguards that protect religious freedom and religious expression, including religious expression based on sacred texts. The petitioners share the desire to combat hate and acts that propagate hate, but note that this proposal would not achieve those goals and would instead subject those who hold sincerely held religious beliefs to criminal prosecution.

Therefore, the petitioners are calling on the government to do two things. The first is to withdraw this proposal entirely, and the second is to promote and protect religious freedom for all Canadians, uphold their right to read, share and teach sacred texts and prevent government overreach into matters of faith.

David Bexte (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of constituents of the riding of Bow River and, in fact, constituents across the country to present a petition from Canadians who are concerned that the Liberal-Bloc amendments to Bill C-9 could be used to criminalize passages from the Bible, the Koran, the Torah and other sacred texts. The state has no place in the religious texts or teachings of a faith community, and freedom of expression and freedom of religion are fundamental rights that must be preserved.

Therefore, the petitioners call on the Government of Canada to protect religious freedom, uphold the right to read and share sacred texts and prevent government overreach into matters of faith.

* * *

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.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

* * *

[Translation]

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

IRAN

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Government Orders

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I sent you a letter this morning at about 8:00 a.m. to request an emergency debate as soon as possible on the major military escalation between the United States and Iran. I realize that the circumstances surrounding the debate have changed since then, but I still wanted to inform you about the urgency of the situation.

The events of the past 10 days are creating an extremely serious situation that demands clarification of the Government of Canada's position on and response to this conflict. It is imperative that Parliament debate the issues involved, including the safety of our troops, the nature of our commitment to our allies, the urgency of ensuring the safety of Quebec and Canadian nationals and the humanitarian crisis that could result from this war.

I was intent on bringing this matter to your attention, as I did at eight o'clock this morning. Of course, I am grateful for the attention you have just paid to our request.

• (1530)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean. I imagine he is now aware that, this morning, the House agreed to hold a take-note debate on this subject, which is obviously an urgent and important one for peace in the world.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUILD CANADA HOMES ACT

The House resumed from February 23 consideration of the motion that Bill C-20, An Act respecting the establishment of Build Canada Homes, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that this is substantial legislation designed and meant to support Canadians in all regions of the nation in regard to housing by working with different levels of government and the many stakeholders out there in an attempt to increase Canada's housing stock and make it more affordable in many different ways.

I wonder if the member opposite would not concede that it is important that the national government play a significant role in this. That is what our new Prime Minister and the government has done by bringing forward Bill C-20.

Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I look at is the record of the Liberals over the course of the last 10 or 10 and a half years. They brought in many pieces of major legislation and many strategies to try to make housing more affordable in this country. They had the national housing strategy and the housing accelerator fund, and now they have Bill C-20, which would add a fourth bureaucracy with Build Canada Homes.

What has happened over the course of their record every time they have added a new piece of legislation or come up with a new

strategy? The cost of housing in this country has doubled. The cost of rent has doubled. At a time when we need to get more shovels in the ground and build more homes, we are actually seeing that pace slow down. Forgive me if we do not want to give credit to the Liberals, because every time they reintroduce new legislation, their record is one of failure.

On this side of the House, we are talking about doing things not legislatively, to add more bureaucracy, but by getting rid of it by taking the GST off all new home builds under \$1.3 million. That is a concrete way we could lower housing prices immediately.

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of promises from the other side, going back years and years. There was a housing accelerator fund, and there were promises of hundreds of thousands of new homes.

I would like to get my colleague's opinion on whether this new promise, dressed up in old trappings, is going to achieve any of the results we hope it will.

Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, if the past is any indication, we are in for higher costs when it comes to housing and rent, and more red tape and bureaucracy when it comes to the system of trying to improve housing in this country. Actually, my colleague and I both served in municipal politics at quite a young age, and this is one of the things the Liberals have broken their promise on. They could have done it in the budget, but they did not. They could have done it in this piece of legislation, and they have not. It is to address the cost of development charges by municipalities in this country. The Liberals promised during the election, as did the Conservatives, that they would cut in half the cost of development charges.

The Liberals are breaking their promise, which is adding tens of thousands of dollars to the cost of housing in many cities. They need to keep their promise and not just add more layers of bureaucracy. That is not going to solve the problem.

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, listening to the debate, as I have been, we would not know it, but there is a quiet but growing anxiety in the country. We can feel it in conversations around the community, with those who work in our offices, with the people one potentially goes to school with, with people on the pickleball court. We hear a pause before a young couple answers the question of when they are buying. We see the construction worker who is constantly checking the listings, the articles about litigation for those who were so close but just could not close on what they bought pre-construction.

The housing market in Canada is not just cooling. It is absolutely cracking for these people, for people who want to get into the housing market.

In Toronto, starts have fallen to 30-year lows. Last month, fewer than 300 homes and fewer than 100 condos sold in the entire city. That is nearly 90% below average, and 75% of people who do not own a home in that city believe they never will own a home.

Think about that. That is now a story in Canada. Three-quarters of people who do not own a home will have already given up on the idea that they will own a home. I repeated that because I want members to let that sink in. This is a country where the dream of home ownership has always been there and should continue to be there.

This is not a market correction. It is not a cycle. It is an entire generation losing faith in what their parents and grandparents, and those who came before them, had in this country. It is in moments like this, in a real crisis, that leadership and action actually matter.

When a person's house is on fire, they do not call the fire department for a literature review on combustion, and that is exactly what we are talking about. It is exactly what the government is doing with yet another piece of legislation on housing. The flames are obvious, the young people are locked out, the renters are squeezed, builders are stalled and jobs are disappearing. Now, imagine that, instead of water, the government arrives with a brand new set of clipboards. It announces a task force on flames. It creates an office of fire awareness. It holds a press conference about historic fire mitigation targets, but the house keeps burning.

For a while it sounded like the Liberals understood the urgency. For a while there was talk of a new government and a new plan. They promised the most ambitious housing plan in nearly a century. They used words like revolutionary, transformative and historic. Those are their words, but what did Canadians actually get? They got Bill C-20, which has nothing of what they said. It is just tinkering around the edges, more of the exact same thinking that got us to this point in the first place.

Do members want to know the headline feature of the bill? It is unbelievable. It is yet another housing bureaucracy, housing bureaucracy number four. What did the first three deliver? They doubled the price of homes. They doubled rent. They doubled mortgage costs, and they sent housing construction into an absolute tailspin. This year, we are supposed to, according to the government's own numbers, build 500,000 new homes just to keep up with demand. This new bureaucracy will add 5,000, which is a rounding error, at the cost of \$13 billion, which is not a rounding error. That is \$13 billion for a government that believes that if one studies a crisis long enough and writes enough reports and makes enough announcements, reality will somehow happen by press release.

Here is the truth. No one can live inside a housing accelerator. That was part of their first plan. No one raises their children in a federal task force. That was their second plan. No one calls bureaucracy home. Builders build homes. Workers build homes. Communities actually build homes. The government's job is to get out of the way rather than stand in it.

If the government is short on ideas, I will be happy to help. In fact, we are going to help it throughout this entire debate, and maybe there will be a bill that could come back to the House that would actually be supportable.

• (1535)

Those who get in the way cannot possibly be rewarded. Incentivize cities to actually build homes, not to do the paperwork. Sell federal land. Empty buildings, so that families can live in them. Cut

Government Orders

the federal GST on new homes for everyone, up to \$1.3 million, to get buyers buying and builders building. I know that they are thinking about that, because the plan they brought forward to cut GST for first-time homebuyers on new homes under \$1 million is not working, and they know that. I invite the Liberals to go back to the drawing board. I do not really care how they do it. They just need to do it. It is not rocket science.

Clinging to ideology is a really powerful blindfold on the other side. The Liberals always just get halfway there. Sometimes we have to wonder if they are comfortable with this being the new reality, where those young people I talked about do not believe they will ever buy a home.

Maybe that is the entire plan. Maybe the plan is to give up on the dream of home ownership and have a permanent class of renters forever. The only problem is that it is not the Canadian promise. It is not how we have lived for generations. It is not how anybody wants to live. The Canadian promise was very, very simple. People work hard, they save, they play by the rules and they build a life. They do not rent that life forever.

The answer to the crisis today is that it was created by too much government interference. Certainly, we are seeing that today, but it cannot be another study or another agency. Every month that they wait with the same plan over and over again, another young person believes that the dream is not for them.

Again, maybe that is the plan. A country where people stop believing they can build a future is a country that is headed in the wrong direction. It is a country that gets hollowed out by the fact that the youngest, smartest people in our society, who really want to attain the dream that was promised to them, end up looking elsewhere.

Unfortunately, the bill that we have in front of us proves that the government still does not understand. Canadians do not need another government program that sounds good in a press release and fails in reality. The bill would not do the very things that the current government itself admitted it needed to do at the beginning of its term. A year later, we are here with yet another announcement of another federal bureaucracy run by another insider.

People need homes. We need supply. They need costs to come down. It is really not that complicated. Builders are telling the government the exact same thing regarding what is required: Get out of the way, cut taxes, cut red tape and let them build. Bill C-20, unfortunately, would do none of that.

Government Orders

Conservatives believe that there is a solution to the housing crisis, but it is not bigger government. It is more homes. Until the government understands that basic fact, Canadians keep paying the price. Over the course of the last 10 years and a year of the pretend new government, with all of the same ministers sitting in the front benches and all of the same people piping in on the same exact policy, we have seen housing prices double, rent double and a payment on a mortgage double, and now we see an absolute stalling of new construction in housing.

The Liberals know the problem. They have admitted the problem. In fact, the fix that they put forward before this piece of legislation was part of the problem. Now, I know they are thinking about announcing a wider GST cut, but we continue to hear about that over and over again, and it never happens. I do not know why they did not put that in this piece of legislation. At least there would be a piece of it that we could support: a full-on GST cut for homes under \$1.3 million for everyone, no matter what. They would have to do a few other things, but we could at least support that measure. Hopefully, the government will revise this legislation to include some of our suggestions on lowering development charges, cutting red tape and lowering the cost of housing, so that young people one day will be able to afford a home in this country.

• (1540)

Caroline Desrochers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really ironic to hear the Conservatives talk about ideology and pretend to defend young Canadians, when they voted against all measures to improve housing affordability for young Canadians. They voted against GST cuts for first-time homebuyers, against expanding mortgage criteria, against first home savings accounts and, most recently, against Bill C-227, which proposed a housing strategy specifically for young Canadians. Just today, the Conservatives are looking down again on home renters, so we know which side they stand for.

The only question I have for my colleague is this: Which Canadians are they standing for?

Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that is the burden she thinks it is. We stand on the side of young people who want to afford a house in this country, and she is part of a government that has doubled housing prices, doubled rent and doubled mortgage payments. The Liberals have sat comfortably here while they have done it. Builders have asked them to lower development charges. Builders have asked them for things they want in order to get housing done, and they have done absolutely none of it, so it is not very hard to say that we are on the side of home ownership in this country.

• (1545)

[Translation]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lestiguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we, too, are concerned about Build Canada Homes. One of our concerns is that it is a large bureaucratic entity that is too far removed from the action and does not provide adequate justification for its decisions. That is what is happening already. In my riding, proponents of a housing project received a letter saying that their proposal was rejected because the program is

so competitive. How would my colleague improve Build Canada Homes, if it can be improved?

[English]

Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, in terms of what would improve the organization, there is no question that the federal government has a role to play in housing, but the role is not one of an organization or role that picks winners and losers in a market. It is one that does not distort market conditions to allow these things to be built. It is one where GST can be taken off new homes. It is one where we can incentivize municipalities based on their approval of building permits or their lowering of development charges, whether we would grant them federal infrastructure dollars or not.

This is the government's role in all of this. There is plenty we can do, but an additional bureaucracy will not do any of that. In fact, it will result in more of the exact same that we have seen over the last 10 years.

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it always astounds me when members stand up in the House and have absolutely no clue about what they are talking about on the ground. The member opposite talked about past housing projects. Through the housing accelerator fund, \$93.5 million went to the City of Hamilton. That was used to build nearly 3,000 additional homes and housing units and for building growth-related infrastructure. In terms of CMHC funding, nearly \$200 million went to CityHousing Hamilton and affordable housing projects in the City of Hamilton. Before members stand up and speak nonsense, they should know the facts.

Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, it is nice that the member is actually allowed to get up outside of question period. He is not yelling from the peanut gallery.

This program is supposed to deliver 500,000 homes. It is going to deliver 5,000. It has delivered about five so far.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, as I look at the creation of Build Canada Homes, I am particularly interested in the fact that the government moved fast and used something rarely used, called a special operating agency, which is under Treasury Board rules.

I wonder if the lack of transparency involved in that troubles the member for Thornhill.

Government Orders

Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite raises an interesting point. There are a lot of these shadow bureaucracies being set up right outside of the bureaucracy, which has grown, by the way, in a disproportionate way. The member opposite should be interested to know that the government is actually looking to set up another \$1.5-billion office to buy excess condo stock off the market. The Liberals have not told anybody about it, but that is certainly what they are dealing with here. This is yet another program outside of what is being delivered in what is going to be Build Canada Homes, unless they change it and they can get the votes in the House to support it.

[*Translation*]

Caroline Desrochers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

I am very proud to have this opportunity to talk about Bill C-20, the Build Canada Homes act, and why Build Canada Homes plays an important role in supporting the Canadian economy and the federal government's buy Canadian policy.

Launched in September 2025, Build Canada Homes is a special operating agency that, thanks to its fast and effective work, has already undertaken major projects to provide more affordable housing to Canadians. As a Crown corporation, Build Canada Homes will have the flexibility and operational autonomy to fulfill its mandate and clear lines of accountability to the government. This is why the Build Canada Homes act is a decisive piece of legislation.

The Government of Canada must strengthen its ability to respond to the housing crisis, increase housing supply and accelerate innovation in residential construction. Too many Canadians are still struggling to find affordable housing. The mission of Build Canada Homes is to fast-track the construction of affordable housing. Housing costs are going up and supply is not keeping up with demand. By consolidating functions that were once spread out across multiple departments, agencies and programs, we will strengthen the government's ability to deliver real results. We know that our opposition colleagues hate it when we deliver real results, but we are going to do it anyway. Traditional approaches to construction and financing are no longer enough on their own to deliver the fast, large-scale results that Canadians need. Build Canada Homes will be a developer, a funder, a unifying force and a catalyst for innovation in the housing sector. Canadians need more homes, and the build Canada homes act will help us build faster and more efficiently at scale.

I would now like to talk a bit about the economic situation and how Build Canada Homes fits into the current economic climate across the country. Recently, the global economy experienced a change that upended the traditional world order. Canada can no longer count on its biggest trade relationship. In light of this, we have to strengthen our capacity here in Canada. We are building stronger relationships with all levels of government, be they municipal, territorial or provincial, and with our indigenous partners. We are making strategic investments to build a stronger, more sustainable and more resilient economy. We are working to cut red tape, remove internal trade barriers and pursue new agreements to stimulate local economies.

In these uncertain times, the Government of Canada is taking decisive action now to transform our nation and to make it more resilient, moving it from reliance to resilience. The goal is to make Canada one of the fastest-growing and most competitive economies in the world, ushering in a new era of economic security and prosperity for Canadians. The Government of Canada is achieving this by building on the strength of our industries and implementing measures like Build Canada Homes and the buy Canadian policy in order to invest in the future and grow our economy.

As a Crown corporation, Build Canada Homes will be funded through the initial \$13-billion envelope announced in the 2025 budget. Build Canada Homes is not a program. It is an investment agency that may seek other investment and gather other financial institutions around the table. Build Canada Homes was created to centralize federal support for affordable housing, in coordination with the other departments and agencies. It is going to move swiftly, use federal lands, support innovative building approaches and establish partnerships in all sectors to build more homes.

Build Canada Homes is a key part of Canada's new industrial strategy, and it will contribute to a more productive residential construction sector. Build Canada Homes will boost the housing industry through the construction of thousands of new homes. As more homes are built, we will ensure the growth, training and support for Canada's skilled workforce while creating good-paying jobs. In addition to building new homes, we will support the delivery of critical housing infrastructure, including water and waste water systems. Build Canada Homes will prioritize projects that use Canadian-made materials, such as mass timber, softwood lumber, steel and aluminum.

● (1550)

It will promote modern construction methods such as modular and prefabricated housing to reduce construction times, material waste and environmental impact.

The federal government is leveraging the key relationships it has with private developers, businesses, community organizations and non-profits, and with other government and indigenous partners. By working together, we are creating job opportunities here at home and supporting the Canadian workforce. We are doing all this by building housing more efficiently and to benefit everyone: builders, developers, investors, buyers and workers.

Government Orders

In December 2025, we launched the buy Canadian policy, which was created to protect and prioritize Canadian industries and workers and to strengthen Canada's economy. The policy ensures that the federal government prioritizes Canadian suppliers and local content in its procurement processes. This approach applies to all federal funding sources and Crown corporations. The buy Canadian policy also provides a road map for provinces and municipalities to implement similar standards in their own procurement processes.

We have a big challenge ahead of us, and we need to tackle it on all fronts. These changes to the procurement rules will create a strong Canadian supply chain and help Canadian industries be more self-reliant and resilient in the face of fluctuations in the global economy. This policy supports Canada's construction and defence industries and applies to projects such as buildings, bridges and much more. It requires major federal construction and defence procurement projects to use Canadian-made steel, aluminum and wood.

The policy will also protect Canada's industry from global trade disruptions and foreign tariffs. Our aim is to build and strengthen our country while creating good-paying jobs and supporting major Canadian industries, such as steel, aluminum, critical minerals and softwood lumber. With the new buy Canadian policy, we are making the government a force for nation building. We are becoming our own best customer. We are protecting Canadian businesses and giving workers access to good-paying jobs that strengthen Canada's prosperity.

In conclusion, the Government of Canada is introducing legislation like the build Canada homes act to strengthen our capacity here at home. We are investing in Canadian industries and creating good jobs for young people, the jobs of tomorrow. Build Canada Homes is part of the federal government's strategic efforts to invest in our country, protect Canadian interests and make our economy one of the strongest in the G7.

By making Build Canada Homes a Crown corporation, the government will be in a better position to ensure that Canadians have access to affordable housing. Across the country, we want to build more housing quickly and efficiently using Canadian materials, Canadian labour and Canadian businesses. We want to build housing so all Canadians have a home that fits their budget and needs.

The build Canada homes act will give the federal government a bigger positive influence over Canada's housing system. Together, the investments made by Build Canada Homes, in collaboration with key partners, will help strengthen our economy and create lasting economic benefits for communities across the country.

• (1555)

[English]

Burton Bailey (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite speaks highly about the bill, but let us be honest, it is more bureaucracy: paying tax dollars to a bloated board of directors, all appointed by the government.

How does the member justify adding this layer of bureaucracy when Canadians are crying out for more actual homes, not more Liberal insiders with big salaries?

[Translation]

Caroline Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, the housing crisis is real, and we have to deal with it. We really need to think outside the box. We need to try something different. Clearly, what has been done so far has not worked.

Some very good projects have been launched since 2017 under Canada's national housing strategy. Hundreds of homes have been built. Now we have to tackle the issue of affordability. That is what we are doing through Build Canada Homes. The mission of Build Canada Homes is to deliver affordable housing.

What the members opposite are proposing is to help a different class, a different type. We also want to talk about access to home ownership. Access to home ownership is important, but we need to build more affordable homes.

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her co-operation during our work together on housing projects in my riding, in the Gaspé and on the Magdalen Islands.

I would like to ask her a question, because I think she has a good grasp of regional realities.

At the moment, construction costs are often 30% higher in the regions, but the funds provided by governments to build affordable housing make no allowance for this disparity. As a result, the same housing in the Gaspé has to cost 30% less to offset the additional costs.

What does my colleague think Build Canada Homes would have to do to ensure that regional realities will be taken into account?

• (1600)

Caroline Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, my colleague raises an important issue. We must ensure that Build Canada Homes also responds to the realities of rural regions and remote communities. This is extremely important to me, and I often bring it up in conversations.

Right now, Build Canada Homes is exploring options to better support small municipalities, rural areas and remote communities in order to ensure that they have access to the program and that Build Canada Homes fully understands the realities of rural communities. We are continuing our efforts.

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could just reflect on how important the issue has been for the government, which is the primary reason for bringing this legislation forward.

In contrast to the Conservatives, we believe that the national government does play a strong leadership role in making housing more affordable in Canada and in working with our partners.

[Translation]

Caroline Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, Build Canada Homes has been established very quickly. Very little time passed between when we made that commitment during the election campaign and when Build Canada Homes was launched in September. In addition, shovels will be in the ground soon. The process happened exceptionally fast because we know that there is a real crisis. We absolutely must propose concrete solutions, not just unequivocal, across-the-board tax cuts. That is no way to run serious programs.

By making Build Canada Homes a Crown corporation, we will get all the tools we need, all the mechanisms we need to build more housing, to bring more financial partners to the table and to create innovative partnerships. That is what we are doing.

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will ask a very quick question. Housing is under Quebec's jurisdiction. Why is the government still trying to centralize it? It slows the process down, and the Government of Quebec, provincial governments and local governments know more about what their people need.

Caroline Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, I would encourage my colleague to have that conversation with the Government of Quebec, which is very enthusiastic about the agreement we signed. Our collaboration with the Government of Quebec has been going very well since the agreement was signed on January 21. We have already met several times to discuss working together, and some projects are close to being approved.

I encourage the member to discuss this with the Government of Quebec, which is happy with the agreement.

[English]

Hon. Rebecca Chartrand (Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support Bill C-20, not only as the Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs, but also as a first nations woman and the first to have this portfolio.

However, this is not about me; it is about the communities of the north that really need to be the problem-solvers of the issues they are dealing with on a day-to-day basis, including housing. It is also about the communities I come from, Churchill—Keewatinook Aski. When we think about the generations of northern and indigenous women who have carried their families, languages, nations and communities through hardships and hope and we think about this moment, there is real meaning and opportunity in this bill.

When we think about a house, it is more than four walls and a roof; it is the backbone of health, safety, opportunity and identity.

Government Orders

When families sleep at night, sometimes they are concerned about overcrowding. This can be exhausting when elders do not have a place to consider home as they are aging. They want to age on the lands that raised them. They want to see that children have space to study and dream and that communities can thrive. In the north and the Arctic, people have waited far too long for basic conditions most of us in the south take for granted.

When we think about moving forward from an Inuit Nunangat perspective, more than half of Inuit live in crowded housing, and in Nunavut the rate is even higher. The realities of building in the north are unlike anywhere else in Canada. There are high construction, operation and maintenance costs; short building seasons; and supply chains that rely on sealift, winter roads and air. When timing slips in the north, it is not just a minor inconvenience; it can push a project into the next season and the cost increases significantly. The delays that this puts on families are exhausting.

This is why the Build Canada Homes act matters. This legislation would transform Build Canada Homes into a Crown corporation, which would give it the independence and tools to build more homes faster and more efficiently. The bill would strengthen federal capacity to partner with northern indigenous communities, which can build faster and at scale.

We want to ensure that we use public land more effectively and use modern construction methods that fit northern realities. Build Canada Homes would help scale off-site and modular construction, which are approaches that can improve speed and predictability when weather and short seasons make on-site building difficult. It would also help bundle projects so that smaller and remote communities are not left behind. It would back Canadian lumber, Canadian steel and Canadian workers; strengthen domestic supply chains; create good jobs; and build more of what we need here at home and in the north.

We are not starting from zero. Since launching in September 2025, Build Canada Homes has already advanced six direct-build projects and secured partnerships representing more than 7,500 homes.

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Last month, Canada, Nunavut and NTI signed an agreement in principle to deliver 750 new homes across the territory, including public, affordable and supportive housing. Importantly for Nunavut's short season, a portion will use factory-built components to reduce delays and deliver homes more predictably, and 25 of those homes will be delivered through an Inuit-led model, reflecting the Inuit Nunangat policy and the right of Inuit to design and deliver housing solutions that work for them and their communities.

That is the kind of partnership this bill would make possible. It is practical, community-led and rooted in indigenous leadership and northern realities. It is the kind of partnership the House should be proud of.

This bill also supports the government's broader housing agenda, which is grounded in partnership with first nations, Inuit and Métis partners, so that housing reflects indigenous priorities and builds long-term capacity.

As Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs, I see housing as foundational to everything else, including health, education, economic participation and community well-being. I also see it as a connection to sovereignty. Arctic sovereignty is not only about maps. It is about people: whether families can choose to stay where they grew up, workers can live where opportunities are and communities can thrive on lands for generations yet to come.

• (1605)

The bill is an opportunity to match urgency with capacity and to replace delay with delivery. I urge all members of this House to support the bill. The north has waited far too long. With the legislation, we could help build a future where northern and indigenous families are no longer waiting for housing, but they are helping to shape it, they are building it and they are finally calling it home.

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague provided her perspective as a member of the Inuit from northern Canada. I thank her for that, but I wonder how she is not angry. How is she not seething mad that under the present government, conditions have become so bad in Canada's north? The Auditor General, several years ago, concluded the same. Nunavut's own housing agency cannot keep up with it. In fact, the wait-lists for those seeking public housing in Nunavut have increased under the government and only continue to increase.

How can the minister support this? How can she support a government that is failing so miserably for her own people?

Hon. Rebecca Chartrand: Mr. Speaker, as I said, housing in the north is a priority for the new government. In fact, through Build Canada Homes, as I mentioned earlier, we have signed an agreement, in principle, with Nunavut and Inuit partners to deliver 750 homes, which will be Inuit-led, delivered and built, including units delivered and managed by NTI. When we think about factory-built modular construction, that will also provide the opportunity to speed up timelines and create northern jobs, so those are also added value.

[Translation]

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have seen situations where the federal government decided to implement programs that are none of its business, that fall under the jurisdic-

tion of Quebec and the provinces. The federal government's task is simply to transfer the funds. However, the Liberals always want to add conditions. In the latest situation involving housing, it took nearly a year and a half before an agreement was finally reached. As a result, Quebec's share of the money to help municipalities with housing was no longer available.

We are seeing something similar here. Build Canada Homes is a beast of a thing that risks further complicating the principle, bogging down the system and making things even more complex for Quebec municipalities.

I would like to know whether my colleague, on behalf of her government, can commit to ensuring that Quebec's share will still be there at the end of the negotiations. That way, we will be able to move forward with the projects that are priorities for Quebec and its municipalities.

• (1610)

[English]

Hon. Rebecca Chartrand: Mr. Speaker, when we think about the investments that we are making, we are looking all across Canada. We are not focusing on any one region. We think about the work that we have done already, and we have tripled the Canada Infrastructure Bank for indigenous investments. We look at northern Quebec and northern Labrador, for example, and we have increased investment to \$3 billion, because we are treating housing as critical infrastructure that will strengthen communities for generations.

We are also looking at skilled trades apprenticeship. We are looking at training-while-building models. We are looking at certification pathways, and this applies to Canadians across Canada, including Quebec.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech quite intently, and I want to thank her for her hard work, because we certainly know that a lot of work has been done.

As opposed to what the member opposite said, the government certainly has prioritized housing for the north. During the speech, she also indicated that Build Canada Homes has established and elaborated some partnerships with people in the north. It is my understanding the partnerships are to ensure that the housing is built for the people and by the people. I am just wondering if the minister could elaborate on those partnerships.

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Hon. Rebecca Chartrand: Mr. Speaker, recently we have made some announcements, including one that I made in the Yukon on February 19, for an investment of \$2.3 million. This is going to support First Kaska construction. It will ensure that this company has new equipment to upgrade manufacturing facilities. We are also investing in NGC Builders, where we will see new fabrication facilities. We are also investing in RAB Energy. This is a northern windows and doors company. It is indigenous-owned and indigenous-led. We will see the expansion of commercial aluminum operations to support northern builds. The impact here is that we are seeing support for northern and indigenous businesses like never before, because we have always taken a southern approach. This time we are ensuring that we are taking a northern approach as well.

Roman Baber (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the same recycled housing approach that the Liberals have had for the last decade, but I have a very serious and concrete question for the member. We already have the ministry of housing. We already have Canada Lands. We already have CMHC. Why do the Liberals require a fourth bureaucracy to not build homes?

Hon. Rebecca Chartrand: Mr. Speaker, the Crown corporation is listening to northern and indigenous peoples. The Crown corporation the member mentioned is going to ensure we are working with partners in the north and that they are also the problem-solvers of the issues they are dealing with.

Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC): I will be splitting my time, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to speak not just about a bill but about a generation that did everything right. They studied hard, they worked hard, they saved diligently and they followed the rules, and yet they cannot afford a home in the country they love and the Canada they call home.

Today we are debating the Liberals' so-called Build Canada Homes act. The Liberals are calling it bold, transformational and generational, but for the young couple staring at listings they can never afford, for the new immigrant family working two jobs and still renting a one-bedroom apartment and for the tradesperson who builds homes all day but cannot buy one at night, this Liberal bill feels less like hope and more like déjà vu of the years under the last Liberal prime minister. When we strip away the Liberal rhetoric, what do we find? It is another Liberal announcement, another Liberal acronym, another Liberal bureaucracy, another federal agency staffed by highly paid Liberal-connected Ottawa bureaucrats and another Liberal promise without a target. However, one thing is clear. The Liberals are not interested in building homes. They are simply building roadblocks and a backlog while crushing the hope of an entire generation.

In my own community, I meet young professionals, software developers, engineers and accountants, who quietly pull me aside at events and say they have given up, not because they are lazy or lack ambition, but because, even with good incomes and savings, the math simply does not work. One young couple told me that they had saved for 10 years, 10 years of discipline and counting the pennies on two full-time incomes. All they want is a modest townhouse to start a family, but they are completely priced out. They tell me they have given up on having kids and starting a family because of

the housing crisis the Liberal government started. Others tell me they are moving back in their parents' basement because they want to at least have some money left at the end of the month after paying rent so they can afford food and basic necessities.

This is what the Liberal housing crisis has done. It has normalized suffering and despair. What does the latest "Housing Market Outlook" from the government's own housing agency, CMHC, tell us? It tells us that things are not improving. As a matter of fact, they are getting even worse, believe it or not. CMHC says Canada needs between 430,000 and 480,000 housing starts per year for the next decade just to restore affordability and meet projected demand. What did the Liberals get built last year? It was a meagre 259,028 homes. By 2028, housing starts are projected to fall as low as 212,000 per year. That is a staggering 18% drop and 55% below what CMHC says is necessary.

The Prime Minister promised 500,000 homes per year. He said we needed to build at a pace not seen since the Second World War. Instead, we are building at half the pace he promised, and headed even lower. In Toronto, housing starts were down 31% compared to the previous year. In other major Ontario cities, they were down 13%. In January, in the entire greater Toronto area, only 269 new homes were sold. That is down 36% from last year. It is 80% below the 10-year average, making it the lowest level since the early 1990s. That is not a slowdown. It is a Liberal paralysis. Buyers cannot buy, builders cannot build and sellers cannot sell, and the Liberals' answer is to create a fourth federal housing bureaucracy under the so-called Build Canada Homes act.

The Liberals do not want to build homes. Instead, they are obstructing builders with red tape, choking the market with taxes and shattering the dreams of young buyers. Even when the homes eventually get built under the Liberal bureaucracy, the government's own parliamentary budget watchdog, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the PBO, found that the Liberal bureaucracy will add just 5,000 homes a year. That is 1% of the 500,000 homes the Liberals promise. The Liberal housing minister himself admitted there are no top-line targets set for the number of homes to build. Really, no top-line targets? Imagine telling a 35-year-old, who feels like time is slipping away, that the government has no concrete goal.

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The only thing bold about the government is the speed of its failure, and the transformation Canadians are witnessing is the transformation of hope into shattered dreams. This made-by-Liberal crisis is visible in every metric. CMHC itself says many households will delay buying homes and choose to rent longer as prices continue to rise over the next three years. Let us think about that. The government's own housing agency is effectively saying young Canadians have to wait longer, but pay more. For renters, the story is just as painful. Average two-bedroom rents rose another 5% last year after more than doubling under the last Liberal prime minister. In the GTA, someone earning an average income must spend 42% of their after-tax income just to afford a one-bedroom apartment and it is two-thirds of a minimum-wage paycheque just to rent a studio.

Canadians are suffocating in the Liberal housing hell. A report showed that more than half of first-time homebuyers who intend to purchase in the next five years believe home ownership is completely out of reach. We wonder why young Canadians are delaying marriage, delaying having children and moving back home. Many are leaving their communities and the country entirely.

• (1615)

We also need to be honest about what caused the Liberal housing crisis. Over the last decade, municipal development charges have increased by 700%. In Toronto, buyers now pay over \$130,000 per apartment just in municipal taxes, and nearly \$98,000 per condo in Mississauga. For single-family homes, Toronto and Markham charged over \$180,000 per home, and \$135,000 in Mississauga. Those are taxes before we even pour the foundation or lay a brick.

The Liberals promised during the election to cut these development charges by 50%, and as we can expect, they have broken that promise. Instead, they sent hundreds of millions of dollars to cities without strings attached, including nearly \$400 million to Metro Vancouver, even as some regions now plan to triple development charges from 2024 levels. Developers warn that this will add tens of thousands of dollars to the price of a unit and slow down construction even further. Liberals are spending taxpayer money but delivering opposite results.

At the same time, the Liberal industrial carbon tax drives up the cost of cement, steel and glass. There are Liberal taxes on materials, taxes on permits, taxes on land and Liberal taxes on investment and reinvestment. Then, the Liberals think introducing a new federal agency will somehow solve the shortage those taxes and red tape helped create. When a country run by the Liberals makes it harder to build a home, it should not be a surprise when it becomes harder for Canadians to build a life.

It already takes the federal government nine years to dispose of surplus property, yet now the Liberals are considering acquiring private land, even as they cannot effectively build on the land they already own. The PBO found that under the Liberals' own affordability formula, a two-bedroom unit would cost \$2,168 per month for the median household, which is nearly double the \$1,100 national median market rent. Even their so-called affordable Liberal-made housing stretches affordability beyond reason and reality.

After 10 years of Liberal strategies, funds, accelerators and announcements, the Liberal housing crisis has become a Liberal hous-

ing catastrophe. Between 2011 and 2021, home ownership among young Canadians aged 30 to 34 fell from 60% to 52%. The decline is even steeper for younger cohorts. From 2019 to 2024, for every 100-person increase in the adult population, there were only 12 housing starts intended for home ownership, less than half the rate in earlier decades. Canadians see what is happening. A staggering 87% say they are concerned about the state of housing today, including 90% of gen Z and millennials.

The Liberal housing crisis is reshaping our communities, with 69% of Canadians saying that affordability is changing who can live in their neighbourhoods, and nearly half of young Canadians have considered leaving their city or province because housing costs are simply too high. This is not a market imbalance. It is a generational warning sign. Imagine doing everything right in life but not being able to build a life. That is what the Liberal government has done to the psychology of an entire generation.

Conservatives have sounded the alarm on the lack of housing supply for years. The Liberals have finally admitted that there is a problem, but they have not yet admitted that they are the problem. It has gotten so bad that 38% of builders report that they or their subcontractors have had to lay off workers because of market conditions. In 2020, 69% of housing starts were intended for the ownership market, with 31% for primary rentals. By 2025, five years later, the share for ownership had dropped to just 49%, a dramatic shift away from homes that families can actually buy.

Even more troubling is that 86% of builders now express concern about their business surviving the next 12 months, and 27% are extremely concerned, up sharply from 16% in late 2023. When the very people who build our homes are laying off workers and fearing for their survival, it is clear that this housing crisis is not just hurting buyers but is also crippling our workers and the economy as well.

Canadians do not need another Ottawa-based housing czar spewing Liberal rhetoric and propaganda. They need results and hope. That is why Conservatives have put forward a real plan. We will cut the GST on all new homes under \$1.3 million, saving families up to \$65,000 and unleashing new construction. We will tie federal infrastructure dollars to housing approvals. Municipalities must permit at least 15% more housing each year, and we will cut development charges by 50%. Finally, we will end capital gains tax on reinvestment in new housing to unlock billions in private investment.

Young Canadians are not asking for another agency. They are asking for a chance: a chance to save, a chance to buy and a chance to build a life. The Canadian promise used to mean something simple: Work hard, and one day one can own a home. Under the Liberals, that promise has been broken.

Let us stop building bureaucracy and start building homes. Let builders build so young Canadians can finally build a life. Hope has not faded for Canadians yet. It is just waiting to be rebuilt.

* * *

● (1620)

PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-9

NOTICE OF CLOSURE MOTION

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to consideration of Government Business No. 6, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the House, a minister of the Crown shall move, pursuant to Standing Order 57, that debate be not further adjourned.

* * *

BUILD CANADA HOMES ACT

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

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a contrast, if I may, to when the leader of the Conservative Party was the minister responsible for housing. He will likely go down in Canadian history as the worst minister for housing. He contributed to six homes being constructed.

Having said that, we have seen, within a year, significant progress in terms of affordable housing. We have seen stakeholders of all forms actually get on board and support the government. The only ones who seem to not recognize the value of this legislation in particular are members of the Conservative Party. Why is that?

Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find that kind of rich coming from the Liberal member. When the Leader of the Opposition was the housing minister, rent for a one-bedroom apartment was only \$900. That is less than half of what it is today. As well, the average home price was \$450,000, much lower than it is today, after the 11 years of Liberal housing hell that the Liberal government has created.

Let us talk about building homes. The Liberal Prime Minister, just like the previous Liberal prime minister, making promises he

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cannot deliver, promised he would build at a pace not seen in generations. He is going to build 500,000 new homes. Guess what. He has built only 5,000. His own agency says he has built only 5,000. That is less than 1%.

Do members know who is even more out of touch? It is the Liberal Prime Minister, who has told young Canadians they need to make some sacrifices, they need to become content with less and they need to lower their expectations.

● (1625)

[Translation]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we generally agree that the problem stems from a bureaucratic structure and that it will delay housing construction. The Bloc Québécois believes that the federal government should stay in its lane and stick to transferring money to Quebec and the provinces with no strings attached.

What does my colleague think about that?

[English]

Vincent Ho: Mr. Speaker, we have a Liberal Prime Minister who is so out of touch with Canadians, especially young Canadians, that he has told them to make more sacrifices, that they need to be content with less and to lower their expectations. Young Canadians are expecting a leader who will restore hope, not crush it. That has become the psychology of an entire generation, that they are losing hope.

The stats do not lie. Most young Canadians, 93% of gen Z and millennials, believe they need to move out of the area they grew up in because they do not believe they can ever afford a home. That is what the Liberal Prime Minister is doing.

It is time for Canada to restore hope and have a leader who will restore hope for young Canadians, not crush it.

Steven Bonk (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was just wondering if my colleague could maybe reflect a little bit on what he said in this speech: that a big portion of the cost of a new home for young Canadians is for permitting and bureaucracy. Could he explain to us how the Liberals think that adding another layer of bureaucracy will make housing cheaper for Canadians?

Vincent Ho: Mr. Speaker, that was a great question. Just to reiterate, in Toronto, buyers now pay over \$130,000 per apartment in municipal taxes, and nearly \$98,000 per condo in Mississauga. For single-family homes, it is up to \$180,000 in Toronto and Markham, and in Mississauga, it is \$135,000.

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Canadians do not need a fourth Liberal bureaucracy. What the Liberal government is doing is laying the foundation for a new bureaucracy, not laying the foundation for new homes. All it has managed to build is new office space for its new highly paid, Liberal-connected bureaucrats and another Liberal bureaucracy.

What Canadians need are homes, not more Liberal press releases.

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member say that the Conservatives would cut the HST off all new homes, cut development charges and give tax breaks, 35% of the cost of new housing being government fees.

It is easy to make those kinds of comments from the opposition benches when you have no plan, but how would you actually pay for that?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I remind members to address their comments through the Chair.

The hon. member for Richmond Hill South.

Vincent Ho: Mr. Speaker, we would pay for it by not having a fourth Liberal bureaucracy.

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the kids are not all right. I believe that idiom originates from an older song, perhaps known by some of our older members, by a good rock band from the 1960s, The Who. It said, “the kids are alright”.

Over time, those lyrics were inverted, and they are as relevant today and as pointed today as they were when they were inverted. The kids are simply not all right when it comes to housing. That culminated in the lyrics of a rock band of my youth, The Offspring. I know that the Speaker is probably young enough to know The Offspring. They had a song, *The Kids Aren't Alright*. Part of the lyrics really hit me for this presentation on housing. The song says:

When we were young, the future was so bright...
The old neighborhood was so alive...

Now the neighborhood's cracked and torn...
The kids are grown up, but their lives are worn

That is true today. The next generation has grown up. Millennials are growing up. Gen Z is growing up, and they are worn out. They are tired. They have been working, but they cannot get ahead no matter how much they save, how much they scratch or how much they plan. They cannot get into the housing market. After 10 years of being priced out of the market, they are worn out, and we see it today.

The speakers on this side of the House have been millennials, constantly pushing the message of housing. I do not hear any of the younger members on the other side speaking in this debate. To me, their silence is telling.

Let me take us through some of the brass tacks in my part of the country, Durham Region, to show what has happened to housing and to incomes over the last 10 years. In January 2015, just shortly before the government was first elected, a single-family home in my region of Durham was \$399,000. The most expensive was

about \$448,000. Just five years later, prepandemic, in January 2020, a single-family home in Durham Region was \$631,000.

Fast-forward to today, January 2026, and a single-family home in Durham Region is almost \$900,000. In 10 years, the price of a single-family home, a starter home, an average home, has more than doubled in my region.

Let us look at what happened to incomes at the same time. According to the 2016 census, with 2015 numbers, the median after-tax household income in my region of Durham was \$77,000. Five years later, in the next census, after-tax household income was \$93,000. My math is not so good sometimes, but that is not a doubling of after-tax income.

Let us look at what that means for the household price-to-income ratio. This is an important metric that I use when I am talking to people, to explain the difference that young people are facing today. I often hear, when we talk about housing, the response that we had a hard time too, that we had to save money and that we endured high interest rates. I am not taking away from that. My parents endured that too, as did others before them, but it is simply different. It is not apples to apples.

Here is the proof. In 2015, the price-to-income ratio in Durham Region was just about five times income. By 2020, it was 6.7 times income. As of 2026, it is nearly 10 times after-tax income, 10 times what one makes in a year, to qualify for an average home. That trend, in my neck of the woods in Toronto, is very on the mark for Toronto more generally, where, many studies have noted, the average price-to-income ratio is about 10 to 11 times income.

I have two more statistics to put this into perspective. First, mortgage payments as a percentage of income shows us how expensive mortgages have become. It shows how much of someone's paycheck their mortgage payment is eating up. According to the National Bank's housing affordability monitor for the fourth quarter of 2025, the most recent numbers, it is nearly 70% of income for a mortgage payment in Toronto. CMHC says that an affordable house is 30% of one's income in payments toward housing, so we are at more than double what the government's own housing agency says is appropriate.

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• (1630)

The second statistic is that the average household income needed to afford a representative home in the Toronto area is now \$253,000. That is according to the most recent numbers in the National Bank of Canada's housing affordability monitor for Q4 of 2025. If one earns \$253,000, that puts them among the highest earners in the country. Most Canadians do not earn that much, which means most Canadians in Toronto cannot afford the representative house. I repeat that the kids are not all right.

Let me give members more statistics to prove my point that the housing crisis is hitting young Canadians the hardest. The lack of affordable housing in Canada is causing Canadians, particularly young Canadians, to feel less free and less happy. That is not just my argument. I have some numbers here.

The world happiness report, which is a joint report of Oxford University and the United Nations sustainable development office, reports on the happiness measures of countries. I will let members decide if this is correlation or causation with respect to the Liberals and our declining happiness. I know where I stand on the issue. In the 10 years of the Liberals being in power, Canada has fallen from fifth place, the fifth most happy nation in the world, to 15th place. That is a pretty poor result in and of itself, but the results are even more dismal for young Canadians. This is where it gets really bad. For those below the age of 30, we rank 58th out of 134 countries. The only countries that scored worse than us in this last rating were Jordan, Venezuela, Lebanon and Afghanistan.

I do not know about other members, but that is not a bunch of countries I want to be ranked with when it comes to happiness. That means increasing proportions of the population of young Canadians are feeling hopeless about their futures and are lacking a sense of connection with their community. It is a concerning trend for future population health and our economy. There are significant studies that correlate happiness with productivity, growth and wealth. We are seeing a divergence in the next generation, who are increasingly feeling despondent, despairing and out of luck when it comes to housing.

How does Bill C-20 fit in? It is the “building no more homes in Canada” act because it is not going to build any more homes, but it will build another Crown corporation. There is nothing particularly unique about the structure of the bill. It is quite a short bill. I have seen it many times before, in fact, to create Crown corporations. One question I have for the government is this: If we want to move at speeds not seen since the Second World War, why did it take nearly a year to introduce Bill C-20? If this was the most important thing, as the government says, why are we only debating this piece of legislation now?

Let us consider what has been accomplished in that year. The new CEO of Build Canada Homes was here in Parliament giving testimony. She said that nine homes have been constructed and are move-in ready. The Parliamentary Budget Officer looked at Build Canada Homes and said that it might build 5,200 homes a year. Lastly, the minister—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Jacob Mantle: Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North can laugh. I will give him another number that is not so funny. It is, in fact, sad.

The minister, in his own speech when introducing the bill, said that he maybe had agreements for 9,000 homes this year. I will remind the member for Winnipeg North what the target was. It was 500,000 new homes a year, so is the target nine, 5,200 or even, at best, 9,000? I would laugh if it were not so sad for the next generation.

Build Canada Homes does not address any of the root issues. We have a permitting and permission issue in Canada. Bill C-20 does not speed up or incentivize permitting. In fact, among the OECD, Canada ranks second to dead last in permitting approvals; it is 29 out of 30. Housing starts are projected to decline every year until 2028. Therefore, the target has been raised, but the numbers are going to decline.

A previous prime minister said that we are going to “move faster in building supply, issuing permits and developing low-income and middle-class housing, creating the supply that is so needed to take the pressure off families and communities.” That was in 2021. It sounds a lot like the Prime Minister today. Where is that promise now? Is it with so many Liberal promises, on the trash heap of history?

The next generation should have the same opportunities as the generations before them had to earn, work hard, save and buy a home.

• (1635)

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite quoted some lyrics from The Offspring, which I really appreciated. It is also a band from my youth.

I am going to quote some lyrics from another band, a hometown band from Hamilton called the Arkells, and its song about cynical people. It goes:

If you're the kind with nothing to say,
You heard about this party,
But you're praying for rain.

Now, if you want me to boil it down,
All you cynical [people],
Get out of town now.

Will the member opposite take the advice of the Arkells?

Jacob Mantle: Mr. Speaker, I am a positive person. I believe in Canada. I believe in the next generation. I do not think this is a laughing matter. It is a serious matter for the next generation, who struggle day after day, week after week, dreaming of home ownership and having that dream ripped away from them by a Liberal government that is presiding over the worst housing crisis in a generation.

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• (1640)

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does my colleague agree that, instead of creating a large, centralizing structure like this one, the federal government would be better off respecting Quebec's areas of jurisdiction and transferring the money with no strings attached?

[*English*]

Jacob Mantle: Mr. Speaker, the federal government should incentivize municipalities to speed up permitting, cut down red tape and get more shovels in the ground. I think that is the same for Quebec as it is for any province in this country. We need the same rules for everybody.

Steven Bonk (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we know, the Liberal government has failed by every metric when it comes to housing, especially when it comes to young people.

Since my colleague said he is a positive person, and I know him to be one, I was wondering if he could maybe give some hope to young people and explain the Conservative vision of how we can build homes in Canada.

Jacob Mantle: Mr. Speaker, I gladly take that opportunity. The first thing I want to say to the next generation, if they are listening, is that we are on their team. We hear their complaints, their struggle, and we will fight every day in the House to make housing affordable and accessible to them.

Some of the suggestions we have are to remove the GST on all homes, get rid of federal lands that are useless, incentivize municipalities to get shovels in the ground and cut development taxes. All of these things would help increase the supply, build it faster and get it to them so they can experience and realize the dream of home ownership in Canada, which is the right of every Canadian.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask members to imagine, if they will, a new Prime Minister, elected less than a year ago, and thousands and thousands of homes, from non-profit to affordable housing, being built. We have a government, a Prime Minister and a Liberal caucus committed to support and care about, as much as possible, more homes being built at rates we have never witnessed before in Canada.

The Conservative Party's position is to stand back, do nothing and ultimately cross fingers in hopes that homes will be built. My confidence is in a government that understands it has an important role. That is what the Prime Minister and the government have demonstrated.

What gives the member opposite any sense that the Conservative Party has any concept of how to build affordable homes when the member's leader, when he was the minister of housing, was an absolute failure who only had six homes built?

Jacob Mantle: Mr. Speaker, I would have confidence in any government that can show results, but we do not have that. We have the CEO of Build Canada Homes saying that we built nine, the Parliamentary Budget Office saying that maybe we will build 5,200

and the minister himself, in his own speech, saying maybe we will build 9,000.

The government's target is 500,000. That is the Prime Minister's target. I believe politicians should be held to their promises, so when I see 500,000 new homes, then we will have a discussion.

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things we have been pointing out is that the bill is only adding a fourth bureaucracy to the government. I am wondering why the ministry cannot just fund some of these projects on its own. Why does it need a second party to do that? Is it perhaps because the government wants to distance itself from when this operation gives a whole bunch of money to Brookfield?

Jacob Mantle: Mr. Speaker, in short, to answer the member's question, the government does not need this. It had all the tools before it, but instead it has created a new, shiny object to put in the window to distract from its failure.

Also, the government does not even have a target. The Prime Minister says 500,000 new homes and Build Canada Homes says that it actually does not have a target, so who knows what this agency, this new Crown corporation, will achieve. I hope for the best for young Canadians, but I will plan for the worst.

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Sherbrooke.

Housing affordability is one of the defining challenges that Canadians face today. Across this country and in my community of Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, families are really concerned about the cost of housing and whether their children are going to be able to afford a home in their community.

Build Canada Homes is an important step forward in addressing the housing supply crisis across Canada. I want to begin by acknowledging plainly that the cost of housing is far too high. While incomes have been increasing, we are nowhere near the sustainable market that we need where the average income earner can afford an average-priced home. Young Canadians are feeling locked out while renters are feeling squeezed. Parents worry whether their children will be able to live in the communities where they grew up, and seniors cannot afford to downsize in their own community.

My kids are 17 and 19, and as a parent, I think about this often. My children are at the age when they are starting to look towards independence. They are going off to university. They are building a life of their own, just like so many kids in so many families across Hamilton. I want them to have those opportunities to be able to stay in Hamilton, get a job and be able to afford the lifestyle that they deserve. A big part of that is being able to afford a home in their community in Hamilton.

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I do believe Hamilton is a city of tremendous opportunities. We have strong industries, amazing opportunities in the skilled trades and small businesses, access to nature and vibrant communities and neighbourhoods, but those opportunities only exist if housing is affordable and attainable.

Before being elected to this role, I served nearly two terms on Hamilton city council. A significant portion of that was as the chair of Hamilton's planning committee. I also worked as a licensed professional engineer in the construction industry. I have worked on construction sites and navigated the approvals process, so I understand how homes actually get built. I do acknowledge and understand how easily projects can be delayed or be made unviable through permitting and business cases.

Over the past several years, the City of Hamilton has been very proactive and has taken significant steps to enable housing development and construction. The City of Hamilton modernized zoning to allow more as-of-right development, expanded permissions for secondary dwelling units and reduced parking minimums. They set a firm urban boundary and protected the greenbelt from development, and promoted smart, sustainable infill growth throughout the city. I really believe that Hamilton is a leader across Canada when it comes to municipal housing reforms to make sure that the permitting and permissions are in place to get as much housing built as possible.

A really important part of that was the implementation of the City of Hamilton housing secretariat. This created a real housing strategy, with centralized accountability and faster approvals for housing projects across the city. That structure is making a measurable difference.

Hamilton and representatives from all levels of government have been working with the housing development industry to ensure good quality developments are approved for construction as quickly as possible. In fact, the City of Hamilton recently implemented a 20% decrease in citywide development charges, applying to both residential and non-residential development, with the goal of boosting housing construction and promoting jobs during the difficult downturn in the construction market.

The housing secretariat is currently prioritizing over 30 projects within a three-year investment plan that is expected to deliver, at minimum, 2,100 new affordable housing units, of which 511 will be supportive units and 138 attainable, low-income or geared-to-income special markets.

We are hearing from the mayor and council that Hamilton's application through the Build Canada Homes fund will be targeting 4,500 new housing units, leveraging hundreds of millions of dollars in private, institutional and public funding across all levels of government. That is the plan moving forward, which this legislation would help unlock for cities such as Hamilton and municipalities across Canada.

That is what coordinated action looks like to provide more affordable homes, with the federal government taking a leadership role and stepping up to the table with the housing accelerator, agreements, relief for first-time homebuyers and historic investments in housing and housing-enabling infrastructure.

• (1645)

It is important that we also be honest about how we arrived at this moment, and it is not just the opposition's talking points about the last 10 years. Over the last 25 years, Canada has experienced historically low interest rates. Housing increasingly became viewed as not simply shelter but an investment asset. That happened across multiple federal governments, from Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin through Stephen Harper and into recent years. Housing markets evolved in ways that encouraged commodification. Families found themselves bidding against investors, homes sold for hundreds of thousands of dollars over asking, and real estate became tied to global capital flows, which was then accelerated even further with unprecedented inflation during COVID and the resulting increase in the cost of construction.

The current housing affordability crisis was not created in a single year by a single government. It reflects long-term structural pressures. At the same time, many of the core legislative tools that directly shape housing supply and affordability, for both ownership and rental housing, are strictly under provincial jurisdiction. In Ontario, the Planning Act, the Development Charges Act, the Residential Tenancies Act, the Landlord and Tenant Board and the Ontario Heritage Act are all provincial acts and provincial systems.

I also want to talk about supportive housing. When we talk about supportive housing, the wraparound supports that are needed include addiction treatment, mental health treatment and health care services. These are strictly within provincial jurisdiction as they are tied to provincial health care systems.

In Ontario, municipalities are often left carrying significant financial and service delivery responsibilities that have been downloaded from the province. As an example, Ontario Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act, and broader provincial policy decisions downloaded about \$55 million in annual expenditures to the City of Hamilton, which resulted in a 2.4% property tax increase each and every year for every single City of Hamilton property taxpayer. That is not a sustainable system. Costs cannot be continually downloaded onto municipalities.

I am optimistic that new partnerships through Build Canada Homes will come forward with the province of Ontario, and provinces across Canada, but we need all levels of government at the table to be successful, and we need to be working toward solutions that actually work. I know there is a genuine desire across the House to see more affordable housing units built, and that is something that all members share.

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Build Canada Homes reflects that understanding. It is designed to streamline federal funding so that projects move faster. It seeks to scale up modular and prefabricated home construction to improve productivity. It emphasizes energy efficiency and quality, ensuring that the homes we build today are net zero and are reducing costs for families over the long term. Most importantly, it positions federal funding to be proactive, to unlock and leverage private investment, rather than simply react to market cycles.

I want to reflect on the position of the homebuilding industry in municipalities and communities as a major employer. Many of these builders are people I have worked with for years as chair of the planning committee. They provide thousands of jobs in Hamilton and drive billions of dollars in economic activity. Local homebuilders in Hamilton are our partners, and they actively deliver quality housing.

This growth drives the need for roads, transit, water and wastewater infrastructure. New housing construction enables infrastructure, and infrastructure enables more housing. When we build homes, we support thousands of direct and indirect jobs, from the skilled trades and suppliers to manufacturers and small businesses. Hamilton has the workforce and the expertise required to scale growth responsibly and efficiently.

It took nearly a quarter of a century of structural market shifts to create today's affordability challenges. They are not going to be solved overnight. With Build Canada Homes, supported by unprecedented federal housing investments and long-term infrastructure funding, we are aligning federal tools with municipal action, and we are working with provincial partners toward genuine, long-term solutions to housing affordability in Canada.

• (1650)

Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the member opposite acknowledged there is a housing crisis. For 10 years, the Liberals have said everything is fine as costs drive people, particularly young people, out of the market. We know many young people are still living with their parents, unable to find a place to rent, let alone a place to buy, and start their family, but the Liberals are still talking about this issue as if there is nothing they can do about it and they are just bystanders in the process. The solution they are now bringing forward is yet another housing bureaucracy, which has been proven to not work time and time again.

There are tangible things the Liberals can do, like cutting taxes on new homes or stopping their inflationary spending that is driving up the cost of living. Why do they not look at those solutions rather than just creating another housing bureaucracy?

• (1655)

John-Paul Danko: Mr. Speaker, I see the Build Canada Homes Crown corporation as similar to the approach that the City of Hamilton took with its housing secretariat. It would be an oversight agency, to make sure that \$13 billion of funding is flowed through to the areas across the country where it is needed most. On top of that, there is another \$51 billion in infrastructure, which would offset a lot of those costs that are going into development charges, allowing municipalities to further reduce development charges with the goal of a 50% reduction.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will refrain from talking about delays and bureaucracy although I really want to.

However, I want to ask my colleague from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas whether he thinks this is a normal state of affairs. On January 21, 2026, the federal government finally signed an agreement with Quebec. However, this program, the Canada housing infrastructure fund, was actually announced two years earlier, on April 16, 2024. Is it normal for it to take such a long time, especially since the agreement amounts to \$1 billion for Quebec out of the \$6 billion set out in the fund? That represents 16.6% of the envelope, while Quebec has a demographic weight of 22%. Why the discrepancy?

I would be curious to know whether, if the situation were the same with Ontario, my colleague would be clapping his hands and saying that it is a great program and that we need to continue like this.

[*English*]

John-Paul Danko: Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite brings up an interesting point in the fact that we recognize the need to build more homes faster, and the goal was to double the speed of construction across Canada. My experience is that this takes a cultural shift. This needs to have the government get to a point of yes, and that is what Build Canada Homes would do. It would build a way to get those approvals done faster and get to yes, to get those houses built.

Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, being an engineer and formerly the mayor of a small town, I think the more engineers we have in this place, the better off we are going to be.

I would like to have the member's comments on how Build Canada Homes would use prefab housing and modular housing to lower the costs for young families in all of the country.

John-Paul Danko: Mr. Speaker, coincidentally, during the constituency week, I toured a prefab housing factory in my riding that is gearing up for production. People there are really excited about the federal investment in prefabricated housing, because they see it as a way, once those factories are at scale, to produce much-higher-quality housing at a lower production rate versus doing it on site.

Most countries across the world, including in Europe, have gone in that direction. It is a tremendous opportunity not only for businesses and industry but also for homebuyers, at the end of the day.

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Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they are not even hiding it anymore. The previous member was asking about modular homebuilding. It is interesting that Brookfield just acquired a modular homebuilding operation. This is going to be the green slush fund all over again.

Would the member not agree that these big institutional investors in the Canadian housing market may be a big problem?

John-Paul Danko: Mr. Speaker, I find it embarrassing that the members opposite continuously bring up conspiracy theories in the House of Commons, so I am not going to acknowledge the premise of that question. Suffice it to say, we are taking tangible action to build more housing that Canadians need.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today at second reading to Bill C-20, an act respecting the establishment of Build Canada Homes.

The housing crisis is hitting hard across the country. Too many families, too many young people, too many seniors are spending more than 30% of their income on housing. Too many people are priced out of the market. We have a collective responsibility to take ambitious, thorough and creative action.

Bill C-20 is a strategic response. By making Build Canada Homes a Crown corporation, we are giving it operational independence, the ability to take calculated risks and the governance necessary to achieve large-scale results, while remaining fully accountable to Parliament and Canadians.

Backed by an initial investment of \$13 billion announced in the 2025 budget, Build Canada Homes will have the tools it needs to build more housing that is more affordable, more quickly. A clear definition of affordable housing is housing that does not exceed 30% of a household's pre-tax income, based on regional realities.

Beyond the structures and numbers, this bill is first and foremost a partnership project with the provinces and territories. Examples include the agreements reached between Quebec and Nova Scotia; the partnerships with indigenous communities, such as the agreement in principle signed between Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated; and the partnerships with municipalities. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has clearly welcomed this measure. Other examples include the partnerships with non-profit organizations, housing co-ops and private developers that are ready to build.

I would now like to talk about my riding of Sherbrooke. The housing crisis is very real in my community. Vacancy rates remain very low. Families, students and vulnerable people have serious needs.

Then again, Sherbrooke is also a laboratory for innovation. It is a vibrant university town, driven by the Université de Sherbrooke and the Sherbrooke CEGEP, where population growth is accompanied by a remarkable entrepreneurial spirit.

Our developers are not just builders. They are partners in social and economic development. They have been able to think up human-scale projects that are integrated into their neighbourhood, promoting diversity and architectural quality. A number of recent projects in Sherbrooke illustrate that creativity: mixed-income

housing projects, which combine market-priced housing with affordable units; projects that incorporate community spaces and local services; initiatives that prioritize wood, energy efficiency and sustainable practices. That is exactly the spirit that Build Canada Homes wants to encourage.

Thanks to its new Crown corporation structure, Build Canada Homes will be able to make better use of public lands, particularly by integrating federal expertise in real estate development; deploy flexible financial tools to support complex arrangements; encourage modern construction methods, including prefabricated housing; and support non-commercial and community housing where the market alone is not enough.

In Sherbrooke, as elsewhere, we are seeing the emergence of a new generation of developers who understand that profitability and social responsibility are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. Bill C-20 is creating the conditions needed to amplify that momentum.

This is not about replacing the market, but about complementing it, structuring it and stimulating it where the needs are greatest. The CMHC will continue to play its key role. Build Canada Homes will focus on persistent gaps, non-market housing, the strategic use of public lands and the structural transformation of our capacity to build.

We need a streamlined organization focused solely on delivering housing. We are already getting results. In just a few months, Build Canada Homes has launched its national portal, published its investment policy framework, issued requests for qualifications for thousands of units on federal lands and signed major memoranda of understanding. That is not theory. It is action.

The developers I meet in Sherbrooke talk about clear needs: predictability, quick decision-making and financial flexibility.

● (1700)

By becoming a Crown corporation, Build Canada Homes will be able to hold assets, invest directly, enter into complex transactions and act with the agility required in a rapidly changing market. This will enable us to support more meaningful projects, such as housing for women fleeing violence, adapted housing for people with disabilities, cooperative projects led by community-based organizations and residential complexes for seniors who wish to remain in their community. We will do this with local workers and businesses.

Our buy Canadian policy aims to mobilize public funds to strengthen our economic sovereignty. In an uncertain global context, investing in housing also means investing in our industrial capacity, our materials and our expertise.

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In Sherbrooke, this means supporting entrepreneurs, engineers, construction workers and the entire regional supply chain. Housing is a key economic policy. Every home built generates activity, jobs and tax revenue. Every completed project contributes to the attractiveness of our region and the vitality of our neighbourhoods.

Bill C-20 is a bold and necessary change in the way we plan, fund and build housing. It gives Build Canada Homes the independence and means to act. It recognizes that governments, municipalities, community organizations, co-ops and private developers have to work together to succeed. It taps into the very real energy I see in Sherbrooke, that ability to turn ambitious ideas into tangible projects for the good of families, now and into the future.

By passing Bill C-20, we are sending a clear message: We take the housing crisis seriously, we trust our partners on the ground and we choose to act ambitiously for Sherbrooke, for Quebec and for all Canadians.

• (1705)

[*English*]

Steven Bonk (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am just wondering how the Liberal member opposite can square the circle. When we add more bureaucracy, we also add less productivity.

How are they expecting to get more houses built in a more efficient manner when they are increasing bureaucracy, which is the cause of the housing crisis in Canada?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Élisabeth Brière: Mr. Speaker, by transforming Build Canada Homes into a Crown corporation, we are creating a specialized organization focused exclusively on housing construction. We are also giving it the full financial and legal independence it needs to act quickly, enter complex agreements and use public lands effectively.

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lestiguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week, I met with workers at a factory, a sorting facility, in my riding. The first issue they raised was housing. I was asked how we could ensure that housing gets built faster in my riding. It is a very broad question, but I would like to pose it to my colleague.

How will Build Canada Homes speed up housing construction?

Hon. Élisabeth Brière: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

As I said in my speech, transforming this agency into a Crown corporation gives it all the independence it needs to speed up housing construction. We are already seeing real results. Just last Thursday, I was in Saint-Jean-Port-Joli to announce the opening of a nine-unit building for women fleeing violence. Everyone was thrilled. The Coalition Avenir Québec member representing Minister Proulx was there. Everyone was of the opinion that the agreement signed with Quebec would make it easier to build housing faster in our communities.

[*English*]

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

Speaker, I know my colleague understands the benefits of the Province of Quebec and Ottawa working together. I just want to read from a press release, if I may. We were talking about it a little earlier. This was done in January, when we had both the Province of Quebec and the Government of Canada sitting at a table. This is the press release: “In order to ensure the harmonized deployment of Build Canada Homes in Quebec, in line with its priorities and jurisdictions, the governments of Canada and Quebec have signed a memorandum of understanding to guide their collaboration.”

I am wondering if my colleague and good friend would reinforce just how important it is. Not only does the federal government have a role to play in housing, but it is absolutely critical that we work with our partners. A good example of that is the Province of Quebec.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Élisabeth Brière: Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague for this important question.

When we travel elsewhere in the country, we see how important it is to work with the provinces, particularly in times of crisis. Everyone here today has mentioned how serious the housing crisis is and the many consequences it is having on the lives of Canadians. We must therefore work together with the provinces. This collaboration will really help speed up and facilitate housing starts.

I would like to add that during my visit to Saint-Jean-Port-Joli on Thursday, the Coalition Avenir Québec representative highlighted this fact and even said that we should work together more often in order to achieve tangible results more quickly.

• (1710)

[*English*]

Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talked about taking public lands, but here in paragraph 20(g), it says the government could “take any security or security interest in any property”.

This is not just the green slush fund all over again. This would be 30 by 30 going to 50 by 50. They would take more land through this, including private property.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Élisabeth Brière: Mr. Speaker, Sherbrooke is home to a fine example of the use of public land for the construction of an apartment building, although I cannot recall the number of units. The fact is that Build Canada Homes has a clear mandate, which includes the effective use of public land, and I am confident that this mandate will be adequately fulfilled.

[English]

Chak Au (Richmond Centre—Marpole, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians understand very well that the best predictor of future performance is past results. That is why Canadians have every reason to be skeptical about the Liberal government's latest housing promise. For nearly a decade, Canadians have heard the same story repeated again and again: a new announcement, a new strategy, a new fund, a new target. Each time, the government assures Canadians that this time the housing crisis will finally be solved, but when we examine its record carefully, a troubling pattern emerges.

In 2017, the government introduced what it described as a historic initiative: the national housing strategy. It committed more than \$115 billion in housing spending over 10 years. It promised to drastically improve affordability, reduce homelessness and expand the supply of housing across the country. Billions of dollars were allocated. Targets were announced. New programs were created, but what actually happened?

During roughly the same period that the government was rolling out these plans, housing prices in Canada nearly doubled. Young Canadians are increasingly locked out of home ownership. Families are struggling with rising rents. In many major cities, housing affordability is now among the worst in the world. The government announced another plan, then another fund and then another target.

The housing accelerator fund was introduced with the promise that it would help build hundreds of thousands of homes by cutting red tape. Then another national plan was released, claiming that Canada had the strategy to solve the housing crisis. Now, once again, Canadians are told that this time the government has found the solution. This time, we are told a new federal housing agency will fix the problem.

Canadians have heard this before. Each time a new program is announced, the government claims the housing crisis is about to turn a corner, yet each time the targets are missed, the timelines are extended and the crisis deepens. At some point, we must ask a very basic question: Why should Canadians believe that this new promise will succeed when all previous promises have failed?

Another question must also be asked. Canada already has multiple federal bodies involved in housing policy. We have the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which has long been the federal government's primary housing agency. Infrastructure Canada funds projects tied to housing development. The Department of Finance designs housing tax policies and financial programs. Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada is responsible for implementation of the national housing strategy. On top of that, the Liberal government has created additional structures over the past decade, including the federal housing advocate, the National Housing Council and multiple new program administrations.

With all of these institutions already operating in the housing space, Canadians deserve clarity. What exactly would this new agency do that cannot already be done by the existing agencies? What specific function is missing from the current system?

If this new agency is truly necessary, Canadians deserve to hear other answers as well. What existing programs will be streamlined? Which agencies will have their responsibilities reduced? Which bu-

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reaucratic processes will be eliminated to avoid duplication and more red tape? If this new agency simply adds another layer of administration, then Canadians are not getting more homes. They are getting more bureaucracy.

● (1715)

Housing affordability will not improve because we create more government entities. It will improve when we build more homes faster and more efficiently. That is why Canadians are skeptical when they hear the Liberal government's latest announcement.

This brings us directly to Bill C-20. Once again, the government's answer to real problems is not reform, but reorganization. Instead of fixing the delays that prevent homes from being built, the government proposed to create another federal housing body.

Let us consider the Minister of Housing's own record. He is now leading in the so-called new housing plan. When he first ran for mayor of Vancouver, he made a bold promise that street homelessness in Vancouver would be ended by 2015. It was a clear commitment that he widely publicized, but by the end of his time as mayor, the number of homeless had increased, housing prices in Vancouver had soared and Vancouver became one of the least affordable housing markets anywhere in the world. That record matters. Once again, Canadians are being told that the same leadership, ideas and approach will now help fix the national housing crisis.

To conclude, Canadians have seen a pattern for more than a decade: promises made and promises broken. Billions have been spent and bureaucracy has expanded, yet the homes Canadians need are still not being built. Canadians are told that this time it will be different. Canadians do not need another layer of bureaucracy; they need homes.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with one thing, which is that Canadians would love to have hope. We have a Prime Minister who was elected less than a year ago. Take a look at the number of initiatives that this new Prime Minister, along with the government as a whole, has taken in order to provide that hope. There are number of initiatives and thousands of homes. It is a plan that is accepted by other jurisdictions across the land, including stakeholders.

Does the member opposite not agree that the government has a role to play in providing the leadership that we have seen by this government, recognizing that in order to build homes we need cooperation from the different stakeholders?

That is exactly what we have, and why I would suggest that the Conservative Party needs to revisit its policy decision and vote in favour.

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Chak Au: Mr. Speaker, I do not understand how recycled ideas could be disguised as new operations. We have seen repeated announcements in the last decade promising the same thing. Recycled ideas will not bring hopes or homes. It is not even a dream; it is just a disillusion. I do not understand why these recycled ideas could be disguised as new.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his speech.

The Conservatives are known for trimming the fat, so to speak, wanting to reduce the size of government and make it more agile. However, we in the Bloc Québécois believe that Build Canada Homes and the Liberal government in general tend to encumber and complicate the system and its processes rather than simply respect the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces.

Does my colleague not agree that it would make a lot more sense to transfer the money owed to Quebec and the provinces so that they can manage these programs? Does he not think that would be more effective than getting involved in some sort of huge bureaucratic machine that will almost certainly slow down the process and complicate things, when there are such pressing needs on the ground in the regions of Quebec and Canada?

[English]

Chak Au: Mr. Speaker, I agree that the federal government has a role to play in providing affordable housing to Canadians. However, I have the experience of being a city councillor for the last 12 years, and my experience has been that first, the federal government always downloads everything to the local government and second, the federal government does not consult. There is a lack of consultation, and at the end, the federal government does what it wants to do, and it does not provide the means that the local community could provide in a better way.

It is better for the federal government to get out of the way and let local governments and other partners work to make things better for our communities.

Sukhman Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has highlighted concerns about Bill C-20.

I would like to ask him what he is hearing from the grassroots constituents and the youth of his community. What are their concerns, and what are they saying to him about the current rising unaffordability?

Chak Au: Mr. Speaker, what we hear, day in and day out, in our communities is how unaffordable things are, including housing. It is because all kinds of bureaucracy, taxation and added costs in building new homes have created this problem, the crisis that people are facing right now.

Again, the lack of consultation by the federal government has resulted in inappropriate solutions for the problems that people are facing. I was told that before the launching of this new agency, the Richmond City Council was not consulted. They have no role to play in giving feedback and inputs to the new agency. This is one example where the lack of consultation is a problem.

Kristina Tesser Derksen (Milton East—Halton Hills South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am aware of an academic community organization in that member's province called the Balanced Supply of Housing, or BSH, and it works in tandem with the University of British Columbia.

BSH has stated that “Build Canada Homes is not a silver bullet, but it may be a turning point. By investing in non-profit, co-op, supportive housing, and by creating the financing and land pathways to make projects possible, Ottawa is reasserting itself”. It points out opportunities in achieving scale and goes on to state that, “For now, Build Canada Homes represents a step in the right direction”.

Does the member disagree with that organization's position on Build Canada Homes?

Chak Au: Mr. Speaker, once again, we do not need more bureaucracy and we do not need more reports to build more homes.

Let me give another example. Just last week, Richmond opened 84 units of affordable low-income housing, without federal funding. Cities can do it. They do not have to be told what to do. They need the opportunities, freedom and resources to build homes, not another layer of bureaucracy.

• (1725)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, just to show some contrast, we have the mayor of Winnipeg, the premier of Manitoba and different stakeholders in Winnipeg all recognizing the valuable contributions that the federal government is making in terms of expanding affordable housing. It is all public information.

Would the member not at least recognize that we do have a government that is working with the different stakeholders, and that the stakeholders are responding positively to the program?

Chak Au: Mr. Speaker, my response to that question would be that we do not need the federal government to direct us on what to do. Each community would have its own priorities, needs and the best way to resolve them.

Again, using Richmond as an example, in the past 15 years, because Richmond has a good housing strategy, we were able to build thousands of homes in partnership with the building community, not with any government funding from the Liberal government.

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that Build Canada Homes does not address is the need for construction for ownership. This is a huge issue. In fact, the supply that we need should, predominantly, 75% in fact, come from home ownership.

I am wondering if this is something the member hears about when he is in his riding, and if he would just like to speak to that.

Chak Au: Mr. Speaker, in my riding, this is exactly what I hear, day in and day out.

People need homes, not allocated or dictated by the federal government on what type of housing they should have. They do not need to rent for life. They want to have the opportunity to save enough money to own their own home one day.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today we are continuing our study of a new structure that the government wishes to create called Build Canada Homes. We are not against optimizing housing resources, quite the contrary. It is necessary to invest heavily in housing, and for that to happen, every tax dollar must be invested to generate maximum benefits. However, instead of opting for the simplest and most affordable solution, which is to transfer the money to the provinces, the true housing program authorities and experts, this government is opting to create a new structure. Meanwhile, many of the programs that Build Canada Homes will be responsible for were already being taken care of by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Once again, the federal government is going to set its own housing priorities rather than working with local governments. The Quebec National Assembly, regional county municipalities and cities are in the best position to understand the needs and to determine priorities, zoning, urban planning and the real needs of the people where they live. For the Bloc Québécois, there is one essential condition: There must be a “Quebec clause,” so that Quebec can opt out of Build Canada Homes with full compensation in the form of dedicated housing transfers paid to the Government of Quebec. At the very least, the government has an obligation to transfer to Quebec the funds to which it is entitled on a per capita basis, without conditions. Quebec is and remains the sole driver of its housing policy. It is up to Quebec to determine its housing priorities and to develop its own tools and programs, not Ottawa.

There is something else I am concerned about. Since Build Canada Homes is designated as an agent of the Crown, it will be able to expropriate residents and will benefit from tax exemptions. That will be good for the cities, which will be unable to collect property tax to fund this infrastructure, because that is a possibility. The same goes for land use planning, if the government can simply decide to expropriate residents to build wherever it wants to build, all while having the opportunity to acquire shares in affordable housing companies. That can open a Pandora's box. If a real estate company receives government support for a private project in which the government is a shareholder, could Build Canada Homes use these expropriation and tax exemption powers to increase the value of its investment? The answer is obvious. The question certainly seems relevant when we look at projects like Alto.

I want to bring this Parliament back down to earth because we need to identify the problems that we are now facing if we want to resolve them in the long term. Speaking of coming back down to earth, I would like to talk about rural life, a reality in a region like mine. My team, particularly my executive director Lynda Perreault, has helped many non-profit organizations work out the intricacies of housing projects. Our team can easily list the obstacles to the development of social and affordable housing in my region of Abitibi—Témiscamingue. Given that Build Canada Homes has not been created yet, we must talk about the problems we experience almost daily with the CMHC in the hopes that, at the very least,

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changes will be made and that, in many cases, the promised money can be disbursed. The first key point is delays. There is no big surprise there. For 10 years, this Liberal government has made long delays one of its specialities. This has happened in many areas other than housing, but it has also happened in housing, even very recently.

On January 21, 2026, Ottawa finally signed an agreement with Quebec as part of the Canada housing infrastructure fund. However, Ottawa launched the program nearly two years before that, on April 16, 2024. The goal was to modernize and develop essential infrastructure, such as drinking water and waste water treatment infrastructure, to support new housing projects. The agreement with Quebec took two years to finalize. Things happened a lot faster in Ontario, as usual. Why? The reason is that Ottawa's programs are designed with Ontario laws in mind. They do not take Quebec's reality into account, and the government refuses to transfer the funds.

We have seen this play out before, such as in 2017, when there was the agreement with the provinces. It took three years for the money to make its way to Quebec. There was the COVID-19 pandemic, ballooning costs and inflation, which meant that we were building a lot less than everywhere else in Canada, especially Ontario. That is not right, and it is so frustrating because the problems are just getting worse, especially in Quebec.

• (1730)

Two years after the program was launched, an agreement was reached for \$1 billion of the \$6 billion allocated to the fund. That is 16.6% of the envelope even though Quebec accounts for 22% of Canada's demographic weight, so there is a huge equity issue there that needs to be addressed. Quebecers are receiving less, and they are receiving less two years on, which means that it is much less.

It is also important to understand that with the skyrocketing construction costs, Quebec is not meeting its housing needs, all because Ottawa is incapable of respecting its jurisdictions. It is one thing for Ottawa to want to invest in housing. It needs to transfer the money to Quebec.

I discussed this with the Parliamentary Budget Officer when he was appointed recently. If Ottawa let the provinces manage their own affairs and simply transferred the money, that would save enormous amounts of money that are currently being wasted on unnecessary bureaucracy. One good example is the child care program. The government took inspiration from Quebec and transferred the money. Quebec is where the most spaces have been created. Why not repeat that pattern when it comes to building housing? It is such a simple solution, perhaps too simple.

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The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC, takes too long to make decisions and does not even meet its own deadlines. In my region, one project was approved in January 2025 with construction set to begin in April or May. The developer was waiting for CMHC's final approval before starting construction and getting on with the work. Months went by. The documents were submitted correctly, but CMHC was slow to issue its final approval. April and May passed, but nothing happened. In June, CMHC finally responded, but with a letter announcing that unless the work started in the next two weeks, the money would be allocated to another project.

Developers are waiting for the bureaucracy to act, but the bureaucracy can say that it is going to spend the money elsewhere, even though CMHC never gave its final approval. I hope that Build Canada Homes will learn from that. Although it will allegedly be much more agile, implementation issues around the transition from CMHC to Build Canada Homes are precisely what happened over the past year.

There were problems with the construction of a women's shelter for victims of domestic violence, the Maison l'émeraude, in La Sarre. The project almost never saw the light of day because of bureaucratic delays. It also almost did not happen because of repeated last-minute requests that do not apply to the Quebec reality, but are required nonetheless, such as requiring the organization to take out a mortgage. All of this can have an impact on the quality of services, the size of the building or even the quality of the fences to protect the women. There are consequences to such a lack of consistency and lack of efficiency.

This kind of delay slows down construction. These delays hold up projects, leading to increased costs for developers. The subsidy does not increase, and we know how much interest rates can fluctuate depending on the situation. However, the CMHC takes months not only to make decisions, but also to disburse funds. When we talk about non-profit organizations, or NPOs, and co-operatives, we are not talking about organizations that are rolling in money and have deep pockets.

They are being asked to pay construction costs just to wait. Wait for what? Once an organization reaches its project completion percentage, the CMHC money arrives but it arrives late. A non-profit that takes out a loan has to pay interest on the loan purely because the CMHC is not paying on time. That is a lot of money that the non-profit and the co-operative cannot reinvest in their facilities. These are additional costs that increase project costs.

That is to say nothing about the consultants that the CMHC asks for, even though the Quebec civil code already provides various options for recourse. That is completely unnecessary duplication. As a result, the Government of Canada and non-profit organizations are paying consultants to analyze something that is already covered or has already been done. There is a saying that laws are made for Ontario, not for Quebec. This is a clear example of that. Money is being flushed down the drain.

Let me go back to the definition of what a rural area is and what an urban area is. Once again, there is a clear lack of vision. The federal government and the Department of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities have a vision based on the concept of census ag-

glomerations versus census metropolitan areas, with a scale ranging from 10,000 to 100,000 people or fewer. I am sorry, but there is a significant difference between a municipality of 45,000 residents located eight hours away from major urban centres and a municipality of 45,000 residents that is two hours away from Montreal or Toronto.

• (1735)

Programs need to reflect the reality of these remote regions. They need to reflect the fact that building 150 housing units in municipalities like Baie-Comeau, Sept-Îles, Rouyn-Noranda, Amos, La Sarre, or Notre-Dame-du-Nord is much more difficult, almost inconceivable. We would need programs tailored to six, 18, or 24 housing units to have an equally significant impact on our populations. In a rural town or census area, we must take into account the geography and the ability to create and organize these projects to also meet bureaucratic requirements.

I would also like to note an important aspect of the definition of affordability. During the committee's study of the Auditor General's report on the current and future use of federal offices, I had the opportunity to question officials from the Department of Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities on this. While Canada has always been out of touch, I was pleasantly surprised by the thought process that officials had gone through. For example, income-based affordability, in the case of housing that costs less than 30% of pre-tax income, can be applied differently. Again, this calls for flexibility and an understanding that there may be income disparities in certain regions.

I will stop here. I will continue my thoughts during questions and comments.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from my perspective and the way that I look at it is that it does not matter what region of the nation one is coming from. I truly believe that people want to see opposition and government members working together, not only here in Ottawa but working with other jurisdictions in order to be able to deal with the serious issues that we have to face.

The Province of Quebec has signed off with a memorandum of understanding, and the member made reference to it. The Government of Quebec is working with Ottawa, and Ottawa is working with the Government of Quebec and other stakeholders to increase affordable housing. Does the member feel any compulsion whatsoever to respect the memorandum of understanding that has been signed by the two levels of government?

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I certainly welcome the fact that there is an agreement, but, once again, we need to be able to look at that agreement to see how it is applied. The reality is that we do not feel that this money is having a real impact in the regions. When we look at the public accounts, we see that the Canada Infrastructure Bank has invested zero dollars in Abitibi—Témiscamingue. That is unacceptable.

A Radio-Canada article showed that Ontario received \$2 billion from the Canada public transit fund and Quebec got nothing. Does that make sense? Programs are simply not being designed for Quebec's reality. Needs are not being taken into account, particularly the issue of energy efficiency in the north. They are also causing more delays. Is that fair? It is already costing us close to 30% more.

Lumber is cut in our forests, processed in my riding and sent to Boucherville, Toronto or the United States before coming back to my region, generating a lot of transportation costs, not to mention the environmental impact. That is one of the key issues, and I hope that it will be addressed by this new bureaucratic structure.

[*English*]

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we see that the Liberals would set up another bureaucracy, the board of which they would then stack with their friends. Where have we seen this before? We saw this with the green slush fund. I know that the member was here before, when this broke, when directors of the board of the green slush fund were handing their own companies money. There were over 180 conflicts of interest in that decision-making.

Does the member not see that this would also be a place where the Liberals would be able to enrich their friends?

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, the culture of cronyism in the Liberal Party is still a danger. What I also find dangerous is not knowing what the government is using our money for. Abitibi—Témiscamingue creates approximately 2% of Canada's GDP, notably through its mining and forestry sectors, but what does it get in return?

We have been experiencing a housing crisis for 20 years. Housing costs are just as high in Abitibi—Témiscamingue as they are elsewhere. A neighbourhood in what is known as the buffer zone has to be relocated. Yes, there are a lot of questions about the federal government. I can give a very simple example. According to current specifications, Canadian roads do not account for the fact that rectangular houses have to be shipped.

There are companies that make prefabricated houses, which could be used by workers, in particular. This would prevent them from occupying available housing, since we know that they are not going to put down roots. We want to leave that housing for people who are investing in our community and who will be able to stay there. As a result of the housing shortage, workers fly in and fly out. This is the reality because the programs have not been tailored to the situation in Abitibi—Témiscamingue over the past 20 years.

This is a huge problem, and I hope that this new initiative, Build Canada Homes, will be able to respond to it.

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight the passion of my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue and his command of the file. People are indeed feeling the effects of these bureaucratic decisions or these kinds of big bureaucratic machines that come to do the work or impose conditions in the regions of Quebec, when the organizations already in place, the municipalities, the regional county municipalities, the Govern-

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ment of Quebec and the provinces are already well equipped to manage these investments.

I would like to hear my colleague talk about the fact that, last time, the agreement between Quebec and Ottawa took years to be implemented. Is there cause for concern now? Is there a concern that the same thing will happen again and that the regions of Quebec will once again be penalized?

Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, the answer is obviously yes, because the municipalities, towns and regions are the ones with the expertise, but there is hope.

I would like to give an example: The Abitibi—Témiscamingue CEGEP has partnered with the Regroupement innovant pour l'impression d'immeubles durables, or RI³D. I want to highlight the leadership of a high school friend, David Laliberté, who is a CEGEP teacher, in implementing this innovation that helps to build walls. Perhaps the homes of tomorrow will be built thanks to initiatives like the one at the Abitibi—Témiscamingue CEGEP.

[*English*]

Sukhman Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the people of Abbotsford—South Langley and I rise on their behalf. They have real concerns with respect to the Liberal House. During the election, the Liberals promised Canadians bold, decisive action on housing. They pledged to create Build Canada Homes, claiming it would solve the very housing crisis that they helped create in the first place; they have failed over and over again. It sounded like a plan for hope for the families that are struggling to buy their first home. Today, Canadians are seeing something very different. What was promised as a solution has become more bureaucracy. What was promised as action has turned into inaction. This was meant to bring more homes and hope, but neither was delivered.

Let us remember what was promised. The Liberals pledged to deliver 500,000 new homes every single year. That was a commitment made to Canadians in this country who are struggling to buy their first home. There was a promise made to youth, to the young families trying to get ahead and to the renters hoping to one day own their own home. Now we learn that housing starts have fallen to 212,000 homes per year by 2028, less than half of what was promised. This is a complete failure to achieve what was pledged to Canadians by the Liberal government.

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Instead of delivering homes, Bill C-20 would effectively deliver a fourth housing bureaucracy. What is most shocking about this is that there are no set targets. The housing minister confirmed during a press conference on Bill C-20 that, under the Liberals' plan, there are no top-line targets set for the number of homes to be built. It is an utter shock that there are no targets set. How are Canadians supposed to place their trust in the government? Canadians were promised 500,000 homes per year. Now they are told there are no targets at all. How can Canadians have confidence when there is no plan to measure any success? How can we solve a national housing crisis without clear benchmarks for success? It is all talk and no action.

When houses start to be built, the Parliamentary Budget Office found that Build Canada Homes would likely add only around 5,000 homes per year. That is 1% of what the Liberals promised. At the same time, construction activity is projected to decline by 18.1% to well below the 10-year historical average. Let me be clear. Prices are projected to rise, construction is projected to fall, and the Liberal government's solution to this is this bill, which only creates more bureaucracy without any set targets. It is just shameful. Build Canada Homes would not solve real problems because it creates a new agency without removing the rules and the delays that make housing more expensive for Canadians. It would not change any zoning laws, settle any case-by-case rezoning fights, set firm deadlines for approvals or cut duplicate fees or environmental charges.

If we do not fix delays, we do not fix costs. If we do not fix costs, we do not fix affordability. Real reform is about creating new programs. It is about removing roadblocks, setting clear timelines, cutting extra taxes and fees, improving coordination between governments and holding departments accountable. That means fixing the system that we currently have, not adding another layer of bureaucracy to it. Builders across the country are saying clearly that we need to see less government in homebuilding, not more. Developers are not asking for new federal agencies, which the government is delivering to them. They are asking for faster approval rates, lower taxes, fewer development charges and predictable rules outlined.

On this side of the House, we believe that Canadians should have the opportunity to own a home and have access to affordable housing. Yes, we believe that the federal government can play a role in it, but it has to be limited. It should not obstruct; it should take out the bureaucracy. Conservatives have a plan to fight and focus on results. Conservatives oppose adding more bureaucracy and red tape to housing sectors already burdened by slow approval rates and rising costs. More government layers do not solve delays, but make them worse. Developers are clear about the challenges they are facing. We are the only party offering a real plan to address them.

Under the Liberal government and this so-called new Prime Minister, Canadians are being offered the same approach we have all seen before: more programs, more announcements, more agencies and fewer real results. We have seen this all before with the housing accelerator fund, where billions were spent on studies and consultants, and many of the slow approval processes have stayed in place. Money was added, but the delays remain.

What Canada needs is more supply and less red tape with less government interference. It is that simple. Construction workers are ready to build, builders are ready to build and Canadians are ready to buy. What is standing in the way is not the lack of demand, but the lack of supply caused by excessive government interference and rising costs.

● (1745)

Private builders, people who construct the vast majority of homes in this country, are asking for something very simple. They are asking for the government to get out of the way. They want less red tape, fewer taxes, less bureaucracy and more building. This is a Conservative approach.

Nearly nine out of 10 Canadians are concerned about housing affordability. This is not a niche issue or a temporary challenge. It is a matter of national stability. Housing supply is not a generational wedge issue. It is an issue that affects everyone, from young Canadians to adults to seniors. That is why the government should care, because it affects everyone and all of us together. When housing becomes scarce and unaffordable, it is more than just an individual strain. It weakens our nation's fiscal health. It reduces productivity and limits economic growth. Scarcity harms us all.

For generations, home ownership has been the centre of a Canadian dream, the promise that if someone works hard, they can buy a home, raise a family and build a secure future. Today, that promise feels increasingly out of reach. Too many young Canadians believe they will never have the same opportunity as their parents did. That is just sad. We must restore the dream of home ownership for the next generation.

We must give Canadians, including families in my community of Abbotsford—South Langley and communities across this nation, a real chance to buy a home, start a family and build a future, without being held back by the government's inefficiency and soaring costs. No one in Canada should feel that they will never get a fair shot at success, yet under the current Liberal government, far too many do. It is time to address the housing supply and the urgency it demands, not as a partisan issue, but as a non-partisan issue, as a national priority that secures opportunity and prosperity for all Canadians.

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Conservatives are ready to act and we are ready to work with anyone who is willing to put Canadians first. We have a clear plan that cuts costs, removes barriers, empowers builders and gets homes built. We would increase supply, lower prices and make home ownership achievable for families from coast to coast to coast. It is time for results, not red tape. It is time for action. That is why I urge the Liberal government to take a second look and cut out the bureaucracy and the layers.

This Build Canada Homes bill is not what we need right now. We need to make sure we can cut taxes and we can fight for Canadians.

• (1750)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the member in general, but I like his first comment about providing hope. We have a newly elected Prime Minister, from less than a year ago, and we have been working with different levels of government. We have been working with many different stakeholders. We have a substantial piece of legislation to support Canadians in every region of the country. It is not a duplication. It would ensure that houses are more affordable in many different ways.

I do not understand. Is there not a progressive element within the Conservatives? Are there not red Tories within the Conservative caucus who recognize there is value for the federal government to do what it is doing? I would think that members want all of us to be working together on the housing—

The Deputy Speaker: I have to interrupt the member to give the member for Abbotsford—South Langley a chance to respond.

Sukhman Gill: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague already knows that the government has been in power for the last 10 years. We have seen unaffordability rise under the Liberal government. That is what has been happening.

My generation is not succeeding. We are being held back now more than ever. That is the last thing that we need. Another bureaucracy being put in front of us is the last thing we need.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts held a meeting on the subject of infrastructure. We realized that, according to page 298 of volume II of the Public Accounts of Canada 2025, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation was allocated \$2.1 billion in financing for housing. However, it spent only \$1.3 billion. On that same page, we see that \$5 million was not spent in 2025. In other words, nearly \$2 billion was not spent.

Are things structured in such a way that all the lovely promises in the budget do not translate into money flowing and construction happening in the regions? Is that not a problem?

[*English*]

Sukhman Gill: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague here on this side of the House that there are many problems that the current government is bringing in front of us that it is not addressing. Yes, we do need to work together. We do need to see all stages of the policies that we need to work on to make them more efficient.

I think we would both agree that the last thing we need to do is add another layer of bureaucracy.

• (1755)

Steven Bonk (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for that great speech. I know him as someone who has a real heart for youth, the young people of this country, and he advocates for them regularly.

When we look at the housing record of the government, by every metric, the past 10 years have been a disaster. Canadians know that.

Can my colleague highlight the proud vision that the Conservatives have for housing in this country, especially when it comes to young people?

Sukhman Gill: Mr. Speaker, when a Conservative government was in power, many family members of mine came to this country. They were able to come here, afford a home and build a life, and they were able to succeed because they saw the Canadian vision. They saw the Canadian promise, the North American promise.

For myself today, being born in Canada, it is difficult to succeed in this current chapter, in this current year, because everything is getting more and more unaffordable. That is the same thing I hear from my peers, the same thing I hear from all the youth in my community.

The member who asked me the question is correct. We need to bring change. We need to make sure that we go back to the old ways, to the things that worked, and not add more layers of bureaucracy.

Burton Bailey (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians need affordable housing, but pumping billions of dollars into a new corporation is just growing the bureaucracy instead of getting homes built.

With Canadians struggling in a productivity crisis of the Liberals' making, can my colleague comment on why the government is creating another government job factory instead of getting houses built?

Sukhman Gill: Mr. Speaker, I will answer that question very simply. I am from British Columbia. The current housing minister apparently did an amazing job in Vancouver with the housing bureaucracy he created there. We do not see anything getting better currently with the Liberal government. If there is a problem, it is because of the Liberal government. If something is in the way, it is because of the Liberal government. We need to make sure that we bring change. That is what Canadians are fighting for. I urge the members across to stop supporting this bill.

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Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the renters of the spacious riding of Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke to speak to Bill C-20, the build bigger bureaucracy act.

To begin with, I want to assure my biggest fan across the aisle that by the end of this speech, he will see what ancient Greece, Peru's new Prime Minister and the Soviet Union, as well as Jesus Christ, have in common with the Liberals' latest building bureaucracy bill.

To properly understand this legislation, we need to look at housing history, the present circumstances and the future potential.

Let us start with the past. As has become the style in Canadian political speeches, let me begin by quoting an ancient Greek philosopher. Xenophon wrote that the household is the source of all wealth. It is fitting that we begin with a discussion on the so-called housing bill with the ancient Greek. The word "economics" comes from the Greek words *oikos*, meaning household, and *nomos*, meaning custom or management. In effect, all economics begin at home. Four hundred years later, in the great Roman Republic, Cicero said each person should retain his own property and not seize that of another. It is clear that these men believed that home ownership was the path to prosperity. Sadly, the Liberal Party has not learned this ancient wisdom, even with an economist as a leader.

Moving from the ancient world to the modern world, we reach the year 2017, the year the Liberal government introduced the national housing strategy. It was a \$115-billion plan to build housing. One program under the strategy, the affordable housing fund, received \$16 billion over 10 years to build 60,000 new affordable rental units. The program launched in May 2018, and in the eight years since, it has spent 85% of its budget. The program has built only 25,428 units, which means the Liberals spent 85% of the budget to reach 42% of the goal. That is a failing grade.

Another part of the national housing strategy was the affordable housing innovation fund. Phase one was a five-year plan to spend \$200 million to build 14,000 housing units, created using so-called "innovative business approaches and building techniques". The program ran from 2017 to 2021. They built 5,319 units. The goal was 14,000, which means they built 38% of the target, another failing grade.

The apartment construction loan program was a \$54-billion plan to build 131,000 rental units. This was a 15-year plan, and we are at the halfway mark. So far, we have built 18,497 rental units. Even if we are being generous and we cut the goal in half, that still means the Liberals have built only 28% of the mid-goal.

At 42%, 38% and 28%, the Liberals keep failing, and it gets worse. This is the history every Canadian should have known before the last election. This is the history every Canadian should have been reminded of when this Brookfield government staged a photo op at a fake housing construction site to announce this legislation. That is history. That is the Liberals' proven track record of housing failure.

Despite this legacy of failure, the Prime Minister is doubling down on a failed strategy, which brings us to the present and the bill before us today. Bill C-20 would not fix Canada's housing cri-

sis, because Bill C-20 is not about building houses. It is about building bureaucracy.

My biggest fan, the member for Winnipeg North, once bitterly complained about the Harper government's creativity in applying branding to the short titles for legislation. To paraphrase Denzel Washington, "King Kong ain't got nuttin" on these Liberals.

The short title for Bill C-20 is the Build Canada Homes act. The real title is "an act respecting the establishment of Build Canada Homes". The Liberals are clearly trying to trick Canadians into thinking they are building homes for Canadians. The real title reveals that they are building a new bureaucracy they call "Build Canada Homes".

Aside from revealing the Liberals' love of slogans and propaganda, Bill C-20 also reveals the root of the problem and the real reason Liberals keep failing over and over again. Under section 4 of the bill, the Liberals lay out the purpose: "The purpose of the Corporation is to promote, support and develop the supply of affordable housing in Canada and to promote innovative and efficient building techniques in the housing construction sector in Canada." Now, attentive listeners might have noticed that this is the same purpose behind the failed affordable housing innovation fund I mentioned earlier.

● (1800)

I have quoted a Greek philosopher and a Roman politician, but on the issue of building houses, maybe we should heed the words of a Jewish carpenter's son, who said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." No one can serve two masters, and no bill should have two purposes. While I could not find a quote to fit, I am sure we can all agree that Jesus would look unfavourably at a policy that treats lower-income Canadians as guinea pigs for housing construction.

Is the goal of the bill to provide affordable housing, or is the goal to provide corporate welfare to home builders? It cannot do both. We know it cannot because it has not worked in the past. Two years ago, the Liberal government announced it was seeking bids from developers to build homes on federal lands, including a plot here in Ottawa on an old air base. The government would own the land and give developers 99-year leases to build rental units. This is the model used in China. The state gives developers 99-year leases. Set aside the “own nothing and be happy” vibes of this policy and look at the results. Nothing has been built. People in Ottawa can visit the site. It is empty, because the Liberal government did not ask developers to submit bids for low-cost affordable housing. They asked for bids to build high-cost, low-rent housing. These units had to exceed energy-saving standards by 25%. The four-acre lot must accommodate 495 units. The units must exceed accessibility standards. The units must also respect the heritage and legacy of the Algonquin peoples and respect the military heritage of the site.

It is not enough for the Liberals to build affordable housing. It has to be progressive housing. It has to be the type of housing our Laurentian elite think we should live in. Mixed-use apartments with no vehicle parking are the Liberals' platonic progressive ideal. The problem is that most Canadians looking to buy a house want a single-family home to call their own. They do not want a 99-year rental agreement with a government always chasing the latest left-wing fad. This ideological housing policy was popular in the Soviet Union. It had the progressive notion that by building socialist Soviet communities, it would build better socialist citizens. They would own nothing, be happy and be socialist subjects, or so the government thought.

The problem is the owning nothing part. While the Prime Minister is burning as much CO₂ as he can, flying around the world to avoid Parliament, I suggest he stop in Peru to have a conversation with its new prime minister, Hernando de Soto. Prior to becoming prime minister, de Soto was an internationally acclaimed economist. His research proved how important property rights and a legal system to protect those rights were to economic development. As the Prime Minister seeks to undermine Canada's law protecting property rights to build his high-speed white whale, he should visit de Soto's writings. De Soto proved with facts and figures what Cicero knew 2,000 years ago, that owning a home is the path to prosperity.

Conservatives and Liberals can agree that everyone deserves a home. Where we differ is on who should own that home. With Bill C-20, the Liberals continue to believe that government knows best. They believe government should be the landlord of first and last resort.

It was not always this way. In 1942, the Liberal government passed the Veterans' Land Act. Here is how the government described the law at the time:

The purpose of the Veterans' Land Act is to assist veterans toward the full ownership of rural homes

Bill C-20 would do nothing to increase home ownership. All the bill would do is create new bureaucracy to duplicate the work of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the Canada Lands Company. It does not matter how many new bureaucracies the Liberals build; the Liberal record is clear. Over \$1 billion was spent in

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the last eight years, and not a single program has even reached a passing grade after eight years of that 10-year plan. Liberals continue to fail the housing test, but Canadians pay the price.

Only Conservatives can be trusted to get the government out of the way so Canadians can build the homes they need and the homes they want.

• (1805)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must say that I always enjoy listening to the member opposite. I know she puts a great deal of effort into her speeches, and I suspect there are many Conservatives in the back room who take note of what she says so they can add it to the Conservative spin they put out on a daily basis.

Let us get down to the very root of the difference. I remember when I was the housing critic in Manitoba back in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and there were 20,000 non-profit housing units, many houses built by government, with co-operation. That would not have happened if there had not been a federal government presence in the housing area.

We have a Prime Minister who has recognized the importance of affordable housing, including issues such as disabilities, seniors and so forth. Would the member opposite not agree that maybe, in certain situations, there is a role for government to play in housing?

Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the day when the member opposite is once again the housing critic.

Steven Bonk (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is always full of good quotes. I would just like to maybe tell her about a quote from Aristotle, who said a stable society begins with stable homes. We have seen that the Liberal government has done everything in its power to destabilize the housing market in the last 10 years.

I was wondering if she could maybe highlight some of the Conservatives' vision for how housing should and could be in this country.

Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, Conservatives want government to get out of the way. Development fees form a big chunk of what the cost of a house is. We need to control spending so that interest rates do not keep on going up and up. Builders tell me that they are not building on spec anymore. They are tired of ending up being landlords. What they want to see is interest rates go down and the cost cut by cutting the development fees, so individual families themselves can make down payments and afford a mortgage to own the home themselves.

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[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Conservatives would not want to create such a centralist bureaucratic structure. Here is my question. Would they respect the fact that housing falls under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces?

• (1810)

[*English*]

Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, housing per se does come under provincial jurisdiction, specifically municipal legislation, and Conservatives respect this position.

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy listening to my hon. colleague talk. At the very opening of her speech, she talked about a very important economic concept, that of home ownership. We agree that home ownership creates a foundation for long-term stability and growth, especially for the next generation.

I am just wondering if she would like to expand on that, specifically about what the implication might be for the next generation if we do not get serious about addressing home ownership in this country.

Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the member is bang on. The Liberals just keep on talking about housing. We are talking about building homes. When renters have to stay being renters and cannot set aside enough for a down payment because the rent keeps on going up, that means at the end of the day they are going to have smaller families, and their families are not going to be able to have the foundation because they are paying rent too. They will never get the amount of money to set aside and buy a home themselves, because the prices keep on going up. This affects the whole economy. A good economy begins with home ownership, and the Liberals are bereft of that.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I asked earlier to another hon. colleague on the Conservative benches if there was not an improvement in seeing if, now that we have Bill C-20's approach, we actually are no longer describing Build Canada Homes as a special operating agency and there may be more transparency—

The Deputy Speaker: I will give the member for Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke a chance to respond.

Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, we can save taxpayers a lot of money if we just vote against this bill. One less bureaucracy is going to be one less notch in every taxpayer's bill. Let us save taxpayers' money, so they can set aside enough money for a down payment to buy and own their own home.

Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise on behalf of the residents of Vaughan—Woodbridge and Canadians all across this country, the young, the old and everyone in between, who do not need to be told that there is a housing crisis. They can see the fact that there is a housing crisis clear as day. They see it in the listing prices. They see it in the rent that is consuming half their paycheques. There are young adults living in their parents' basements, unable to leave those homes. Families, young people, are seeing this in delayed family plans.

After a decade of having the Liberals in government, housing prices have doubled in this country and home ownership is increasingly out of reach. For young people in Canada, they are the first generation less likely than their parents to own a home. Eighty-eight per cent of renters say that they feel they will never own a home. It is just a dream somewhere far off in the distance. Half of millennials and two-thirds of gen Zs are delaying starting a family. Youth unemployment has reached record levels at 14.7%, and a generation has been locked out of work and housing.

However, this crisis is not just specific to the young. Slower growth, weaker retirement security, the cost of living and the cost of housing affect everyone. They put pressure on a construction industry that employs hundreds of thousands of people all across Canada. There is a dream in Canada of home ownership, and it is more than a dream. For many people, it is a rite of passage. For many people, it signifies the transition from childhood to adulthood, and that dream is eroding.

The Building Industry and Land Development Association, or BILD, just the other week said that there are only 269 homes that have been sold in the GTA. That is down 36% year over year, and 80% below our 10-year average. Typical January sales in 2026, for example, are 1,300 sales or more. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, CMHC, has said that housing starts are down 15% in January, and it sees construction declining through 2028. It argues that 2026 might be the weakest year in decades.

Builders are hesitant to build due to the rising uncertainty in the market and the rising uncertainty with government policy. Let us take a look at what some of the building associations are saying. Kevin Lee from the Canadian Home Builders' Association says that the biggest barriers to our housing development are development charges, permitting delays and insufficient processes.

Let us look at the municipal fees. They have completely skyrocketed. They are up \$27,500 on average since 2022. The average is now \$82,600. Some cities cite as much as \$200,000 per home. I have heard from people in the industry, as I am sure many others have, that we are now looking at approximately 33% of the list price of a home in government development fees, taxes, levies and red tape.

Approval timelines are another hurdle preventing builders from building. It is nearly one year for a permit, on average. Thirty-plus studies are being required in some municipalities. Delays equal higher borrowing costs for developers, and higher borrowing costs equal higher prices. New home sales are down roughly 90% since 2021, and as I mentioned earlier, construction jobs are at risk. That is the backdrop in which we are discussing Bill C-20.

Bill C-20 does not address any of these issues I laid out. What it would do is create a new Crown corporation that would have sweeping powers to acquire land, invest in housing ventures and provide loans and financial assistance. The government plans to spend \$13 billion over five years: \$11.5 billion for Build Canada Homes and \$1.5 billion for Canada Lands Company. That is the third housing agency and fourth federal bureaucracy.

• (1815)

The central problem with this plan, as the minister himself admitted, is that there are no actual top-line targets. An economist at the Ivey Business School, Mike Moffatt, has said there are no key indicators in place. He has never seen this before. There is no clarity on price points or on what the target should be. The PBO said that only 26,000 units will be built over five years. That is 26,000 units in a country that needs hundreds of thousands of homes per year.

What does Bill C-20 not do? It does not cut development charges or assist municipalities with cutting development charges. It does not reduce approval timelines. It does not tie infrastructure to housing results. It does not cut the GST for all buyers on new homes. It certainly does not eliminate the capital gains tax on reinvestment or remove a single study requirement, or remove or reduce a single municipal fee.

Instead, it centralizes more authority in Ottawa and expands the federal footprint, adding yet another layer of government. The problem we are facing here is simple. It is the cost of building: the development charges, the industrial carbon tax that is impacting material costs, the endless regulatory layering, the approval delays and the lack of clarity. Builders want less government in the way, not more. What has the government's response been? It is that they have a bureaucracy that will solve that problem, which seems to be a common theme with the Liberal government.

What would we do? The Conservative approach would be tied directly to results. We would tie infrastructure funding to 15% annual increases in homebuilding. We would cut development charges by 50%, and we would cut the GST on all new homes under \$1.3 million. This would save families \$65,000, approximately, on a purchase. We would also end capital gains on reinvestment in new housing to spur the economy.

If we look at the bigger picture, housing starts are less than half of what is needed to restore affordability. From 2022 to 2031, it is predicted we will see the fewest homes built per person since 1972. This is a crisis that is built layer by layer, with rising taxes, rising fees, rising delays and rising uncertainty. All of this creates conditions in which development will not foster and will not spur, and developers will not build. Everyone is feeling this and everyone is paying: young Canadians, families and retirees.

What we need to do is contrast this bill, which reorganizes authority, expands spending, lacks measurable targets and does not confront structural barriers, with what the Liberal government needs to do. It needs to adopt our plan and target structural reform. We see this time and time again when we are talking about various areas of policy in this country. We have structural issues facing our country, such as regulatory hurdles and the tax framework, all these

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things that need to be revamped significantly to get the economy moving.

We have the workers. We have the materials, and we have the capital. We need a government that is willing to work with us to remove these barriers. Canadians deserve measurable targets, lower costs and real supply growth, and they deserve a path to ownership. That is the social contract in this country: People want to own their homes. Government can partner with municipalities to make these things happen. It can partner with the provincial governments and work together to remove some of the costs impeding the growth of this sector. It is long past due that we have a change in direction.

What we do not need is more recycled policy. We do not need to see the same approach over and over again. We certainly do not need more government bureaucracy and more government spending. Housing must be restored for an entire generation of Canadians that feels left out.

• (1820)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is the bottom line. Less than a year ago, Canada elected a new Prime Minister and a government that made the commitment to achieve 500,000 homes being built per year within the next 10 years, to get to that goal. We are working with provinces of all political stripes, from Progressive Conservative governments to New Democratic governments. We are working together in order to be able to achieve a goal that will provide the hope that Canadians want to see, and that includes working with the many different stakeholders out there.

Bill C-20 is a critical component in dealing with affordable housing. It seems, once again, that the official opposition, the Conservative right, has made the determination that the government has no place in affordable housing. Does the member believe that the government has any place at all—

The Deputy Speaker: I will interrupt to give the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge a chance to respond.

Michael Guglielmin: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the Liberal government has been in power for 10 years now. That member himself has been here for the last 15 years, or is it 20 years at this point? Either way, we have the same problem facing this country that we have had over the last 10 years. We have house prices that have doubled. We have stakeholders and industry stakeholders who are yelling at the top of their lungs what the solutions are, which I laid out. They are to cut government taxes, facilitate the reduction or removal of DCs and of levies, and get rid of the HST on home purchases. Just work with us. Steal our ideas. Take them. Implement them. Let us solve this crisis together.

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[*Translation*]

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have been saying it all day and since the debate began: The Bloc Québécois thinks that the government is making things a lot more complicated than they have to be and that it is preventing the municipalities and the Quebec and provincial governments from doing their work effectively in their own jurisdictions.

I want to know whether my colleague agrees with the Bloc Québécois, which is suggesting that instead of complicating the process, the government should simplify it by simply doing its job and transferring money to Quebec and the provinces. They will each be able to manage this with their municipalities in a much more efficient and targeted manner, based on their specific needs.

● (1825)

[*English*]

Michael Guglielmin: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with the member that the government needs to not add more layers of bureaucracy. It does not need to spend more money on another Crown corporation that would do absolutely nothing to solve the problem. The provinces and municipalities know what needs to be done. They need to be able to facilitate a reduction in development charges and levies. The federal government should partner with them by creating targets and transfers, so that governments at the municipal level and the provincial level can get rid of these barriers and let developers build and get shovels in the ground, so we can create the housing supply that we need in this country.

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola. Before I begin, I want to welcome one of our newest constituents, Harper Alice Frang, born February 9 in Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola. We wish her and her family all the best.

I listened closely both to the speech and to the member for Winnipeg North and his question. In fact, he is the only Liberal I have heard ask a single question today. We have heard Liberal plan after plan, and every time it is the greatest housing plan.

I am wondering whether my hon. colleague, also of Italian heritage, agrees with me when I say that Canadians and we, in this House on this side, have just lost hope because there is always a new Liberal housing plan and never any results.

Michael Guglielmin: Mr. Speaker, this is the third housing agency and the fourth government bureaucracy that has been created. At some point, we are just wondering where the fresh ideas are. Where are the new ideas? Instead, the Liberals are recycling old policy and old plans that would do nothing but add money to the debt. Right now, the PBO has said their plan would create only 26,000 homes over a five-year period.

We know what to do. Get government out of the way. Let us get the industry building.

Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-20, which is an act respecting the establishment of Build Canada Homes, the Liberals' latest promise to solve a problem that they created. The bill would create a Crown corporation, their third that deals with housing,

while our young people have watched the prospect of owning a home slip away. As rents have doubled over the last 10 years, the prices of those homes have also doubled. Inflation has soared and swallowed up their ability to save for the future.

In the last election, less than a year ago, the Prime Minister promised he would build at speeds not seen in a generation and has since spent his time invoking grand speeches reminding us that for much of our proud history, Canada was able to build vital projects and the housing people needed. I say “much” of our history because over the course of the last decade of Liberal rule, businesses have been forced to shut their doors, companies have been forced to lay off their workers, and builders have been left unable to build because of an increase in costs and regulatory burdens.

After the Liberals promised to deliver 500,000 new homes every year, Canada's housing starts are projected to fall as low as 212,000 per year by 2028. Rather than delivering on their promise to build these homes, they have decided to build yet another bureaucracy. This makes it their fourth attempt at using a bureaucracy to try to fix the housing crisis they created.

While the Liberal government continues to tell young Canadians that solutions are on their way, that they are going to deliver and that all they need is more time, our young people are waking up each morning with less hope of making a down payment on a home, landing a career that will meet their needs or starting a family. If 10 years was not enough, just how much time do the Liberals need?

● (1830)

The Speaker: Speaking of time, I must interrupt. That is a good segue.

We will have to break here.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to order made earlier today, the House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole to consider Motion No. 7 under Government Business.

* * *

IRAN AND THE MIDDLE EAST

(House in committee of the whole on Government Business No. 7, Francis Scarpaleggia in the chair)

The Speaker: Before we begin this evening's debate, I would like to remind hon. members of how the proceedings will unfold.

Each member speaking will be allotted 10 minutes for debate, followed by 10 minutes for questions and comments.

Pursuant to order made today, members may divide their time with another member. The time provided for the debate may be extended beyond four hours, as needed, to include a minimum of 12 periods of 20 minutes each. The Chair will receive no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent.

I would like to remind hon. members that, pursuant to Standing Order 17, every member participating in person desiring to speak must rise in their place.

[*English*]

We will now begin tonight's take-note debate.

Hon. Anita Anand (for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved:

That this committee take note of the hostilities in Iran and the Middle East, and the impact for Canadians abroad.

[*Translation*]

She said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the hostilities currently unfolding in Iran and throughout the Middle East and the very real impact they are having on Canadians abroad.

The situation in the region is changing by the hour. Military strikes and retaliatory attacks have drawn several countries into a conflict that continues to spread.

[*English*]

Several countries in the region have faced repeated waves of missile and drone attacks. Civilian infrastructure, including airports, ports and energy facilities, have been damaged and blatantly targeted by Iran. Maritime traffic in the Persian Gulf has been disrupted, with the Strait of Hormuz essentially closed. The risks of even further escalation are real. Millions of civilians across the region, including Canadians, are now living under the threat of violence and instability.

Canada condemns attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. International law must be respected by all parties. The focus must be on rapid de-escalation.

[*Translation*]

Canada has long considered the Islamic Republic of Iran to be one of the main sources of instability and terrorism in the Middle East. The regime's actions have caused enormous suffering, both in Iran and throughout the region.

[*English*]

When the IRGC shot down flight PS752, the terrorist regime murdered 176 civilians, including 55 Canadians and 30 permanent residents. Six years later, the regime has still failed to fully comply with the investigation and continues to deny accountability. Within Iran, the regime has severely restricted the rights of women and girls and the basic freedoms to which every human being is entitled.

Today, the day after International Women's Day, I want to take a moment to recognize the brave women of Iran who are fighting every day for equality and justice. Canada stands with them.

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• (1835)

[*Translation*]

In recent months, the regime has further intensified its crack-down on peaceful protests, arresting demonstrators, silencing journalists and intimidating those who speak out.

Once again, lives have been lost as the regime responds to calls for freedom with violence. Canada has consistently condemned these actions and will continue to support the Iranian people in their fight for human rights and freedoms.

[*English*]

Canada has taken strong action to hold the Iranian regime to account. First, let me point to the listing of the IRGC in June 2024 as a terrorist organization under the Criminal Code of Canada. Canada has also listed the Houthis, Hamas and Hezbollah as terrorist organizations under the Criminal Code of Canada. Second, Canada continues to implement measures to hold Iran accountable for its support of terrorism, human rights violations and destabilizing activities. This includes Canadian sanctions on 222 Iranian individuals and 256 Iranian entities for peace and security violations, human rights abuses and terrorism support.

[*Translation*]

In its response to the current crisis, Canada is following clear principles.

[*English*]

We did not participate in the recent military strikes carried out by the United States and Israel. We were not consulted in advance about these operations, and we have no intention of joining them. At the same time, Iran must never obtain nuclear weapons and grow its arsenal of missiles that represent a serious threat to international peace and security.

The U.S. strikes come as a result of a failure of the international order. This is not a blank cheque. Canada reaffirms that international law binds all parties, including the United States and Israel.

Again, let me be clear. International law binds all parties. Civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected. We will continue to bring Canadians home.

[*Translation*]

For our government, the primary responsibility at this time is clear: to ensure the safety of Canadians abroad.

[*English*]

Global Affairs Canada has activated an extensive consular response across the region. Consular teams have been deployed across several countries to assist Canadians navigating the crisis. Additional staff have been positioned near border crossings, for example, to help Canadians leaving affected areas, and our emergency watch and response centre has over 150 people working every single day to answer Canadians' calls for help.

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Our government is offering three options to help Canadians depart safely: charter flights, block-booked seats on commercial airlines, and buses to help Canadians reach safer locations when onward travel can be arranged. We have made sure that officials from Global Affairs Canada are in place to help Canadians across the region, including 15 countries in the region, and we have arranged for hundreds and hundreds of Canadians to return home.

[*Translation*]

Diplomatic missions in the region remain open and continue to provide consular services. Consular officers are in contact with thousands of Canadians who have requested assistance. Canadians in the region are encouraged to remain vigilant, follow the instructions of local authorities and register with Global Affairs Canada to receive the latest updates and advice.

[*English*]

In closing, at moments like this, Canada's approach must remain steady and principled. We will continue to support efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and hold the Iranian regime accountable for its actions. We will continue to work with international partners to reduce tensions and promote stability across the Middle East. Above all, we will continue to prioritize the safety and security of Canadians abroad.

Canada stands with the Iranian people in their long and courageous struggle for freedom. Their calls for dignity, for justice and for basic human rights have been met with repression by the regime, but their voices continue to resonate around the world. The Iranian people deserve a future free from fear and oppression. On our watch, we will continue to hold the Iranian regime to account.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, the situation remains unstable and deeply concerning, but Canada's commitment is clear. We will stand up for international law, we will stand up for the protection of civilians and we will stand up for the safety of Canadians, no matter where they are in the world.

[*English*]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has said three things about the U.S. air strikes that are incoherent and contradictory.

First, on March 4, the Prime Minister said, “Canada’s policy itself is to always and everywhere respect international law.” He went on further and said, “Canada reaffirms that international law binds all belligerents.” The minister herself just said, “International law binds all parties.” Second, on March 4, the Prime Minister also said about the air strikes that “it appears that these actions are inconsistent with international law.” Third, the government has said multiple times since February 28 that it supports the air strikes.

The government sees the air strikes as inconsistent with international law but supports them anyway, and the government policy is to always and everywhere support international law. Can the minister explain this mumbo jumbo of foreign policy?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been clear. Canada was not consulted, Canada did not participate, and

Canada has no plans to participate in the offensive strikes against Iran. We support efforts to end the Iranian nuclear program and the regime's decades-long pattern of state-sponsored terrorism.

Canada's priorities are clear. Civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected, international law must be respected, and we will stand for the safety and security of Canadians wherever they may be in the world. That is clear, and that is a clear statement of Canadian foreign policy.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will correct the minister. The Prime Minister was very clear. He supported the American military offensive from day one of the American offensive.

The government cannot say one thing and then contradict itself on a topic as complex as the one that brings us here this evening. How can the Prime Minister say that we must defend international law at all costs and, at the same time, in his own words, support an offensive that violates international law?

Does the Minister of Foreign Affairs really think that is a serious position from the Prime Minister of Canada?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for my colleague. Let me be clear. While we support efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, our support is not a free pass.

Canada reaffirms that international law applies to all parties. All actors, including the United States and Israel, must respect the rules of international law. International mechanisms exist to determine compliance with international law.

My immediate priority and that of our government is de-escalation, the safety of civilians and efforts to bring Canadians home.

• (1845)

[*English*]

Ernie Klassen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 8, our Prime Minister convened the incident response group with ministers and senior officials to discuss the ongoing hostilities in Iran and the Middle East and continued vigilance to ensure the safety and security of all Canadians.

Based on Canada's recent discussions with leaders in the region and the G7, could the minister update the House on the efforts to de-escalate the situation and could she assure Canadians that Canada will not engage in the military actions in Iran?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Speaker, Canada had no advance notice of these strikes and we were not consulted. We have no plans to become involved in offensive actions taken by the United States and Israel.

Canada supports preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and preventing its regime from further threatening international peace and security. We have been clear for years that Iran's nuclear proliferation is unacceptable and contrary to international law. We will stand by our allies when it makes sense to do so and we will always defend Canadians when we are called upon. This position has not changed.

Canada was not consulted, did not participate and has no plans to participate in the offensive actions taken by the U.S. and Israel. We have been clear on this point.

I respect my hon. colleague's question on the matter.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, again I will ask the minister to clarify the government's position.

The government has said multiple times that international law binds all parties and that Canada, everywhere and always, respects international law.

The Prime Minister said in Australia on March 4 about the air strikes, that "it appears that these actions are inconsistent with international law." The government then also says that it supports the air strikes. These things are all contradictory.

Can the minister clarify what the government's position is in a coherent, consistent and cogent manner?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of my hon. colleague and this House, I will reiterate that Canada has long spoken out against Iran's nuclear proliferation. We strongly support nuclear non-proliferation internationally. Therefore, we will continue to reiterate that Iran must not have nuclear weapons.

In addition, the clarity of our foreign policy in terms of international law must be underscored. We are a country of international law. We believe that the international legal rules relating to engagement bind all parties. We support preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. We support international law.

We are focused on de-escalation, including the numerous calls I have had with G7 counterparts and my colleagues. We will continue to support de-escalation. That is a clear statement of Canadian foreign policy.

[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question will be short and clear. I would like the answer to be short and clear too, ideally a yes or no.

We know that a lot of countries have been getting ready to offer proper consular services for a long time. Yes or no, does Canada have a contingency plan for providing consular services?

[English]

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Speaker, of course we do. We have a very robust approach to ensuring we are bringing Canadians home and have already arranged for hundreds of Canadians to return home.

I will specifically underline the three particular means of bringing Canadians home: first, through charter flights; second, through blocked bookings on commercial airlines; and third, through buses

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that transport Canadians to countries where they can safely book onward travel.

Just this weekend, our government arranged a charter flight that arrived in Toronto from Dubai with nearly 190 seats for Canadians. We continue to book seats on commercial airlines, bringing up to 300 Canadians home per day.

Canada remains vigilant as this conflict evolves. We are deploying consular services across borders in the region to ensure that we are supporting—

● (1850)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands may ask a very brief question.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, a former senior commander of the Canadian Forces, retired Major-General Denis Thompson, has said on the record that he thinks it is "highly likely" that Canadian exchange officers in the region knew in advance.

Does the minister have any comment on that?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that the Canadian Armed Forces have been supporting our consular services and supporting diplomatic efforts throughout the world, including in the region, over the last number of decades. In particular, I will say that they take it very seriously to ensure that we are, wherever possible, protecting civilians.

Our position on that matter could not be more clear: Innocent civilians must be protected—

The Speaker: Unfortunately, this segment has come to its conclusion.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the world faces upheaval, when war breaks out, and when energy and food supplies are interrupted, we must zero in on what matters most at home and on what we control. We work for Canada and its people. Here is our home. We want this country to be affordable at home, safe at home, and strong at home, so that we can be unbreakable abroad. Put in more academic terms, we must put Canada's national interests first and foremost as we look at this war, what it means and where we stand.

[Translation]

We are working for Canada and for Canadians here at home, because we want a Canada that is affordable, safe and strong, at home. This is how we are going to become masters of our own destiny, capable of defending our interests and values internationally.

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That principle should guide us in the present war in the Middle East, so let us start with the regime itself. This is the most prolific terrorist regime in the world, a regime that routinely murders, harasses and intimidates Canadians. The regime killed 55 Canadian citizens and 30 permanent residents when it fired an unprovoked missile at a passenger plane PS752, for which there has been no subsequent justice by the regime.

Further, let me chronicle the unprovoked aggressions this regime has taken against our country. In 2023, a year-long Global News investigation found that there are “700 regime [backed agents] operating on Canadian soil [for the purposes of intimidating] and threatening” dissidents who fled the regime. Victims' families and Canadians protesting the regime have reported harassment and surveillance on Canadian soil, according to the RCMP, which has received numerous “reports of foreign interference by...the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

In 2024, two Canadians were indicted in the U.S. for their role in an alleged murder-for-hire plot on behalf of Iranian intelligence. In 2024, agents of Iran attempted to assassinate former Canadian justice minister Irwin Cotler. According to a CSIS report in 2024, “the regime is one of the main perpetrators of foreign interference and espionage” in Canada. “CSIS assesses that Iran will continue to use proxies, such as individuals involved in transnational crime networks” when its perceived enemies are active in other countries.

According to CSIS, “as of late 2023, Iran-aligned cyber actors [such as the IRGC-linked CyberAv3ngers] have been targeting Western critical infrastructure... including [and this is important] healthcare and public health, government, information technology, engineering... sectors.” In other words, they have been attempting to mess with our technological capability to deliver health care to our people through foreign attacks on our cyber networks.

The Hogue Commission lists “Iran as a considerable transnational threat because it is likely monitoring, influencing, collecting information on, harassing and intimidating the Iranian diaspora community to prevent criticism of Iran” and the national security committee found that Iran is one of “the primary perpetrators of repression against ethnocultural communities in Canada”. This list only chronicles the direct harm the regime has done to Canada itself. Forget that this regime is the single biggest sponsor of terrorism in the world, that it orchestrated the attacks of October 7, 2023, that it has killed countless of its own citizens, including 30,000 in the last month alone. All of these moral atrocities only compound the regime with the evil that the regime has done to our country.

In other words, it is in our national interest for this regime to be defeated and replaced by the Iranian people with a peaceful democracy. We need strong leadership that takes a stand, maintains that stand, stays consistent at home and abroad, and shows up in this House of Commons to do what is right and speak for the Canadian people. That is what we do here today. We as Conservatives make it clear that it is in our national interest that the regime in Iran, which has infiltrated our country, murdered at least 55 of our citizens, and harassed countless others, be removed. That is why I supported the Prime Minister's initial support of the U.S. and Israeli air strikes.

Since that time, the Prime Minister has flipped and flopped more than four times, having four contradictory positions in as many days. First, he said he was for the attack. Then he regretted his support for the attack. Then he said that his support for the attack was illegal under international law. He said he would consider sending troops for the attack, which he supported but regretted supporting, and then said that it was illegal under international law. His party says one thing to one group and the opposite to another, confusing our allies and dividing Canadians.

Some of the Prime Minister's own Liberal MPs said in the newspaper today, “What the hell” when it comes to his stance on the war in the Middle East, and now he has gone into hiding, having failed to speak a single word in tonight's debate. In this time of crisis, Canadians deserve to know where the Prime Minister stands. Indeed, they deserve to know where the Prime Minister is.

- (1855)

[Translation]

This is a security and affordability crisis. This is an international war on which the Prime Minister has already flip-flopped four times. He should speak out here in the House of Commons, in front of Canadians, instead of hiding. Where is the Prime Minister?

[English]

We have been clear and unwavering. Conservatives support the right of the Iranian people to remove their terrorist regime, a regime that has murdered countless Canadians and targets our people on our soil, in order to bring forth a peaceful democracy in Iran.

We must turn our attention, though, to our own country. What does this war mean for Canada? First, we must be safe at home. Canada has become more dangerous under the Liberal government. There have always been wars in the Middle East, but they have never spilled onto Canadian streets. However, after 10 years of Liberal immigration, Liberal catch-and-release laws and Liberal incompetence, we are seeing violence and terrorism normalized in Canada, synagogues shot at, dissidents targeted and regime officials using our country as a safe haven.

Government Orders

As of February 5, only one of the 28 individuals identified by CBSA as illegal foreign regime officials has been kicked out. That does not take into account that, according to Global News, there have been as many as 700 of these regime, terrorist-linked officials who are making Canada their personal hotel. Why has the Prime Minister not moved to have these people deported from our country? The Prime Minister has not made any changes to the Criminal Code to kick the terrorists out, lock the criminals up or stop new ones from coming in.

We need a plan to deport all the regime officials. They need to be identified, they need to be arrested and they need to be deported. There is no room for IRGC or Iranian regime officials in our country. Kick them out.

We need to ensure that Canada is safe for its Persian and Jewish communities, and we need a real action plan to protect synagogues and other places of worship that have come under attack. The government has failed to keep Jews, Persians and other Canadians safe in this country. Enough is enough. We are a very welcoming people, but we will not put up with foreign wars and other forms of terrorism spilling onto our streets. This is Canada, and every Canadian has the right to feel safe living in this country.

We must be affordable at home. Oil prices are spiking due to the blockage of the Strait of Hormuz, which transports about a fifth of the globe's oil. The government cannot control global oil prices, but it can control domestic taxes and policies allowing domestic production.

The Prime Minister has brought in a new tax, the fuel standard, and has blocked domestic production of our oil. We need a plan to unlock affordable energy to supply not only ourselves but the entire world. We need to repeal anti-energy laws such as Bill C-69 and Bill C-48, and the industrial carbon tax, to unblock and unlock our resources, shipping them off our coasts in order to fuel our friends and power our paycheques. In this way, we can make the country both more affordable and more autonomous.

● (1900)

That must be our mission. We work for Canada. That is our job in this place. We must be a country that is affordable at home, safe at home and strong at home so we can defend our interests and be unbreakable abroad. We are here for our country and our people.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Nathalie Provost (Secretary of State (Nature), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are discussing a very important situation today. The Leader of the Opposition is talking about the threat to Canadians and how serious the risk of domestic terrorism is.

I am a new member here, but I have been told about an important security clearance, which is an official clearance granted by the Canadian government that allows access to classified information that is necessary to be a strategic participant in these matters.

However, I gather that, to date, the Leader of the Opposition does not have that information, does not have access to it and is not willing to seek it out himself. I would like to know whether he thinks he can seek out the security clearance himself and get involved, with all the information on these issues at his disposal.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister gave a good answer to that question a few days ago. The media asked him a question about foreign interference here in Canada. He said that he could not answer because he had received briefings that prevented him from talking about it openly and answering questions.

I will not be muzzled. I will hang onto my freedom of expression. An opposition leader should be able to speak freely, and I will not let anyone in the government stop me from doing my job and speaking out against foreign interference to protect Canadians.

[*English*]

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I come from the Edmonton region, where so many families continue to grieve the losses that came when the IRGC shot down flight PS752. Over 50 Canadian citizens were murdered that day, many with connections to my region. The regime promptly bulldozed the crash site and even harassed the relatives of victims who spoke out.

When so many Canadians are murdered, this is an attack on us, on our people, on our nation, on our home. Some members of the House seem to have forgotten these events, forgotten the attacks on our country and our people and the continuing attacks on our country through foreign interference that underline the justification and need for this response.

I know that the Leader of the Opposition has engaged directly with flight PS752 families, so I wonder if he can speak to those conversations and what we can do specifically to deliver justice and solace for these Canadian victims of the regime.

● (1905)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for leading the charge to achieve justice for the families of the victims of this terrorist attack directed at Canadians. These were our people: 55 Canadian citizens and 30 permanent residents mercilessly killed by a missile targeting a passenger plane, and then their remains bulldozed by the regime, which has done nothing to bring justice to those who fired that missile.

That was an attack on every single Canadian, yet it took four years after that attack for the Liberal government to even list the IRGC, which fired the missile, as a terrorist entity, allowing this group to walk and operate freely on Canadian soil, terrorizing our people. To this day, the Liberal government and the Liberal Prime Minister refuse to deport the terrorist officials who are known to be on our soil. We must kick them out, we must seize their assets and we must bring justice for the Canadian victims of this regime.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the opposition leader says that the Iranians should choose their own future. I could not agree with that statement more. I wish for that with all my heart. I hope that will happen someday.

In the same breath, he also says that he unreservedly supports the American offensive in Iran. As such, he supports President Trump 100% in this offensive. President Trump also said that in the wake of this offensive, it will be up to him to choose the next leader of Iran. He said that himself.

Does the opposition leader understand that this kind of issue should be approached with great nuance? It is very complex. By unilaterally supporting the military offensive by Israel and President Trump, he is effectively supporting that same president's choice for the next leader. Does he realize that?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, no, that is not true. I support the Iranian people and their right to choose their own government. That is why I agreed with the Prime Minister when he spoke out in favour of this mission. Now, we do not know where the Prime Minister is physically or what his position is—

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition can talk about a member's position on an issue, but he cannot refer to a member's physical presence in the House. It really is important to stick to that rule.

The Leader of the Opposition may continue his answer.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I was saying that this is why I agreed. However, I do not know whether the Liberal members agree with their own leader on that.

The Bloc member says that he wants Iranians to be able to choose their president and their government, but how are they going to do that without removing the current regime? Does the member really think that dictatorships are just going to give in and voluntarily hand their power over to the people? No, this is a terrorist regime and it needs to be overthrown.

[English]

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I addressed this question earlier to the official opposition with some trepidation because it is information I have from friends within the Vancouver area who are also, like me, associated with the Anglican Church and are very concerned that some members of the Iranian national guard may be obtaining a baptismal certificate to hide their real background and intentions in this country. I second the member's call that we absolutely look for any members of the Iranian national guard who are masquerading as real refugees. I want to ask him if he has heard similar concerns.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Yes, Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question from the hon. member. In fact we are getting anecdotes all the time from the Persian community. There is a police chief from Tehran who was spotted in a Richmond Hill gym, working out, enjoying himself, enjoying all the plunder that he and his friends stole from the Iranian people. All over parts of the GTA and the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, the Persian community will tell us that they see known members of the regime living in mansions, en-

joying the good life here with all the money they stole from the people of Iran.

They are not citizens. They are not permanent residents. They are easy to identify. It is time for the government to arrest these monsters and kick them out of Canada for good.

• (1910)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in recognizing the very serious nature of what is happening in the Middle East, the Minister of Foreign Affairs made very clear the government's actual position on what is taking place. It seems to me that the Conservatives have the motivation of trying to portray misinformation to Canadians, when in fact the government is being clear.

Does the leader of the official opposition recognize that the Conservative Party of Canada does have a role to play and that providing misinformation at times does more harm to a very serious issue that we are having to face today in the Middle East?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the member seems to suggest that we are misrepresenting the position of the Liberal Prime Minister on this conflict. My question is this: Which position is that?

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, we can agree on that. My question for the leader of the official opposition is very simple. On day one, the Prime Minister took the same position that the Conservatives are taking today, which is that he unequivocally supported the Trump-Israel military offensive.

If the leader of the official opposition had been prime minister instead of the current Prime Minister, would he not have consulted his allies before making such a statement? Would he have followed the example of France, Germany or Norway, which stated with nuance that they did not necessarily support the offensive because they wanted it to comply with international law?

What would he have done? Would he have aligned himself with European allies or would he have done what his own party is doing today, which is unilaterally supporting Donald Trump's American offensive?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I would have done neither. Yes, we would have consulted with our allies, but we do not work on behalf of foreign governments, whether they are in Washington, the capitals of Europe or elsewhere. We work for Canadians.

This regime has killed Canadians. It has launched missiles to kill 55 Canadian citizens and 30 permanent residents. It continues to harass our citizens and sponsors terrorism on our soil. That is why we are taking action to support our interests here in Canada and to support the freedom of the Iranian people.

Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, allow me to quote a rather old but very relevant saying: The absent are always in the wrong. This saying takes on a very special meaning today. Let us hope that, together, we can see reason.

Government Orders

Perhaps some people would have preferred to see certain others here. Everyone will come to their own judgment. However, a certain someone's presence would certainly have helped to clarify things and reassure the public, and that is a fundamental function that comes with certain titles.

More than six months ago, Iran supposedly had its nuclear capability permanently taken away. President Trump boasted about that with all the subtlety we have come to expect from him. However, he has been criticized for everything he has and has not done for the past year and even prior to that. Suddenly, without consulting anyone, he unleashed hell on Iran.

We can all agree on certain fundamental truths that have been repeated for a long time now. Iran's nuclear program must be dismantled. We must put an end to a regime of terror that oppresses women first and foremost. We must stop the Iranian regime's sponsorship of terrorism.

However, can we question the approach, once these objectives have been clearly established? Is it really healthy and normal to automatically rule out the international institutions that act as safeguards against the inappropriate behaviour we have seen, which has an impact on the entire planet? Is it normal not to inform the usual allies, even if we understand that the UN Security Council was basically hamstrung? Is it normal to accept not having been consulted by the person or country that is supposed to be our main ally? Spontaneously, however, we suddenly support the U.S. and Israeli attack on Iran.

First, they give their unconditional support. Then, the minister and the Prime Minister procrastinate. Next, they have a sudden epiphany and defer to international law. Then they say that Canada will not get involved. Then they say that it might get involved, depending on the conditions.

Finally, today, we are being offered a position, a sort of belated conversion that has the virtue of being clearer: Canada was not consulted, Canada does not agree, and Canada will not participate. It is a belated conversion, but at least it is clear. We are not the only ones interested in this, because Canada is a member of NATO and a member of the G7. It took a long time to understand this, and we are not immune to further changes in position.

It must be said that the trade agreements the Prime Minister is signing all over the place are a long way off from free trade agreements. He is signing a piece of paper at the end of every visit because he does not want to get on the plane empty-handed. There is nothing in those documents that will change the economic reality of Quebec or Canada in the foreseeable future of the next several years.

It is more or less the same thing. No matter what figures Canada or the Prime Minister says, Canada would not even be able to spend the promised amounts anytime soon. Canada is not going to become a major military power overnight. This is the starting point for that reality.

In Davos, the Prime Minister touted co-operation between middle powers. Surprisingly, he did so two days after more or less making a pact with the Chinese empire. Did he speak with the middle powers he is referring to? Right now, the so-called middle powers

in the west are moving in a very disordered way, around, beside and behind the American initiative, unable to settle on a common path.

• (1915)

Let us take a look at the effects here in Quebec and Canada, because this war will change people's lives. We already had a tariff crisis, which is still going on and has been getting worse for the past year. We already had a trade crisis so bad that anytime the U.S. President even bothers to take the Prime Minister's call, everyone goes crazy and it is front-page news. Canada and the U.S. are nowhere near reaching an agreement.

We were already living with the threat of a recession, and now the price of a barrel of oil is skyrocketing, with obvious short-term inflation and a possible recession spiral. The effects are significant: purchasing power, especially for the most vulnerable, the likely rise in interest rates, access to home ownership and job losses. These all threaten us.

Proposals have been made for short-term measures in a spirit of collaboration. I am talking about measures to preserve purchasing power, especially for seniors. These also include proposals to improve processing within our borders and reduce vulnerability to threatened trade agreements. They also include measures related to productivity and wage subsidies.

Today, we are exposing ourselves to another monstrous deficit in the fall of 2026, with no long-term effect and no time to put any measures in place. Heaven knows that implementing effective measures quickly is not what the Liberals are best known for after 10 years. Despite that kind of deficit, none of the measures that people need will have been put in place.

If this war drags on, and if the threat surrounding the Strait of Hormuz persists, this fall will be a complicated time in Canada. Once again, the most vulnerable will pay the price. I am calling on the Prime Minister to present a clear plan for taking care of people. His main role is to take care of people. Canada, Quebec and likely Terrebonne are waiting to hear what he has to say.

Above all, the Prime Minister must do three things: relaunch tariff and trade negotiations, deploy short-term measures to support the economy and people's needs, and stand firm by partnering with other middle powers to save as many lives as possible during this war, which is no reality TV show. It is a war and people are dying.

• (1920)

[*English*]

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over 100,000 Canadians are caught in the growing crisis in the Middle East, and they deserve more than vague assurances and last-minute contingency planning. As the threat from the Iranian regime escalated, the government says it deployed consular staff, updated travel advisories and explored possible airspace access. Those are preparatory steps, but Canadians in the region need action.

Government Orders

In past times of war and crisis, the Canadian government has organized emergency support and assisted in departures, such as Haiti in 2024 and Operation Lumen in support of potential evacuations in Lebanon in 2023. To date, Canada's response to the Iranian crisis has been reactive instead of proactive. When warning signs of impending crisis had been visible for months, plans and preparations should have already been in place.

Does the leader of the Bloc Québécois agree with my call for the government to work with allies and regional partners to secure safe departure operations without delay; to ensure that needed military personnel, aircraft and consular resources are in place; and to support the thousands of Canadians caught in the Middle East and the over 3,500 Canadians looking for extraction, including those within Iran?

The Speaker: I will ask members to keep their questions and answers fairly succinct.

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

[*Translation*]

Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, it is a good thing I do not need to ask my colleague to repeat his question.

My answer will be shorter than the question.

The primary duty of a government is to take care of its citizens, to protect them. As I said earlier, not all of the 106,000 or so Canadian expats have asked to be repatriated. There have been only a few thousand requests. How many of them just said that there was no answer? There was no answer. It takes longer than trying to change Internet packages. It is interminable.

This suggest that this particular iteration of the government, which is just as Liberal as the last one, is incapable of understanding what is happening on the ground, what is happening to real people who are facing real threats and real dangers every day.

Claude Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc Québécois talked a lot about taking care of people. We will assume that he is talking about Canadians in general. In order to do that, at a time when gas and energy prices are rising, we have major projects in Canada. For example, there is the agreement with Alberta. There are even rumours of a possible liquefied natural gas project in Quebec.

I want to know the leader's position on energy development projects to keep energy prices low in Canada and also to put money in the pockets of Canadians, which will help us pay for all our social programs.

● (1925)

Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, I understand that we are talking about oil and gas pipelines. However, there is now a war going on in Iran. The last time Canada wanted to build a pipeline, it took 14 years. I am hopeful that people are a bit more optimistic than that about when this war will end.

After letting a good part of our capacity to develop the electric sector fall apart, the government is now realizing that people who

were smart enough to go electric are having a good laugh when they drive past gas stations.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my leader gave a wonderful speech, as always. He mentioned Davos. Everyone remembers the Prime Minister's speech in Davos, despite the fact that he had been in the United Arab Emirates and Beijing three days earlier.

In his opinion, how did the middle powers receive the Prime Minister's first speech on the American and Israeli offensive?

How does he think this was perceived by our allies, whether European or Australian?

Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, we have no right to speak for people who are not here and who will not speak publicly. Diplomacy is, by its very nature, discreet. We should ask ourselves what diplomats are currently saying behind closed doors.

It is a troubling inconsistency when a prime minister says that military interventions must be sanctioned by the UN under international law, and then, at the first opportunity, suddenly hides behind the American President, whom he mocks and does not think very highly of. I am certain that international diplomacy has understood this well.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the Bloc Québécois leader, for his speech.

Now, I want to quote the President of the United States, who said, "When crazy people have nuclear weapons, bad things happen."

Does my colleague think, as I do, that the President is looking in the mirror?

Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, rhetoric aside, I will not rise in this Parliament to declare that the President of the United States is a crazy person. I will exercise restraint. However, I get the impression that insanity in the use of nuclear weapons has much in common with insanity in the use of weapons in general. We see that all too often here, in the United States and everywhere else. Using violence and wishing for someone's death is, in and of itself, crazy.

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the leader of the Bloc Québécois for his remarks. They are always well thought out and well explained, with truly inspiring language, although sometimes I do not entirely agree or I really disagree with the leader of the Bloc Québécois.

The leader of the Bloc Québécois pointed out that, unfortunately, for some, Davos is not the House of Commons and the House of Commons is not Davos. Everyone makes their own choices. However, my question is this. He mentioned that the head of the government has, in fact, changed his mind on a number of occasions. What is the member's impression of how this might affect international relations with our European allies, our American allies and our Asian allies?

Government Orders

Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, I have serious concerns, and they are not exactly easy to express. I will explain why. There is a tendency to give a bit of a free pass, so to speak. It is as though, whenever there is a crisis, it is important to not question what the Prime Minister says, does, thinks, writes or changes. That is our job as parliamentarians, however.

Over the past few months, in a number of speeches and moments to which he, at least, attaches great importance, the Prime Minister has taken positions and made commitments that have not materialized so far. Had it not been for what appears to be a honeymoon phase, he would be having a harder time politically. It is risky for his party, which does not really bother me, but the fundamental problem is that it is risky for the well-being and the economy of the entire population of Quebec and Canada.

Incidentally, I salute my colleague. I am as keen as he is to disagree sometimes, but a gentleman is a gentleman.

• (1930)

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I want to come back to the current position of the Conservatives, who unequivocally support the American and Israeli offensive, an offensive that, by all appearances, goes against international law and is aiming for regime change. We all hate this regime, but that does not change the fact that this is an offensive designed to change an established regime in violation of international law.

Is the Leader of the Opposition not in fact telling Vladimir Putin that, basically, what he is doing is okay?

Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, that question brings up the whole issue of precedent, that is, questioning the multilateral institutions that ensure that people talk to each other before they take action. Many of these institutions were created in the aftermath of the Second World War to safeguard against the proliferation of armed conflict. It is very risky to play games, calling for an end to such institutions.

I would remind members that, without much more support, President Trump intervened in Iran a few months ago, boasting about the outcome. Nobody took him to task for that. We may not have done enough either, and I speak for myself as well. He felt emboldened to do the same thing again without, as I said, consulting with those who might have served as guardrails.

Hon. David McGuinty (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the events unfolding in the Middle East remind us that, in today's interconnected world, no conflict is far away and no nation is immune to the repercussions of upheavals elsewhere.

[*English*]

The stakes of what is unfolding in the Middle East extend far beyond the region itself. The past weeks have brought a stark reminder of this reality. Military operations, retaliatory strikes and the threat of escalation have sent waves of concern across the globe. As our Prime Minister noted in Sydney, the world's focus must remain on restraint, preventing further escalation and ensuring that the Iranian regime does not acquire nuclear capabilities. At the same time, the hopes and aspirations of the Iranian people for freedom, dignity and self-determination must not be ignored.

Canada has a direct stake in what happens in that region. The Middle East lies at the heart of global trade, energy flows and international security. Instability there reverberates around the world, touching economies, alliances and the lives of Canadians, both at home and abroad. For decades, the Iranian regime has sown instability, and deliberately so, through support for militant proxies, armed groups and terrorist organizations. Through its pursuit of nuclear capabilities, the regime has threatened its neighbours and undermined the security of the international community.

Recently, the United States and Israel conducted coordinated military strikes targeting elements of Iran's leadership and military infrastructure. Canada was not consulted, Canada did not participate and Canada has no plans to participate in these offensive operations.

Our focus is clear: the immediate de-escalation of hostilities, the protection of civilians and the prevention of further conflict. Few will mourn the weakening of a regime that has oppressed its own people and destabilized an entire region. Canada stands with the Iranian people who seek a future defined not by fear or repression but by freedom and the ability to chart their very own path.

At the same time, we recognize that conflict carries consequences far beyond its origin. Gulf states and other regional partners, including Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, have borne significant consequences from attacks on their civilian infrastructure and essential services.

• (1935)

[*Translation*]

Canada places great importance on these partnerships and continues to work closely with these countries, as well as with its G7 allies, to defuse tensions and promote diplomatic solutions.

[*English*]

Let me be unequivocal when it comes to our Canadian Armed Forces on the ground. All Canadian Armed Forces personnel in the region are safe and accounted for. The Canadian Armed Forces continuously assesses threats, adjusts its posture and enhances protective measures to ensure the safety of personnel while maintaining effectiveness.

[*Translation*]

When necessary, adjustments are made quickly and decisively, with the protection of the forces always being the top priority.

Government Orders

[English]

Again, protection of our personnel is the highest priority. The nature of modern conflict extends beyond conventional operations. Cyber-threats now form a critical dimension of national and international security. The Communications Security Establishment, together with the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, stands on Canada's digital front lines, protecting government networks, critical infrastructure and Canadians from malicious activity.

Following recent developments in the Middle East, Canadian authorities have assessed the potential for Iranian-linked cyber-activity. Threats could target critical infrastructure, attempt influence operations or harass our military personnel, diaspora communities and activists. In response, guidance has been issued to organizations across the country to remain vigilant and to protect their systems. Cyber-capabilities are also integral to supporting Canadian military operations abroad. The Communications Security Establishment can provide intelligence, situational awareness and active cyber-protection to ensure the safety of deployed personnel. Legal authorities allow Canada to respond to foreign threats in a measured, lawful and proportionate manner, consistent with our democratic values.

Canada continues to invest in its cyber and defence capabilities. Modern secure communications, resilient networks and advanced defence systems strengthen our ability to act decisively, protect our personnel and operate alongside allies with greater confidence.

[Translation]

These investments enable Canada to address the challenges posed by a constantly evolving and increasingly complex threat environment.

[English]

What defines Canada's response in moments of international crisis like this is principle. First, act responsibly. We do not join conflicts without consultation or request. Second, protect Canadians. All personnel deployed abroad and citizens in affected regions remain our very highest priority. Third, support our partners. Those enduring consequences of a conflict they did not choose deserve our solidarity. Fourth, promote stability through diplomacy, engagement and adherence to international law. Canada has long maintained that global security is best preserved through co-operation, restraint and respect for international norms. These principles guide our actions today.

The Middle East faces a period of profound uncertainty, but also of possibility. The weakening of an oppressive regime opens the door to a different future, a better future, one shaped not by violence or proxy wars but by the aspirations of the Iranian people for dignity, security and self-determination. We will continue to focus our efforts on protecting Canadians in the region and we will work with partners to de-escalate this conflict. We will continue defending democratic principles, human rights and international law.

● (1940)

[Translation]

We will continue to act responsibly, protecting Canadians and contributing to the stability of a world too often disrupted by conflict.

[English]

In moments such as these, the choices we make define the values we uphold. Canada chooses responsibility. Canada chooses courage. Canada chooses the protection of human life, the support of partners and the promotion of peace. Canada chooses de-escalation. In doing so, Canada continues its unwavering commitment to a more secure, stable and just world.

James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Chair, I just want to add my voice to those of other Conservatives including the leader of the official opposition, who has said that our support for the people of Iran is clear and unwavering. They deserve to have a peaceful government, democratically elected, and that is why we support the removal of the terrorist regime in Iran.

I have to reiterate that we can never forget all the illegal terrorist activities, the state-sponsored terrorism, throughout the region that the Iranian regime has conducted, not just in the last few years but over the last 47 years; and never forget that when they shot down Ukrainian Airlines flight PS752, that was the murdering of 55 Canadians and 30 permanent residents. We know that Iran is a major supporter of Russia in what it has done in invading Ukraine with the Shahed drones and the lessons learned there.

The minister talked about making sure there are consultations about ongoing conflicts. It has been part of this House to actually pronounce itself with a vote on whether we ever deploy troops. Can he guarantee that there will be a vote in this House if the government decides to deploy Canadian Armed Forces members and our kit in support of the operations against the Iranian regime?

Hon. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for his concern for the situation. He and I share that concern and stand on the same ground.

I have made it very clear. Canada has no intention whatsoever of entering into this prosecution of a war led by Israel and the United States. Canada was not consulted. Canada did not advise. Canada does not have personnel actively engaged in this conflict. That is very clear for this government. We are going to use our best efforts first to have Canadians who are in the region removed. We have made sure that our military personnel are in safe locations, away from harm. The third thing I would say is we are going to make sure that we can work with other like-minded parties to de-escalate this situation, which appears to be actually spiralling out of control.

[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the minister a question. First, since he mentioned it in his speech, what is Canada's official position now? I understand that when a situation evolves, positions have to be adjusted, but why have there been so many contradictory messages in such a short time?

Furthermore, I know that a contingency plan is now finally in place, but why is it that, while everyone else was getting ready, Canada was not making any plans regarding consular services?

Hon. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, I think that I accurately described Canada's position. It is fairly clear, and the Prime Minister himself has been very clear in his most recent remarks.

Preparations to assist Canadians in the region began immediately after the attack by Israel and the United States. We have hundreds of people in place, both here and in the region, to help Canadians leave the area. We are talking about tens of thousands of people.

We organized flights and increased the number of seats per flight, and we continue to support those who want to leave the region. There are a lot of retirees and a lot of people who live or work in the region. Canada's position is clear: Our priority is to protect Canadians, evacuate them as necessary, protect our military and take part in negotiations to de-escalate the situation.

● (1945)

Claude Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like the Minister of National Defence to convey the gratitude of all Canadians to the members of the armed forces for the work they do every day. This weekend, General Carignan said, and the Prime Minister was very clear, that it is possible that the Canadian Armed Forces may be involved at some point. However, he said that we would not be involved in any offensive strikes. General Carignan said she was working with her team on all sorts of possible situations.

Can the Minister of National Defence explain to us what the armed forces may be asked to participate in in situations like this? Is it about evacuating people, escorting oil tankers? Based perhaps on past examples, can he tell us what the Canadian Armed Forces might do in such situations?

Hon. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, the Canadian Armed Forces are in a constant state of readiness. They are always monitoring what is happening geopolitically around the world. In this case, following the attack in Iran, the Canadian Armed Forces are doing their job.

There is always the possibility of helping other countries, especially in the Middle East, that may need assistance, for example with desalination plants, thermal power plants or other power plants. There are always ways we can help. Assistance could also be provided by the Communications Security Establishment Canada, which does a lot of intelligence work. It will depend on the needs, and we are listening.

Today, our priorities are first and foremost Canadians and the Canadian Armed Forces. Next, we are trying to see how we can

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help reduce the intensity of this war. That is what we are hoping for.

[English]

James Bezan: Mr. Chair, in the last exchange, the minister said that they are not considering any participation from the standpoint of sending military to the region. At the same time, the Prime Minister said in answer to a question last week, "One can never categorically rule out participation". As we know, the chief of the defence staff has also said that they are looking at what they could do.

Historically, we have brought motions to the House and voted on whether there will be any deployment of the Canadian Armed Forces. Those forces could be used in supporting those already in the region or to support the Gulf states or other allies in the war against the Iranian regime, but we had votes in the House for Afghanistan in 2006 and 2008, for Libya in 2011, and for Iraq and Syria and the war against ISIS. Even under Justin Trudeau, we had a vote on the Iraq and Syria war in 2016.

Will the minister guarantee that there will be a vote before we send any Canadian Armed Forces into the region to assist our allies? Will he also address the issue of whether the 244 troops currently in the region, in Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt and the Golan Heights, are safe, armed and able to protect themselves or just sheltering in place?

Hon. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, the first thing I would remind the member of is that there is a difference between offensive and defensive activities. Right now, I have made it very clear that the government is not going to be pursuing offensive activities. This is not something we are contemplating. It is not something we have been requested to do. We have not been approached by the prosecutors of this war, Israel or the United States, and we have no intention of following up on that front.

We are going to focus on de-escalation efforts. It is not helpful in my mind right now to gin up the volume around this conflict on any side of the House. Canadians are worried enough right now. We have enough family members and enough Canadians in the region. What we should be doing is letting cooler heads prevail, and I think we should be assisting neighbouring states, if it is requested, with civil matters, water systems, desalination plants, electricity and other challenges that countries in this region are facing.

It is not a simple matter, and the member knows this. We are not talking about the prosecution of war in this country today. We are talking about trying to get things to de-escalate so we can find a successful outcome.

● (1950)

G rard Deltell: Mr. Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 43(2)(a), I divide all Conservative caucus slots in two.

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[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I know he is very interested in the United Nations, of course. We have actually travelled there together on a couple of occasions.

I would like him to comment on the fact that the majority of members of the United Nations Security Council expressed serious concerns and immediately called for de-escalation and a return to diplomatic negotiations.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres is particularly concerned about the risk of renewed violence throughout the region.

Could my colleague comment on that?

Hon. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, I think that what is being discussed at the United Nations should be taken seriously. However, we also have to admit that there is a problem at the UN. I used to work for the UN. The organization has a problem. It does not seem to be working. Over the past decade, the UN and its security council have failed to resolve a number of conflicts.

I think there is work to do and progress to make to rebuild this multilateral institution, but at the same time, it is a—

The Chair: I have to interrupt the minister so debate can continue.

The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills North.

[*English*]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills North, CPC): Mr. Chair, the government's position on the war in the Middle East has been contradictory and incoherent. I think, when I say that, I am being generous in my criticism. The Prime Minister and government members have said multiple times that they support U.S. air strikes against Iran to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and to prevent Iran's regime from further threatening international peace and security.

When the U.S. air strikes began on Saturday, February 28, the government issued a formal statement, issued jointly in the names of the Prime Minister and the foreign affairs minister, which can be found, if the public is interested, on the PMO's website. It states unequivocally, "Canada supports the United States acting to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and to prevent its regime from further threatening international peace and security." In other words, the government unequivocally supports the U.S. air strikes against Iran. This is clear, unambiguous, coherent and consistent.

However, then several days passed and some Liberals became uneasy with the Prime Minister's clear, unambiguous, coherent and consistent statement, so the government started to backtrack ambiguously, incoherently and inconsistently. On March 3, the Prime Minister said, with respect to his support for the air strikes, that he took the position with regret.

Here is exactly what he said:

We take this position with regret, because the current conflict is another example of the failure of the international order. Despite decades of United Nations Security Council resolutions, the tireless work of the International Atomic Energy Agency,

and a succession of sanctions and diplomatic frameworks, Iran's nuclear threat remains.

In other words, the Prime Minister took the position in support of the air strikes with regret and says the current conflict is an example of the failure of the international order, including diplomatic frameworks.

On the same day, the national defence minister came out and called for a diplomatic end to the U.S. air strikes, saying that the government would prefer to see the U.S. air strikes cease. Here is what the national defence minister said on the very same day the Prime Minister issued the previous statement: "We're also calling for a diplomatic end to it. We very much would prefer to see peace and a ceasefire." In other words, the government, on the same day it said diplomacy had failed, was calling for more diplomacy. It said it supported the U.S. air strikes but regretted supporting the U.S. air strikes.

Does the government support the air strikes, or is it calling for a ceasefire? It is not clear. Which is it?

Then, on March 4, the Prime Minister said this about the U.S. air strikes: "Canada's policy itself is to always and everywhere respect international law." He then further said, "Canada reaffirms that international law binds all belligerence." The foreign affairs minister tonight in the House said that "international law binds all parties." At the same time, on March 4, the Prime Minister said about the air strikes that they appear inconsistent with international law. He said, "Prima facie, it appears that these actions are inconsistent with international law."

However, the Prime Minister has said multiple times, as has the government, that he consistently supports the air strikes. Does the government see the air strikes as inconsistent with international law, but support them anyway, while its policy is to call on Canada and the United States and all international parties to always and everywhere, all the time, support international law? This is completely contradictory and inconsistent.

To summarize, here is the government's position on the conflict in the Middle East: It supports the U.S. acting with air strikes, but it also regrets having to support the U.S. in air strikes. It calls for a ceasefire of the air strikes, but it calls for the air strikes to continue. The international order and diplomacy have failed, but it is calling for more diplomacy. It calls on all parties, including Canada and the United States, to uphold international law, but it believes the air strikes are inconsistent with international law, yet it supports them. The government's foreign policy is a complete, incoherent mess.

● (1955)

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chair, several things are interesting this evening.

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I completely agree with my colleague that the Liberal Party's changing positions have resulted in confusion. This is not how a party in power should behave. The New Democrats have not risen this evening. I do not think we are hearing them even though they held a press conference today calling for an emergency debate. Theirs is an unusual position.

In contrast, the Conservatives have a clear position, but that does not mean it makes sense.

Here is my question for my colleague: When the Leader of the Opposition said he was proud of his Prime Minister and his first speech, in which he blindly supported Donald Trump's offensive, did he realize at the time that Donald Trump had said Iran's next leader—

The Chair: I must interrupt the hon. member to give the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills North an opportunity to respond.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I really appreciated my colleague's remarks.

Our position is clear. The regime in Iran poses a threat to citizens here in Canada, a threat to the international system and a threat to peace and security in the Middle East.

That is why we oppose the regime in Tehran, and we are pleased that the regime can no longer threaten our country as it did before.

[*English*]

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Chair, my colleague's excellent speech highlighted the gross inconsistencies in the government's position. On a debate so important, I would think that more members of the government would actually be willing to show up, listen and participate in this conversation.

I ask the member to comment on the use of Shahed drones as part of the invasion of Ukraine and the close relationship between the regime in Tehran and the Putin regime. We are seeing a collaboration among belligerents and among dictators, and I know people in the Ukrainian community, as well as those in the Iranian community, want to see an end to this regime and an end to the support that it has been offering Vladimir Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

• (2000)

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, my hon. colleague's question points out that Ukraine, which we all support in the House, was unequivocal, clear and unambiguous in its support for the U.S. air strikes against Iran, because Ukraine, like few democracies, understands first-hand that this is a fight between western liberal democracies and authoritarian states. Ukraine is on the front lines of that fight and has been subject to the Shahed drones that Iran has been providing Russia. They have attacked Ukrainians and their communities thousands of times over the last four years, leading to thousands, if not tens of thousands, of deaths.

Iran and Russia are in this together, along with the People's Republic of China. There is an increasing rise in authoritarianism that threatens not only democracies like Ukraine, but also democracies on the other side of the Atlantic, such as Canada.

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Mr. Chair, I do not think anyone here in the House can be in any way accused of sympathizing with that regime.

Now we are talking about threats. During Barack Obama's presidency, there was a nuclear deal. It was going well, it was working. It was ripped up during Donald Trump's first term. There was a way to make it work. What is more, that regime was becoming increasingly unpopular and was collapsing. Young people were turning their backs on the regime, which undoubtedly would have collapsed.

Does my colleague really believe that this attack will bring about real regime change? I get the impression that pockets of the population that were not sympathetic to the regime will now become very radicalized against the west.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I think that the threat of Iran, in the context of nuclear threats, is very real. We obtained information indicating that Iran obtained 400kg of nuclear material with a purity of 60%, and—

The Chair: I have to interrupt the member to resume debate.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Heritage has the floor.

Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Chair, it has been a war of our medieval rivals over the civilization we have built, a war borne of post-war and Cold War anti-colonial uprisings and of Communism's fall in the Soviet Union reanimated from Beijing today, and a war of nearly a half century cast in modern technologies, the globalized economy we have built and the moral equivalencies we have fallen to.

I rise having just returned from Abu Dhabi, where the closing chapter of this regime began to unfold before my very eyes. As I watched Emirati interceptors engage Iranian ballistic missiles overhead, missiles and drones enabled by Beijing's technology, I was taken back 20 years ago to when I was in Iraq watching Iranian Katyusha rockets falling over Baghdad.

Today, in response to more than 1,000 missiles and drones, the Emiratis defend their country with extraordinary precision. Their systems worked. Their people were protected.

Why does this regime attack Abu Dhabi and Dubai with such aggression? It is because these shining cities represent everything the Iranian regime fears. While the Middle East has moved forward toward prosperity and opportunity, Tehran remains trapped in its same dark obsessions.

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For 20 years, I have warned about this regime. In Iraq, I have worked with Iranian dissidents. For that, Tehran branded me a terrorist. Later, as an adviser to former prime minister Harper and former minister John Baird, I helped close the Iranian embassy in Ottawa, strengthen nuclear inspections and provide political space to millions of Iranians to speak freely.

After 47 years of the Islamic Republic and 37 years under Ali Khamenei, the record is damning. This is the regime that stormed the American embassy and took diplomats hostage, while brave Canadians helped some escape. It is obsessed with destroying Israel, has pioneered roadside bombs, built an empire of proxy militias, sustained Bashar al-Assad's butchery over his own people and brutalized its own citizens over the "Women, Life, Freedom" movement.

In recent weeks, the regime has massacred tens of thousands of Iranians, all while racing toward nuclear weapons. Who helped fuel this final sprint? The Kremlin and the Middle Kingdom saw their partner in the clerical military dictatorship. Russia and China want a new age of empires. They have been afforded the west's best intentions. The G7 expanded to include Russia, creating the G8, and NATO established confidence measures and the NATO-Russia Council. China was granted most favoured trading status, a seat at the World Trade Organization and prominence in multilateral organizations.

None of this was earned. Neither Russia nor China divested their military ambitions, dispensed with their revanchism or displaced arbitrary authoritarian rule with democracy and open markets. As their decisions to decouple from the international system compounded, as they pursued dreams of dual circulation to export boldly while curtailing access to domestic markets and as the state capitalist belt and road initiative challenged democratic capitalism, democracies grew more complacent and prone to elite capture and corruption.

The west's nihilistic obsession with postmodernism swelled, imbued with performative stances on issues ranging from human dignity to energy security and an incapacity to define and confront the threat of a rising illiberal age. Russia turned to the Iranian regime for drone technologies and to China for discounted energy as an instigator for the chaos in the west militarily and through exploiting moral equivalencies.

Two lifetime rulers, undeterred by well-intentioned protestations and unbowed by democratic resolve, stood in their shared vision of their own dominance over their neighbours and the world. From their vantage, at every turn over the last decade, the democratic world adhered to a pattern of half measures to conciliate, failing to make the hard decisions that would defend us against their authoritarian ambitions.

In Venezuela, we see an unchallenged authoritarian consolidation. In Crimea and Donbass, we see a policy of strategic management. Between Syrian former president Bashar al-Assad and ISIS, we see containment. In Hong Kong and Xinjiang, we see performative theatre. In Kabul, we see retreat. In Tehran, we see entreaties.

The democratic world's aversion to confronting authoritarians for what they are, instead of longing for a return to an elusive normal

they wish they had, can be summed up in one word: appeasement. In two years, China has become the principal external supplier of Iran's ballistic missiles and now buys nearly 90% of its oil.

However, this moment is bigger than one regime's collapse. It is about the Iranian people, the millions who have suffered and the thousands who have died for freedom. It is about fulfilling the ancient promise of Cyrus the Great. To the Iranian community in Canada and around the world, this is their moment. The ancient light of their civilization now pierces through the darkness of the last 47 years.

The Prime Minister began with strong measures but now wavers between strength and de-escalation. De-escalation with the regime that launches missiles at its neighbours and massacres its own people is not policy; it is appeasement. The Iranian people deserve their freedom. The region deserves peace. Canada must have the moral clarity and act on our interests to stand on the right side of history.

• (2005)

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Chair, I think one of the things we are trying to do on this side of the House is make sense of what the Liberals are saying and doing about this issue. To give it the most charitable reading, they are still saying two contradictory things. On the one hand, they do not like this regime. They do not like that it is slaughtering its own people. They would like if it were not there. On the other hand, they do not like the intervention. It seems that most of them do not. It is hard to square them saying that they want the regime to go with them not wanting anyone to take action to remove it.

It seems to me that the Iranian community here in Canada and around the world has been clear about the fact that, after everything that has been tried by the people, they would like to see external support in their pursuit of change. Does the member agree? Is he hearing the same things from the community?

Shuvaloy Majumdar: Mr. Chair, the hon. member is on point. He knows what he has been talking about in defence of the Iranian people for a very long time. He is a true champion of our communities across Canada, which are hearing conflicted messages. There have been four positions over four days, including one from the Prime Minister, who once said that the rules-based international order was over, yet only days ago, he said that we have to uphold international law and the rules-based international order.

I am not confident the Prime Minister is clear in his own mind. It is not clear what his government stands for, and it is clear his caucus is completely divided. For our Iranian communities here at home, it is devastating at a time when they need clear leadership.

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[Translation]

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He opened the door: Yesterday, March 8, was International Women's Day. My colleague talked about the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement. It is more of a comment than a question, but I want to commend that movement.

What does my colleague think of the fact that, as my leader said earlier, sadly, women are often the first victims of these religious regimes?

[English]

Shuvaloy Majumdar: Mr. Chair, I join my hon. colleague in standing with the women of Iran and women around the world. I appreciate the fact that she took some time to honour what this is all about.

The “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement is part of a longer Iranian story of women's suffrage. For 47 years, women in Iran have been subjugated by the clerical military dictatorship to a radical ideology that has denied them education, opportunity, a franchise and a democracy. It has denied them the freedoms they are born into.

When we saw the uprisings on January 8 and 9 begin, we saw young Iranians from across the country stand up for their own freedom, and it was the women who paid the severest price. The kind of tools of oppression the regime uses is brutal beyond what I can say in this chamber and something we must hold to account.

• (2010)

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Chair, a regime change in Iran may be sought by many, but it would not necessarily lead to peace and prosperity for the people of Iran if it were to come through an armed conflict.

I recall, as the member will as well because he was with that government working with John Baird, when on June 14, 2011, I was the only member of Parliament to vote against Canada bombing Libya. I asked John Baird at the time about the people who we recognized as a legitimate government of Libya, which included people from al Qaeda. He famously said that, although we may not know the people we were supporting, we could be assured of one thing, which was that they could not be as bad as Gadhafi.

The reality now is that we have a failed state in Libya. It exported a lot of arms to conflicts and terrorism around the world. Can we reflect on how we can bring about a regime change so that there is peace and stability?

Shuvaloy Majumdar: Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for her question and the offering of her wisdom. What we have seen in the wars over the last 20 years are mistakes and errors that might have been corrected had we had today's wisdom, but we did not.

Today, what we have is the story of the Iranian people themselves. They are among the most pro-western civilizational strengths the region has to offer, despite the occupation of the regime for 47 years over its own people. The Iranian people go back millennia to Cyrus the Great and the cylinder, which is now

before the United Nations, describing one of the first instances of human freedom, human dignity and religious freedom. It is that aspiration that is now piercing through the veil of this 47-year-old tyranny, and the people of Iran are at a point where they have had enough of their government. They have paid the price with rivers of blood across the streets of Tehran and across the country.

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will be sharing my time with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Tonight's debate comes at a time of profound uncertainty in the Middle East. Canada's position on the current situation is clear: We are calling for de-escalation, we urge all parties to exercise restraint, and we reaffirm that the security and sovereignty of partners in the region must be protected.

[English]

At the same time, Canada has long been clear-eyed about one of the central drivers of instability in the Middle East: the actions of the Iranian regime. For decades, Iran's leadership has pursued policies that undermine regional security. The regime has supported armed proxy groups throughout the Middle East, advanced its ballistic missile capabilities and continued activities related to uranium enrichment that raise serious concerns for the international community. In recent days, those destabilizing patterns have been on full display.

[Translation]

Although the geopolitical dimensions of this crisis are considerable, we must also acknowledge its deeply human dimension. Tens of thousands of Canadians live, work and travel throughout the Middle East every year. Many of them now find themselves in a rapidly changing security situation.

For our government, protecting Canadians abroad is the most urgent priority. As soon as tensions began to escalate, we activated our crisis response mechanisms. Consular officers throughout the region are working tirelessly to assist Canadians seeking information, advice and support. Global Affairs Canada has launched a major consular operation. Additional staff have been deployed throughout the region.

Our diplomatic missions have strengthened their consular capacity, and the 24-hour Emergency Response and Watch Centre has been actively co-ordinating assistance for Canadians seeking to leave the affected areas. This effort is based on several departure options. Where airspace remains open, Canada has secured seats for Canadians on commercial flights and has also arranged charter flights to ensure safe departures.

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For example, the Government of Canada has chartered flights from Dubai and secured seats on flights out of Lebanon to help Canadians leave the region. These efforts have already produced results: Over 900 Canadians have left the region thanks to flights and buses organized or facilitated by the Government of Canada. One particular chartered flight transported some 180 Canadians out of Dubai, and hundreds more seats on commercial flights have been reserved to enable Canadians to depart in the days to come.

In areas where no flights are available, Canada has worked with partners to support departures by land. That includes helping Canadians who crossed borders by ground transportation to reach neighbouring countries where Canadian consular officials are ready to assist them on the next leg of their journey. Canadian officials have been deployed to countries such as Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan to get Canadians across borders and provide them with immediate support, assistance with their documents and, of course, help arranging travel back to Canada.

This is complex work that requires dedicated public servants working tirelessly to make it happen. Airspace closures, flight cancellations and rapidly changing security conditions prevent evacuation operations from following a single, predictable path. However, the guiding objective remains clear: to ensure that Canadians who want to leave the region have access to safe departure options, provided that leaving is possible and safe.

We will continue to do everything in our power to keep Canadians safe, and that includes bringing them home. These are the responsibilities of a country that takes its international role seriously, and they are responsibilities that Canada will continue to perform with determination, diligence and resolve.

• (2015)

[*English*]

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Chair, it has been my experience in this place that when we hear a member of the government say that their position is clear, it signals a case in which their position is not clear. I have a very simple question for the member. I hope she will answer it.

I would like to know if she wants to see the regime in Iran removed from power.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Mr. Chair, the Prime Minister has been clear. At a time when Canadians are scattered across the region, we want to make sure they are safe. Obviously, we want to ensure an end to the regime, and we want to ensure that all regions of the country are secure.

This evening, I had an opportunity to speak with Canadians about the importance of protecting Canadians currently in the region and of finding ways to bring them back to Canada if they so wish.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chair, why is Canada always behind when it comes to providing consular services during international crises? The Americans had been sending ships for weeks. All the other allies were already prepared. As for Canada, we are reacting, once again, as always.

I do not want to know if there is currently a contingency plan. I want to know why there was not already a contingency plan in place, just in case. That is the key question tonight. How is it that no consular officials had been sent to the region, when it was well known that something was going to happen, given that the Americans were already sending in military forces? Why did Canada not have a contingency plan before the conflict began?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Mr. Chair, the government is always ready to ensure that consular services are deployed in times of crisis. In this case, the Government of Canada was clearly ready to assess how many Canadians had questions and how many were asking for support to leave the region.

Obviously, it has to be done safely. We also sent a number of officials to help those who were already working on the ground. The work of our officials is important, as is the work of the consular services team, both on the ground and in Canada, who are working 24 hours a day to repatriate Canadians who want to return to Canada.

• (2020)

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, I have a very simple question, but the parliamentary secretary does not seem to be able to answer it. I will ask the same question a second time. Does she want to see the regime in Iran removed from power, yes or no?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Mr. Chair, I thought I was clear. The Prime Minister wants to ensure that Canadians are safe when they are deployed or when they are in the Middle East.

We also want to make sure that this regime does not have the capacity to carry out the terrorist acts it is currently committing. That is why Canada listed the IRGC as a terrorist organization, among other things, to support efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. In addition, if I am not mistaken, we imposed more than 200 sanctions against Iranian individuals. Our position is clear and we will maintain it.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Chair, I will be brief. How is it that when francophones contact Global Affairs Canada, they receive a reply in English from their consular services?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Mr. Chair, from what I have observed this week, responses have been provided in both official languages. If my colleague has specific examples to share with me, I am more than willing to take a look at them.

We are capable of providing our services in both official languages, and we must do so. If there is one thing I will do, it is ensure that this is the case. Now, if my hon. colleague has any examples to offer me in order to improve consular services, we are always open to hearing them. The important thing is protecting Canadians and keeping them safe when they are abroad.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Chair, I thank my dear colleague for giving me the opportunity to participate in this evening's incredibly important debate.

[*English*]

Since the morning of February 28, from coast to coast to coast, Canadians have been scared. Canadians are praying for peace, wondering if the world is unravelling even faster than before. We have wondered, since Putin invaded Ukraine four years ago, if the world is capable of pulling together for peace.

My goal tonight is to try to find some common threads, because what this must not be is purely a partisan debate. It is far too easy to point out that the Prime Minister made a mistake on February 28 in being too quick to issue a declaration that we supported the bombing. It is obvious now, and it should have been obvious that day to the Prime Minister, that this is a violation of international law. We must stand with international law.

However, we are Canadians, first and foremost. Around this room and through all parts of Canada, I am sure what we most want is for our country to do the right thing, and that might mean that we have to put partisanship to the side.

[*Translation*]

I think we can set aside partisan differences. The question we must debate is this: What can we do now?

[*English*]

We know the Minister of Foreign Affairs said clearly that we need to move to de-escalation. She is not alone in that. I want to quote the Secretary-General of the United Nations, at the emergency debates of the Security Council. Of course, we know that around the table of that Security Council are some of the prime actors in avoiding peace in this conflict.

Still, Secretary-General António Guterres said, "Military action carries the risk of igniting a chain of events that no one can control in the most volatile region of the world." He said, "the world [needs] a way out now", and that way is "de-escalation and an immediate cessation of hostilities."

How can Canada help? Can we help?

We do need to stop saying there is no international law. There is such a thing as international law. It's the United Nations Charter. It is critical that Canada continually defends the fact that there is a United Nations Charter. We are wrong when we decide it is difficult, awkward or embarrassing to point out when the United States violates the international rule of law by, for instance, seizing the President of Venezuela. It is hard to point these things out, but when we have a U.S. President who, right now, 60% of Canadians see as a threat, we really do need to insist on the United Nations Charter being observed and respected. Otherwise, who will stand up for us if someday we need to remind people that the United Nations Charter defends Canada's sovereignty?

We need to defend the sovereignty of even those nations in which we want to see regime change as quickly as possible. No one will disagree, I do not think, that the Iranian regime is a despicable and brutal regime that oppresses, suppresses and kills its own peo-

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ple. However, that does not mean that the United States and Israel had any legal grounds to bomb Tehran. That was reckless and dangerous, and we will continue to see the consequences, maybe into generations.

We need to now seize the chance, somehow, against the odds, while we are still respected in the world, for Canada to play the kind of role we played long ago, but not that long ago. I am thinking of Hon. Lloyd Axworthy. He was our foreign minister from 1996 to 2000, and he played a key role in getting the landmine treaty. He is calling on the government to respect international law, to speak out and to ensure that we are on the right side of history.

For this, it means that those of us in this room tonight accept our responsibility, not just as partisans but as human beings on a planet in peril, and put aside the obvious fun of making political points and giving partisan jabs. There has not been a single person speaking tonight with whom I would not agree with most of what they said. Not every word, but most of what everybody has said in this room tonight is about how we protect all of the world from an escalating conflict whose ultimate consequences could be beyond the disaster that we dare not speak its name.

● (2025)

With that, I conclude.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Chair, I respectfully disagree with my colleague on the issue of international law. I would put to her three points. First, the right of sovereignty is properly understood to be invested in the Iranian people, not in their oppressors and occupiers, the Iranian people who have taken to the streets, demanded change, been brutally slaughtered and are asking for action to protect them. Second, we have a responsibility to protect people who are being slaughtered by the regime that occupies them, people who have done everything they can but do not have the means to displace this regime without outside intervention. Third, the member would have us go to the UN Security Council where Russia, in the midst of its slaughter of civilians in Ukraine, could veto interventions against its ally and enabler, Iran.

What does the member offer in response to these points that, practically, would help the Iranian people get out of this?

Elizabeth May: Mr. Chair, it is not possible to rewrite the United Nations Charter from a desk in this place. It is the case that sovereign nation-states are recognized for their sovereignty as nation-states.

I will agree with the hon. member. I, myself, dislike the Iranian regime, but the sovereignty of that nation does not rest in its people, unfortunately, any more than the sovereignty of any nation can be determined by public opinion polls.

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[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Madam Chair, I have a simple question for my colleague. Humanitarian support absolutely has its place and must be deployed because the situation over there is extremely serious. However, does she agree that, at this point in time, not one soldier should be deployed over there for military purposes?

Elizabeth May: Madam Chair, I agree with my colleague 100%. The Government of Canada must not support illegal wars.

[English]

Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Chair, there is a rogue regime that promotes terrorism abroad, threatens communities across the world, is on the verge of getting a nuclear weapon and has an ally in the Security Council that would veto any action the United Nations would take against it. Is the hon. member saying that the world should then do absolutely nothing and allow that country to get a nuclear weapon and destroy the world?

- (2030)

Elizabeth May: Madam Chair, the member for Mount Royal knows that is absolutely not the position Greens would take. We do believe that there can be multilateral diplomatic efforts, and we have always supported that the people of Iran deserve to be protected.

Unfortunately, the responsibility to protect doctrine was wrecked when Canada went along with bombing Libya until Libya became a failed state and we destroyed the opportunity to use responsibility to protect. It is a nascent notion in international law. We must defend it, and we should be able to use it, but only within the constraints of those things that are legal.

Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, I have a follow-up to my previous question. The member's answer, as I understood it, was that we have to respect the existing recognition of sovereignty for an autocratic regime that is slaughtering its people, because apparently the UN charter says we have to. I disagree with that interpretation. There are plenty of legal bases for believing we can and should respond, including the fact that we have been attacked.

However, more fundamentally, does the member not think we have a moral obligation to stand with the innocent, and that when we see before our eyes thousands of people being slaughtered simply for peacefully protesting, do we not have at some point a moral obligation to say that the processes at the United Nations are not working, that we will not allow Vladimir Putin to veto action and that the moral, the just and the right thing is to stand with those people who are being slaughtered rather than to look away on the basis of a legal technicality?

Elizabeth May: Madam Chair, the United Nations Charter is not a legal technicality. If we did not have it, this world would be in a great deal more trouble.

However, I do agree with the hon. member. We should not turn away. We should never have turned away. We should not have allowed what happened in Syria to happen, with the butcher al-Assad killing his people. We turned away because it was difficult, but a community of nations working together can take action, and we need to revive the doctrine of the responsibility to protect.

[Translation]

G rard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrak, CPC): Madam Chair, we have come together this evening to talk about the war currently in progress in the Middle East. My late father was a Second World War veteran. He was decorated with the Legion of Honour and wounded twice on the battlefield. He always told me that nothing was uglier in life than war. As a small child, I asked my mother, if war is so ugly, why did Dad go? My mother told me that my father fought during the war so that I would not have to.

My reason for bringing this up is that, as we speak, millions of people from this great nation are experiencing the insecurity of war. When I say "great nation", I want to call attention to the words of my colleague from Calgary Heritage, who mentioned just a few minutes ago that Iranians do indeed represent a great, millennia-old nation that has played a major role in our lives today and whose achievements benefit us to this day.

We support the Iranian people, who have been struggling for 47 years with the dangers of living under the regime of the ayatollahs in Tehran. I can never talk about this people without remembering that, for 47 years, they have suffered under the yoke and terrifying violence of the Ayatollah regime. That has been going on since 1979. Keep in mind that we Canadians, in late 1979, 1980, helped Americans escape Tehran when the Ayatollah regime let terrorists enter the U.S. embassy. This was one of the most illustrious pages in Canada's diplomatic history. For 47 years, a repressive, tyrannical, theocratic dictatorship has held sway in this country. That dictatorship is the main source of terror in Iran, in the Middle East and across the world, even here in Canada. I will come back to that a little later.

My colleagues also mentioned that the country really does present a nuclear threat. They mentioned that, unfortunately, these people could indeed be prepared to build nuclear weapons, that they have massacred their own people for not sharing the views of the Ayatollah regime, that they shot down a civilian aircraft carrying 55 Canadian citizens and some 30 permanent residents, Canadians who were targeted by the Iranian regime. They orchestrated the attacks of October 7, 2023, and, yes, they are a daily threat here in Canada. Our intelligence service informs us that there are hundreds, even up to 700 people, in our country currently acting under the orders of the Iranian regime. We can talk about this with the great Irwin Cotler, who fortunately was not targeted, but who was targeted by the Iranian regime.

As strange as it may sound, the one good thing in times of war is that political partisanship is set aside, although maybe not entirely. Just because partisanship lessens does not mean we should turn a blind eye to the actions of our government, and I mean our government as Canadians. Canadians have noticed that, since this event, the Prime Minister has had a varied attitude, to say the least and to put it politely.

Initially, the Prime Minister expressed full support for the action taken by Israel and the United States. The next day, he said that he reluctantly supported it, but that he was not giving *carte blanche*. First flip-flop, second flip-flop, third flip-flop. He then called for de-escalation. Finally, he raised the possibility of military involvement. That is four flip-flops in a short period of time for such a serious situation. With all due respect to the Prime Minister, with all due respect to the office he holds, there can be no denying that he was unclear. In times of war, it is essential to be clear. I urge the Prime Minister to pull himself together.

We support the initiatives of both Israel and the United States, because we believe that the Ayatollah regime must indeed come to an end. The crimes, murders and atrocities it has been perpetrating for 47 years are completely unworthy of a civilized society, especially one as rich and as inspiring as the Iranian nation. That is why we support the military initiative while, of course, hoping for an end to hostilities.

• (2035)

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Chair, I am surprised to see that the Liberals are not really participating in the debate, even though they are the ones who requested it, but these things happen.

My question for my colleague is simple.

Canada is blindly supporting the offensive currently being waged by Donald Trump and the Israelis. However, according to Donald Trump, the logical next step would be for him to personally choose the next regime and the next leader of Iran.

Does my colleague not believe that there is a danger in blindly supporting this offensive, knowing full well that it should be up to the people of Iran to choose their future and their political regime? I am sure my colleague agrees with me on this. That is clearly my position. Those who support Donald Trump are also supporting his desire to decide who will lead Iran following the offensive he has launched.

Gérard Deltell: Madam Chair, I want to thank my colleague for always asking relevant questions. I was talking about Irwin Cotler earlier. I know that my colleague knows him well, that Mr. Cotler knows him too, that my colleague has a lot of respect for him and that Mr. Cotler has a lot of respect for him too. Mr. Cotler is currently being targeted by the tyrannical regime of the ayatollahs and by the regime in Tehran. I was careful not to say “by Iran”, because it is really the regime in Tehran and the regime of the ayatollahs.

As I said, there is nothing nice about war. What we want is for this terrorist regime to be wiped out and replaced by honest people who will serve their nation and their people. That is what the Iranian people are demanding, and that is what they are entitled to. Unfortunately, that was taken away from them 47 years ago.

• (2040)

[English]

Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Madam Chair, I want to take a minute to congratulate my colleague for his incredible speech and for his clarity of moral conviction and our national interests. He has been a powerful voice in Parliament for the people of Quebec, and they must be confused about what the Prime Minister

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ter and the foreign minister have said over the past week: four positions over four days, and still no clarity in tonight's take-note debate.

I would ask my friend and hon. colleague this: What do Quebecers think of the confused, equivocating and unprincipled Liberals?

[Translation]

Gérard Deltell: Madam Chair, in Quebec and across Canada, people are wondering where the Prime Minister is. Where is the Prime Minister in this debate? Where is the Prime Minister in this arena that we call the House of Commons?

Davos is all well and good. Travelling around the planet is all well and good. Visiting with the leaders of parties and countries is all well and good. This, however, is the reality. The reason he is the Prime Minister of Canada today is because millions of Canadians exercised their right to vote and wanted this Prime Minister to take action for Canada in Canada.

He is not even here in the House of Commons.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member knows that we are not permitted to mention whether members are present or absent in the House. I would ask him to withdraw that comment.

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Madam Chair, my colleague is of course talking about this regime change, which is a good thing in itself.

Here is my first question. When has it ever worked? In Iraq, for example, did a regime change imposed by an attacking force go well?

Second, during the Obama era, an agreement was reached to limit Iran's nuclear capabilities and control its ballistic missile program. China was there, Russia was there and the United States was there. The United Kingdom, Germany, France and Iran signed it, and it led Iran to relinquish 95% of its uranium stockpile, while providing inspectors with free access to its nuclear power plants.

Is that not a sign that diplomacy does work when an effort is made?

Gérard Deltell: Madam Chair, absolutely, when diplomacy is done well, it works. It is no coincidence that Canada invented the concept of peacekeepers. However, we cannot rewrite history. We can write it, though.

For 47 years, this tyrannical regime has been imposing its abhorrent dictatorship on a nation that does not deserve it. It is time to take action; there are clearly countries that feel directly threatened by its nuclear program. Also, here in Canada, there are citizens who are threatened by hundreds of people scattered across the country who are controlled by the Tehran regime and want to impose their law here.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Madam Chair, I would like to begin by reminding members from the governing party what it is we are actually speaking about today. We are talking about the oppressive and brutal Iranian regime, the very regime that for 47 years has perpetrated atrocities on its own people and supported and wreaked havoc throughout the whole Middle East region and other places around the world.

Let me bring up a couple of examples. Justice 88 is a group that commemorates, on an annual basis, what happened in 1988, when this very brutal Iranian regime decided to arbitrarily murder 30,000 people it claimed to be political prisoners in its prisons in one shot.

Majid Reza Rahnavard was a very vibrant young man who dared to speak truth to power and wanted democracy in his own country. Not only did the Iranian regime murder him, but hanged him from a crane in Mashhad so that anybody driving by could see that, if they dared speak one word against the regime, they would hang there dead for their fellow citizens to see.

Mahsa Amini was a 22-year-old young lady who was wearing a hijab, but it was not to the liking of a particular IRGC monster who wanted it lowered to her eyebrows. When she questioned why, she was brutally murdered. Many members stood up and made statements in the House about Mahsa Amini, I want to remind the hon. members in the House.

Another atrocious monster programmed the machine, pushed the button and fired not one, but two missiles into a civilian plane, flight PS752, murdering 55 Canadians, 30 permanent Canadian residents and a total of 176 people, including children.

This is who we are talking about when we are talking about de-escalation and diplomacy. We cannot have diplomacy with people who behave like this. These are not normal human beings.

Here in Canada, Iranian communities are living in fear that someone is in our community who is going to squeal on them and something is going to happen to their families back home or they will live in danger in their own homes in the communities that we represent. I represent an area of the York region that is the heart of the Iranian Canadian community in Canada.

Repeatedly, we have seen these things, yet we see a Prime Minister who has decided to be radio silent in Parliament on this issue. He has not stood in his place, he has not addressed Parliament and he has not voiced any opinion except when someone puts a microphone in his face wherever he is travelling around the world doing his own things. Four different times, he has changed his mind on how he sees the effort of the United States and Israel and the incursion into Iran. What they are doing is trying to help the Iranian people get their country back and to have their own voice. It is a very inconsistent and incoherent message coming from the Prime Minister of Canada. It is unfair to Iranians. It certainly is unfair to all Canadians, especially Canadians in a very vibrant, dynamic Iranian community.

Flip-flopping on issues like this is not advisable at any time, but especially in this particular instance.

Today, I gave notice of a motion at the citizenship and immigration committee that would, amongst other things, do a few things to address the abysmal record of the immigration file of the Liberal government's seven ministers in the last 10 years. In a nutshell, in the interest of time, I asked to expedite the deportation of non-citizens known to be IRGC operatives and to release the name of the individual reported on February 6, 2026, who asked and obtained the right for his name not to be revealed, who is known to be an IRGC operative. The names of all IRGC operatives and all people threatening people in our communities in Canada must be disclosed expeditiously so people in Canada can live safely.

Iranian Canadians and Canadians across our nation deserve to live in safe communities. Canadians have a right to live in safety. It is the responsibility of the Prime Minister and the government to ensure that we unequivocally support the overthrow of the brutal Iranian regime and return the beautiful country of Iran back to its people.

● (2045)

Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Madam Chair, I remain a huge fan of your work and your stewardship in this chamber. I am pleased to speak before you today.

I would like to take a minute to congratulate my colleague, the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill. He has been a powerful voice for the great people of his communities. We are so honoured to have him in this Parliament to champion their cause and be such a clarion voice for their interests, their values and their dignity.

I would like to ask the hon. member for his assessment of what his constituents are advising him, with respect to the confusion they have heard from Liberal leaders giving four different messages over four days in the period of a week. Even during tonight's take-note debate, we do not have a clear sense of what the government's actual position is. That must cause a great deal of grief and pain.

I am curious what the hon. member thinks.

Costas Menegakis: Madam Chair, in fact, not only the community itself but friends of the community gathered together with hundreds of thousands of people gathered over roughly the past 10 days. There were 350,000 people who gathered in Richmond Hill with one voice, asking for the overthrow of the regime, asking for support of the American and Israeli effort to overthrow the Iranian government.

People are fed up. They are fed up because they are living in fear. They are fed up because of what is happening to their families back home. Their loved ones are being taken out of their homes, beaten to death because they dared to say, "We want to have a voice in how we are governed". That is what we are dealing with. It is a brutal regime. With people that behave like that, we cannot have diplomacy. We cannot have de-escalation talks. They are not people who have de-escalation talks. Their way of resolving problems is by hanging people from cranes in Mashhad in the square.

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• (2050)

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Chair, my colleague talks a lot about this coming war and their support for it. However, one of the aspects my leader mentioned in his speech earlier is the impact this conflict would have here, such as inflation, when the economic situation is already unstable.

Is my colleague aware that this conflict is escalating? Earlier, I attended a meeting with farmers who fear this conflict will continue to escalate and who are particularly concerned about the inflation it could cause here.

[*English*]

Costas Menegakis: Madam Chair, it is hard to put a dollar sign on this, monetize this, or speak in financial or economic terms when talking about people's lives.

I will share with my hon. colleague the following story of a constituent of mine in Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill who came to me and told me their first cousin was taken from his bed, in his bedroom where he was with his parents. The young man was taken from there. He disappeared for three days, only for the family to be informed three days later to go pick up his body at a specific corner on two streets in Tehran. When they went to find the person, their loved one, he still had a pulse, but he was near death with a note on him that said, “If you dare take him to the hospital or dare call a doctor, we will not only kill him, but we will kill all of you as well.”

I find it very difficult to sit here and talk about what will perhaps have an economic effect on Canada and, at the same time, say it does not matter what happens to people living in Iran because they are living there and we are living here. That is not human. I cannot participate in a discussion at that level.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Chair, no one on the Conservative side seems to want to answer my question. However, it seems like a valid question to me.

It has to do with support for a military offensive launched by Donald Trump, who said that following this offensive, he would choose the next regime in Iran, because the United States was going to win this war. That is what Donald Trump said.

However, anyone who blindly and unconditionally supports the American and Israeli offensive is also supporting Donald Trump's desire to choose the next regime. I sincerely and firmly believe that it is up to Iranians to choose the next political regime.

Is this not something the Conservatives should consider and factor into their position? I say this in all sincerity and friendship. Is this not a way for them to distinguish themselves based on their current position?

Costas Menegakis: Madam Chair, the brutality of the Iranian regime knows no bounds. The country will never return to the people of Iran until the regime is overthrown. A democratic government must be chosen by the Iranian people, and today that is not possible without intervention—

[*English*]

The Deputy Chair: We are way over time.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Chair, I want to start by saying that I will be sharing my time with the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton.

I want to go back to what was just said. Let us remember that, in 1953, there was a gentleman in Iran, Prime Minister Mossadegh, who was overthrown so that the shah of Iran could take his place. This was done by the British and the Americans. However, what people often forget is that Canada provided logistical and diplomatic support for the overthrow of Mr. Mossadegh, who wanted to nationalize oil resources. Members must remember that it is always a little dangerous to change one regime by imposing a new one on the people.

I want to come back to the Liberals' position on the debate we are having tonight. This is the first time the Prime Minister has faced an international crisis of this magnitude. Unfortunately, he failed rather embarrassingly in his first response when he gave his unreserved and, once again, blind support to Donald Trump's and Israel's military offensive. Sadly, he made that statement without first consulting our allies. It is not okay to blindly support such an offensive. It is not okay to fail to consult key allies before making such a statement. It is not okay to not have a consular contingency plan in place before a conflict erupts. All of Canada's allies had already prepared contingency plans. The writing was on the wall. The Americans have been sending ships to the Persian Gulf for weeks. Several of our allies already had a plan to repatriate people in case a conflict broke out. Unfortunately, Canada did not have one, which explains why it is so difficult for Canadians and Quebeckers who are stuck there to return as quickly as French, German or Romanian citizens. The Romanians have deployed consular services that are much more effective and faster than Canada's.

It is not okay that no measures have been announced to deal with the consequences this conflict will have on our constituents. It is extremely distressing to see the results we are facing and the way this government is managing the situation. They call this their new government, and this is their first major international crisis. That is the Liberals.

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It is no different on the Conservative side. I just talked about that. They support the Americans. They were even proud of the Prime Minister's first statement. They have said so. The Leader of the Opposition told us earlier that he was proud of the Prime Minister when that statement was made. I sometimes wonder whether this Prime Minister is a Conservative dressed in red and vice versa. In short, for one day, everyone was on the same page, Conservatives and Liberals alike. However, it is not right to support someone like Donald Trump, who has clearly stated publicly that once the conflict is over, he plans to choose the next regime or the next leader in Iran, in Tehran. It is just wrong to take such a position. I invite all parties to think more carefully when dealing with an issue as complex as the one we are discussing this evening.

It is also not okay for the NDP to hold a press conference in the foyer of the House to call for an emergency debate and then not participate in the debate. I see the Prime Minister nodding his head and seemingly agreeing with me. As I said, the NDP is not currently participating in the debate, even though it held a press conference calling for an emergency debate on this issue.

All this is to say that none of the positions heard today in the House are worthy of a G7 country, yet all of the parties here, except ours, aspire to govern Canada. I believe that, from the outset, we have been in the best position to see what should have been done. I hope my colleagues are taking note.

First, the government should have consulted our allies. Second, it should have prepared a contingency plan for consular services before the conflict erupted. Finally, it should have taken steps to deal with the consequences unfolding here at home.

• (2055)

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Chair, on October 7, 2023, Hamas, which is a proxy terror organization funded by the Iranian regime, conducted one of the worst mass murders of Jewish people since the Holocaust. The government of the regime in Iran has presented an existential threat to Israel since, frankly, time immemorial.

Does my colleague agree that the Israeli people have the right to defend themselves?

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Chair, the Bloc Québécois has always said and will always say that Israel has the right to fully defend itself, just like any other independent country or any other nation does. Israel has the right to its own security and the right to take every measure to defend itself.

Now, international law comes first. Above all, there are allies with whom it is possible to work, whether diplomatically, through various international organizations such as the UN, the G7, or NATO countries, to forge alliances and ensure that the security of all democratic nations is not jeopardized.

• (2100)

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Chair, my colleague has clearly outlined the solutions proposed by the Bloc Québécois.

He talked about consulting with allies while acknowledging that Iranians must be the only ones to choose their leaders.

Then he talked about preparing a contingency plan beforehand, of course. It has to be prepared.

I would like his thoughts on a point that I think has been overlooked: preparing measures to mitigate the impact on the people here. I would like to hear my colleague talk about that, briefly.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Chair, five minutes really does fly by.

We know that there will be repercussions. We are experiencing them already. What will it mean? Of course, it means that energy costs are going to spike, but it also means that that nearly every economic sector will feel the effects, possibly leading to job losses and rising inflation.

What we are saying is that, first and foremost, as my leader mentioned, wage subsidies should be introduced for businesses affected by these repercussions. This was done before, during COVID-19. The Bloc Québécois proposed it and we were delighted when the government picked it up. When possible, we can use this as a way to maintain the employment relationship, to reassure people about their jobs, but also to reassure businesses that their employment relationships are not lost.

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, Iran did not observe international law when it built up the capacity for nuclear weapons or when it committed mass terror acts on many people around the world, different groups, including Israel.

I would like my colleague to explain how the Israeli government's degrading the Iranian regime's capacity to build nuclear weapons, stockpile additional weapons for its proxies and continue the reign of terror on the Jewish people would not constitute defending itself.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Chair, what we have been saying all along is that we cannot support an American-Israeli military offensive without prior consultation. In fact, even the U.S. Congress was not consulted.

We will always defend Israel's right to defend itself.

Just because someone commits a crime does not mean another person has the right to commit one too. That is one thing. Now, I am not saying this is a crime. I am saying that the most important thing is to talk to our allies, ensure that everyone is on the same page and ensure that there is no impending catastrophe as a result of the military actions of Donald Trump and Israel.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Madam Chair, tonight we are holding a take-note debate, but it could have been an emergency debate. In fact, many of us requested that it be an emergency debate. This debate concerns an issue that is extremely serious and extremely worrying: the situation in the Middle East.

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As members of the human race, I think we all have reasons to grieve and worry about what is happening.

Some Quebeckers sitting here are about my age, give or take a few years. Like many other Quebeckers, we grew up with that classic Quebec film called *La guerre des tuques* and with the saying, “War, war, that’s no reason to hurt each other.” We remember that.

Unfortunately, once we leave tender childhood behind, we are confronted with the cold reality that war means dead men, women and children; it means the sound of bombs; it means souls; it means civilians dying and returning soldiers suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. In many cases, families never see their fathers and husbands again. Unfortunately, some wars are necessary, some wars are just, but it is best to avoid them whenever possible.

In this case, my colleague talked earlier about how the United States and Canada helped overthrow the Iranian regime in the past and installed the shah of Iran. It was a corrupt regime. The transplant did not take and the shah was overthrown. I do not know how necessary it is to point out that no one here in the House has any sympathy for the Iranian regime, for political Islam or for the terrorist practices supported by the Iranian regime.

That is not the issue. I think that the debate needs to focus on other things. Although we may have differing opinions on what needs to be done, no one here has any sympathy or support for those things. However, one thing is certain: Nation building does not work when it is imposed. When imperial wars have been waged to change a regime, no matter how repressive or repugnant the regime was, it has never worked.

Did it work in Iraq? No. Did it work in Afghanistan, even though, in that case, it was a completely justified war because it was a regime that had supported a terrorist attack in the heart of the west? Circumstances made this attack necessary, but the Taliban returned several years later anyway. Is it going to work any better, or work at all, in the case of Iran? The answer is also no.

The Ayatollah regime was on its last legs and was extremely unpopular. Its economy was in bad shape, and it was starting to become unstable. People were protesting, and young people especially were deeply hostile to that regime. It was probably only a matter of time before it fell on its own. However, through these attacks, which were carried out without consulting their partners, the United States and Israel have probably created generations of anti-westerners, who will stay that way for a long time, pass it on and build a common narrative for themselves in that country. They will build a common narrative that will ensure that anti-western hate lasts a very long time.

These nation builders—formerly known as neo-Conservatives during the time of Bush Sr. and Bush Jr., who believed that bombing and invading countries was the way to impose democracy—were, however, denounced by the Trump administration during a different era. I was in Dayton just last spring for the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and the United States gave a speech opposing hegemonic and imperialistic practices. That has never worked anywhere.

Here at home, while we strongly favour diplomatic support, humanitarian support, humanitarian convoys, emergency aid ship-

ments to the most essential consular missions over there, we want to make it perfectly clear: Not a single Canadian soldier is to set foot there for military purposes.

• (2105)

That is a no. It will not work. We would end up getting involved for reasons that are not our own. We would get involved for unsubstantiated reasons in a dispute that solves nothing. My purpose is not to rewrite history, but diplomacy has worked before—

The Deputy Chair: I must interrupt the hon. member. Questions and comments.

The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Chair, my colleagues from the Bloc have been talking about the lack of consultation on Israel’s response to the Iranian regime. I would just like to note that Israel was not consulted before Iranian terror proxy Hamas killed 1,200 innocent Jews and other persons, including 46 Americans, on October 7. Also, Canada was not consulted when the Iranian regime shot down 45 Canadians and 30 permanent residents.

Can my colleague explain how Israel’s defending itself by degrading the Iranian regime’s capacity to create nuclear weapons and arm its proxies is not justified?

• (2110)

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for the question, as it will allow me to conclude my speech. What I had left to say would have taken about a minute.

If she wants us to go back in history, we can go back to a fairly recent time when there was a ballistic missile agreement that limited the deployment of nuclear material. This resulted in Iran disposing of 95% of its uranium and allowed inspectors to visit nuclear power plants. This was during Barack Obama’s presidency in the United States. The agreement was signed by the United States and Iran, but also by Russia, China, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. All of these countries sat down at the same table. The heads of state who find it difficult to look each other in the eye today were all at the same table. What this shows us is that the diplomatic approach works, while escalation does not.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Chair, I will take the liberty of asking a question.

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I want to be very clear that I will not point out the absence or presence of anyone in the House. I just want to ask my colleague whether he thinks it is right that the leader of the Green Party asked more questions and made more comments this evening in response to speeches than any members from the Liberal Party and the NDP combined, even though they are the ones who asked for this debate.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Chair, I will not point out the presence or absence of anyone either, but I will say that I would have really liked, given the importance of this moment, to know the Prime Minister's position. I would have liked to hear it, but I imagine that will not happen tonight.

Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience, Lib.): Madam Chair, can I ask my colleague where his leader is tonight?

The Deputy Chair: No, that is not a question members may ask.

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Chair, I am more than happy to answer that question.

The parliamentary secretary can go back and listen to my leader's speech, which he delivered at around 7 p.m. Actually, I think he could listen to my answer as well. He is asking me a question from the other side of the House. That explains why he was not aware that our leader delivered a speech earlier.

The Deputy Chair: I would remind hon. members that they are not to ask these types of questions about speeches.

The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, there are 700 senior officials of the Iranian regime in Canada, yet the Liberals have only managed to deport one, and they are hiding the identity of some of these persons, one in particular, in their deportation hearings.

Would my colleague agree that it is not in the public interest to hide the identity of Iranian officials whom the CBSA has deemed it necessary to deport from the country when no other person gets these rights?

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Chair, quite honestly, I say this with some reservation because I have not specifically researched the subject of the question. I will therefore be cautious with my answers. Based on the wording and the way it was phrased, and if everything is accurate, then yes, there appears to be a significant degree of laxity. What did she say? She said that only one individual had been deported. That is clearly insufficient and shows an alarming degree of laxity.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Chair, I want to know whether my colleague finds that the consular services provided since the start of the conflict are worthy of a G7 country. Several stories have been reported in the newspapers, such as the *Journal de Montréal*, and in other media. I get the impression that Canadian consular services are still lagging behind the consular services of many of our allies.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Chair, that is indeed the case. Consular services are falling short. In fact, the newspaper was reporting on how francophones were being answered in English only. That does not measure up. That is unacceptable, but the scariest part is the lack of preparation before things started.

[*English*]

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Chair, for 47 years, the Iranian regime has ruled in the shadow of repression, crushing its own people, jailing and murdering dissidents, massacring tens of thousands and acquiring a nuclear arsenal. This we have made clear in the debate tonight. For a lot of people, the dream of that regime actually crumbling is closer than it has ever been in their lifetime.

There is going to be lots said about the position of Canada, the conflict in Iran, the toppling of a regime and our nation's place in the world, but I am going to talk about what this means right here for us in Canada, because that is what we can control.

This is about building a safer country, free of terrorism, a country where freedom and protection under the law actually mean something for everyone here. We have 700 IRGC agents, whom we know about, who are currently active in this country. The minister stood up today and could not even tell us if there was more than one who has been expelled.

I am a proud member of Parliament who represents a small part of that community. On a regular basis, I get calls from members of that community, members of that community who have run away from that regime. They are scared, with a blurred out background, sitting in their cars, with a blacked out number, away from their homes, because they are terrified that the repression and the reach of that regime is right here in our country. We know of senior members of the regime who have worked out in the same gyms as they have, a neighbourhood gym in my own constituency. We know of senior members of the regime eating in fancy steak houses. We know of senior members of the regime's kids who are studying in universities here.

I cannot tell the House how disappointing it is to hear the Prime Minister have four different positions on this in four days. In fact, I think we heard two more different positions here in this debate, in the House, throughout the day. This is, of course, unclear to the hundreds of thousands of Iranian Canadians who have been in the streets calling for the toppling of the regime, but it is even more concerning to our allies and to our place in the world.

I am going to go back to what we can do right here. There has been violence in our communities. There have been people kidnapped. There have been, potentially, murders because of the reach of the mullah's thugs. I want to speak for a second directly to the Iranian Canadian community. I want to say clearly in the House, because it has not been said: The mullahs are not the history of Iran. The mullahs can never be the history of Iran, and it is our responsibility as the members of Parliament of a G7 country, members of the civilized world, members of a western democracy, to stand up against tyranny at every opportunity we get.

That opportunity has been given to the Prime Minister tonight, and he is nowhere to be found in this debate throughout the day in the House. He has not made his position clear in the House of Commons or to Parliament at all. He has made a position sort of clear on one day. He first said that he supported the strikes. Then he said he regretted that support. Then he said it was in contravention of international law. Then he somehow said that he would join the strikes. Then he said he was not asked to join the strikes. I am going on and on because we can see how ridiculous it is to anybody watching this, such as our allies and those in the community who are suffering from the repression right here in Canada.

I want to make a few things very clear, and I will do it in one minute. I want the government to commit today to expelling every single regime agent who has made Canada their own playground for the activities we see on the other side of the world that have subjugated a population of poets and architects and those yearning for freedom.

I want every single one of those agents gone from this country so that the notion of “Woman, Life, Freedom” actually means something. I want every single Liberal who stood on a stage for the last three years chanting “Woman, Life, Freedom” to actually mean it in the House, to actually show up for this debate and to actually have a position on it.

• (2115)

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for her contribution to the debate, even if we disagree. I fully understand why people desperately want to see this regime relegated to the trash heap of history. However, at what time in history and in which country have we seen an armed liberator successfully impose democracy on a country in the aftermath of an attack?

• (2120)

[*English*]

Melissa Lantsman: Madam Chair, when members in the House line up with Iranian Canadians, chanting “Woman, Life, Freedom”, supporting the rights of the LGBT community not to be thrown off a roof or supporting women's rights in Iran, what did they think that meant? What did they think the hundreds of thousands of people in the crowd were chanting for? Did they think it was just going to be a magical democracy that came out of nowhere? Finally, the Iranian people are on the verge of freedom, and we are right there with them.

Sandra Cobena (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Madam Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for her strong convictions. I

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would be interested to hear her thoughts on the consequences and damage of having the Prime Minister, the leader of this country, change positions so many times. What does that say not only to Canadians and to the Iranian diaspora here, but also to the rest of the world?

Melissa Lantsman: Madam Chair, I think it is a concerted strategy. It is a concerted strategy of saying one thing to one group of people at a certain time and an entirely different thing to another group of people. We have seen that strategy play out, where the Prime Minister divides the Canadian population on an issue of foreign affairs without ever taking a position. The only problem now is that everybody sees the game. Everybody sees the game that the Prime Minister is playing, including our allies. It is pretty sad.

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Chair, my colleague did not answer the question from my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton. Does she know of a country where forced nation-building has worked, and does she believe that forced nation-building, like what Donald Trump is doing right now, will really meet the expectations of the “Women, Life, Freedom” movement?

[*English*]

Melissa Lantsman: Madam Chair, we have always advocated the same position: that the freedom of Iran belongs to the people of Iran, that the future of Iran belongs to the people of Iran and that the decision of how they are led in the future only belongs to the Iranian people. We will continue to take that position. By any means necessary, if this regime is one step closer to being toppled, I think that is a good day for western democracy and it is an even better day for human history.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Chair, I could not agree more with the hon. member for Thornhill that it would be a great day to see the end of this regime. My problem is that the lessons of history tell us that when wars have started for regime change, they often fail to achieve regime change and worse leadership is put in place by the same kinds of thugs we were hoping to get rid of the first time.

I ask the hon. member if she sees a pathway to the people of Iran being able to choose their own leadership in a situation of conflict that is escalating out of control.

Melissa Lantsman: Madam Chair, the path only starts when the current regime is toppled, and we are a step closer to that today than we ever have been in my lifetime and in the 47 years of this brutal dictatorship. The member opposite has a long illustrious career in this place, and I hope she is not suggesting that we just give up when we do not see the outcome we want. That is not what she has done in this place, so I am surprised that she is advocating that for an entire group of people.

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Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Chair, to respond to some of the points being made across the way, it seems bizarre to me to say that the lessons of history are that intervention in defence of people who are suffering and are seeking democracy can never succeed. There is Germany and Japan; there are many instances. Frankly, Afghanistan was stabilized and was democratic until an abrupt pullout. To suggest that somehow defence of the innocent can never lead to the advance of democracy is clearly historically wrong. Removing the regime so that the people can choose their own government is a path forward.

Melissa Lantsman: Madam Chair, I will thank my colleague for his comment.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Chair, the Iranian regime is, as my colleague has said, a brutal dictatorship that is directly responsible for the death of Canadians, never mind countless Jewish people and others. It has engaged in a reign of terror over its own people. I think of Mahsa Amini and the women in Iran. This is a brutal dictatorship.

After much pressure from the Conservatives for years, the Liberal government finally designated the IRGC as a terrorist organization. The problem is that there has not been a lot of enforcement on what that means in terms of Iranian officials. These are people who are senior officials directly involved in human rights abuses. There has not been a lot of action taken by the Liberal government to deport the over 700 people we know are in the country who would fall under this category. In fact, today there is a significant Globe and Mail story, I believe it was, that showed that there was only one person who fit this category who was deported.

I would just say this. Today we had officials in front of our immigration committee and we asked them, essentially, why this was the case. These are reasons that were cited today: that there were no flights to Iran, that they needed to protect the privacy of Iranian regime officials and that there were pending asylum claims. That is bananas. The reality is that hundreds of senior Iranian officials who are complicit in human rights abuses have come to Canada and remain here, and the Liberal government is not really doing anything about it. The government is letting its officials just say, "Okay, this is fine." The Liberals need to exert political will and say that things have to change.

The reality is that Canada is becoming an attractive destination for Iranian regime officials to flee because they know that lax screening procedures allow them to enter undetected, and even if they are detected, they are not going to be deported because they have endless appeal processes available to them. They can claim asylum, and there are loopholes in the laws and in the processes.

I would like to think that nobody in this place would like to see this continue to happen. What we saw today at our committee was one of the worst exercises in bureaucratic incompetence that I have seen in almost my entire tenure in this place. I will put it this way: If I were the immigration minister, I would have called all of these officials into my office, raked them over the coals and given them a plan on how to do better. Public safety is at stake and there are members of the Iranian diaspora in Canada who feel deeply unsafe.

We are not just opposing the Liberals' failed approach here. Conservatives are also proposing a constructive path forward. Today,

the government, actually all members in this place, can do something material and concrete to oppose the Iranian regime with the strokes of a few pens. Conservatives will be provoking a debate in the immigration committee over the following motion, which we gave notice of today.

We would like the Liberals to undertake a comprehensive review of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act with an eye to modernize it to prevent Iranian regime officials from avoiding deportation by clearly ensuring that non-citizens who are deemed inadmissible, if they are involved in regime-linked businesses, spreading propaganda or human rights abuses, are deported. For example, an Iranian official was able to evade deportation, even though he ran a regime-funded propaganda distribution newspaper, even though he was a deputy general in the supreme leader's office in the U.A.E., and even though he held a senior position in the Friday imams policy propaganda, because he said he was not a cabinet minister, so he should be allowed to stay here. The law clearly needs to be updated and, frankly, shame on the IRB for allowing him to stay here.

● (2125)

We have other measures in here as well. One is to create an exemption for non-refoulement protections for Iranian regime officials who have been deemed inadmissible due to human rights abuses. We would also like the government to table, with Parliament, the identities of known Iranian regime officials who are currently present in Canada, especially those under deportation orders. These are common-sense measures that would keep Iranian diaspora and, frankly, all Canadians safe, and the government could do them today. It would be a way for Canada to strike a blow at the heart of the regime and to say, "No, Canada is not a safe destination for human rights abusers who have been involved in this regime."

If we do not do this, I suspect that in a very short period of time, some prime minister will have to stand up and make an apology.

● (2130)

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chair, I want to thank my colleague, someone I hold in the highest regard, and ask her a fairly simple question.

Earlier today, the Leader of the Opposition said that he was proud of the Prime Minister who, without consulting our allies, declared that he unequivocally supported the American and Israeli offensive. In the same breath, he also said that had he been prime minister, he would have consulted our allies before making a statement.

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He cannot have it both ways: Would he have consulted our allies before making a statement, or is he proud of the Prime Minister's statement, which was made without consulting our allies?

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Chair, here is what I know. The Iranian regime did not consult the Jewish people when it murdered 1,200 people who were innocent, on October 7, 2023. It did not consult the dozens of Canadians who were blown to smithereens in an attack in January 2020. I could stand here for hours and talk about all the regime's human rights abuses for which it did not consult the international community and that, frankly, the lefty Squish-Os in the international community let it get away with for years.

Therefore, I support the right of Israel to defend itself against the terror that it has experienced from the Iranian regime, and I would like the Liberal government to do more to deport Iranian officials who see Canada as a safe haven due to Liberal inaction.

Sandra Cobena (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Chair, I held an open house this weekend in my riding, which has a large Iranian community. Its members know there are about 700 IRGC operatives in Canada. One of the things attendees asked me was to explain why the Liberal government is not doing anything about expelling them and is allowing them to operate here and to intimidate Canadians.

I would love to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Chair, the Liberal government needs to be doing more. It is patently crazy that it is saying things such as that it has deported only one because there are no flights to Iran, and that it should protect their identities and let them claim asylum. That is just craziness. Frankly, the minister needs to go to her officials, tell them to read the room, that people are unsafe, that these are human rights abusers and that maybe we should deport them as the law says we should do.

This is why Conservatives have put forward a common-sense motion at the immigration committee. We will be triggering a very publicized debate on this. My colleagues will have Wednesday caucus meetings. I would ask my Liberal colleagues to take this seriously.

I tried to write the motion so that it was politically palatable. Under the auspices of the current law, we are asking for things like a review. There is no reason why we should not be supporting these measures and keeping Canadians safe.

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Mr. Chair, I think it is pretty clear where our positions differ. Although we agree that we should not be partisan, it is also healthy to have a debate. It is healthy when not everyone is moving in the same direction. That is normal, because truth emerges from compromise and from tensions reaching equilibrium. That is how things should work in a democracy. If we all moved in the same direction, it would not work.

That being said, we are having a take-note debate here, the whole point of which is to raise different points of view. What does my colleague think about the silence of the Liberal members who want-

ed this debate, but from whom we are hearing very little this evening?

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Chair, my colleague is asking me to put my mind into the minds of my Liberal colleagues. That is something I do not feel like doing tonight.

There is a motion in front of the immigration committee. There are already media stories on it. I intend to make this a big issue. I ask all members here to take this back to their colleagues at their caucus meetings on Wednesday morning. This should be supportable, and we should have government action on this to ensure that Iranian regime officials are deported. They should not be allowed to stay in Canada. Their identities should not be protected because their lawyers asked for privacy. They should not be given asylum. It is just bananas. Let us get them out of the country.

• (2135)

Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will be sharing my time with the member for Willowdale.

First of all, I would say that this debate tonight, for me, boils down to four simple questions.

Question number one is this: Is Canada safer if Iran is denied the opportunity to possess nuclear weapons? To me, the answer is a very clear yes.

Question number two is this: Is Canada better off, are Canadians better off, is the world better off and are the Iranian people better off if this regime disappears? The answer is yes.

Question number three is this: Is there some kind of horrible precedent being created internationally that is bad for Canada as a result of the action to stop the Iranian regime from getting nuclear weapons? My answer to that is no, and I will explain why. The Iranian regime not only massacres its own citizens and destroys the rights of Iranians in Iran, but foments terrorism across the Middle East and across the world and kills people in other countries for terrorist purposes. The regime can be distinguished from literally every other regime in the world, and the danger of the regime acquiring nuclear weapons is differentiated from any other regime in the world.

Question number four is this: What should Canada do as a result? We are not involved in the conflict. Our troops are not there. What are our baseline requirements? To me, our baseline requirements are twofold. The first is to bring home Canadian citizens and permanent residents from the Middle East. For whoever wants to come home, we need to help them get home. The second is to protect Iranian Canadians, Jewish Canadians and all Canadians from the regime. We need to make sure that people in Canada are safe. We have already seen the regime take actions within our country that have put Canadians in danger. Iranian Canadians have the right to live in Canada not in fear of the regime. Jewish Canadians have the right to live in Canada not in fear of their synagogues being shot at because of the regime hiring gangs in Canada. To me, that is a baseline requirement.

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What has the Iranian regime done worldwide? In July 2024, I was in Argentina. I was in Argentina for the 30th anniversary of the worst terrorist attack in Argentinian history: the bombing of the AMIA, the Jewish community offices in Argentina. The Argentinian judicial system found that those responsible were part of the Iranian regime. Not only were they responsible for the bombing of the AMIA, which killed 85 people and wounded 300, but they were also responsible for the bombing of the Israeli embassy in Argentina in 1992.

That is not all. Recently, Australia discovered that the Iranian regime was responsible for the firebombing and fire that took place at a synagogue in Sydney. This weekend, our British allies in the U.K. arrested four spies of the Iranian regime. They were in the U.K. and are now alleged to have been spying on the Jewish community in the U.K., putting them in danger.

This is unacceptable behaviour for any regime. If anyone believes that the regime will not have nuclear bombs, I do not know what they are thinking. If anyone wants the regime to stay in power, I do not know what they are thinking. The Iranian community in my riding has made it very clear to me, and Iranian Canadians I have spoken to across the country have made it very clear to me that they want the regime gone and they support actions to get rid of the regime.

Of course, as the member for Thornhill said, the Iranian people need to choose the next leadership of Iran. However, that does not mean that the regime is one that anyone wants to remain in power. They are dangerous to their own people, they are dangerous to the world and, especially, they are dangerous to Canadians, which is our primary priority.

Over the last week, we have continued a successive wave of anti-Semitic incidents in Canada that started on October 7 and has never ended. Three synagogues were shot at in Toronto, and everyone stood there. My colleague from Toronto—St. Paul's, who is sitting next to me, was there. I know one of the synagogues was in the riding of my colleague from Eglinton—Lawrence, and he would have wanted to be there.

This cannot continue. Everyone stood there and said that governments at all levels, the federal government, the provincial government and the municipal government; police at all levels, the municipal police that have jurisdiction, the OPP and the RCMP, and everyone else needs to protect Jewish Canadians. I would add that everyone needs to protect Iranian Canadians and everyone needs to protect all Canadians. That has to be our number one priority as a country.

• (2140)

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Chair, at the beginning of this operation in Iran, the Prime Minister was in the same place as the hon. member who has just spoken in the House. Since then, the Prime Minister has described the same strikes as a dangerous escalation, has said that Canada supported them “with regret”, has suggested that they reflect a “failure of the international order”, has raised concerns that the strikes appear “inconsistent with international law” and has called for de-escalation and diplomacy. However, despite all that disapproval, he has not ruled out the possibility that Canada might want to get involved at

some point. There are 700 members of the IRGC in Canada terrorizing and maybe even murdering the Canadians whom the member says we should be worried about as our primary cause.

I want to know if the hon. member will commit his government to expelling IRGC operatives—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Anthony Housefather: Mr. Chair, as the hon. member well knows, this is not question period. I am not here speaking on behalf of the government, but I am here speaking on behalf of myself. I heard the Minister of Public Safety today, during question period, making very clear that Canada wants to expel anybody who should be expelled from this country, which includes the people who are high-level officers in the IRGC, and that he is going to take every single action to keep Canadians safe. I thought he said it very well.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chair, in fact, there is only one thing I want to know following my colleague's speech. When dealing with issues as complex as this one, we need to be thorough. In his answers, the Prime Minister first said one thing and then the opposite. He began by saying that he supported the American and Israeli strikes. Then he said that international law must be respected at all costs. Later, he said that the strikes did not comply with international law. At that point, we were a little confused.

The most important question is this: Is my colleague more in favour of his Prime Minister's position or is he more in favour of the Conservatives' position at this time with regard to the current conflict?

Anthony Housefather: Mr. Chair, I am not going to speak for others. I can say that I made a speech in which I stated my position very clearly. My position is that the Iranian regime is a danger to Canadians, that it should never obtain nuclear weapons and that we must ensure that Canadians in the Middle East return to Canada. We must ensure that Canadians are safe and secure, particularly Canadians of Iranian origin and Canadians of Jewish origin, who are most at risk today.

[*English*]

Leslie Church (Toronto—St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to thank my colleague for expressing the concerns that many of us have about the brutality of the Iranian regime and its wide-ranging terror campaign that is conducted through proxies across the Middle East and spilling into our streets. My colleague mentioned the spate of anti-Semitic violence that we have seen in recent days, and I wanted to ask him if he could speak a bit more about the measures that we must take as a government and as a country to ensure that all Canadians are safe.

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Anthony Housefather: Mr. Chair, Jewish organizations across the country have said that we need to adopt the combatting hate act. To me, that is the first thing this House of Commons needs to do in order to protect not only the Jewish community and its institutions, but all communities and their institutions. The combatting hate act's main provisions were part of the justice committee's recommendations in our anti-Semitism report tabled in December 2024. That, to me, is the number one priority. The second priority is that the security infrastructure program needs to have more money, and we need to make sure that it rolls out much more quickly. I think the minister today made some good points on that.

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Chair, I have a comment and a question. First of all, nothing in the combatting hate act would have stopped what is happening in the streets of Toronto. Would the member opposite agree that what is happening in our streets right now is domestic terror? Will he advocate for his government to call it just that?

Anthony Housefather: Mr. Chair, I take note of the point. I am not sure I can label it. I would say it is disgusting, it is deplorable and it needs to stop. The real goal is making it stop. It needs to stop.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs and One Canadian Economy (Canada-U.S. Trade), Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank all my colleagues for their remarks tonight, and I agree with a lot of what I have heard, but perhaps just to take a very different perspective on this, I want to talk about the perspective of the Iranian Canadian community. As members know, the Iranian Canadian community is approximately 500,000 strong. Many of us have watched as many protests have taken place across our country. I just want to provide a window onto how Iranian Canadians are looking at this as it unfolds.

Let me begin by providing a very brief history. Iran, at the beginning of the 20th century, had the first constitutional revolution in the Middle East. As members can imagine, Iranians have aspirations, but since 1979, they have been living a very, very bleak chapter in the history of Iran. As I watch developments unfold, I share the same sentiment in the sense that I am very optimistic that finally we will see an end to this regime. However, watching things unfold on television, there are also moments where I have fear because I and the vast majority of Iranian Canadians, and Iranians within Iran as well, want to see an end to this regime. At least 80% of Iranians are known to want to see an end to the scourge of this regime. Of course, I am also concerned that ultimately, after all this hardship and the war that has started, we actually see regime change and that Iranians will be masters of their own destiny.

As I said, many of us are familiar with the dark chapters and the terrible things that Iranians have been subjected to since 1979. This is a regime that is truly a theocratic kleptocracy. It has really stripped the country down. These ayatollahs and their henchmen are all about themselves, and we are watching a country that is dealing with terrible economic despair. In addition to that, I think all the members are somewhat familiar with the terrible things that have happened in recent memory.

I would start with the green revolution in 2009, where Iranians courageously stood up to the regime but had to deal with its brutali-

ty. After that, there were protests in 2018. Again, Iranians were incredibly courageous and brave and tried to change the course of that country. Again, the Iranian regime was brutal. There was flight PS752, which Canadians are very familiar with, when the regime shot down a plane over the skies of Tehran. There was the Woman, Life, Freedom movement. Again, people were very hopeful that it would be the end of the regime, but unfortunately, it was not. Now we have watched over the course of the past several months as the Iranian regime has butchered and massacred up to 30,000 people.

Iranians are looking at this. For, I would say, 95% of Iranian Canadians, nothing would make them happier than to see an end to this regime, and even in Iran, it is the same thing. All that is to say, and some people may not understand the complexities of this, that the vast majority of Iranian Canadians are optimistic but also very concerned about what their loved ones are experiencing back in Iran.

In terms of recommendations, I would completely agree with the members who are saying we should be concerned about public safety here in Canada. There is a gentleman who is leading the protests in Toronto. His name is Salar Gholami. His gym was vandalized. It took many shots. That is a good indication that we should be vigilant and make sure we clamp down on any activities by any agents of the regime. We should remind our allies, whether it be the Americans or the Israelis, to adhere to human rights and humanitarian law. We should be concerned about connectivity for Iranians here with their loved ones back home. Lastly, I would say we should remain focused on ensuring that a democratic Iran emerges.

• (2145)

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Chair, an Iranian member of my local community wrote to me to say that Iranians have tried peaceful protest and civil resistance for years, only to face arrest, torture and deadly crackdowns. They have tried diplomacy, and gotten hangings and executions. She wrote to me that a democratic Iran would significantly improve regional stability and reduce the global threats posed by the IRGC.

If the member does not believe in war, but still wants to see quick regime change, what realistic path for change does he believe remains open to the Iranian people?

• (2150)

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: Mr. Chair, perhaps I did not do a good job of painting the complexities, but that is precisely my point: Iranians have tried to do everything within their power to change this thug-gish regime. This is a regime that is hell-bent on brutalizing Iranians and has no respect for human rights. That is precisely why I would say that 95% of Iranian Canadians and 80% of Iranians would like nothing better than an end to this regime.

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[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Mr. Chair, my colleague clearly has a parliamentary secretary's file on the specific issue of Canada-U.S. relations. I know, having travelled with him before, that he has contacts with the Americans. The relationship with the Americans is important, but that does not mean that we have to take them at their word, follow their every move and repeat everything they say.

Once upon a time, under the leadership of the Obama administration, an agreement was reached with Russia, China, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the United States and Iran. The agreement on Iran's nuclear program worked. It resulted in Iran disposing of 95% of its uranium and inspectors being able to access nuclear power plants without any problems. Is that not a sign that diplomacy still works?

[English]

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: Mr. Chair, I am very proud of the position our country has adopted. As the member can imagine, we have consulted very closely with our European allies, and I would say that our position is very consistent with theirs so far. We have said that we understand the concerns about Iran's nuclear facilities. We also are very much concerned about Iranians and the terrible things they have experienced at the hands of their own regime. Our position is very consistent with the position that has been adopted by our closest allies.

Hon. John Zerucelli (Secretary of State (Labour), Lib.): Mr. Chair, there is a great deal of complexity around deporting people from this country, and it spans across governments. What I am referring to specifically in this case is a former central banker of Iran, Mahmmoud Reza Khavari, who came to this country when Stephen Harper and the Conservative government were in power.

Can you speak to how difficult it is to deport people and how it spans across political parties?

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Questions should be directed through the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: Mr. Chair, I thank my good friend and colleague for his understanding and appreciation of the complexities of these cases.

Yes, this was a central banker of the Iranian regime who arrived here in Canada. The Conservative government did zero. So, I find it rich when I am hearing all these lectures about how terrible our government is. The reality is that these are sophisticated, complex files, and I think we can all work together to do a much better job.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Chair, I wonder if the hon. parliamentary secretary can agree with me that there are times when we land on the same place, like with the need to get rid of former Iranian Guard members who make Iranian Canadians and others in the diaspora feel afraid. We have to deal with that, but can we also agree that a lot of Iranian dissidents who hate this regime also object to the bombing by the United States and Israel?

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: Mr. Chair, again, it is very important to highlight that we have been very vigilant about members of the Iranian

regime. We are the only country that has on our books a law that says that any individual who has served the Iranian regime since 2004 has no right to be admitted into Canada. I do not know of any other country that has such a law.

• (2155)

Sandra Cobena (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Richmond Hill South.

This past weekend, I held an open house in my riding of Newmarket—Aurora. It was a chance for neighbours to come by, share a cup of coffee and talk about issues affecting their families and what is happening around the world. Among those who came were many members of the Persian diaspora, my neighbours, people who have called our community home for years. They are entrepreneurs, parents, students and neighbours. They contribute so much to the life of our community.

However, this weekend they came with cautious optimism and heavy hearts. They spoke about the war unfolding in Iran and the uncertainty, the fear and the anguish of watching events unfold from thousands of kilometres away while their families and friends remain there.

I said to them that many of us see the headlines, the stories of bombings, sunken ships, schools, and soldiers dying. I asked how they see this moment and what it means for them and their families. Their answer struck me. They said they have lived under this oppression for 47 years and know that this will be their last chance in a generation.

With tears in their eyes, they talked of the cautious optimism of what this means to them. They spoke about the many protests over the years. They spoke about the young people who marched for freedom. They spoke about the women who stood up to demand dignity and opportunity. Many of those protesters paid with their life.

Just a month ago, more lives were lost as people once again took to the streets in hope of a different future. They told me something that was both heartbreaking and powerful. They said that, yes, it is painful to hear of the bombings near their families, but they believe this may be their only chance to break free from a regime that has oppressed their people, their families and especially their women for generations.

That perspective struck me because here in Canada we often discuss these issues in terms of diplomacy, international law and geopolitics. Yes, those discussions are important, but for many people in my community, this is personal. It is about their parents, brothers, sisters, cousins and childhood neighbourhoods. It is about their language, their culture and their history. They carry the unfathomable weight of all of that while watching events unfold from afar.

Government Orders

Today, I simply want to be a voice for those members of our community, a voice that says we know this moment is painful. We know that they are worried for their families. We know that they carry both hope and fear at the same time. Canada cannot control the actions of other nations or the course of events far beyond our borders, but we can be a voice that says we believe that every person is born with inherent rights to life, to liberty and to safety.

The method of the Iranian regime is not constrained by borders. It operates in our home as well. To this day, an estimated 700 IRGC operatives are operating here in Canada, intimidating Canadians on Canadian soil, and this is unacceptable. Our thoughts are with Iranians here in Canada, and our prayers are with their families.

We hope sincerely and deeply that out of this moment, something better will emerge: a future where the people of Iran can live with freedom, where women can live with dignity and where a proud civilization, one that has contributed so much to human history, can flourish once again under the values of liberty and opportunity. This wish is one shared by many people in my riding and many other Canadians, and today I want to give it a voice.

• (2200)

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for her speech, in which she spoke in particular about these courageous Iranian women and their “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement. She expressed her hope that, in the future, these women will have a state that respects their rights.

Does my colleague really believe that, by leaving the choice of Iran's next leader to the U.S. president at this time, she can truly guarantee that these Iranian women will be able to live safely and that their rights will be respected?

[*English*]

Sandra Cobena: Mr. Chair, the future of Iran and the future Iranian government is up to the Iranian people. I think the Iranian diaspora here has been very clear in their cautious optimism for what this opportunity has created. There have been family members who have died with the hope of an opportunity to have a new government, a new life. That moment has come, and they are cautiously excited about it, but it would be up to the Iranian people to democratically elect their new government.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Chair, I know my colleague is very close to the Iranian-Canadian community in her riding. She knows that this is a community with thousands of years of history. It is a history of religious tolerance and of good relations with other faith communities, including the Jewish and Christian communities, as well as a history of intellectual inquiry, creativity, art, beauty and so much more.

The hope of this present moment is that space and security can be created for the people of Iran to control their own future, drawing from this rich past. We see that incredible potential in the heroic courage of the Iranian people who are ready to give their lives to restore their country.

For the member, I want to ask what her hopes are. What is she hearing from her constituents about what they believe is possible for a future free Iran?

Sandra Cobena: Mr. Chair, the stories I have heard over the last few months are countless. There are stories of hope and heartache. There is a deep desire for life and liberty, and for economic stability. There are stories, also, about the history of Iran and what Iranians have contributed for over two millennia. It is their desire, their dream, to continue the work in leading their contributions in governance, culture, science, literature and trade. It is their wish that they can live in a country that has safety, liberty, freedom and that they can lead in all these academic areas as well.

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, following up on my question, the member spoke about the sense that this is a final battle. I know I have heard similar language being used by the community in my region of Edmonton. There are members across the way who say that they do not like the regime but that we should still advocate for countries to sit on the sidelines and wait for things to unfold. I know that the communities in Canada have been asking for this intervention because they know that success at this juncture is critical.

The member spoke, as well, about this being a final battle in the pursuit of freedom. I wonder if she could share why it is so important to not sit on the sidelines but to engage, act and support the people of Iran right now.

Sandra Cobena: Mr. Chair, the people of Iran have been very clear. They have been waiting for 47 years. The reality is that many lives have been lost. Iranian people today want to know that those lives, those sacrifices, were worth it. Right now, they believe that it is their only chance.

• (2205)

Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC): Mr. Chair, the Liberal Prime Minister claimed that he is the man we want in a crisis, but recent days have shown that he cannot live up to his own standard.

Over the last week, Canadians have not seen leadership. They have seen contradictions, confusion and a series of foreign policy flip-flops on Iran and the conflict in the Middle East. First, the Liberal Prime Minister came out clearly in support of the American and Israeli strikes on Iran. His statement was unequivocal. He said, “Canada supports the United States acting to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and to prevent its regime from further threatening international peace and security.” However, only days later, he said he made the statement “with regret”, called the strikes a breakdown of the international order and said they are a violation of international law. Then he started calling for a de-escalation and a ceasefire that would, if we carefully read between the lines, leave the same brutal regime in place.

Let us not forget that this is the same regime that terrorizes its own people and, more recently, killed tens of thousands of innocent civilians and injured many more in a short few months. This is also the same regime that has sponsored terrorism across the Middle East and all across the world for the last 47 years and whose agents and proxies intimidate communities here in Canada.

Government Orders

While he calls for de-escalation, the Liberal Prime Minister simultaneously says he is not ruling out military participation with the United States. Canadians deserve clarity, but instead, they are getting contradictions. On the conflict in the Middle East, the Liberal Prime Minister says one thing to one audience and something different to the next. He tells Canadians that he represents a so-called new government, but the more Canadians watch these flip-flopping statements, the more it looks exactly like the old Liberal playbook: confusion, contradictions and someone who is not to be taken seriously. First, he supports decisive action. Then he regrets supporting it. Then he calls the situation a breakdown of the international order and says that international law binds all parties involved, but at the same time, he refuses to rule out sending Canadian troops into the conflict.

If the Liberal Prime Minister believes this is a breakdown of the international order, Canadians deserve to know what exactly Canada's position is. Is the Liberal government supporting decisive action against a dangerous regime, or is it calling for a ceasefire that leaves that regime untouched?

Even members of his own cabinet cannot keep the story straight. The Liberal foreign affairs minister said last week that Canada prefers “a diplomatic resolution”, an end to the U.S. strikes, and believes in a peaceful resolution. At the same time, the Liberal defence minister tried to say both contradictory things at once. He said the Liberal government supports the U.S. strikes but also supports a ceasefire. That is not clarity or leadership. It is trying to be on both sides of the same conflict at the same time by speaking out of both sides of his Liberal mouth.

Meanwhile, the Liberal Prime Minister has been avoiding the media and refusing to answer questions about the safety and security of Canadians overseas and here at home, about Canada's role in the international response or about whether Canada could be drawn into a military conflict. By the way, Conservatives are calling for a debate and vote before Canada gets involved militarily.

The silence is deeply troubling. As head of government, the Prime Minister has a special responsibility for national security and the conduct of Canada's international relations for Canada's national interests. Canadians deserve transparency, consistency and clear leadership.

The regime in Iran has shown time and time again that it cannot be trusted. It lies, represses its own people, sponsors terror across the region and repeatedly demonstrates that it is incapable of negotiating in good faith and engaging in diplomacy. This is why Canadians, especially many in my riding of Richmond Hill South and many other communities across this country, understand what is at stake. They understand the brutality of the regime and the courage of the Iranian people who are fighting for freedom and making the ultimate sacrifice. They understand that moral clarity matters, but instead of moral clarity, the Liberal government offers mixed messages. Instead of firm leadership, it offers hesitation. Instead of answering questions, the Liberal Prime Minister simply disappears.

Only Conservatives are prepared to speak clearly. We stand with the people of Iran who seek freedom from tyranny and a peaceful transition to a free and democratic Iran. We support decisive action to prevent the regime from acquiring nuclear weapons, and we will

always stand for the protection of Canadians here at home, especially against the threats posed by foreign terror networks and their proxies.

Canadians deserve a government that is clear in its principles, firm in its decisions and accountable for its actions. Right now, they are getting none of these things from the Liberal Prime Minister. He must stop hiding. He must come before Canadians and answer the very simple question that still remains: What exactly is Canada's position?

• (2210)

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Chair, I want to thank my colleague for his excellent speech. He has been here for about a year and he has already made a real mark on this institution in so many different ways. I want to ask him about the issue of foreign interference because I know he has a large Iranian community in his riding. I am sure there are concerns about how the regime seeks to project power beyond its borders, even here in Canada, intimidating people who are trying to speak out.

What is he hearing from people in his riding about how foreign interference impacts them here in Canada and what needs to be done in response?

Vincent Ho: Mr. Chair, people are infuriated. They are infuriated after years of Conservatives and advocates calling for the implementation of a foreign agent registry, which is still delayed. After two years, it still has not been implemented. The Liberals are mulling \$50 fines. Members know that \$50 is not even enough to get groceries for a family in this Liberal economy. People are frustrated that the Liberals are not taking serious action to combat foreign interference. There are hundreds and hundreds of regime agents who are terrorizing communities. They are intimidating journalists. They are silencing activists. They are terrorizing business owners. That has to stop.

It is time for the Liberals to stop delivering empty Liberal rhetoric and it is time for them to start taking action.

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Mr. Chair, I am going to ask a very simple question.

Today I am hearing the Conservatives say that there is an urgent need to overthrow this regime. How is it that, prior to this American and Israeli attack, I had never heard them calling for such intervention?

[*English*]

Vincent Ho: Mr. Chair, Conservatives have always been consistent in our view. We are unequivocal in our support of the Iranian people who are braving bullets, blackouts and beatings, executions and torture, because they seek a new and free Iran. Conservatives will always stand with the Iranian people against this tyrannical regime.

Government Orders

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, it is important to correct the record in terms of what my Bloc colleague said. He can review the Hansard for at least my statements, going back to three parliaments ago. I was very clear about wanting to see and expressing hope for an end to the Iranian regime, expressing hope that the various protest movements that we have seen over the years would succeed in toppling the regime, giving the Iranian people a government that is responsive, democratic, free and pluralistic; indeed, giving them the government that they deserve.

What has been clear over the years is that these protest movements have been met with escalating brutality. At that point, the only alternatives were intervention or the complete subjugation of the people in a military dictatorship, persistent—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I have to give time to the hon. member to respond.

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Chair, I rise on a point of order.

I simply want to explain to my colleague that there is a difference between hoping for regime change and hoping that the protesters succeed, and wishing for a military attack.

The Assistant Deputy Chair (John Nater): That is debate.

The hon. member for Richmond Hill South.

[*English*]

Vincent Ho: Mr. Chair, Canadians have been wondering this past week about the Liberal Prime Minister's flip-flop. First, he unequivocally supported the strikes from Israel and U.S. on Iran and the Iranian regime. Then he called for de-escalation and ceasefires. Then, all of a sudden, he said it is a breakdown of an international order and a violation of international law. Then he went on and said that maybe we should not rule out military participation.

Canadians and people in my riding of Richmond Hill South are wondering when the Liberal government will offer the moral clarity that they deserve rather than giving flip-flopping Liberal statements that sound a whole lot like the last Liberal prime minister.

Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Chair, there are moments in global affairs when the decisions of powerful nations echo beyond their borders, when the international order is tested, when rules meant to prevent mass violence are cast aside and when innocent people pay the ultimate price. We are living through such a moment now.

On February 28, the United States and Israel launched coordinated air strikes against Iran. This was a patently unlawful act of aggression and the consequences were entirely foreseeable: Iranian retaliation across the region, the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and a rapidly escalating conflict with massive damage and the loss of innocent lives.

It is a war being prosecuted with appalling brutality and disregard for international humanitarian law. Instead of protecting civilians, U.S. and Israeli forces are deliberately striking non-military sites and civilian infrastructure, a pattern disturbingly reminiscent of Israel's recent siege of Gaza. Targets hit thus far include a girls' elementary school, attacked by missiles once to kill the children

and then again to kill the parents frantically looking for their kids; hospitals; desalination plants; oil refineries; and historic cultural sites. Densely populated cities are being carpet-bombed. The death toll is now in the thousands.

These are war crimes. This disregard for civilian life is no accident. It is being openly celebrated by the Trump administration. On March 2, U.S. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth declared the United States will not be following "stupid rules of engagement" or fighting "politically correct wars". Instead, he said that "death and destruction" were the prime objectives of the U.S. forces.

What has been the Liberal government's response to this illegal, dangerous assault? It is a position that is unprincipled, contradictory and incoherent. In fact, it has changed almost daily. The Prime Minister's initial response offered a full-throated endorsement with no caveats, conditions or even a mention of international law. That is a telling and tragic omission.

Under the UN Charter, force between states is prohibited, except in two prescribed circumstances: self-defence from an actual attack or authorization by the Security Council. These strikes met neither test. Trump administration officials admitted there was no intelligence suggesting Iran planned to attack the United States, and neither the U.S. nor Israel even attempted to bring a case before the Security Council, the only body under international law empowered to determine when the use of force is lawful. Put bluntly, this attack is clearly and completely illegal under international law.

Moreover, the International Atomic Energy Agency has confirmed that their inspectors had found no evidence of a coordinated Iranian program to build nuclear weapons. On the contrary, at the very time the U.S. and Israel attacked, negotiations were ongoing, with mediator Oman saying that significant progress was being made and that Iran had made all the necessary concessions asked of it. This is against the backdrop of Donald Trump ripping up the previous nuclear agreement with Iran that had, by all accounts, been working, as well as the bombing of Iranian nuclear facilities and scientists by Israeli forces last June, which Trump said, at the time, conclusively took out Iran's nuclear weapons capacity.

However, the Prime Minister chose to endorse this war. Only four days after doing so, he then admitted that the attack appears inconsistent with international law, but in the same breath declared he supports it, with regret. Then, when asked directly whether Canada might participate militarily, the Prime Minister refused to draw a firm line, saying only that "One can never categorically rule out participation".

Government Orders

This is untenable. One cannot logically and ethically acknowledge that a war is illegal, but continue to support it and refuse to rule out participation in that very illegality. More disturbingly, the words and actions of the Prime Minister completely contradict the foreign policy doctrine he outlined at Davos just weeks ago. There, he told the world that Canada and other middle powers “are not powerless” and that we have “the capacity to build a new order that encompasses our values, like respect for human rights...sovereignty and territorial integrity”.

He said that we aim to be principled in our commitment to the prohibition of the use of force, except when consistent with the UN Charter. He claimed that middle powers must “live the truth” by “acting consistently, applying the same standards to allies and rivals.”

• (2215)

Canada has rightly condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine as illegal, but when the United States and Israel launched air strikes that equally violated international law, the Prime Minister offered his support. This is a stark betrayal of the Prime Minister's own words.

In our view, Canada's security is always dependent on a rules-based order that constrains great powers. The moment we decide international law applies only to our adversaries, we undermine the very protections that shield countries like our own. This is not just my position as leader of the New Democratic Party. Former Liberal foreign affairs minister Lloyd Axworthy has been blunt in his critique of the Prime Minister's approach.

Mr. Axworthy said Canada is abandoning its historic commitment to preventing illegal aggression. He warns that the Prime Minister is becoming a “complicit partner” to Trump's ambitions, and he indicts the Prime Minister with endorsing Trump's new “obsession with becoming an imperial power”, calling that the “worst kind of situation for Canada.”

Canada ought not continue down this path. The time for ambiguity is over, and principled clarity is required now. That is why New Democrats are calling on the government to take three clear positions immediately: Condemn the war and explicitly recognize it violates the UN charter, categorically rule out any Canadian military participation and call for an immediate ceasefire and a return to multilateral diplomacy.

I would like to address the key arguments raised by the Liberals and the Conservatives throughout this debate. The first is that Iran's regime is oppressive and dangerous. New Democrats are under no illusions about the Iranian regime or its brutal repression, nor do we dismiss concerns about nuclear proliferation, but an illegal war is not the answer. It can never be if we desire a world of order, security and justice. The real remedy is harder: diplomacy, engagement, arms control and rigorous inspections, which are tools that were working when this war was launched.

Furthermore, we know from painful experience what follows U.S. regime change wars. Similar attacks on Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria did not yield stability or democracy. On the contrary, these societies are now lawless and fragmented, economic basket cases run by the people we once labelled terrorists, with pro-

longed conflict, civilian suffering, mass displacement and regional chaos. Most fundamentally, the events unfolding in Iran today will not bring freedom to its people. They will bring catastrophe.

Second, we heard the argument that with tariffs already weaponized against our economy, Canada cannot risk further retaliation from Donald Trump. We must be honest about what that position demands, placing a price on Canada's independence, reputation and humanity. I remind the House that Canada's ability to chart our own foreign policy was not gifted to us. It was earned through immense national sacrifice, and it cannot be sacrificed on the altar of expediency or by bending to a bully.

However, I think the best answer is to quote the Prime Minister again just weeks ago in Davos. He invoked Václav Havel's image of the greengrocer who placed a sign in his window to avoid trouble and signal compliance, and the Prime Minister proudly declared that Canada was “taking the sign out of the window.” He said that if we think we can go along to get along, to accommodate, to avoid trouble and to hope compliance will buy safety, it will not.

What sign has the Prime Minister put in Canada's window by his recent statements and clear contradictions? It is a sign that says our values are conditional, our words lack integrity and our foreign policy is for sale. That is not the Canada New Democrats envision, and we believe it is not who Canadians want us to be.

On the gravest questions any government can face, such as whether to commit our country to war, whether to implicate Canadian forces in illegal violence, whether to abandon the principles we proclaim, Canadians deserve clarity, consistency and moral courage. That is what we owe the people we represent. That is what I and my New Democrat colleagues are here to demand tonight.

Government Orders

• (2220)

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Chair, I made many of those points as well when I spoke earlier this evening, because it is clear that this is an illegal war, but we are put with a false choice that if we do not oppose an illegal war, we are somehow just giving in and abandoning the brave people of Iran who are fighting against a brutal regime.

Does the hon. leader of the NDP not believe we can do both: work hard to protect and stand in solidarity with the brave people of Iran, and denounce an illegal and reckless war undertaken by the United States and Israel?

• (2225)

Don Davies: Mr. Chair, the answer is yes. We do have an obligation to stand by the people of Iran, as we do for all oppressed people of the world. The real question that this debate engages tonight is how to do that. I know my hon. colleague is a lawyer. We cannot justify breaking the law because we think we have a good motive. I imagine Canadian society if we invoked that in our streets. If there was a family we did not like or we disagreed with, we could take it upon ourselves to violently attack them. To use such a ridiculous example shows how absolutely, utterly absurd this is on an international level.

Once again, I commend to my colleagues the examples in this House. Tell me an example in the Middle East where violence has resulted in freedom for the people, democracy in their government and better welfare for their society. Show me where. It did not happen in Libya, it did not happen in Iraq, it did not happen in Syria and it did not happen in Afghanistan. One cannot impose democracy from the outside by force. We need to stand with the Iranian people in a peaceful way and support them with diplomacy, with economic sanctions, with help and with nuclear proliferation processes that actually work. We are working.

The Assistant Deputy Chair: There being no further members wishing to speak, pursuant to Standing Order 53.1, the committee will now rise.

(Government Business No. 7 reported)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): It being 10:27, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 10:27 p.m.)

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