



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 110
Friday, October 7, 2022

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, October 7, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1000)

[*English*]

STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FOR A HEALTHIER CANADA ACT

Hon. Joyce Murray (for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change) moved that Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, to make related amendments to the Food and Drugs Act and to repeal the Perfluorooctane Sulfonate Virtual Elimination Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I want to seek unanimous consent to split my time with the member for Cloverdale—Langley City.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to split his time?

Ms. Elizabeth May: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader has a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, generally speaking, what we have seen over the last couple of weeks is that members in the opposition and in government have asked for the opportunity to share time. That is all this is; there is nothing mischievous.

The member for Winnipeg South just wants to do the same as others have done, given that it is the opening round, so maybe we could ask again if the member has unanimous support to split his time this morning.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has a point of order.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I do not think it is a point of order. I am trying to explain the concern that, while this may be routine, members in my position, when there is a 10-minute speech

and a five-minute round, virtually never get a chance to ask a question. Bill S-5 is an enormously important bill to the Green Party—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is a point of debate. I will ask the question one more time.

Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to split his time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her understanding on this matter and allowing my colleague to split time with me.

I am very pleased today to rise in support of Bill S-5. My remarks will focus on the government's accomplishments under its chemicals management plan, commonly known as CMP. This is relevant to Bill S-5, as these accomplishments have largely been achieved under the authorities of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, or CEPA.

Before I go on, I really want to thank all senators for their important work in the other place to bring the bill to this place so we can further consider it. The government has learned many lessons from the implementation of the CMP, and these have informed areas where the government is proposing changes to CEPA through Bill S-5.

In 2006, the government completed the categorization and prioritization of approximately 23,000 substances on the domestic substances list. This resulted in a list of more than 4,300 substances prioritized for further assessment based on their potential risk to the environment or human health.

Following this prioritization, Canada launched its chemicals management plan. Canada became the first country in the world to triage and announce a plan to systematically address its in-commerce chemicals based on environmental and human health concerns. This approach has gone on to inspire chemicals management approaches around the world, such as in the United States, Australia, Argentina and Brazil.

Nearly all of the approximately 4,300 prioritized substances have now been assessed. Chemicals assessment approaches have evolved since that list of 4,300 prioritized substances was first established. New chemicals have entered Canadian commerce, and our knowledge of risks we can protect Canadians from has grown. Therefore, a new process for prioritizing substances for assessment is required.

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The changes proposed by Bill S-5 would include working with Canadians to develop and publish a plan of chemicals management priorities, which would, among other things, continue to build on Canada's world-class leadership in science-based decision-making while adopting a more collaborative and inclusive approach to setting priorities for substances to be assessed going forward. This new approach is intended to be flexible, nimble and scalable, and would allow for shifts and adaptations to new priorities as needed or as new information emerges.

The CMP is a science-based approach to substances management. It helps to reduce the risks posed by substances that are harmful to Canadians and the environment in a way that is predictable and transparent. This is accomplished by assessing not only the impact of substances in end-of-pipe emissions or transboundary pollution, but also their presence in food, consumer products, cosmetics, drugs, air and drinking water.

Members of our scientific community apply internationally adopted standards, methods and principles to the work carried out under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999. Canada's approach to chemicals management is in line with that of other jurisdictions and is the foundation behind our international reputation of well-respected, science-based chemicals assessment. Bill S-5 builds on this foundation rooted in science and positions Canada well among other jurisdictions, both as a leader and as a contributor to chemicals assessment at large. I would caution MPs from changing the risk assessment and risk management provisions of the act.

As part of the CMP, the government overhauled its substances assessment process to include new tools. With these innovations, the government went from assessing just a few dozen substances each year to an average of over 300 per year. Where risks are identified, controls can be put in place. Since the launch of CMP in 2006, the government has developed measures to manage close to 500 substances assessed as posing a risk to human health or the environment.

● (1005)

One of the early accomplishments under the CMP was to help protect newborns and infants from exposure to bisphenol A, more commonly known as BPA. Following a risk assessment under the CMP in 2008, the government announced its intent to prohibit the manufacture, import, advertisement and sale of polycarbonate baby bottles containing BPA under the Hazardous Products Act, an action which continues today under the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act. With this prohibition, newborn and infant exposure to BPA, which has the potential to affect brain development, social behaviour and anxiety after birth, declined by 96% between 2008 and 2014.

One of the lessons learned from this risk management action on BPA was the merit of meeting the risk management obligations under CEPA using other federal acts. Under Bill S-5, CEPA would be amended with this practice in mind and would enable the federal act or the minister best placed to manage the risks identified in a CEPA risk assessment for a toxic substance.

In addition to the innovative approaches to risk assessment and risk management since the CMP began, the government has also made advancements in research, monitoring and surveillance that

have informed a range of actions taken under the authorities of CEPA. For example, monitoring initiatives funded under the CMP are instrumental for tracking levels of substances in both humans and the environment. Through the health measures survey, the government has obtained nationally representative biomonitoring data since 2007 of over 250 substances in the general Canadian population. These surveys have demonstrated that Canadians' exposures to many toxic substances have decreased over this time.

Biomonitoring can help inform Canadians about the progress that is being made to help reduce their exposure to harmful substances and can help identify new priorities for risk assessment. Bill S-5 would require the Minister of Health to conduct biomonitoring surveys as part of the obligation to conduct research and studies in relation to the health effects of substances. An additional amendment to clarify is that such research and studies, including biomonitoring surveys, may relate to vulnerable populations.

Bill S-5 would also amend CEPA to require the consideration of vulnerable populations and cumulative effects in risk assessments when information is available, which will improve the protection of Canadians and the environment. As vulnerable populations may be disproportionately exposed to or negatively impacted by harmful substances due to factors such as age, behaviour, health status, geography, culture and socio-economic status, it is important that we understand and take into consideration implicated groups' unique characteristics and needs when assessing and managing risks identified.

The reality is that Canadians and their environment are not exposed to substances in isolation, but to multiple different substances on a daily basis and over a lifetime, which is why it is so important to consider the cumulative effects of substances. Including these considerations in an amended CEPA will also help inform additional biomonitoring work to inform regulations.

To conclude, I urge all members to work together to ensure that this bill gets to committee as soon as possible in order for parliamentarians to start their important work.

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• (1010)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is a bill that many of us have been waiting for for some time. It mentions, in its preamble, the right for Canadians to live in a healthy environment. I have a private member's bill, Bill C-219, which we will be hearing about later this fall, that talks about the environmental bill of rights, a right to live in a healthy environment, that would extend across the whole federal mandate, not just within CEPA, as this does.

Could the member comment on whether the government would consider amending Bill S-5 to take into account the stronger language from my bill about individual rights to live in a healthy environment, or even on whether the government would accept all the amendments that the Senate put forward? This bill needs to be fixed to be made more actionable when it comes to that right.

• (1015)

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is a leader in the area of environmental protection. I look forward learning more about Bill C-219. We would consider it at that time.

I just want to assure the hon. member that we are going to have a very robust process at committee. The minister and I, and others, have indicated that we are certainly open to strengthening the bill. The Senate did some excellent work, which I think we can build on. I want to thank the hon. member for the question.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to express my gratitude to my colleagues in other parties who have held back so I could ask this question.

Further to the excellent points made by the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, I want to direct the hon. parliamentary secretary to the observations filed by the Senate's Standing Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources that accompanied the amendments. They are to the point and they say very clearly that we do not have a right to a healthy environment in Bill S-5, no matter how much the propaganda tells us we do.

I will quote from point 4 of its important submission:

This committee would like to state their concern that the right to a healthy environment cannot be protected unless it is made truly enforceable. This enforceability would come by removing the barriers that exist to the current remedy authority within Section 22...

The point closes with this sentence: "As Bill S-5 does not propose the removal or re-evaluation of these barriers, this Committee is concerned that the right to a healthy environment may remain unenforceable." Is the government prepared to do what the Senate committee has challenged it to do and what Canadians expect it to do?

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, this is the first time in the history of CEPA that a right to a healthy environment is there, front and centre. That will be debated in the House and at committee. The hon. member would have the opportunity to make those points again. As the hon. member would know, the bill, which was formerly Bill C-28 and is now Bill S-5, gives two years to codify and specify all of the conditions to implement that right to a healthy environment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, the government claims that this modernized legislation will create a right to a healthy environment. That is not the case, according to the senior officials who presented the bill to parliamentarians when it was introduced.

Does the member of the governing party agree that this legislation does not go far enough?

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, the Bloc would get their opportunity to weigh in, not only in the House, but also at committee to propose amendments. Again, a right to a healthy environment was very much considered an innovation that was not in the previous CEPA and is now in Bill S-5. If hon. members have suggestions on how to strengthen that, we would be open to that debate.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague and good friend, the member for Winnipeg South, for sharing his time today. I also thank members of the House for giving me the opportunity to speak this morning.

I am really pleased to rise today in the House to speak to Bill S-5, strengthening environmental protection for a healthier Canada act, particularly to government proposals and Senate amendments relating to a right to a healthy environment in the bill.

Before I get into the substance of our proposal and the Senate amendments, I would like to remind the House that it has taken decades of work to get to where we are today. Discussions relating to a right to a healthy environment have been taking place domestically for many years, with many Canadians, civil society organizations and indigenous leaders advocating for a recognition of a right to a healthy environment at the federal level. There have also been discussions with industry associations supporting recognition in the preamble of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, or CEPA, as it is commonly called.

I would also like to acknowledge the important contribution of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development to these discussions. It is a committee that I was part of and that recognized the need to update the CEPA legislation. I would like to recognize the work of the committee under then chair Deb Schulte, and colleagues Will Amos and Mike Bossio, who also played key leadership roles in this study.

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In 2017, our committee called on the federal government to strengthen CEPA to provide greater protection to human and environmental health from toxic substances and unanimously recommended, among other things, that the preamble of CEPA be amended to explicitly “recognize a right to a healthy environment”. I commend our committee for the insights and ideas put forth over the years to enhance the protection of the environment and human health for present and future generations of Canadians. All those efforts brought us to this point today.

The government is proposing to strengthen the protection of all Canadians and the environment from pollution and harmful substances through the amendments proposed in Bill S-5. To that end, the government has proposed to recognize in the preamble of CEPA that every individual in Canada has a right to a healthy environment as provided under the act. This is the first time that this right has been proposed for inclusion in a federal statute in Canada. This is huge.

Recognition of a right to a healthy environment under CEPA is a significant milestone in and of itself. However, the government is doing more to elaborate on this right and its implementation for the purposes of the act. The red chamber made amendments to this part of the bill, as members know, and I look forward to building further on those amendments.

The bill, as amended by the Senate, would include specific requirements of the government with respect to a healthy environment under the act. First is a duty on the government to protect that right when administering the act, subject to any reasonable limits. Second is a requirement to develop an implementation framework to set out how that right would be considered in the administration of the act. Among other things, the framework must include consideration of the principles of environmental justice, the idea of avoiding adverse effects that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations; non-regression, the idea of continuous improvement in environmental protection; and intergenerational equity, the idea of meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. These provisions would mark the first time that the federal government has introduced legislation requiring that it elaborate on the consideration of the principles of environmental justice and non-regression in the administration of an act.

The framework must also elaborate on the reasonable limits to which that right is subject, resulting from the consideration of relevant factors, including social, health, scientific and economic factors. The consideration of factors reflects the fact that no right is absolute, but it must be meaningful and considered in context.

Moreover, the bill would require that the implementation framework on the right to a healthy environment be developed within two years of the amendments coming into force. This would ensure that our commitment to implement this right is delivered on a timely basis while, at the same time, allowing for meaningful input and engagement from all parts of Canadian society, including indigenous groups, civil society organizations and industry. As transparency is key to fostering dialogue and moving forward on environmental protection, the implementation framework would also be published, so it would be available to all Canadians, and it would be reported on to Parliament annually.

The implementation framework is expected to set a path for a progressive implementation of a right to a healthy environment under CEPA and to evolve over time, based on the views of Canadians and the experience gained by the government. It is expected to provide relevant and persuasive guidance to officials to inform the decision-making processes under the act, and is part of interpreting and applying the act.

• (1020)

Third, this bill contains a requirement to conduct research, with studies or monitoring, to support the government in protecting this right. This is intended to ensure the government and future governments can make decisions about how to protect this right based on scientific evidence. This requirement must contribute to efforts to address environmental justice issues. For example, it should involve the collection and analysis of data to identify and monitor populations and communities that are particularly vulnerable to environmental and health risks from toxic substances and the cumulative effects of such substances. In turn, this could lead to new thinking on how to better protect such populations.

These requirements would allow for meaningful recognition, with the opportunity for Canadians to have input into how this right would be considered in CEPA and the path toward its progressive implementation. Applying the lens of a right to a healthy environment to the administration of CEPA is expected to encourage new thinking about how to protect populations that are particularly vulnerable to environmental and health risks and provide continued support for strong environmental and health standards, now and in the future.

In addition to these new provisions on a right to a healthy environment under CEPA, there would be a number of complementary changes to the act to assist in addressing environmental justice issues in Canada.

Certain populations and communities face greater exposure to harmful substances and combinations of substances. They are in areas of concentrated pollution, sometimes referred to as pollution hot spots. Under the bill to amend CEPA, decisions under CEPA would need to consider vulnerable populations, groups of individuals within the Canadian population who, due to greater susceptibility or greater exposure, may be at an increased risk of experiencing adverse health effects from exposure to substances. In addition, our duty to make decisions and exercise powers under CEPA would expressly include protecting the health of vulnerable populations. This would be done, in part, through consideration of available information regarding vulnerable populations in risk assessments.

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The Minister of Health would be required to conduct biomonitoring surveys, specifically in relation to the health effects of substances. These biomonitoring surveys could focus on vulnerable populations. These new research requirements are intended to be complementary to the research requirements related to a right to a healthy environment, and the data and information they generate might lead to new thinking on how to better protect all Canadians from pollution and substances. These new research requirements are also expected to contribute to our efforts to better understand real life exposure, including exposures in vulnerable populations, and would assist in providing environmental and health protection for all.

Finally, the preamble of CEPA would confirm the government's commitment to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This aligns with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, which received royal assent on June 21, 2021, and which provides a framework to advance implementation of the declaration at the federal level.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only revealed, but has also further exacerbated, social, health and economic disparities for indigenous peoples, Black Canadians and other racialized and religious minority Canadians and their communities. We cannot delay efforts to make Canada more just, more inclusive and more resilient. We see these proposals as one of the means to combat inequities in environmental protection in Canada, such as the increased health risks of more vulnerable members of society that can result from the exposure to substances and the cumulative effects from a combination of substances.

These proposals would help advance discussions so that the vulnerability and the impacts of real life exposure are taken into account in environmental and health protection under the act. As the bill moves through the House, we are committed to engaging with colleagues in the days and weeks to come to move forward in support of strong environmental and health standards now and into the future.

I must point out that Bill S-5 would be a strong start to updating CEPA. The Senate amendments are strong and must be accepted. However, I believe further amendments, which I hope to see seriously considered at committee, are in order. I recognize CEPA is complex legislation. It would be difficult to update in one effort. I would like to see updates addressing marine dumping, establishing air quality standards and implementing stronger citizen action. If these issues could be addressed, the legislation would be further strengthened, either now or in the future.

Bill S-5 would go a long way to updating CEPA. More can be done, both now and in the future. I encourage all MPs to ensure we leave a positive legislative legacy as we update CEPA for the first time in more than 20 years. I look forward to thoughtful debate, the strengthening of amendments and a timely passage of this important legislation.

● (1025)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my many colleagues who gave me this chance to ask questions.

I would like to thank my hon. colleague for Cloverdale—Langley City, and I agree that there are many sections of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act that need amendment, which are not dealt with in Bill S-5. I hope we can bring them forward soon.

I have actually been working on the bill for 35 years, since I helped prepare it for first reading in 1987, but that dates me pretty badly. However, one of the things that needs fixing is that we are not addressing genetically-modified organisms, which are in part 6 of CEPA and definitely need updating. We are also not dealing, as the hon. colleague said, with improvements to ocean dumping, but I want to come back to the point that I made in the first question.

A right to a healthy environment is not a right if it is not enforceable. Is the government open to getting rid of the two-year period, create the right to a healthy environment and fix the enforceability sections of CEPA so that Canadians have the right to a healthy environment? A right that is not enforceable is no right at all.

● (1030)

Mr. John Aldag: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for all of her work, over a lifetime, on environmental issues, including on CEPA. She has been a mentor and a friend to me, and I look forward to working with her on possible amendments for this legislation.

To the point on the right to a healthy environment, as I commented in my notes, this is the first time that government legislation has included this type of right within its preamble. Can more be done? Absolutely, but I think that this is a really strong point for legislation to start. We do have other pieces of legislation to expand on it, as we have heard from our NDP colleague, but I think that now is the time to look at how we can further strengthen the right to a healthy environment within the discussions and amendments that we are bringing before the House at this time.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, indeed, when we conducted the committee report in, I believe, 2017, I was a staffer, and all parties worked very closely together on the work at the environment committee at that time. When the member was giving his speech, I thought back to the long discussions we had in 2017 on the role of toxic chemicals and management, and some of the recommendations put forward on the chemicals management plan, which allowed for any Canadian to submit data, evidence and arguments for consideration under that plan.

Would Bill S-5 allow for more citizen participation in environmental concerns as recommended by the committee in recommendation 24?

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Mr. John Aldag: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and neighbour from British Columbia for his question and for his work on the committee report. As he said, he was a staffer at the time and had great input, and it is a pleasure to see him now representing his constituents in the House.

On the question of the whole citizen engagement piece, I think there are aspects within the bill where citizen action can be taken. Complaints can be relayed to the minister. We have heard from environmental groups that they see opportunities to strengthen that aspect of the legislation. As we have these debates in the House and as we take the legislation to committee, there will be opportunities to look at further citizen engagement as we look at having a healthier environment and protecting public health.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, the current bill is the same as Bill C-28, which was introduced in the previous Parliament.

Does my colleague know why the government chose to call an election before passing the bill? Was it because, for the government, getting a majority was more important than this environmental legislation, or does he think it was because the government needed to get the hon. member re-elected to make it easier to pass the bill?

[*English*]

Mr. John Aldag: Madam Speaker, regrettably, I was not here in the 43rd Parliament, but I was here in the 42nd Parliament when I did work on the committee report. However, I am delighted to be back and to be part of the discussions in the 44th Parliament as we try to bring home the much-needed changes to CEPA, which is why I am so delighted to see Bill S-5 before the House today, having had the Senate consider it and I think strengthen the legislation. I am happy to be here as part of the debates today.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my distinct honour to be able to speak to Bill S-5 today. I thought I would start off my remarks by pointing out the major differences between the Conservative record on the environment and the Liberal record on the environment.

Conservatives, of course, have a much stronger record when it comes to tackling environmental issues than Liberals. Looking back at the previous Conservative governments and our major achievements, including the clean air act, which was a landmark piece of legislation to tackle various forms of pollution and to develop a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, there were massive investments in conservation.

The root word of Conservative is to conserve. That ties in with conservation. The previous Conservative government had many instances where we indicated much of Canada's natural beauty in our landscape for conservation projects to make sure that future generations would be able to enjoy the wonderful environment that has been passed on to us, protecting wetlands and vulnerable ecosystems for both plant and wildlife. That was a hallmark aspect of the previous Conservative government's achievements when it came to environmental action.

Major investments in innovation funds to help tackle some of the challenging aspects of having a robust, industrialized country, while at the same time, minimizing our environmental footprint, ensuring that there are resources available for companies and for not-for-profits to access some of that research funding to come up with better ways of doing things, better ways of making things and producing things here to lower all of the different kinds of impacts on the environment, that was a hallmark piece of the previous government's record on the environment as well.

I should mention as well that under the previous Conservative government, because of our strong action on things like emissions and tackling climate change, CO2 emissions actually went down. We actually reduced the amount of CO2 that Canada emitted into the atmosphere under the previous Conservative government. What has it done under the current Liberal government? It has gone up. That is the major difference between Conservatives and Liberals. The Liberals are very good at talking about things. I have to give them credit. They have an actor for a leader and he is very good at getting into the parts and delivering the lines, but when it comes to action, they are not so good. He is very good acting, but not so much at action.

Think about the very first thing the Liberal government did, one of the very initial things, while the ink was still wet on all those cabinet appointments and they were all just learning where their new offices would be and who was going to drive their cars. The very first thing that they did was to grant a permit to the City of Montreal to dump billions of litres of raw sewage into the St. Lawrence. It is unbelievable. After all the talk they did during the election pretending to care about the environment, the first thing they did was grant that permit. How gross is that? We are talking about toxic substances here in this bill. What about the toxic substances that were unleashed into the St. Lawrence and ultimately into the oceans all around the world by the Liberal government? It was the first thing it did.

The government's hallmark piece is a carbon tax that we now know does not work. It has had the carbon tax in place since its first term in office. It has gone up every year, and so too have emissions. It is not an environmental plan at all; it is a tax plan. Remember too that the Liberal government has been completely dishonest with Canadians about that piece. Yes, they were dishonest. I will remind the hon. member for Winnipeg North about the dishonesty of one of his former colleagues.

• (1035)

Just before the 2019 election, the former minister of environment, Catherine McKenna, promised Canadians that the carbon tax would not go up. In fact, we Conservatives warned Canadians that we had information from the Department of the Environment that the government was planning to increase the carbon tax. Catherine McKenna, the former environment minister, was deployed to accuse Conservatives of spreading misinformation, saying it is never going to happen.

Of course, their friends in the government-subsidized media were only too happy to carry that message for them. They asked how the Conservatives could make up such a wild accusation that the Liberals might raise a tax, and we said it is because that is what their information and their own documents show and if we look at their modelling, in order to even try to hit the targets they have set for themselves, they are going to have to increase the carbon tax. The response from their friends in the government-subsidized media was that it is not true because the Liberals say so. After seven years of Liberal rule, members will pardon those of us in the official opposition if we do not take Liberals at their word.

In the last Parliament, we were talking about toxic substances. I had a private member's bill to ban that practice of dumping raw sewage into our vulnerable ecosystems, our rivers, lakes and oceans.

● (1040)

[Translation]

Putting an end to the practice of municipalities dumping sewage into our rivers, lakes and oceans is a central element of the environmental plan the Conservatives have been promising since 2019. It is now 2022, and it is time to put an end to this practice.

[English]

It is 2022. We have the technology and resources to make sure that municipalities are not doing that with untreated waste water, but the Liberals, the NDP, members of the Bloc Québécois, all voted against that common-sense measure. Members will pardon those of us in the Conservative Party when we receive a piece of legislation that claims to address environmental issues and we have major concerns about everything the Liberals do on this.

Bill S-5 is not before this House in its original form. Bill S-5 went through the Senate first, so the piece of legislation that we are dealing with today has been amended by the Senate. There are many concerning things about these amendments and there are some concerning things about the bill in general.

First is the amendment on the right to a healthy environment. Of course, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has pointed out the lack of clarity about that, the lack of provisions that would make any of that enforceable or anything that would give Canadians comfort to know that the government would follow up a platitude with a piece of action. It is undefined and very ambiguous, and when legislation is ambiguous, it really sets us up for litigation.

Often there are competing interests when it comes to environmental issues between industry and conservation groups or municipalities that might be affected by one thing or another, and it is essential that we have clarity on these types of things. Otherwise, we get long-drawn-out court battles to decide what word means what and where lines get drawn. If the government was going to bring in this piece of legislation, the least it could have done was clear up that ambiguity and not leave it for the courts and lawyers, but of course Liberals often do things that make lots of money for lawyers to settle things in court.

I also want to touch on another major flaw with the thinking behind the government as it relates to toxic substances. Henry Hazlitt

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wrote an excellent book about economics primarily, but it is a lesson that we should apply in every aspect of life. The book is called *Economics in One Lesson* and the main theme of this book is to convince people to think about both the things that are seen and the things that are unseen. In other words, it is to not just look at the superficial aspects of what is being proposed, but to really take a step back and consider all the aspects of what a decision or a course of action might result in. That is not something that the government has done with many of its environmental policies, specifically when it comes to the listing of plastics in one of the schedules of this bill.

Obviously, we want less plastic in our oceans and we want less plastic in our waterways, but we have just come out of a pandemic where plastic was essential in protecting Canadians. Plastic was essential in packaging to keep germs out of everything from utensils to pieces of equipment. Lots of aspects of PPE have plastics in them.

Imagine where we might be in the future if many of the pieces of this legislation are enforced and make it harder to access those types of what we now know to be life-saving materials. We urge the government to take a closer look at that aspect of it.

When we look at plastics around the world and in our oceans, it is Canada that has been leading the way for years to reduce our output of those pieces of material. In fact, 93% of the plastic that ultimately ends up in our oceans comes from just 10 rivers. Ten rivers around the world are responsible for 93% of the plastic in our oceans. How many of those rivers do my colleagues think are in Canada? The answer is zero. The hon. member for Essex got it right. None of those rivers is in Canada. Seven of them are in Asia, including the Yangtze in China, and two are in Africa.

Why is that important? When we take a step back and look at the government's entire environmental policy, we see policies designed to drive production out of Canada, where we have high environmental standards and rules about what can be put in landfills and dumped into rivers. Those policies drive production to other jurisdictions around the world that do not have those measures in place.

The carbon tax is the biggest culprit in that. The carbon tax raises the cost of making things here in Canada, and our competitors around the world, specifically China, which does not have a carbon tax or anywhere near the environmental protection Canada has, go out and bid on contracts to make things. When they do, when those plastics are manufactured in China, in Asia, in developing countries that do not yet have our robust regime around environmental protection, then more things get produced there and more things end up in our oceans.

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Liberals might go around and feel like they are doing something for the planet because they brought in a carbon tax and they are banning plastics here in Canada, and the net result of that is more plastic in the ocean. Their policies are actually doing more harm than good. They also do not look at the entire life cycle of alternatives to plastics.

A landmark study was done in 2018 by the Independent Institute, based out of Oakland, and it found that plastic bans can actually have a negative impact on the environment as people substitute other products that have more emissions involved in their life cycle. For example, the difference in manufacturing between a plastic straw and a paper straw is very significant when we look at the amount of energy needed and the amount of CO₂ emissions produced.

It takes 39 kilojoules of energy to make one plastic straw. In the entire life cycle of that straw, production, usage and all that, it emits 1.5 grams of CO₂. For a paper straw, it takes 96 kilojoules to make it. That is more than double the amount of energy. Because the methods involved in all the aspects of producing that paper straw are more energy intensive, it actually produces 4.1 grams of CO₂. A plastic straw produces 1.5 grams and a paper straw 4.1 grams of CO₂.

Again, on the one hand the Liberals say they are trying to take action on reducing emissions, and on the other hand they are bringing in policies that actually increase emissions. That is the hallmark of Liberal governments in general. They offer simplistic, sloganistic solutions, and the effects of their policies do more harm than good.

Conservatives are going to be studying this piece of legislation very carefully. We are going to be working very hard at committee to make improvements to the bill on many of the problematic amendments that came from the Senate.

I hope my colleagues across the way will remember one thing. If they truly care about things like reducing emissions, then now is the time for them to abandon their carbon tax. It has been so ineffective. So many Canadians want to see real action on climate change, and the carbon tax is not just making things more expensive; it is actually driving production out from here in Canada. That production then moves overseas and emissions go up.

A molecule of CO₂ does not need a passport to travel around the planet. A unit of CO₂ that moves away from Canada and doubles because of the lack of protection in countries like China actually results in more CO₂ in the atmosphere.

● (1045)

Because the Liberals are so locked in on this failed policy of imposing this new tax on Canadians, they are not taking the meaningful action that they could take. It is called an opportunity cost. They have all the people at the Department of the Environment enforcing this tax and imposing it on provinces that have not adopted it, and because they are using all those human resources and all the government's time and energy on a failed policy that is only resulting in higher emissions, they are not taking other measures that could actually lower emissions.

If they truly care about the environment, now is the time to scrap the carbon tax, especially when we link it to the affordability crisis, because it is not just the carbon tax of today. It is not just that Catherine McKenna was lying when she said that they were not going to increase the carbon tax in 2019. It is that the Liberals are going to triple the carbon tax in the coming months and years. It means that the affordability crisis that is hurting Canadians so much is only to get worse, and the environmental crisis that the Liberals claim they are trying to address will only get worse as well.

● (1050)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, allow me to pick up on the questions that the member just made reference to.

I can appreciate that when he was the leader, the Conservative Party was against the price on pollution. However, I would remind the member that the leader who followed him actually reversed the Conservative Party position on the price of pollution. In fact every Conservative member of today's Conservative caucus campaigned and knocked on doors saying that they were in favour of a price on pollution, as dictated by the then leader of the Conservative Party. It is only under the new leadership of the current leader that they have flip-flopped once again.

However, Conservatives still made a commitment, a promise to Canadians, that they supported the principles of a price on pollution. Does the member feel any obligation whatsoever to Canadians, given that his party had a platform that supported a price on pollution?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am not sure if those are comments or if members are trying to answer the question, but I would ask them to hold off. I know that the hon. House leader for the official opposition is very capable of answering questions or making comments. If I have not recognized you, then you should not be talking.

The hon. official opposition House leader.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is completely mistaken about that. Members of the Conservative Party have always opposed the carbon tax; that has not changed.

I have pointed out to this member in this past that Liberals like to play around with language. They are fond of saying "a price" on pollution. A price is something that the market sets. A price is something that is determined by input costs and supply and demand. The most important thing is that a price is something that we have a choice to pay. If I do not like the price of an apple at one store, I can try to get a better price at a different store, or I can eat pears instead of apples, or I can look for alternatives. I do not have to spend the money.

When the government sets a price, enforces its collection, and there is no choice, that is called a tax. It will always be a tax, and Liberal games with wordplay will not fool Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

However, I have to say that his comments about plastics were hair-raising. One of his colleagues actually introduced a private member's bill to ban the export of Canadian plastics to places such as the Philippines and India. Of course, our plastics do not end up in the water, but we send them to places that do not have the means to recycle them. I just wanted to point that out.

Would my colleague support the idea of strengthening industry regulations in the context of the bill before us now?

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question.

[*English*]

The member raises a very important issue, and that is the other types of effects of making regulations here in Canada and looking at only one aspect of it. She rightly points out that many regulatory changes over the years have made it harder to process, recycle and break down plastic here in Canada. Because of those rules, which are put in place without thinking about the effects, we have driven a lot of that type of operation to other countries.

In addition to displacing production here, that has also had the effect of moving some of the recycling and other ways to break down that plastic to other countries as well. It is an important issue to raise, not only when we contemplate all the unintended consequences of what may be well-meaning measures here, but looking at the entire aspect of the knock-on effects in other countries as well.

● (1055)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy some of the fantasy speeches I hear in this House, and I thank the member for providing us with one today.

I understand that in 2007, the environment committee studied CEPA, which is probably something very important because it has not been reviewed in over 20 years. We now have a bill before us that would improve it a bit, but we still have a long way to go. We know that the Conservatives wrote a dissenting report sharing concerns about enshrining the right to a healthy environment and consideration of vulnerable populations, which we know is one of the most concerning parts of this bill.

Is the Conservative Party still not interested in enshrining the right to a healthy environment or protecting vulnerable populations who are impacted most heavily?

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, the hon. member must not have been listening to the part of my speech where I was talking about the major achievements of the previous Conservative government when it came to real, tangible and practical improvements to the environment.

Government Orders

Of course, we all believe in protecting vulnerable communities, and there are many very sensitive ecosystems here in Canada. There are also very sensitive ecosystems around the world, which are all linked together. That is why it is so concerning, when we take that step back and look at all the effects of the changes here domestically, when we see it has an increased negative impact on everything from emissions to the amount of plastics that are being thrown out into the garbage and landfills, which end up in rivers and lakes.

As I pointed out, 93% of the plastic in the oceans comes from those 10 rivers, none of which are in Canada. That is why Conservatives are urging the government to do that comprehensive, holistic review to make sure that regulatory and legislative changes here do not actually do more harm than good.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned a lot of accomplishments and things that were done in a positive manner, and also mentioned the shortcomings of the current government.

Can he elaborate on the wastewater treatment standards that were put in place by the previous Conservative government, which he was a part of? The Liberal government, under the former minister of environment, the member for North Vancouver, actually delayed the imposition of those standards decades down the road, which enabled wastewater to continue being dumped into our precious lakes, rivers and oceans here in Canada.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague makes an excellent point. The previous Conservative government raised standards significantly for wastewater treatment, to make sure that the water that is being processed and ultimately released into our ecosystem is only released after strenuous treatment.

Not only did we raise the standards, but we were there to help municipalities raise their standards and make the investments they needed into their wastewater facilities. My hon. colleague is right. We were there as full partners, not just on increasing the standards, but also in being there for municipalities.

I pointed out that it is 2022 and there are still major cities in this country that are dumping raw sewage into our waterways, cities that have budgets worth hundreds of millions of dollars. We really challenge municipalities when they come and object to tougher standards on wastewater. We want to make sure they consider the negative impacts they are having on the environment and that they are taking advantage of the infrastructure funding that previous governments have allocated to help them do just that.

Statements by Members

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his very entertaining speech. It was a bit of fiction, I would say. My memory of the Harper record is a little different from his. It withdrew from the Kyoto climate accord, did absolutely nothing on climate change for 10 long years and closed the IISD experimental lakes area. Then there was the war on science and muzzling scientists.

Will the hon. member work with us on Bill S-5 to strengthen the bill and work in the spirit that the standing committee did in 2017?

• (1100)

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, it is not that we have a difference of memory. It is that he has not read the black and white ink on the reports showing that his government has a terrible record on emissions. The first thing it did was allow raw sewage to be dumped in the St. Lawrence.

It is not a matter of debate. It is not my opinion versus his opinion. This is from looking through the archives and looking at the actual record.

When it comes to working at committee, I can assure the hon. member that we will approach the committee work in good faith to truly try to improve this bill.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today marks 22 days since the death of Mahsa Amini, a brave young woman who was beaten to death by Iran's so-called morality police over the country's hijab laws. Since then, hundreds of thousands of Iranians worldwide have rallied for the values of freedom, including in my home riding of Windsor—Tecumseh. However, despite the outpouring of international support, the criminal Iranian regime continues to arrest and murder its own people in the streets and on campuses.

As we prepare to mark the International Day of the Girl Child, we remember Mahsa Amini. We repeat her name to keep the memory of her spirit alive and so that the tyrants of Iran can never hide from their moral corruption and horrendous crimes.

We stand with the brave women and men of Iran who are undeterred. I say this to all the people of Iran: We see them, we hear them and we will always stand with them.

Zan, zendegi, azadi.

* * *

VACCINE MANDATES

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, thankfully life is returning to normal for most Canadians. For those who chose not to get vaccinated, the ability to work and travel abroad has been reinstated. However, this is not the case for everyone. Those who serve in our Canadian Armed Forces continue

to be punished by an unfair and unscientific vaccine mandate. Canadians are rightly proud of our armed forces, but I believe they are being misled on how our national security is now at risk.

While the government claims the mandates protect our operational readiness, the opposite is true. Whether it is due to forced releases or negative reactions to the vaccine, many service members, including fighter pilots, have been grounded. Pilots represent years and millions of dollars of intensive training thrown aside because of a decision to punish them for exercising their own medical choices. Coupled with sky-high attrition rates, it is beginning to feel like another decade of darkness.

These are our heroes. We owe them the dignity of service for which they have sacrificed so much. It is time for the government to end the vaccine mandates and restore those it has wronged within our Canadian Armed Forces.

* * *

THANKSGIVING

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to wish my constituents in Halifax West and all Canadians a blessed and safe Thanksgiving weekend.

My wish for all is that they are able spend quality time with their loved ones. Let us please keep in our minds and hearts families that are in pain and suffering, including Nova Scotians and people across Atlantic Canada and Quebec, whose Thanksgiving will not be easy with the devastation of hurricane Fiona.

We are especially grateful to everyone who stepped up to help before, during and after the storm, including members of our local joint emergency management team, like Karen Saulnier, Dave Aalders and Amani Saleh, the Fairview Resource Centre, the Bedford Lions Club, the Canada Games Centre staff, the Canadian Red Cross, the Disaster Animal Response Team of Nova Scotia and so many more. We thank them.

[*Translation*]

I wish all Canadians across the country a happy Thanksgiving, and I hope everyone has a chance to rest and to reconnect with family and friends.

* * *

[*English*]

HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, the people of Port Moody—Coquitlam, Anmore and Belcarra are horrified and angry about the brutal murder of Mahsa Amini. Our community adds its voice to the women of the world who are protesting long-standing human rights abuses in Iran.

Women of Iran are standing up at great risk to their personal safety, with heinous consequences. This must stop. No Iranians should live in fear. They should have protections in Iran and in Canada too. However, many here do not feel safe because people associated with the IRGC visit and live in our communities and have not been sanctioned. That is a failing of the Liberal government.

The New Democrats stand with the women of Iran and wholly support the United Nations human rights commissioner's call for an independent investigation into Mahsa's death. We are holding the government to account to support women's rights in Iran and around the world.

* * *

• (1105)

[Translation]

NORTHERN ONTARIO BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Madam Speaker, thanks to a \$1.1-million investment from FedNor, the office of the northern Ontario Black economic empowerment program, or NOBEEP, officially opened its doors this summer in downtown Sudbury.

NOBEEP develops and delivers support programs for Black entrepreneurs, which serves to address a gap in the northern Ontario entrepreneurship support system. In order to showcase Black-owned businesses and their success, NOBEEP also offers workshops and seminars, as well as mentoring and consulting services for entrepreneurs.

This program is a valuable resource for people who are thinking of starting a business or have already started one. I applaud the outstanding work being done by the team at NOBEEP and the Afro-Heritage Association of Sudbury in setting up this program. Congratulations.

* * *

[English]

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Madam Speaker, in 1994, the people of Gravenhurst wisely selected John Klinck to be their representative, first as the councillor for Ward 3, then as a Muskoka district councillor and then, in 2000, as their mayor. After his 10 great years as mayor, the members of Muskoka district council wisely selected John Klinck to be their chairman, a role he has performed with grace and dignity for the last 12 years.

I sincerely appreciate the many ways we have worked together over his 28 years in public life, and I will be forever grateful for the invaluable role John played in helping me become a member of this House in 2019. My friend John Klinck has always been a tireless champion for Muskoka, a consummate team builder, a relentless advocate for those who are less fortunate and a kind and generous man.

On behalf of all Muskokans, I offer John a heartfelt congratulations on his well-deserved retirement. For his friendship and his

lifetime of public service, from the bottom of my heart, I thank him.

* * *

MURIEL ANDERSEN

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Madam Speaker, shortly after celebrating her 105th birthday, a well-known and respected Inuk elder from Makkovik, Labrador, Ms. Muriel Andersen, passed away peacefully.

She was born on Dunn Island, Labrador, in 1917. She endured a lot in her life, living through two world wars and two pandemics and surviving residential schools. Ms. Andersen lost her husband at a young age and was left to raise her children on her own. She is the matriarch of a long line of Labradorians. Her family includes six children, 21 grandchildren, 37 great-grandchildren and 28 great-great-grandchildren.

She will be remembered as a strong, hard-working woman who loved to help others. She is truly a daughter of Labrador, and we thank her for her tremendous contributions over 105 years to the people of Labrador.

May she rest in peace.

* * *

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased that our federal government is investing \$15.2 million to construct a new library and performing arts and cultural centre in downtown Barrhaven in my Nepean riding. The facility will also include a community centre for seniors and an outdoor urban plaza. This will provide Nepean residents with flexible spaces to foster social interactions and community engagement for years to come. This project includes a 15,000-square-foot cultural centre, a 3,000-square-foot seniors' space and a 25,000-square-foot library.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the many organizations and individuals who advocated for this, including the Barrhaven BIA, the Barrhaven Seniors' Council and its president, Don Winchester. I give a special thanks to Ottawa city councillor Jan Harder, who was instrumental in proposing this project.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, many Afghans who bravely helped our military are still stranded in Afghanistan. One such case has been brought to my attention by a retired Canadian serviceman.

A former Afghan police colonel, whose courage and competence helped save Canadian lives, has been unable for months to get confirmation from Canadian authorities as to whether his application to come to Canada has been filled out properly. I cannot get confirmation either, despite asking repeatedly.

Statements by Members

The colonel has to fill out Canadian immigration paperwork on a cellphone with limited Internet service while hiding from people who want to kill him. When he fills out an online form, Canada provides no confirmation that it has or has not been properly received. No amount of asking will convince Canadian bureaucrats to share this information, which could be passed back to the colonel, allowing him to complete the forms to our satisfaction, so he and his wife and children hide in a basement, more likely to be freed from their predicament by death than by a government that cannot be bothered to let him know what he has to do to meet our paperwork requirements.

* * *

• (1110)

HURRICANE FIONA

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to commend the generosity and hard work of my constituents of Cape Breton—Canso following the devastating impacts of hurricane Fiona. Over the last 10 days, I have had the opportunity to visit organizations, community groups, the Canadian Armed Forces and first responders who have gone above and beyond the call of duty.

In Reserve Mines, the local seniors and pensioners club worked to prepare over 9,000 meals last week just to ensure seniors had a bite to eat. At the Nova Scotia Community College's Marconi campus, staff have been hard at work preparing meals for countless power crews, personnel from the military and other first responders.

I am sincerely humbled by the outpouring of support for the people of my riding from members of the House. To the leadership of Premier Houston, all MLAs, mayors, wardens, councillors and chiefs, I give a special thanks. I also thank the Prime Minister, the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and the Minister of National Defence.

I could go on with the many selfless and kind-hearted gestures I have seen around my riding. To those in the House, I want to say that it fills me with pride that despite this tragedy, the strength, resilience and character of my province will always prevail.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to ask members to make sure that they stay within the time frame. Unfortunately, I may have to cut them off.

The hon. member for Flamborough—Glanbrook.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, the new Conservative leader will put the people first: their paycheques, their savings, their homes and their country. Today, people feel like they have lost control of their pocketbooks and their lives. The cost of government is driving up the cost of living. It is the most expensive government in history. The more it spends, the more things cost.

The result is that seniors delay their retirements or watch their life savings evaporate with inflation, families downgrade their diets

because of 10% food inflation, and 30-year-olds are trapped in 400 square-foot apartments or, worse, their parents' basements because the cost of housing has doubled under the current government.

As we head into Thanksgiving weekend, in a country as bountiful and blessed as Canada, it is shameful that so many Canadians are falling behind, and there are too many who are just hanging on by a thread. These are our citizens. We are their servants and we owe them hope.

* * *

CARBON TAX

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, the tired Liberal government is driving up the cost of living. Families are downgrading their diets because of the inflated cost of groceries. Seniors are watching their savings vanish with the cost of living rising. Young people have seen their hopes and dreams of owning a home disappear because the cost of a home has doubled under the current Liberal government. It is no wonder that people are worried. The Liberal government's answer is that it is going to triple the carbon tax and punish Canadians for just trying to get by.

The Liberals label our farmers as polluters for growing our food and punish them with a carbon tax. The Liberals label parents as polluters for driving their kids to hockey and punish them with a carbon tax. The Liberals label tradespeople as polluters for driving their trucks to work and punish them with a carbon tax. The Liberals label seniors heating their homes as polluters and punish them with a carbon tax.

Conservatives would scrap the carbon tax. We are dealing in hope for Canadians, for their families and for their country.

* * *

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Synthia Bussi eres, a 38-year-old mother of two, was killed alongside her children less than two weeks ago at the hands of her spouse, making it the eighth femicide in eight weeks in Quebec.

[*Translation*]

We cannot become indifferent to this very important issue. These women who are killed by angry men are our mothers, our daughters, our sisters, our friends. Every woman who is killed is one too many.

• (1115)

[*English*]

On behalf of the women's caucus, I am calling on all levels of government to step up. We have to find a way to end gender-based violence for good in this country.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

We must provide better support to women fleeing violence. We must teach our children at home and at school to recognize and value healthy relationships so that they can leave at the first sign of abuse and not when it is too late.

[English]

All levels of government and society as a whole must take action against violence against women and girls.

* * *

HIGH FOOD PRICES

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, this week, the NDP has been successful in making sure that Parliament addresses the issue of corporate greed in driving inflation, and not only in the House of Commons but also at committee.

Since we have launched our initiative, I have been receiving correspondence from right across the country. I have had pictures from people in Nova Scotia that have shown huge price increases for the same product, in the same town, on the same day. I have had correspondence from employees in grocery stores who are confirming that these unreasonable price increases are happening, and we combine that with the fact that Canada collected \$30 billion less in corporate taxes just from last year alone.

I want to end by wishing my constituents a happy Thanksgiving. As they are struggling to pick out which kinds of food they can put on the family table this weekend, I want them to know that my colleagues and I in the NDP will continue fighting for them to ensure they have equal access to well-priced food.

* * *

[Translation]

SAINT-HYACINTHE HISTORY CENTRE

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Centre d'histoire de Saint-Hyacinthe is a private archival service accredited by the Bibliothèque et archives nationales du Québec, as are 38 other accredited archives. The centre has been in operation since 1992. With 1,500 metres of archives, the Centre d'histoire de Saint-Hyacinthe is truly ranked among the greats, alongside the Museum of Civilization, the Augustinian Monastery, the McCord Stewart Museum and the Canadian Centre of Architecture.

The centre's president, Paul Foisy, just announced that for the past two years, 2020 and 2021, the history centre ranked first in all of its activities, namely, acquisitions, processing and presentation of records, exhibitions, and publications. The history centre also just recently announced that it acquired its 250th member.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I heartily commend the Centre d'histoire de Saint-Hyacinthe on keeping our collective memory alive, because, as William Faulkner so rightly said, "The past is never dead. It's not even past."

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, the new Conservative leader will put the people first: their savings, their paycheques, their homes and their country. After years of government mismanagement and the Liberal-made backlogs, it is time to get the gatekeepers out of our immigration system. Rural Canada, like the riding of Prince Albert, is in desperate need of doctors, nurses and other professionals who provide essential services to our communities.

As Canada faces a labour shortage crisis, we need new ideas to empower workers to fill our workforce gaps. Red tape and bureaucracy should not stand in the way of achieving one's career goals.

Conservatives are bringing hope to doctors, nurses and newcomers who are dreaming of coming to this country, with a system that guarantees that, within 60 days, an immigrant applying for work in their profession will get answers based on their skill sets, not based on where they come from.

There has been enough talking, enough rhetoric and enough broken promises. It is time to remove the gatekeepers, to get more doctors, more nurses, more skilled workers and more inflation-proof paycheques for our hard-working skilled immigrants.

* * *

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on May 17, 2021, the remains of 215 children were found buried on the site of the former residential school in Kamloops. On June 14, 2021, volunteers from the community of Langley put up 215 crosses and children's clothing at the Derek Doubleday Arboretum, to remember and honour those children who did not make it home.

The idea came from Cecilia Reekie, a former Langley school trustee and an "intergenerational warrior", a term to replace "survivors", as encouraged by Kwantlen Chief Marilyn Gabriel. Cecilia was inspired by the sight of crosses with clothing when she visited Kamloops after news of the discovery. One year later, this memorial to the missing children still stands.

I attended the candlelight vigil at the arboretum on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation last Friday and, once again, was moved by this display.

I thank Lower Fraser Valley Aboriginal Society and United Churches of Langley for organizing this vigil. I give special thanks to Cecilia Reekie for all the work she has done and continues to do to make sure everyone remembers the children who never returned home.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS**

● (1120)

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberal economic policy can be summed up in four words: “smaller paycheques; higher prices”. Smaller paycheques come into effect in the new year when this government takes a bigger bite out of the paycheques that Canadians work so hard to earn, but higher prices are here today. Because of Liberal deficits forcing the Bank of Canada to flood our economy with money, prices are at record highs.

Hard-working moms and dads picking up groceries this weekend for the Thanksgiving meal are in for a sticker shock. Turkey is up 15%, and potatoes are up 22%. Those prices are going to rise even further after the government triples its carbon tax.

Why will this government not give Canadians a break and cancel its plans to triple the carbon tax?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have four words for Canadians: “We have your backs.”

We have doubled the GST credit, thanks to the Conservatives who flipped their idea to oppose us and are now supporting us. Guess what. They can see the light once again, and they can vote for dental supports. They can vote for housing supports. I have four more words: “Do the right thing” and “Vote for our bill”.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals have their hands in Canadians' back pockets taking more and more out of the paycheques that Canadians work so hard to earn, and prices are continuing to rise because of this government. Any relief that Canadians may hope to experience will evaporate in a very short period of time as inflation continues to hurt Canadian families.

Once again, we know that inflation is caused by Liberal deficits and we know that prices are going to go up even more when they triple the carbon tax. An easy way to help Canadians with the cost of living crisis that the costly coalition has caused is to cancel their plans to triple the carbon tax. Will they do that?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the middle of a global pandemic with heat in the air caused by global warming, the residents of Edmonton Centre, in the middle of the last election, said to me, “Please fight climate change”. It was the number one thing every day on their doorsteps.

We already had a 9% reduction in emissions in 2020. The plan is working, but I can tell members that the number one thing that the Conservative opposition could do to help Canadians is to vote for Bill C-31.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind members. I was able to clearly hear the official opposition House leader a while ago, but I was having difficulty hearing the answer from the Minister of Tourism. There are other opportunities to ask questions or make comments during question pe-

riod. I would ask members, unless they are being recognized, to please hold on.

The hon. official opposition House leader.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is because Conservatives care about the environment that we fight the carbon tax, because it does not work. The Liberals have missed every single one of their emissions targets, but they are succeeding in making prices go even higher.

Gas prices in markets across Ontario have risen 16¢ in just two days. That is making it even more difficult to attend Thanksgiving dinners as Canadians have to pay more to drive home or to fly. How much more will Canadians have to pay after they triple the carbon tax?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservative opposition has a golden opportunity to provide a Thanksgiving gift to Canadians, and to the half a million Canadians who would benefit from the dental supports that we have put on the floor of the House. What is it that the Conservative opposition has against kids in Canada getting dental care? They can see the light. They can do the right thing. They can vote for the bill and support Canadian families.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, inflation is the number one problem in Canada for all Canadian families. When we get to the point where four in five families have to cut their food budget because of inflation, action is needed. Burdening Canadians even more and increasing taxes is the worst thing to do, yet the government wants to triple the Liberal carbon tax on April 1. We know that Quebec has a carbon exchange.

Will the government clearly lay out to Quebeckers how its greedy desire to triple the Liberal carbon tax will impact Quebec?

● (1125)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let us take a look at the record to see which side of the House has cut Canadians' taxes.

When we cut Canadians' taxes in 2015, the Conservatives voted against it. When we cut taxes once more in 2019, the Conservatives voted against it. We cut taxes for workers again in 2021, and the Conservatives voted against it. The Conservatives voted against it again in 2022.

Oral Questions

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, unfortunately, if nothing changes, they will vote to triple the Liberal carbon tax on April 1, 2023. I am going to repeat my very simple question, and I want a real answer for Quebeckers. Quebec has the carbon exchange. This Liberal government wants to triple the Liberal carbon tax on April 1, 2023. My colleague must stop playing politics and give a clear answer.

What kind of impact will the government's greedy goal of tripling the Liberal carbon tax have on Quebeckers come April 1?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague knows full well that the price on pollution does not apply to Quebec, which has its own plan.

We must continue to work together in the House. The Conservatives supported doubling the GST-HST credit. Now we need their support to provide assistance for dental care and for renters.

Will the Conservatives support us or not?

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, every time we ask government members about problems with the temporary foreign worker program, they subject us to sermons about the importance of immigration.

Obviously immigration is important. That is why we need to deal with it. It is important for companies that lose contracts because they cannot get enough workers, but it is just as important—perhaps more so—for the foreign workers who just want to earn a living but cannot while Ottawa takes its sweet time with their applications. These people do not want sermons; they want to work.

When is the government going to process their applications in a timely manner instead of constantly shattering their dreams?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member asked if we know how to do things properly.

We know how to bring in a record number of new permanent residents, students and foreign workers. We know how to reach Quebec's immigration thresholds. We will continue to make Canada a welcoming new home for immigrants who make tremendous contributions to our economy and our communities.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Liberals say that they know what they are doing, but yesterday we read stories in *Le Journal de Montréal* about businesses that have been waiting for their foreign workers for a year. That is a year of lost contracts for the businesses, a year of lost income for the workers and a year of lost growth for our economy. Everyone loses while this government fails to realize that the immigration programs are intended to serve people, not showcase noble values.

Today the federal government has two choices. When will it finally truly take care of the backlogs? If it cannot do that, when will it hand over the program to Quebec?

[English]

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the reality is that this year, as a result of decisions we have taken to hire more workers, leverage technological solutions and relax policy requirements, we have the largest number of newcomers arriving in Canada, both permanent residents and temporary residents. There are more newcomers coming to fill key gaps in the labour force than ever before.

We are going to continue to do everything we can to speed up the process because we believe it is good for Canada. Even this morning, I was able to launch new policies that will allow international students to work more hours to contribute to the labour force shortage we are experiencing. It is good for our economy, and it is good for our communities.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, families are already struggling to make their mortgage payments and credit card payments, and the Bank of Canada plans to raise interest rates even more. This will lead to a self-inflicted recession that will cost hundreds of thousands of jobs.

The Liberals have refused to fix EI, and the Conservatives do not even want people to have EI. The reality today is that half of the Canadians losing their jobs do not have access to employment insurance.

When will Liberals wake up, do the right thing and fix EI so family members who lose their jobs have support when they need it?

● (1130)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government understands that EI benefits need to be more fair, more responsive and more adaptable to the needs of Canada's evolving workforce. That is why we are committed to delivering a full-scale modernization of Canada's EI system.

Although our temporary COVID support measures are winding down, regular EI benefits will continue to be available to workers, just as they were before the pandemic. We look forward to launching our long-term plan to improve Canada's EI system.

*Oral Questions***LABOUR**

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, Alberta workers are taking the lead on a clean energy future, and they want to know why the Prime Minister is missing in action. They do not want aspirational talk. They want an industrial job strategy focused on unleashing the power of a clean energy future.

The Prime Minister gives \$18 billion a year in subsidies to big oil, and they are using that money for automation and cutting thousands of jobs. We see no similar commitment on the clean energy future.

Where is the plan to work with the Alberta Federation of Labour to create sustainable, good-paying union jobs in the west and across Canada?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member knows full well that we work very closely, not only with the Alberta Federation of Labour, but also with workers from right across the country.

I have said repeatedly that no one other than workers will be leading the so-called “just transition”, a phrase I always use very lightly because, frankly, workers do not particularly like it.

We are going to work together to make sure we lower emissions and work towards a net-zero and more prosperous future for all our oil industries, including the one in my province.

* * *

TAXATION

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, over half of Canadians cannot feed their families and have had to cut back on meat, fresh fruit and veggies. One in five are going hungry, but the Prime Minister does not seem to care.

Food bank use has tripled, but he still wants to triple the carbon tax and triple the cost to truck food to the store. Farmers, the food producers, cannot make ends meet because the carbon tax costs them almost \$40,000 a year more. That is just insane.

Will the Prime Minister cancel his plan to triple taxes on gas, groceries and home heating?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, we absolutely care about Canadian families and Canadian farmers. We know the vital role that farmers play in feeding Canadians, and we value that tremendously.

Let us be clear, on this side of the House, we have taken meaningful action, whether it was creating the Canada child benefit for families, lowering taxes for the middle class or bringing in early learning and child care. In fact, the Conservatives have an opportunity to, for the first time, support these measures by supporting dental care and rental supports. I hope we can count on them to support low-income Canadians.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is the costly NDP-Liberal coalition that is driving up the prices of everything.

Students are being forced to live in homeless shelters. Young Canadians have almost \$300 less at the end of the month compared to last year. Adults are stuck in their parents' basements because they have to spend more on taxes than on clothing, food and housing. Half are \$200 or less away from bankruptcy. Struggling seniors are being forced to choose between heating and eating.

Why do the Liberals not have a heart and cancel their triple tax hikes?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if the Conservatives want to talk about having a heart, they actually have an opportunity to have one.

We have measures on the floor of the House to help low-income Canadians with rental support and to help kids who need access to dental support to get it. For some reason, the Conservatives are against kids going to the dentist. For some reason, they are against helping low-income renters. I do not understand. They have an opportunity to demonstrate they have a heart for the first in this Parliament. I hope they do it.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, in response to my question in finance committee, Tiff Macklem, governor of the Bank of Canada, said that the carbon tax is a significant driver in inflation. The carbon tax has led to food inflation going over 10%. We have a heart because we want Canadians to be able to eat.

When the government triples the carbon tax, what will food inflation get to? How many Canadians will have to go to food banks then? Will it be 30%, 40% or 50%? How many Canadians have to go hungry before the government cancels this carbon tax?

• (1135)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, putting a price on pollution is the best market mechanism to fight the existential threat to our planet, which is climate change. It is working.

In 2020 alone, we had a reduction of 8.9% of emissions. Eight out of 10 Canadians get more money back from our rebate program. Everything from the other side is simply hot air.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, with 62% of small businesses still carrying debt from the pandemic, and 54% reporting below normal sales, raising any of their taxes is nothing short of cold hearted, yet the Liberal tax hikes will triple the carbon tax on transporting goods, heating storefronts and cooking food on gas stoves.

Will the Liberal government cancel their plans to triple the carbon tax on small businesses?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that question is critically important because we know small businesses are drivers of the economy. What we have been doing consistently on this side of the House for the past three years is proposing measures that support our small business entrepreneurs, help keep their employees well paid and remunerated, and help them keep the lights on.

In particular, what we have done most recently is the Canada digital adoption program. We know that the entrepreneurs of the future are moving more and more consistently online. That is why we are providing a \$4-billion program to help them do it.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, families in rural Saskatchewan are struggling with soaring costs due to the rising price of gas, which has increased the price of everything. With winter just around the corner, they know life is about to get even more expensive. Heating their homes is not a luxury. It seems the government is intent on freezing out Canadians by literally having them freeze.

Will the Liberal government cancel its plans to triple taxes on gas, groceries and home heating?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what the Conservatives continuously fail to understand is that climate change is the single biggest threat to Canadians and Canadian families. I do not know if they missed what happened recently in Atlantic Canada or what happened recently in B.C. with the floods. These are significant events that have had huge impacts on families. They all ran on having a price on pollution in the last election. Let us see if they flip-flop again.

* * *

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, last year, the Liberal member for Edmonton Centre stood next to Chief Billy Morin of Enoch Cree Nation and promised funding to bring high-speed Internet to indigenous communities. I just got off the phone with the chief. They applied for the funding, and the Liberal government denied their application. It told them that their Internet was good enough. Well, the fact is, Enoch Cree Nation does not even have Internet.

When will these Liberal gatekeepers stop just posing for photo ops and reverse their decision to wrongfully exclude this indigenous community and all the other rural communities they have betrayed?

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

Canada's north is an iconic region of our country for its beauty, opportunities and exceptional experiences. Many of Canada's indigenous peoples live there.

Oral Questions

Because of northern Canada's geography and the impact of climate change, those communities face many challenges when it comes to high-speed Internet. Since 2015, our government has invested more than \$350 million in connectivity projects. Soon the communities will be connected, and we are working to ensure that all of Canada is connected by 2030.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, the government has cooked the books to hide the fact that it continues to sink our money into the Trans Mountain pipeline.

In the spring, the Minister of Finance announced that the government would spend no more public money on Trans Mountain. However, West Coast Environmental Law has revealed that the interest on the project's debt alone will cost us \$750 million this year and \$800 million next year. By the end of 2023, the total cost of Trans Mountain to taxpayers will reach, brace yourselves, \$17 billion.

How much will Quebeckers have to pay for Canada to continue polluting?

● (1140)

[English]

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Northern Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think it is important for my colleague to remember that, if one really wants to address climate change, it means making bold moves and bold investments. When we consider projects such as the TMX—

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. There is a problem with the interpretation.

[English]

Is the interpretation working now?

The hon. parliamentary secretary can restart.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, I want to point out for my colleague that when one wants to fight climate change, it means one needs to invest to make it happen. When one looks at a comprehensive plan like we have as a government to address climate change, it considers projects like the TMX. It is focused on reducing the amount of oil that is being shipped by rail. It enables Canadians to secure a full value for its oil resources. Going forward, we will continue to focus on the best climate change measures we can implement to reduce emissions and fall in line with our net-zero commitments.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, therefore fighting climate change means increasing the oil supply. We will have to remember that.

We have known since day one that the Trans Mountain pipeline is a financial and environmental disaster. However, we did not know that taxpayers would have to cough up \$17 billion. Another \$17 billion of public money will be invested in the oil sands as we find ourselves in a climate crisis. That is the price of letting the Government of Canada make decisions for us about how to invest our money in climate change.

Do they really believe that Quebeckers would have chosen to sink their money into a pipeline in western Canada that will go bankrupt?

[English]

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as an Alberta MP, I know, as do western MPs and all Canadians, that Canada needs to get its resources to market, particularly at a time when we need to help fuel the world. When we get our resources to market, it will help us get the world price of oil, which will help us to fund the transition to net zero. Our government does not intend to be a long-term owner of this asset. We will be moving forward with a divestment process, and it will be a good asset for all Canadians.

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TAXATION

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, this morning I took part in the annual Food Bank Fill Up for the Brockville & Area Food Bank. The executive director Hailie Jack tells me that food bank use is at an all-time high. With food price inflation at 40-year highs, even monetary donations are not going as far as they should.

Canadians just cannot afford more taxes from the Liberal government, so will it today commit to cancelling its plan to triple the tax on gas, home heating and groceries?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what Canadians cannot afford is for the Conservatives to keep slow-walking on important legislation that will help them, whether that is support for low-income rentals or support for kids who need dental care. These are things that will seriously help Canadian families and Canadians meet the high cost of living.

We are pleased they finally did an about-face and are supporting us on the GST rebate, but we need their support on these other items if they truly care about helping Canadians.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, what Canadians need is an about-face from the Liberal government on its wasting of Canadian tax dollars, like it did on the \$54-million ArriveCAN app. Tech experts are confounded by its costing more than a low seven

figures at worst. We know the app was not based in science. It was all based on dividing and stigmatizing.

If Canadian tech experts do not know why the government spent this much money, what we want to know, what Canadians want to know, is which Liberal insiders got rich on these contracts?

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will make no apology for an app that saved the lives of tens of thousands of Canadians. This was part of a global health strategy to protect Canadians, and this app was put in place in April of 2020 one month after a global—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please.

I am sorry. I have my speakers on and I still cannot hear the answer. I do not think the hon. member who asked the question is able to hear the answer, so I ask members to please hold off.

The parliamentary secretary can start from the top.

● (1145)

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, this app was put in place one month after a global pandemic was declared. To return to answering that question, where the hon. member insinuated the price was entirely related to developing the app, that price is related to development, accessibility, support, maintenance and multiple different contracts. It was not related just to the development of the app.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadians cannot afford this costly coalition between the Liberals and the NDP. We all know they want to triple the carbon tax. Now The Globe and Mail has reported the government is on pace to more than double its spending on the disastrous ArriveCAN app. This app has cost the Canadian tourism industry its 2022 summer tourism season, has wreaked havoc on border communities, caused chaos at our airports and has hurt Canada's reputation as a world-class tourism destination.

Canadians are wondering two things. Who got rich at their expense and when will the government finally scrap this app?

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the government has already announced that the app is now not mandatory and it is voluntary. The app was put in place at the beginning of the pandemic to save lives. The app was used appropriately for the last two years and now the government has allowed the app to be voluntary in order to expedite people moving forward at the border more quickly.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, the app must have been created in order to line someone's pockets. Let us break it down: \$54 million works out to one million hours for an engineer, a professional, at \$50 an hour. That means 31,000 weeks of work, which is 596 years of work for one person, or 596 people working for one year to create the app.

The facts speak for themselves. Someone pocketed a bunch of cash in this deal, but the Liberals refuse to say who that was. Was it friends of the Liberalist?

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we will not apologize for an app that saved lives. The app was put in place at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic to protect the health of Canadians. Thousands of lives were saved as a result of actions taken by the government to protect the health of Canadians.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, Canadians are worried about the effects of the climate emergency and Putin's illegal invasion into Ukraine. Now Canada's chief of the defence staff has made an unprecedented call to immediately halt non-essential activities in the armed forces. Our forces have a personnel crisis. One in 10 positions are not filled and we are only receiving half the applicants we need. On sexual misconduct, the government has failed to implement numerous judicial reports.

When will the government take real steps to properly invest in recruitment so Canadians can be supported abroad and at home?

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, making sure that our Canadian Armed Forces have the right number of people, the capabilities and the culture that it needs to meet current and emerging threats is our highest priority. The reconstitution directive and retention strategy will help ensure that we can grow and retain talent so that our Canadian Armed Forces can continue to serve Canadians. We remain focused on enabling lasting culture change, creating the best recruitment practices and procuring the right equipment for our Canadian Armed Forces.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, in yesterday's report from the Special Committee on Afghanistan, the

Oral Questions

government said it agreed that applications for Afghans who served Canada must be processed immediately, yet Afghans who applied almost two years ago are still waiting for a response. To make matters worse, the Liberals are sticking to an arbitrary cap and new applications are no longer being accepted. Meanwhile, I continue to receive urgent pleas from Afghans being hunted down by the Taliban. Some have disappeared.

Will the government commit today to lift the arbitrary cap for Afghans and immediately expedite their processing?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question, and for her passion and advocacy on behalf of some of the most vulnerable people in the world. I share her concern about their vulnerability and that is why we advanced one of the most substantial commitments, and in fact, the most substantial on a per capita basis, to resettle at least 40,000 Afghan refugees by the end of next year.

I am so pleased to share with the House that a couple of weeks ago, we crossed an important milestone. We now have more than 20,000 Afghan refugees living safely in Canada. We are not done. We are going to do everything we can to make good on our commitment no matter what it takes.

* * *

● (1150)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. George Chalal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Madam Speaker, families in Calgary Skyview and across the province are struggling with the high cost of goods. Albertans are working hard to support their families with groceries, rent and school supplies. On Friday, October 14, all Albertans will be receiving fall climate action incentive rebate cheques, which, for a family of four, will amount to around \$270. When we add up all the payments over the course of the year, it comes to over \$1,070.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change inform this House where else in Canada Canadians are receiving these cheques and what they are—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Oral Questions

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Calgary Skyview for his climate advocacy. He will know the federal pollution pricing system is a win-win. It puts more money back in families' pockets, while fighting climate change. These quarterly payments add up to major support for families facing affordability challenges. Over the course of the year, a family of four will receive up to \$745 in Ontario, \$832 in Manitoba and \$1,100 in Alberta. This money is helping families make ends meet, while helping build a healthy, economic and environmental future for their kids.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, the reality is that this government is going to take even more money out of Canadians' paycheques. People are drowning. Everything is so expensive. House prices have gone up 21% in the Quebec City region alone. A pound of butter, from a well-known brand in Quebec, now retails for \$8.49.

Instead of showing contempt for citizens who are struggling to get by, will the government commit to cancelling its plan to raise taxes?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our deal to lower taxes for Canadians is very clear, and our plan to fight inflation and make life more affordable is very clear.

We have reduced child care costs; we will double the GST credit; we will provide a \$500 housing top-up; and we will provide access to dental care assistance for the most vulnerable youth under the age of 12

This is what responsible leadership looks like. We hope the Conservatives will join us in passing Bill C-31.

[English]

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Madam Speaker, on top of record Liberal deficits, record inflation and a tripling of the carbon tax, now this tax-and-spend Liberal government is coming after workers' paycheques and taking more. This week, we learned that the average Canadian family now spends more on taxes than they spend on the basic necessities of food, shelter and clothing combined. Canadians are desperate.

Will the government give them a glimmer of hope and cancel its tax hikes on January 1 on workers' paycheques?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let us be clear on what the member opposite and the Conservative Party are talking about. They are talking about employment insurance, and they are talking about the Canada pension plan. When we are talking about employment insurance, that is insurance that workers pay into in the event that they lose their jobs. The Conservatives are talking about slashing that fund. When we talk about the Canada pension plan, that is something Canadians pay into to have retirement security.

We have talked about the Conservatives having a heart. I hope they have one when it comes to people who lose their jobs and Canadian retirees.

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, as families across Canada begin their Thanksgiving weekend, all they should be worried about is where they are going to get their favourite local pumpkin pie. Instead, they are worried about making ends meet. Why? It is because the average Canadian family now spends more on taxes than they do on food, shelter and clothing combined. The last thing they can afford are even more taxes.

Will the Liberal government cancel its planned January 1 tax hikes on Canadian paycheques?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what the Conservatives are talking about is cutting EI and cutting the Canada pension plan. These are two of the most important programs that we have in the social safety net in Canada. They support workers who lose their jobs and they support retirees.

As we go into this Thanksgiving weekend, I hope that Conservatives can think about families and can think about the people that they would hurt if these measures do not move forward.

• (1155)

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, people in my community are deeply concerned about the rapid rise in the cost of living. The average Canadian family now pays more in taxes than on the basic necessities of life. Under the Liberal government, things are about to get worse with the tripling of the carbon tax and, on top of that, a hike in payroll taxes. The last thing Canadian families need is even more taxes to pay.

Will the government commit to cancelling its plan to increase taxes on Canadian paycheques?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is that EI premiums have been lower under this government than they were at any time when the Conservatives were in power under the Leader of the Opposition.

The other fact of the matter is that this government has returned more money to the pockets of hard-working middle-class and low-income families than the Conservatives did, with the Canada child benefit, the tax cut for the middle class and support for early learning and child care. Returning the climate action rebate is another important one.

Now the Conservatives have an opportunity to support us on rental and dental. I hope that they do.

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[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, the government will have to change its tone on Roxham Road. We have the right to ask why it is not shutting down human smuggling networks. We have the right to ask why it is refusing to close a loophole that allows asylum seekers to be exploited. We have the right to ask why it takes years to process refugee families' claims. That is our right; more importantly, it is our duty.

When will the government do something about what is actually happening at Roxham Road instead of lecturing Quebeckers?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we need to revamp our asylum system, but there is no magic solution.

Closing Roxham Road is not a good solution; that would just move the problem elsewhere. Suspending the safe third country agreement would have the opposite effect. What we need to do is modernize the agreement, and that is what we are doing. We are working with the United States to find a sustainable, permanent solution. We have to keep working with the provincial government in Quebec.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, if the federal government were taking a humanitarian approach at Roxham Road, it would not be squaring off against refugee advocacy groups before the Supreme Court. Because of the government's inaction, people who should be welcomed with open arms are forced to sneak across the border. As a result, they are being extorted by criminals and arrested by the RCMP at the border. This would all end if the government would suspend the safe third country agreement. Migrants could cross at official border crossings.

Why does the government prefer to fight refugees in court to protect the agreement rather than protect families?

[English]

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are going to continue to work to improve the situation at Roxham Road, but we have international and domestic legal obligations that we are following to the letter.

We are trying to process people in a humane way, to recognize that human beings who are coming into Canada are sometimes very vulnerable. We are going to meet our legal obligations while we work toward a permanent solution, which requires us to negotiate an agreement with the United States of America.

We are seized with this issue. We are going to continue our work to make sure that we abide by our obligations and do right by some of the vulnerable people who are seeking refuge here in Canada.

Oral Questions

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, in June I asked the public safety minister about equipping RCMP cruisers with defibrillators, which would cost only \$10 million and save 300 lives per year. He responded that the RCMP have “invested hundreds of millions” in life-saving equipment, which begs the question why the government does not take 10 million of those dollars and use them for the device that would, dollar for dollar, save the most lives, by a wide margin.

Here is the answer. Records shows that the last time a minister bothered to speak to the department about defibrillators was when Stephen Harper was the prime minister.

Will the Prime Minister finally place defibrillators in RCMP cruisers and save 300 lives a year?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his continued advocacy on this issue. Our priority is keeping Canadians safe, and we will continue to work with the RCMP to prioritize equipment and capabilities within the police service to ensure that Canadians are kept safe.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, it has been reported that the Chinese communist regime is operating at least three illegal police stations in Canada, threatening Chinese Canadians and even coercing some to return to China.

As we learn more, what is the government doing about these illegal Chinese communist-sponsored police stations, which constitute an assault on Canadian sovereignty?

• (1200)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Madam Speaker, protecting the public from the threat of foreign interference is precisely what Canadians have mandated this government to do. Our national security agencies are proactively working on threats from foreign bad actors, such as China. Any harassment, intimidation and coercion by a foreign power will be investigated, and appropriate charges will be laid.

Canadians can rest assured that we will make sure no stone is unturned in our efforts to protect public safety and security.

[Translation]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, we already knew that Iranian officers freely come to this country to harass Canadians. Why is that? It is because the Liberal government does not have the guts to identify the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps for what it is: a terrorist organization.

Now we are learning that Chinese police are illegally operating three police stations in Canada in order to intimidate Canadians.

Did the government know that?

Oral Questions

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we will always stand firmly in support of women's rights and vulnerable communities around the world. We are horrified by Iran's actions and the murder of Mahsa Amini. There will be further consequences, and all options are on the table. We have the toughest and most comprehensive sanctions in the world against Iran.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we appreciate that these are difficult times for Canadians and that our companies are experiencing significant labour shortages. It is time we recognized the significant contributions of international students. I can tell members that in my riding of Willowdale many international students are contributing to the growth of companies.

I want to ask the Minister of Immigration if he could kindly inform the members of this House on what he is doing to support international students and the growth of Canadian companies.

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me begin by thanking my hon. colleague for his advocacy to grow the Canadian economy and to support international students.

Canada has had one of the strongest economic recoveries of any developed nation in the world when it comes to bouncing back from COVID-19. Despite the fact that we have recently hit near the lowest unemployment rate, there are nearly a million jobs available in the Canadian economy that we need to fill.

There are 500,000 international students living in Canada who can make contributions. This morning I announced that we are lifting the cap on the number of hours those students can work, which can make a difference to the Canadian economy. It is a great day for international students. It is a great day for the economy.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, Hadis Najafi, at age 22, is dead. Sarina Esmailzadeh, at age 16, is dead. Nika Shahkarami, at age 16, died after telling a friend she was being chased by the IRGC. Her family was forced to lie publicly about her death. This bloodthirsty regime is clearly beyond the pale. Canada simply must do more.

This is a very important question. At exactly what time today will the government finally do the right thing and list the IRGC as a terrorist entity?

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first and foremost, Canada will always stand with Iranian women and all those who support them, including human rights defenders. Canada stands with all those standing up for their rights in Iran and the families of those lost in the downing of PS752.

We have some of the toughest and most comprehensive sanctions in the world against Iran. The IRGC Quds Force is listed as a terrorist entity. Iran is listed as a state sponsor of terror. We will hold the regime of Iran accountable for its crimes.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, is the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps a terrorist organization?

It has been over 1,000 days now, and we still do not have a decision. Meanwhile, this terrorist group is allowed to continue its activities here in Canada.

Let me remind the House that 55 Canadians died when flight PS752 was shot down.

Will the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps be recognized as a terrorist organization, yes or no?

● (1205)

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the status quo in Iran is dangerous. Women in Tehran are speaking up for their lives, their rights and their future, and as a woman I stand with them.

There will be further consequences, and all options are on the table when it comes to what our government is going to do when it comes to Iran.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Madam Speaker, amid the increasing protests that have erupted, the government has been cowardly silent on why a terrorist listing has not been put in place for the IRGC. Murder is the unlawful, premeditated killing of one human by another. It is imperative that this House follow through on the 2018 motion. The Liberals voted for it, but have not acted.

Open-ended declarations of solidarity with protesters is not enough. When will the government declare the IRGC a terrorist regime?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when it comes to what our government is doing, I would hope the hon. members across the aisle would work with us and not try to politicize the issue.

We are taking action. In fact, Canada has the toughest and most comprehensive sanctions in the world against Iran. There will be further consequences. All options are on the table.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, heckling me and my answer is not going to find the solution; working with us will.

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know the Prime Minister and his government work diligently in the best interests of Canadians. On behalf of my constituents of Don Valley North, I thank them.

The Organization of American States is the oldest regional organization in the world. This an important avenue for advancing Canada's goal to increase economic opportunities and strengthen security and institutions.

This week, the Minister of Foreign Affairs was in Peru to attend the 52nd regular session of the OAS. Can the parliamentary secretary inform this House on this important trip and its benefit to our relations with other American states?

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this week the minister joined countries from across the hemisphere to address the challenges facing us all. She called for action in response to the human rights violations in Nicaragua and Venezuela; she pushed for solidarity with the Iranian women who are fighting for their future, and she held a discussion on the international response to the crisis in Haiti. Canada will always be there to promote and defend diversity, democracy and human rights.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, poor mental health is a top threat to kids, with suicide being the leading cause of death for teens. However, this devastating reality can be changed with government action to improve access to mental health supports. Too many kids cannot access supports because of costs or because of wait-lists that are months and often years long.

Every day that government delays action is another day kids do not get the help they need. When will the Liberals put kids first and follow through on their promises to fix mental health backlogs?

[Translation]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. Suicide is a very important issue for us. We are taking action to make a difference. Our thoughts are with families who have lost a loved one recently.

It is important for Canadians to have timely access to the right services. We are working on establishing a three-digit national crisis line as well as a pan-Canadian suicide prevention service.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, six months ago, on April 5, five Canadian crew members of Pivot Airlines were detained in the Dominican Republic for the crime of trying to report a crime. Will Canada impress upon the Dominican Republic authorities that bad guys rarely inform the police of a crime that they are doing?

Routine Proceedings

Can Global Affairs Canada at least do the bare minimum of updating its travel advisory for that country from “exercise a high degree of caution” to “do not go there”? Almost 900,000 Canadians vacation and spend their tourist dollars in that country. They should go elsewhere and visit a country that respects the rule of law.

• (1210)

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can assure my colleague that we are aware of the detention of Canadian citizens in the Dominican Republic. Consular officials are providing assistance and are in contact with the families of the Canadian citizens. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have recently raised the situation of the Pivot case, which the member mentioned, with their Dominican counterparts. I am also directly engaged on this file. This is a priority for our government.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That brings us to the end of question period. For those who might be going home a bit earlier, I wish them a happy Thanksgiving.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

COMMISSIONER OF LOBBYING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty, pursuant to subsection 94(2) of the Access to Information Act and subsection 72(2) of the Privacy Act, to lay upon the table the reports of the Commissioner of Lobbying on the administration of these acts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), these reports are deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES ACT

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP) moved that Bill S-222, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (use of wood), be read the first time.

Routine Proceedings

He said: Madam Speaker, I am very proud today to rise to introduce Bill S-222, which has come to us from the other place. I thank the member for North Island—Powell River for being my seconder.

This is a small but mighty bill that asks the government to consider using environmentally friendly materials such as wood when building government infrastructure. It was my private member's bill, Bill C-354, in the 42nd Parliament, when it passed through the House of Commons but unfortunately died in the Senate when that Parliament ended. I look forward to seeing this bill pass through the House once again and finally become law.

I want to thank Senator Diane Griffin, who has championed the cause of this bill in the Senate over the past five or six years, and also Senator Jim Quinn, who took up that cause after Senator Griffin's retirement this spring.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

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PETITIONS**MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING**

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to present a petition on behalf of residents of North Okanagan—Shuswap and other Canadians.

The petitioners note that the government should focus on increasing support for mental health care and improving access to supports instead of offering medical assistance in dying for those with a mental illness. Therefore, the undersigned citizens call on the Government of Canada to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying for those with mental illness.

EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, today I am tabling a petition that has been signed by several hundred people across this country who really care about expanded polystyrene, EPS, in our oceans. A lot of people think of it as styrofoam, but we know that those little particles get smaller and smaller and are getting into the infrastructure of our systems, with tremendous damage.

The petitioners want to see the marine environment protected, want us to stop having these things in place and want the infrastructure out there to no longer have EPS as part of it. Sometimes it is encased, but it does not make a difference. It is getting out there and it is toxic to marine life.

The petitioners point out that the qathet Regional District and the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities have unanimously endorsed the prohibition of EPS in marine environments.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise this afternoon to present a petition on a very important and urgent issue.

[*English*]

The petitioners are calling for the Government of Canada to take the climate emergency seriously. They are calling on it to reduce emissions by at least 60% below 2005 levels by 2030, work to wind down the fossil fuel industry and its related infrastructure and ensure that no new investments go into new infrastructure such as the Trans Mountain pipeline or drilling in Bay du Nord.

The petitioners have a long list, but I will summarize by saying that they want to see accessible and affordable public transit and housing that is energy efficient, and want us to work toward a just transition for workers.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, we all remember the vile anti-Semitism of Laith Marouf, who received over \$500 million from the government for anti-racism training. The petitioners are demanding that an investigation under the Inquiries Act take place and that all of those findings become public in the House.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to present a petition signed by a number of residents in Flamborough—Glanbrook who are calling on the government to expedite the delivery of reliable Internet service to rural Canadians.

People are experiencing inconsistent, inadequate and sometimes non-existent Internet. This is something I can speak to very directly, because I have very intermittent Internet service in my own home and recently had a very frustrating conversation with a neighbour. The majority of residents have a very basic level of 50/10. In 2022, that is unacceptable, and waiting another three years is even more unacceptable, so let us make high-speed Internet happen a lot sooner.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if a revised response to Question No. 662, originally tabled on September 20, 2022, could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is it the pleasure of the House that the aforementioned question be deemed to have been made an Order for Return and that it be tabled immediately?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 662—**Mr. Gord Johns:**

With regard to polling data obtained by the Privy Council Office since January 1, 2016, concerning the decriminalization of possession of controlled substances: what are the details of all such polling, including, for each poll, (i) who conducted the poll, (ii) the start and end dates of when the poll was conducted, (iii) the number of participants, (iv) the complete results of the poll, including the questions asked and the responses received, (v) the value of the contract related to the poll, (vi) the dates the polling data was shared with Health Canada or the Public Health Agency of Canada, if applicable?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

COST OF LIVING RELIEF ACT, NO. 2

The House resumed from October 5 consideration of the motion that Bill C-31, An Act respecting cost of living relief measures related to dental care and rental housing, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to talk about proposed Bill C-31, an act respecting cost of living relief measures related to dental care and rental housing.

As announced by the Prime Minister on September 13, 2022, our government has committed to bringing forward measures that should make life more affordable for those who need it the most. As part of Bill C-31, and if the bill is passed without amendments, the government has committed to implementing a proposed benefit called the Canada dental benefit. The goal of this benefit is to help Canadians with the cost of dental care and to get more money into the pockets of Canadians who need it as quickly as possible.

The federal government believes that Canadians deserve access to dental care and excellent oral care, which is why I firmly support this proposed legislation. We all know that having access to quality dental care is an integral part of overall health, but it can be very expensive for Canadians who do not have dental insurance. Of course, this must change. Under the proposed legislation, and if the bill is passed as written, eligible Canadians with children under 12 years old would receive direct, upfront tax-free payments to cover dental expenses.

The Canada dental benefit would be in place while the government takes the necessary steps to build a comprehensive, longer-term national dental care program. Knowing that a national dental care program must be able to support approximately between seven million and nine million Canadians, people whose situations are completely different, the government is proceeding cautiously by establishing this program in a phased manner. This allows the gov-

Government Orders

ernment to undertake the necessary steps in building this comprehensive, long-term dental care program for all Canadians who need it the most.

An effective and comprehensive national dental program requires discussion with all key stakeholders, including the provinces and territories as well as industry, to ensure that the upcoming program meets all needs and expectations. We must insist on one point: Implementing the Canada dental benefit would allow the most vulnerable Canadians to access financial support as soon as possible in order to begin attending to some of their children's dental care needs.

Let us look at some of the detailed provisions contained in the proposed bill that we have on the table, provisions that are subject to the approval of Parliament.

Families with children under 12 years old who have a net annual family income of less than \$90,000 for 2021 would be eligible to apply for the Canada dental benefit. The proposed benefit in Bill C-31 would provide eligible parents or guardians with direct, upfront tax-free payments to cover dental expenses for their eligible children. Per year, \$650 would be provided if the family's adjusted net income is under \$70,000; \$390 would be provided if the family's adjusted net income is between \$70,000 and \$79,999; and, finally, \$260 would be provided if the family's adjusted net income is between \$80,000 and \$89,999.

Applicants in 2022 would need to meet some eligibility criteria to apply. This would include, of course, having children or being the legal guardians of children under 12 years of age and receiving the Canada child benefit for these children, and needing to attest that the children do not have access to private insurance that covers dental care. If applicants are covered by other government programs, they would need to certify that it is only partial coverage and that they would have out-of-pocket dental expenses for the dental procedures. They would also need to have filed their most recent income tax benefit return. In other words, in order to be eligible in 2022, applicants would need to have filed in respect of taxation year 2021.

The Canada dental benefit would be used for any dental care provided by regulated oral health professionals who are licensed to practise in the applicant's province or territory. The exact care covered by the benefit would be decided between the patient and their oral health care provider.

Under the proposed legislation, and if the bill is passed, the Canada Revenue Agency would administer the payments and facilitate the application processes based on its experience with similar benefit programs and its ability to verify income.

● (1220)

The CRA has significant experience in delivering essential benefits to Canadians such as the Canada child benefit. This expertise will allow the CRA to effectively administer the proposed dental benefit on behalf of the Government of Canada. The CRA is valued for its reliable and innovative execution of tax and benefit transactions. In other words, the CRA is ready to deliver a secure and user-centric experience to make it as easy as possible for eligible Canadians to get the money they need for dental care, while protecting personal and tax information.

Government Orders

I can assure all members in the House that the CRA never stops enhancing the security of its digital services to protect Canadians from fraudulent activity. As an example, security features include multifactor authentication and making email addresses mandatory for those who use the CRA's My Account. Of course, if Bill C-31 is passed, the CRA would lean heavily on a range of existing tools from administering other government programs, as set out in the draft legislation, to conduct compliance, verification and collection activities. As an example, the CRA would ensure integrity and verify applicant eligibility, including applicant's income, child's age and family relationship. Applicants will be asked to save their dental care receipts for a period of six years and to show that the benefit was spent on dental care as intended, in case verification is required.

Finally, Canadians can also be assured that they would receive helpful, fair and trustworthy services thanks to the CRA's people-first philosophy. I encourage all Canadians who believe they could apply for this benefit to sign up for the CRA's My Account and direct deposit, if it has not already been done. I also invite Canadians to update all of their information, such as their address and marital status, on the CRA's online services. However, if a prospective applicant does not have Internet access, they can update their information and will be able to apply for this benefit, by calling the CRA contact centre.

In closing, I am pleased to support the proposed Canada dental benefit as it demonstrates the government's commitment to making life more affordable for Canadians. We must remember that in April of this year, through budget 2022, the Government of Canada committed \$5.3 billion over five years and \$1.7 billion, ongoing, to help with dental care for Canadians who are unable to access care because of the costs.

This proposed Canada dental benefit is the first stone in the building of our national plan for our fellow citizens who cannot afford the cost of dental care. There are millions of them and these Canadians deserve excellent oral health.

• (1225)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her speech and the time she took to talk about the importance of especially dental care. I know in my riding, just over a year ago, I sent out a mailer talking about the need for dental care. I was shocked by how many people responded. What was most surprising was how many people actually came to the door. I remember walking into the office and having three seniors waiting outside the door, all of them there to talk about their really important need for dental care and bringing in person the mailer that I sent out, along with their responses.

I am just wondering if this member could indicate why her party, which just, over a year ago, voted against dental care is now in a position of voting for it.

Ms. Viviane Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I too heard the same things from constituents in my riding as I was meeting with them. Making life more affordable for families across the country includes making oral health care accessible for all. Dental care, I am sure my colleague will agree, is an important part of overall health, yet in

Canada one-third of the population cannot afford it. That is why our government is tabling this bill.

The Canada dental benefit would provide dental care for uninsured Canadians. It is important because every Canadian deserves good oral health care. We will continue working with all our partners.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sudbury for her speech.

When we talk about this legislation, we must not forget that Quebec has already had coverage for 10 years and that we need to respect the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. The impact of this bill is questionable, and it has been shown that these cheques may not help improve Quebecers' dental health. I would like the member to explain why.

Ms. Viviane Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. We are working very closely with all of our partners, including the provinces and territories. As members know, every Canadian deserves good care, because that is key to their overall well-being. Our government is on track to keep its promise on dental care.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, this bill is one small step toward making real dental insurance a part of our public health care system. It is just the first step.

• (1230)

[*English*]

When is the government committed to including, and will the government commit to, full dental coverage for all age groups in our national health plan?

Ms. Viviane Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, this is a first step toward developing a full comprehensive dental program, but we felt it was important to take this first step as Canadians who are vulnerable require it.

I want to share some statistics that have recently come out over the needs that are just so important and why we are taking steps. A campaign led by the Canadian Association of Public Health Dentistry suggests that one in five people, and that represents six million Canadians, are not receiving needed dental care due to costs and that only Canadians with financial resources or insurance can experience good oral health. That is why we have taken this first step. It is a recognized first step toward a broader plan.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, can the member for Sudbury speak about why the children under 12 in her constituency need this particular bill to pass?

Government Orders

Ms. Viviane Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, we know Canadians are feeling the rising cost of living, particularly through higher food prices and rent. While inflation is a global challenge, we are helping families weather its impact by working to put more money back in the pockets of Canadians.

The Liberal Party of Canada and NDP's supply and confidence agreement committed to launching a national dental care program, and the agreement identified launching a new dental care program for low-income Canadians as the first priority action under the health care stream of the agreement. The program is restricted to families with an income of less than \$90,000. It is very important because we know every Canadian deserves—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): I apologize but must interrupt the member for Sudbury.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-31.

This summer, I spoke with thousands of constituents from Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley in person, over the phone and at community events. I met with small businesses, not-for-profit organizations and families. The struggles I heard about from people and small businesses are real and extensive. The fact that we are finally talking about the affordability crisis is a good thing. The members opposite have finally woken up and realized that there is actually a problem that has been very obvious to Canadians, with the exception of the Prime Minister and his cabinet.

Inflation is a problem. Canadians are being hurt by it and the Liberal government's policies are making things far worse. It is important to remember how we got here. Back in 2020, the member for Carleton, who was, at the time, our shadow minister for finance, said that Canada was about to face this problem of significantly increasing inflation. He said that the significant increase we are seeing in government spending is going to drive inflation. At the time, those concerns were dismissed by the government, including the finance minister who said she was more concerned about deflation than inflation. She obviously got that very wrong.

For two years, the government has been ignoring the cost of living crisis, but the election of the member for Carleton as Leader of the Opposition seems to have really focused the government's attention. However, the government seems to have turned to a new form of denial. This new form of denial is for them to say that inflation is not its fault and it has nothing to do with it. It says that inflation is happening everywhere and is the result of the invasion of Ukraine and other events, or it is supply chain blockages and the challenges of global supply chains.

It turns out that the Prime Minister's not thinking about monetary policy has had devastating consequences for Canadians. For instance, the deputy governor of the Bank of Canada, Paul Beaudry, recently admitted in a speech just a couple weeks ago that governments and central banks should have withdrawn stimulus measures sooner. That would have kept inflation in check. He said, "It's like-

ly a somewhat faster global withdrawal process could have made all countries better off".

Just yesterday, Governor Macklem said, "Some of this inflation reflects global developments that we don't control, but inflation in Canada increasingly reflects what's happening in Canada. The demand for goods and services here at home is running ahead of the economy's ability to supply them." The fact of the matter is that inflation was clearly an issue prior to the invasion of Ukraine. It is also hard to make sense of the claim that the global supply chains are responsible for instances where the goods are produced right here in Canada, yet the prices have been going up.

Global supply chains can hardly be blamed for the escalating price of property and real estate that makes it increasingly difficult for Canadians to be able to afford housing. However, unfortunately, the measures the government has put in place are not moving us forward. They are not actually addressing the fundamental problem. In fact, in some respects, they are just making the problem worse.

I can understand that there is confusion across the aisle when I say that. How can I say the Liberals' well-meaning plan will not only not work but will make things worse? This does not make sense to them. For those who truly believe that budgets balance themselves, I can understand that the concept of inflation must also be a difficult one.

While the government says this legislation will tackle the real issues of Canadians in need of relief, the value of these supports on people budgets will rapidly proceed to nothing. They will evaporate quickly because of inflation and the cost of living crisis. For two years, Conservatives have been warning the Liberal government about the consequences of its actions and how much it would hurt Canadians, and it is hurting Canadians right across the country right now.

While members opposite and their coalition partners in the NDP will undoubtedly pat themselves on the back for handing out \$500 rent cheques, which, by the way, most renters would not even qualify for, that is a mere fraction of the increased cost that Canadians are paying just to put food on the table. If the Prime Minister was serious about solving the housing crisis in this country, he would listen to Conservatives and increase the supply of housing.

● (1235)

Our housing bubble is the second largest in the world. We have recently learned that the percentage of Canadians who own their own home is at its lowest level in over 30 years. We have the most land in the G7, yet we have the fewest houses in the G7 on a per capita basis.

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The Liberals can pat themselves on the back for spending all of this money on housing, but when we look at the results, we have the fewest houses in the G7, as I said, and among the highest prices, which have doubled under the government's watch. Canadians are now paying half of their paycheques just to put a roof over their heads. I think that it is obvious the government's housing policy has been a total and utter failure.

Conservatives have been talking about precisely where the government could reduce costs, which would directly help to reduce the inflation that is shredding the value of people's paycheques and household budgets.

The government could use a one-for-one rule, which would mean, for every dollar spent, one must find a dollar of savings. It could cancel all planned tax increases, including paycheque tax hikes scheduled for January 1 and tax hikes on groceries, gas and home heating scheduled for April 1. It could cancel the escalator excise tax, which is also scheduled for April 1. That is right, the Liberals even want to increase the price of a beer. It is shameful.

Leaving those scheduled increases on the books will be catastrophic to Canadian and small business bank accounts. Besides government revenues from gas taxes and GST, the reality is that they have already soared due to inflation. While kitchen cabinets are looking pretty bare, the Liberal cabinet is pretty flush.

What is their brilliant solution? It is to send out cheques to people to help them pay the new taxes the government just levied on them. It never ceases to amaze me how the government thinks that raising taxes on Canadians will make life more affordable for Canadians.

Let us change course today. Instead of just printing more money, we need to produce more of the things that money buys; produce more affordable food, energy and natural resources here in Canada; and build more houses. We need to remove the barriers that the Prime Minister has put in place.

The bottom line is that this bill fuels inflation and fails to address the government's excessive spending, which caused this inflation crisis in the first place. This legislation may be styled as an act respecting cost of living relief measures, but this is not a serious plan, not at all, to address the cost of living. It is more Liberal smoke and mirrors. It is an empty PR exercise in the absence of any real plan.

That is why I will be opposing the bill.

• (1240)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very disappointing that the Conservative Party has made the decision that it is not going to be voting in favour of Bill C-31. Worse, it is going to do what it can to stop the passage of this bill. There are people from Winnipeg, as I am, and children under the age of 12 who are going to emergency health care services because they are not getting the dental work that is necessary. It is an affordability issue in many ways. This legislation is going to provide children under the age of 12 the opportunity to get badly needed dental care.

Why would the members of the Conservative Party oppose the children of Canada who are under the age of 12 being able to receive support in getting dental care, especially when we have so many children going to the hospital to get surgery on dental work?

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Speaker, do we know who is disappointed? It is the middle class and those working hard to join it. After seven years of failed government policies, the government has let them down.

The reality is that, if the government was really serious about the cost of living crisis, it would actually take our recommendations. It would not be increasing taxes on Canadians at a time when prices are going up for Canadians. It would stop the tripling of the carbon tax. It would stop the paycheque tax, and for heaven's sake, somebody has to tell it not to increase the price of beer again.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right about one thing, and that is the fact that inflation, especially in the housing market, is a very serious problem.

In addition to housing costs, which increased by 20% in the Montreal area during the pandemic, there is the issue of housing accessibility. It is not enough to have affordable housing; units actually have to be available. If they are built, they will likely be less expensive, because that depends on supply and demand.

Scotiabank, which is not necessarily an organization that advocates for more social housing, released a report in early 2022 saying that Canada needs 3.5 million housing units over the next 10 years to match the G7 average. That is a huge amount.

What solutions are the Conservatives offering?

[*English*]

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Speaker, we have a housing crisis in this country, and the fact of the matter is that the purported supports for rent in this bill would not go nearly far enough. If the government really wanted to tackle the affordability crisis, it would stop the tripling of the carbon tax, stop the hike in paycheque taxes, halt the excise tax increase and not bring in any new taxes. That is what would help Canadians the most at this very difficult time.

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed my colleague's speech. It was well thought out and well prepared.

It was interesting to listen to the Liberal member talk about the poor kids. We worry about children dearly in this Parliament. However, the reality is that this legislation has come about because of a backroom deal between the NDP and the Liberals so the Liberals can stay in power.

Does the member not agree with me? Does he see other ways we could help children?

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that this bill would do nothing to help Canadians. I hate to sound like a broken record, but we need to keep repeating this so the government gets its head around it: It cannot be increasing taxes when prices are going up.

The best way to help children in this country is to leave a bit more of their parents' paycheques in their pockets. That would be the best social support the government could provide, and it needs to do it.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, we are looking at an affordability crisis for Canadians, and when I look at Bill C-31, I see band-aid solutions. I see no reason to be against band-aids while we look at what comprehensive changes need to take place.

Does the hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley not see that there is a benefit in providing some help now, even if it is not the totality of what is needed?

• (1245)

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Speaker, we both have the same idea of wanting to help Canadians, but we just disagree on the best way to provide that help.

On this side of the House, we think that Canadians are overtaxed, and the best thing the government could do right now is not raise taxes on Canadians when the cost of everything is going up. It needs to not triple the carbon tax, not increase the paycheque tax and stop charging more for beer.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise this afternoon to speak to a very important, but also inadequate, bill.

[*English*]

I am honoured to stand today and recognize the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin peoples. We are on their land.

Bill C-31 represents two parts that would attempt to help Canadians when times are tough. Part 1 deals with dental care and an interim dental benefit and part 2 deals with rental housing and a one-time payment to help low-income renters. It is hard to be against anything in this bill. I hope to approach the two parts in equal measure in the time I have available.

A dental benefit is something that no Green Party member of Parliament could be against. We were the first party to propose bringing dental care into our public health care system. It was a central feature of our platform in 2015. We got it costed by the Parliamentary Budget Office, and it would be an enormous cost. We recognized that we would have to start, just as the government would do now, with dental assistance for children under 12, and then move forward to take on more. There is a lot of work that needs to be done in this area, particularly because dentists as a profession are not keen on moving in this direction, at least those I have spoken with.

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However, we know that dental care is an essential part of health care. Without adequate dental care, other illnesses can occur and other diseases can occur. It really does create a poor start in life when our children cannot get access to routine dental care. Therefore, I fully support Bill C-31's interim first step at dental care. It is again a baby step, but it is better than nothing, and it does fulfill, as we understand it, the confidence and supply agreement between the New Democrats and the federal Liberals.

However, I know my constituents are asking, with the health care crisis in this country, if this really is the top-of-mind thing we should be addressing. We know, and certainly this is the case in my community, that many people do not have a family doctor. Many places across the country are seeing emergency services cut back, emergency wards closed some days and ambulance services less available. We are facing a significant public health crisis. This bill, while focusing significant resources on dental care for children under 12, does not speak to the things my constituents are most alarmed about. I wanted to flag that.

I am sure the hon. Minister of Health is well aware that the health care system in this country is in crisis. It is practically in free fall, and it is not just about money, with all due respect to my colleagues who say it is all about transfer payments. The Province of British Columbia, where I live, has received transfer payment increases, but the quality of care has not increased with those payments.

One of the local doctors in my riding put it as wanting to see measurable improvements in what they have termed as, and this is brilliant, the bed-to-bureaucrat ratio. They have seen money come in. Talking to health care professionals, I hear about the layers between the person doing the work, the frontline health care worker, and the boss. There are layers of bureaucracy between that health care worker and that decision-maker, and that bureaucracy expands in layers, but health care does not get easier.

One of my friends, who is a wonderful community nurse on Salt Spring Island, was telling me about going to visit a home where somebody needed help to get a vaccination for COVID. They could not go to the clinic. Two nurses went out. One nurse does the vaccination and the other nurse spends the time trying to handle all the required paperwork. She is with the other nurse, so two nurses are in the same house, and most of the work and most of the stress is on the nurse who has to fill out the paperwork.

We really need an emergency meeting of the federal Minister of Health and all provincial colleagues to look at health care, listen to doctors and to nurses, and fundamentally rethink what we are doing in health care. It must remain public. It must remain single payer. We must not allow the emergency of the moment to allow any further privatization creep into our public health care system, and that is an enormous risk because it is not like it is new.

I will emphasize the risk in Canada, versus a country like the U.K., of the two-tier system.

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• (1250)

Canada's deal with the United States, which was NAFTA and is now CUSMA, means that health care in Canada is a market. It is not just about taking care of people, and the enormously and obscenely wealthy health insurance industry in the U.S., which provides a lesser quality of health care than what we get in Canada, looks north of the border. The more we allow privatization, the greater the risk that we will lose our public single-payer health care system.

I will turn to the second part of Bill C-31, which deals with rental accommodations and includes a welcome short-term \$500 benefit for rent paid on a principal residence in 2022. It is a band-aid. Let us look at a real solution, and on that I want to compliment and thank my hon. colleague from Kitchener Centre, who has placed before us Motion No. 71. This is an affordable housing strategy, not what Bill C-31 offers with an affordable housing band-aid. This is an affordable housing strategy that targets the real causes of the enormous escalation in the price of getting a roof over one's head in this country.

The motion starts by recognizing that it is “a fundamental human right”, as recognized under the Canadian national housing strategy and also under international human rights law, to have housing, and that housing must be adequate to people's needs. The hon. member for Kitchener Centre, in his motion M-71, identifies correctly the problem with housing and why the prices have escalated.

It is that we stopped having the price of a home, and I say “home” and not “investment”, tied, as it was historically, to what a community can afford. If someone is living somewhere where everybody's income is roughly the same, and that tends to happen across Canada, nobody is going to start charging \$2 million in a community where the average income is \$70,000 a year. I am just not going to start trying to sell a house there, because I would have no buyers. When homes became disconnected and unrooted from place and when homes become a free-floating investment open to any speculator from anywhere, that disconnection and commodification of a home into investment territory is when we started seeing massive escalations in pricing.

Vancouver was ground zero for this, tied to money laundering, crime and all manner of nefarious activity, but it has spread. We have targeted, and the member for Kitchener Centre with Motion No. 71 targeted specifically, real estate investment trusts. These REITs create investment opportunities, and they are not taxed appropriately. We need to actually ensure that REITs are no longer exempt from paying corporate income taxes.

There is much more we need to do with housing and making sure it becomes more affordable. The current Liberal government in the budget that was tabled this spring takes some baby steps in looking at non-resident ownership, but there are other areas we have not yet addressed. I would urge the government to look at the impact on available housing stock of the popularity of Airbnbs.

Airbnbs create a tremendous opportunity for investors to buy multiple residential properties. They are unlike the tourism industry, the hotels and bed and breakfasts, which have, over decades, had to pay for their insurance, train their employees and keep their

employees with good wages. Right now all of those regulated industries in tourism are being undercut by Airbnbs.

They sound like they must be the most lovely things in the world. It is as if we are playing in *The Holiday* with Kate Winslet and going back and forth to someone's home. It is not. This is a big business, and it is taking a lot of housing out of market availability for young families that want to buy a home and for people who want to rent a room in someone else's house while they come to do seasonal work in the Gulf Islands. Those properties are disappearing to Airbnbs, and we really do need to tackle that.

I commend the government for bringing forward Bill C-31, but I do not think it is preparing us for the economic storms that are likely to come. We have a number of warnings globally of a coming recession. We need to do much more. We need to tax the excess profits of those who are making a fortune while others suffer, particularly big oil, get that \$8 billion and redistribute it to Canadians who need it the most.

• (1255)

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her speech. I really liked the phrase “bed-to-bureaucrat ratio”. However, I think the debt-to-bureaucrat ratio is important. Both the current Governor of the Bank of Canada Tiff Macklem and the former governor of the Bank of Canada David Dodge stated this week that inflation in Canada is a made-in-Canada problem. It is the fact that we have more money chasing a lack of goods. At the same time, as I said before, since 2015, the government has hired 61,000 federal employees and has really bloated itself. We are looking obviously at motions. We want to help everyone, but like the member so eloquently stated, we have to do the basics: health care and housing.

Do you agree that we have a debt-to-bureaucrat problem also in government and that we need to address that to solve inflation as much as anything else?

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): I would remind the hon. member to direct his questions to the Chair. The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, actually, the current information that we have from the Parliamentary Budget Officer suggests that our debt-to-GDP ratio is not disturbing to the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

It is interesting to note the statistic that the member shared of 61,000 employees hired, because when I look at Environment Canada, there was a 10% budget cut in 2012 in Parks Canada, and those people have not been replaced. Some employees have been replaced in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, but I look at departments where we are not keeping up with the work, particularly in science-based departments.

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Also, I do want to express the concern that most of what we see in terms of inflationary trends has been generated externally. Most of it has been because of the spike in fossil fuel prices caused by Putin's illegal war in Ukraine. There are many elements to our current economic distress, and I do not think that government debt drives most of it.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, previously when we were debating Bill C-31, we were discussing dental care and that this was a first step.

Would the member like to elaborate in terms of a next step that we could look at for dental care for all Canadians?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I would like to see amendments to the Canada Health Act to make it really clear that we understand that mental health is public health and that dental care is public health. We need to look at the totality of what the World Health Organization definition of health has always been, which is a complete state of physical, mental and it even uses the term “spiritual” health. We do not take care of Canadians, and if we are looking for a gap in our health care system, I think the opioid crisis and the mental health crisis point us in that direction.

However, as much as I think it is important to take care of dental care, I think that the steps that would be required to get to full dental care require engaging with the dentistry professional community and with the provinces to determine how we move forward to ensure that no Canadian, regardless of their age, lacks adequate dental care.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her speech. She said that, even though the dental insurance program is not perfect, it is better to send money to people than not send it at all.

With all due respect, I disagree. For example, under this program, families that have insurance cannot collect the benefit even if their insurance does not cover everything, whereas families that pay just a small amount collect the full benefit.

Would it not be more effective to just transfer the money to the provinces, which are in a better position to meet people's dental care needs and can therefore make better use of this money? That would be better than the federal government's misguided approach.

• (1300)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree that the provinces have an important role to play, but, unfortunately, I do not agree with the idea that these decisions should be up to the provinces alone.

We have to participate. We have to work with all levels of government in Canada: indigenous governments, provincial governments, territorial governments and the federal government. We must demand a public health care system that meets everyone's needs. If every province had the right to decide, I would fear for some people.

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand up here once again on behalf of the residents of Bay of Quinte.

Canada's Bank of Canada governor finally admitted this week that inflation is a made-in-Canada problem not just a global phenomenon. Governor Macklem, this week in a speech to the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, said, “Some of this inflation reflects global developments that we don't control, but inflation in Canada increasingly reflects what's happening in Canada.”

This echoes former deputy minister of finance for the Liberal Party and former Bank of Canada governor David Dodge, who stated two weeks ago that inflation was increasingly a made-in-Canada problem. This unjust inflation is hurting Canadian families, and for Canada, a G7 nation, it is embarrassing that we are seeing families affected by the lack of the essentials, the very basics the government of this country should be looking after: housing, food, paycheques and filling job shortages, which includes our military and housing for our military.

This made-in-Canada inflation problem is costing the average Canadian family with two children \$11,000 a year. This inflation problem, this crisis in housing and health care and food shortages are really affecting families to the core. Food bank usage is up. In my riding, it is up 30%, which correlates to a 30% rise in grocery bills. With housing, there is a doubling of homelessness in my region, with 500,000 alone in Belleville. There are farmers who are struggling to pay their bills.

There is the government's announcement for next year, which will be a turducken of taxes during Thanksgiving, a tripling of taxes, including the carbon tax. For a lot of Canadian businesses, we will see rises in interest as we see the bank trying to combat this inflation. Should Canada not, as a G7 nation, need to look after the basics? It has been proven that more money chasing fewer goods causes inflation, a made-in-Canada problem. Should the government not have to look after the basics for its citizens?

This means Canadian families right now are choosing between food, heat, medication and after-school activities. Do we not feel the government should do the same? The government needs to choose where to put its money to be more active in investing in Canada and to ensure we are looking after the basics.

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These are things like creating more hospital beds, doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners or making sure our natural resources like liquefied natural gas can go to Europe, create jobs and bring money into this country. Should we make sure that we create housing for our military and that we do not have a gap of 3,600 families waiting for housing on our military bases? Should we not ensure Canadians take home a greater paycheque?

We are stuck here in Parliament debating and, on our side, having to say no to dental care in Canada, a G7 nation, because we have spent so much money on so many things except for taking care of the basics in Canada. When we are spending money, we need to make sure we invest in Canadian basics and the necessities that are helping all families all the time. That means we are going to need to say no, just like families are saying no when it comes to their own bills. Some of them are saying no to food, housing, after-school activities or anything else Canadians need to make choices on for their families each and every day. It is absolutely disheartening.

The government's number one job is to make sure it is taking care of Canadians' basic needs and to ensure that when we are spending we invest in those things Canadians will find helpful and that will help their daily lives and looks after their families. I want to talk about those things.

For housing, there are 500 people who are homeless in the city of Belleville. It takes one step to become homeless. Sometimes it is a domestic dispute. Sometimes it is a rental cheque that was missed, or sometimes it is alcohol and addictions. It is three steps to come out of homelessness. It means we look at shelters. It is a basic need for all Canadians that they at least have a roof over their heads, which is a shelter, but second is transitional housing.

• (1305)

We have an incredible transitional house in Belleville, by the shelter called the Grace Inn. It is called the Shiloh House. It has six rooms and is helping the homeless transition out of shelters and into rentals. It can help with up to six units. It is not easy. It has transitional programs for mental health and addiction. It helps with employment and keeping a job, and it ensures that people are looking after themselves. I toured it a few weeks ago, and it was inspiring to talk to individuals who were getting themselves into transitional housing and will eventually find a rental and a home for themselves.

However, it is not as simple as just throwing money at the situation and thinking it is going to fix our homelessness situation. The very basis of people having shelter and being able to find themselves in a home takes three steps. That means we have to work harder. We cannot just throw money at it. We have to ensure we are working with Canadians, municipalities and provinces to move people out.

The third step is affordable housing as a whole. This country is short 1.8 million homes compared to the average of our G7 friends. We know that affects supply. When we look at the average affordable rental housing unit and affordable rent, it has to be about \$700 or \$800.

I am a hotelier. I have built hotels in the past. I can tell members that the travesty in our housing right now is that we are not seeing affordability when it comes to building homes. The average affordable housing unit that I have seen in Canada is well over \$280,000 a unit. In 2015 I built a hotel, the TownePlace Suites Marriott, for \$135,000 a door. That included a pool, and there was a kitchen in each room. It had almost everything it could have.

However, affordable housing is so expensive now that it costs \$265,000 just to build the unit. There is no way, when developers build affordable housing units for \$265,000 a unit, that they can charge rents of \$700 or \$800. Even if they get 50% or all the funding from CMHC, they still have to charge \$1,200- to \$1,500-plus for that rent. We have to find innovative ways that Canada can build affordable rental units so that our citizens can afford an affordable market rent.

Housing is a huge issue. It is top of mind. I am very passionate about it. It is something that we need to invest in and spend more time on. Of course, housing and shelter should come before dental care. Let us fix housing and make sure that is a priority.

With respect to food for our families, the average family spends more money in taxes than it does for food, shelter and housing in Canada, a G7 nation. When we look at the fact that we have people lined up for our food banks and what we need to feed those people through our farmers, our farmers are the most important part of that mechanism. They should be invested in and looked after. Instead, what we are hearing this week is that they are paying \$45,000 on average in carbon tax per year, but getting back only \$862 as a rebate. These are the farmers on whom we depend to grow our food.

By the way, by 2030, the world will need 1.5 times the food we have now. We will need 50% more food. Who grows that food, has the animals and has the farmland? Who fishes? It is our farmers and our farming industry. They need to be invested in. They have good technologies that will help them use the soil to produce double the yields and help them save on labour, because good luck to them finding labourers and employees right now, with one million jobs open in this country. We need to invest in farmers and to make sure that is there.

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My last point is with respect to labour shortages. We are one million jobs short in this country, which is costing \$30 billion in spiking inflation, because if we cannot get someone to truck our food, make our food and be there to serve our food, then inflation goes up because we have less. There is more money chasing fewer goods, and it is a made-in-Canada problem. We need to invest in Canadians. Unfortunately, we have to make the hard decisions to make sure we look after the basics. That means saying no to some things.

Looking at our future, we need doctors and labourers. We need to help our farmers. We need to make sure we get shelter and housing for our families. That is what we should be focusing on, and that is what Canadians need to be focused on with respect to the current government. That is what we are going to do on this side of the House.

• (1310)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made reference to the issue of inflation. There are a number of measures we are taking, because this government takes inflation very seriously, even though, when we compare ourselves to the United States, England and Europe, Canada has a lower inflation rate. Therefore, unlike what the Conservatives try to portray to Canadians, we are doing relatively well in comparison to the rest of the world.

Having said that, we are bringing forward measures to provide relief to people who are experiencing inflation, which is everyone. The bill we are debating today would provide relief for renters in the form of a \$500 support. It also provides a framework to enable children under the age of 12 to get the dental care that is badly needed. Why does the Conservative Party want to not only vote against this legislation, but also filibuster it?

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, that is very interesting. I do not know, when you are talking to your residents at the door and telling them that inflation is higher in the U.K., how that helps the family that has to choose between rent, groceries and shelter. I do not understand how you think they understand that.

Residents are hurting and they want to hear relief for those tough things. They want to know their taxes are going to be lowered and that they are going to have more money in their back pocket at the end of the day.

We cannot spend all the money and do all the things and expect that Canadians are going to be helped every step of the way. It has been proven. The Governor of the Bank of Canada said that spending the money we have spent, having more money chasing less goods, has resulted in Canadians spending over \$900 a month more than they did in 2019.

If your answer is to continue what we are doing, if you want to make it \$1,800 or \$2,000, our answer is to rein it in. Let us get focused—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to allow for more questions. I would also remind the member that he is to address questions and comments through the Chair, not directly to members.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague seems concerned about the issue of housing, which I appreciate. I find his interventions on the matter quite thoughtful.

However, he says that the government has to do more than just throw money at the problem. One of the problems with the federal government program right now is that a lot of money is being sent to private developers to build housing that costs \$2,200 in Montreal. People in desperate need of housing cannot afford it. At some point, the government is going to need to invest in building housing that people can afford.

What does my colleague think?

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, there is a common misconception that government builds homes. Government does not build homes. People build homes.

When I have talked to developers in our region, and I have spent a lot of time on housing, being a hotelier myself and building units, the best programs we could do as a government are zero percent interest loans. They would enable developers to look at solutions so that they can build, making sure they do not lose \$1 million when they are building a unit, while hopefully allowing them to build more units that they can then offer for lower rents.

Rentals are what we need. We talk about 1.8 million homes. We talk about people finding themselves at our shelters. They need transitional housing. It is rentals.

The other big thing that we have learned about hotels is that if we have more rentals in Canada, if a landlord is stuck with an empty unit and there are four more empty units, they lower the price point for the unit in order to rent it. We just need more of them. Let us help developers build more rental units.

• (1315)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the population of Nunavut is about 40,000 people. This bill, if passed, would help more than two million people. That is more than triple the number of people who live in Nunavut.

Why is the member against targeted measures that would help all these millions of people in Canada?

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, we are not.

Yesterday the Conservative government voted for tax decreases targeted at our most vulnerable. When we look at how we could help Canadians, we have looked at targeted measures. We just cannot do all of them.

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I know the member for Nunavut spoke yesterday about the increasing costs of food, and I believe it is the highest in the region in Nunavut. We need to look at that cost. Looking at the broadest population, how do we help get food to Nunavut and help those populations? I think that is the bigger necessity. I would focus more on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I must be a bit naive and believe in unicorns and fairies. When I first got into politics, I thought that, as an elected member of an opposition party, I would be able to stand up in committee and in the House to propose solutions, to work with other parliamentarians and with the government. I thought we would work together to come up with bright ideas to help people. I thought that, at the end of the day, all the bills would be so great that everyone would want to vote for us all at once. I imagined that people would be impressed by how well we work together and how extraordinary this legislature and this Parliament are. I really thought that.

Oh, how naive I was when I first got into politics three years ago. I thought those things would happen. That is what I expected. I believed in democracy, in collaboration. I am talking about this because the speech I am about to give, I also gave three years ago, two years ago, a year ago, and again three months ago. I keep rising in this place to talk about housing. We have proposed solutions. I have talked about how pressing the needs are, how glaring they are. I have said that what the government is doing makes no sense, that it is simply not building enough units for people who really need them. I have given this speech many, many times already, and here I am forced to give it again today. The housing crisis is a major crisis.

At this time, there are three major crises in Canada. First, there is the language crisis. We have seen the Statistics Canada figures. The French language is declining everywhere in Quebec and across the country.

Second, there is the climate crisis, which we talk about all the time. The government continues to invest in projects that make no sense, such as Bay du Nord, which will produce one billion barrels of oil over 30 years and is a disastrous project. Even the UN Secretary-General has said that it is criminal to continue extracting oil. This is not just a Greenpeace or Équiterre supporter saying it, it is the Secretary-General of the United Nations. That surely means something. This man speaks to governments and leaders throughout the globe and asks them to make rational decisions that are in everyone's interest. Sadly, no, the government continues to invest in oil. Today, we learned that the bill for Trans Mountain is \$17 billion. That is outrageous. There are high-tech companies in my riding that are developing batteries. In Quebec, people want to build electric vehicles, and electric buses are already being manufactured. This is the energy of the future. It represents the well-paying jobs of the future. We are working for our children. However, we are not moving forward. As much as we keep talking about it, nothing is happening. The spirit of collaboration that I naively hoped would emerge from our debates is just not there.

Third, there is the housing crisis. I am not sure how else to say it. Maybe I should mime it or sing about it. According to Scotia Bank, we need 3.5 million housing units.

I attended a conference organized by the young mayor of Longueuil and the young mayor of Laval. By the way, this is interesting: In the last municipal election in Quebec a year ago, we saw young mayors emerge who have their heart in the right place and who want to present real solutions with a view to serving the people, from dealing with the climate crisis to protecting wetlands, or housing or other things. They truly want to find pragmatic solutions. I commend them. I like collaborating with them. They truly have their heart in the right place when it comes to housing.

At the conference I spoke with an economist from the CMHC. He told me that if we do nothing else in Quebec in the next 10 years and allow builders and developers to get on it with, then 500,000 housing units will be built. There will be all sorts of housing types, condos, low-income housing, but 500,000 housing units in total will be built.

Canada is the worst country in the G7 when it comes to housing units per 1,000 people. There are 427 housing units per 1,000 people in the country, but that number went down in the past three or four years to 424. It is crazy when we think about it.

• (1320)

Canada is the worst country in the G7 in terms of average housing numbers, the number of units. That is where the crisis lies. We need to build housing. We need to take action since private developers do not seem to be doing the job.

In short, he was saying that 500,000 units would be built whether the government intervenes or not. An additional 1.1 million units are required in Quebec alone to address the two priority issues of accessibility and affordability. That is another 600,000. The government needs to show concern and take action to ensure that 600,000 units are built. We are far off the mark.

The major national housing strategy provided for \$72 billion over 10 years. The government said that housing would get built and that is the direction it would take.

The government always forgets to say that the \$72 billion is not just what the government will contribute. A lot of that consists of loans. It also includes investments by provinces, municipalities and agencies. That is worth clarifying.

According to the National Housing Council, 35,000 units were built in the last five years, even though we are halfway through the strategy's timeline. Another 600,000 units need to be built in Quebec alone. We are clearly far from our goal.

About 60,000 units have been renovated. Let us call it 100,000, to be optimistic. There are 100,000 units that have been built. That is not even close to what we need. The government needs to wake up and face the facts.

I am a dreamer. During the conference, which was held in Laval, I saw something that really impressed me; it impressed everyone there. The former mayor of Vienna came to talk about her city. One hundred years ago, the City of Vienna took the bull by the horns. It recognized that housing was a problem and that governments would have to invest money and tackle the problem head on. Today, 62% of the housing in Vienna is social housing. The citizens pay for it with a blanket 1% property tax. That generates about \$350 million per year, and the city continues to build and maintain the housing stock. The buildings themselves are amazing. We tend to think that social housing is for the poor, but people from all walks of life live in Vienna's subsidized housing, from doctors and engineers to psychologists and labourers. There is diversity. There are bike paths and shops that sell organics. It is the stuff of dreams.

Things are not the same here as they are there, but there is certainly a need. I keep visiting organizations all over the place.

That is the cause of the crisis. The government did understand this at one time. It realized it had to invest in social housing. After World War II, the government launched major programs. They were eliminated in 1993. The Conservatives said that they were ending the programs and would no longer be investing in housing. On the campaign trail, Jean Chrétien said that the Liberals would reinstate this program and that it was important. Once he was elected, however, he cut the program.

Had the government continued to invest as much as it did between 1950 and 1993, there would be an additional 80,000 social housing units in Quebec alone. We could have housed so many people with that many more units, but that is not what happened.

In Longueuil alone, it would take \$500 million to solve the housing crisis. A mayoral candidate talked about this at a debate last year. I think the figures were about right. There is a shortage of 2,000 social housing units just in Longueuil, 23,000 in Montreal and 50,000 in Quebec. These people are inadequately housed.

Let us talk about the \$500 that this bill provides. It is not a bad thing. Who could be against it? Had we invested earlier, however, we would not have to be handing out these amounts and people would have housing.

Obviously, I am not an economist. I have incredibly brilliant colleagues who could explain this much better than me. If there were more housing, the housing units we have would cost less. It is pretty straightforward. Even I understand that concept, if my colleagues can believe it. What we need to do is invest in housing.

We support this \$500 payment, but if we do not address the current housing crisis in a meaningful way, we will find ourselves facing the same problem again next year.

• (1325)

We will find ourselves right back here next year, but at that time, we will have to send a cheque for \$500 or \$700. In subsequent years, it will be cheques for \$800 or \$1,200, and it will never end. We need to implement meaningful measures now to deal with one of the biggest crises that Canada has experienced since Confederation.

Government Orders

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member's speeches are always so enthusiastic, entertaining and really on point.

I have to agree with everything he said, pretty much. I agree that the \$500 for rental support is basically a part-time solution, just as the dental care solution in this bill is basically a down payment on a real program that will help all Canadians.

This is more of a comment. I was going to bring up Vienna as an example and then the member mentioned it. I think we in Canada have to look beyond our borders and certainly beyond North America for the solution we need for the housing crisis. One of our problems is that we live next to the United States, which does not provide a lot of those solutions.

I want to thank the member for his speech.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, I am not sure I understood whether there was a question in my colleague's comment, but I thank him for his comment nonetheless.

I will take this opportunity to talk about homelessness, which is an important issue. Obviously, if we do not deal with housing, sooner or later there will be homeless people on the street. During the pandemic, the government launched some decent programs to fight homelessness. A very important resource was created in my riding, and we would like to see it become permanent. However, we are not sure whether the government will continue to fund these projects, and we have to be careful about that.

I would also like to say that the government has launched a program that is pretty good. It is called the rapid housing initiative, or RHI. It is a good program because 100% of the housing is paid for. The government contributes all the necessary funding, so organizations do not have to chase down three or four different grants. The government should be putting more money into this program.

[*English*]

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will follow the NDP member and thank my Bloc colleague for a very exciting and passionate speech.

I agree on the housing issues, especially with his comment that this is just a band-aid solution that is being put forth. It does not get to the root crux of the need for more housing and for more rental units across Canada.

I have talked about these issues with my constituents when I have had housing task force meetings. What they seem to be okay with, even the developers, in order to increase more affordable units across the country and across the riding is putting in a bit of a mandate for developers so they have to hedge so many units to be affordable. The biggest concern and push-back I got was about whether it would be the same for everybody.

Has the member heard similar stories in his riding?

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, it is indeed a worthwhile measure, but it is up to cities, municipalities and urban centres. In Quebec, some cities, such as Montreal, are trying to do that, and the mayor of Montreal is a huge proponent.

There are problems though. Some local governments impose penalties on developers that do not build a certain proportion of social housing, affordable housing or family housing. A few months ago, I read an article that said developers often try to get around that requirement. They promise that 20% of their units will be affordable, but they do not follow through because they would rather pay the penalties and build condos for the upper class.

That is why it is not a perfect solution, but it is not bad.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1330)

[English]

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC) moved that Bill C-281, An Act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act, the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act (Sergei Magnitsky Law), the Broadcasting Act and the Prohibiting Cluster Munitions Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, my apologies for putting you through such linguistic gymnastics toward the end of the session this week and right before Thanksgiving.

On that note, I would like to wish everyone in the chamber and everyone across the country a happy Thanksgiving.

I am honoured today to rise with respect to my private member's bill, which is Bill C-281, the international human rights act. Before I get into the substance of the speech, I would like to start by thanking some important people who have been critical to getting this bill to the floor of the House of Commons.

I would like to thank the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, who was instrumental in coming up with this idea and who worked alongside me. He is constantly fighting for people around the world and pushing for the good causes of human rights.

I would also like to thank the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, who was a driving force behind getting the Magnitsky act in Canada. His tireless and relentless work for the people of Ukraine is admirable, and I thank him very much for laying the foundations for what most of this bill deals with.

Getting into the substance of this legislation, as Canadians we are incredibly fortunate. We live in a country where democratic and human rights are almost taken for granted. Sadly, there are billions of people in this world who do not have the comfort and security of knowing that their minimal basic human rights are protected. Many of them spend nearly every waking hour wondering what action the government will take or what steps the government is taking against them to violate their human rights and cause them and their

family members pain. They live in waking fear of the government just because they want to express their beliefs and thoughts or want to be their authentic selves.

While it may be naive to believe that legislation created here or in any parliament around the world can bring peace and security to people everywhere, it does not mean that we should not start along that journey or that we cannot start the journey toward providing basic human rights wherever we live. Whether someone is born in Canada or Venezuela, everyone should have access to basic rights. No one should have to live in constant fear of their government.

To get into the substance of my bill, it seeks to do two primary things through four significant amendments. First, it seeks to help the government hold to account some of the worst violators of human rights in the world. Second, it seeks to provide a little more peace and security to people in Canada and around the world.

As I said, the legislation contains at least four significant amendments to help those who want to protect the vulnerable in Canada and around the world. The first section imposes certain reporting requirements on the Minister of Foreign Affairs in relation to international human rights. This includes the requirement of a publication about their activities every year. This report would include the names and circumstances of individuals the Canadian government and the Department of Foreign Affairs are advocating for and working to get released. They are prisoners of conscience being held simply because of the beliefs and thoughts they have about the betterment of their countries.

These reporting obligations are not in any way meant to restrict or obstruct the Department of Foreign Affairs and the important work it does. Rather, this section is designed to support the department. We believe that we can bring more oxygen into the room so that NGOs and the public will be in a better position to pressure governments around the world to release these individuals, who are working so hard for the betterment of their countries and fighting for human rights, freedom of expression and freedom of speech.

We ultimately believe as Conservatives that sunlight is nearly always the best disinfectant. By raising public awareness in Canada and abroad about the incarceration and sometimes, sadly, the torture of prisoners of conscience, people who are suffering human rights violations, we can help drive that out. We can change that potentially, leading to the freedom of prisoners of conscience and advocates of democracy, women's rights, LGBTQ2 rights and freedom.

Private Members' Business

We firmly believe that if we can get this more into the public sphere so that Canadians know of the suffering that is going on around the world, they will become more engaged and involved. We can then bring people like the two Michaels home earlier and reduce the suffering of Canadians and, really, the many people around the world who are being held simply for being who they are.

● (1335)

The next section deals with the Magnitsky act. The Magnitsky act is, of course, named after Sergei Magnitsky. Sergei was a relentless champion fighting against Russian corruption at the time. He saw his country, unfortunately, governed too often by corruption, and he pushed hard and fought back. Unfortunately, the consequences for him were dire. He was imprisoned. His medical conditions were completely ignored by his captors. Eventually, he was tortured and beaten to death for fighting corruption. In his name, Magnitsky acts have been passed by parliaments around the world, in Canada and the United States, among other countries.

The Magnitsky act seeks to put sanctions on individuals who are human rights violators so that these people cannot just walk around our world scot-free without paying the price or without having any accountability for the horrible actions they have committed against some of the best people humanity has to offer.

My private member's bill seeks to amend the Magnitsky act to make sure that, within 40 days of either the House of Commons or Parliament passing a motion to sanction an individual or a group of individuals, the Department of Foreign Affairs will have to report back. That would enforce a greater degree of accountability. If, in fact, either the Senate, the House of Commons or both have deemed that Magnitsky sanctions should be enforced, I think it is at least reasonable for the foreign affairs department to come to a parliamentary committee and explain the reason an individual is not being sanctioned or why an individual is being sanctioned.

These individuals are committing some of the most heinous crimes imaginable. If the will of Parliament, ultimately the House of Commons, is the will of the people, and the will of 37 million people is that someone be sanctioned, at the very least, the Department of Foreign Affairs should be able to, within 40 days, come to a parliamentary committee and explain itself.

This bill does not even go so far as to say that we force the Department of Foreign Affairs to sanction someone. All it is asking for is an explanation of why or why not, which makes sense because, in some cases, there may be legitimate reasons for why not. I cannot foresee any, but all we are asking for is that they explain it.

We thoroughly believe that, by having this accountability mechanism and reporting mechanism, we will get more individuals sanctioned. Right now, we are not having enough people sanctioned under the Magnitsky act. Initially, in 2018 when the Magnitsky act was passed, we had a flurry of individuals in Myanmar, Russia, Venezuela and others who were all sanctioned.

Since then, we have had very little activity from the government on that front. In fact, no one has been sanctioned under the Magnitsky act since the initial sanctions, and the last one was in Saudi Arabia. Since then, we have not had any. We want to put this re-

porting and accountability mechanism in place to encourage the government to utilize the tools it has to sanction those individuals who are committing the most vile of crimes and who are violating people's human rights, like the activities we have seen recently in places like Iran and Russia, and to explain why or why not the government is choosing to sanction these individuals.

At the very least, even if we do not encourage the government to sanction more people, which we hopefully do, we will be putting more transparency and accountability around the Magnitsky sanctions. As I said, the Magnitsky sanctions, as reported by many individuals, are actually our most powerful tool to enforce human rights around the world. If we are not using it, we should at least know why.

In fact, Bill Browder, who is one of the biggest drivers of the Magnitsky act, not just in Canada but around the world, in creating and enforcing the Magnitsky act, actually said before a committee of this very Parliament that the lack of use of the Magnitsky act sanctions should have a parliamentary review.

● (1340)

We are acting on Mr. Browder's great advice and in this private member's bill we are asking for a 40-day review any time this House or the Senate deems that Magnitsky act sanctions should be put in place.

The next section is the Broadcasting Act. The bill states:

...this enactment amends the Broadcasting Act to prohibit the issue, amendment or renewal of a licence in relation to a broadcasting undertaking that is vulnerable to being influenced by a foreign national or entity that has committed acts or omissions that the Senate or the House of Commons has recognized as genocide or that is subject to sanctions under the...(Sergei Magnitsky Law) or under the Special Economic Measures Act.

I have already defined what the Magnitsky act is. The Special Economic Measures Act is the legislation under which the government has imposed sanctions recently on Iran, and we thank it for doing so. We continue to ask that it list the IRGC as a terrorist organization, but at least it has gone this far and we look forward to the government taking a stronger role. Quite frankly, I look forward to its support on this legislation as a way of demonstrating that the government is serious about protecting human rights around the world.

Private Members' Business

I will go back to the amendment to the Broadcasting Act. In layman's terms, what this amendment would do is take an important step in preventing countries around the world that are either committing genocide or have been found guilty of the most significant of human rights violations from utilizing Canadian airwaves to spread their propaganda. The Government of Canada formally removed Russia Today and RT France from the list of non-Canadian programming services and stations authorized for distribution on March 16 on the basis that the distribution of these services were not in the public interest, as their content appears to constitute abusive comments or is likely to expose the Ukrainian people to hatred or contempt on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin and that their programming is antithetical to the achievement of the policy objectives of the Broadcasting Act.

Conservatives applaud and support the CRTC's decision to pull their licences, but it had to take this broad approach in its definition because there was no current mechanism to pull Russia TV when it was clearly using Canadian airwaves just to spread its propaganda. This amendment would give the CRTC an appropriate mechanism so it does not have to try to wiggle around existing legislation. It will have a specific tool to say that country X is committing genocide and spreading its propaganda in our country and the CRTC does not believe it should spreading propaganda in our country. Instead of having to sort of gerrymander around the rules in order to pull out the propaganda that is for malicious and nefarious reasons, we believe that this modest amendment would allow the CRTC to protect vulnerable Canadians.

The last part of this legislation is the Prohibiting Cluster Munitions Act. Currently, cluster munitions kill thousands of people around the world. In fact recently there was an increase because the Russians have used them in Ukraine, and fully 97% of people caught by these submunitions, which are basically a bomb that blows up and puts smaller bombs all over, were civilians. Of them, 90 of those individuals were children. This is not a weapon of war. This is a weapon of terror that hurts civilians, specifically children. We need to get these banned and that is why I am proud that Stephen Harper took the first step. This step would also deny financing to companies that are building and producing cluster munitions. It would prevent it. This has been successful in other countries, so Conservatives believe this will go a great deal of the way to reducing civilian and children casualties.

I thank the House for what I anticipate to be overwhelming support to help make life a little more peaceful, a little more secure, and to hold the most awful perpetrators accountable.

• (1345)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South for bringing forward this bill.

One of the areas that I was looking through in the bill would call on the government to publicize a list of human rights defenders whose release the government is actively seeking. For human rights defenders in repressive states, this could not only impede diplomatic actions and our ability to support these individuals, but in a country with known reports of the use of torture this could potentially endanger their lives.

Is my colleague across the aisle aware of this, and is he amenable to amending the bill so as to not inadvertently endanger the lives of human rights defenders?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her thoughtful contributions. Certainly, when we get the bill to committee, I am open to any amendments that would make this legislation better.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Northumberland—Peterborough South for his speech and for his bill.

I wonder if he could comment on the issue of cluster munitions. We know that the United States is not a signatory to the Dublin convention and that it manufactures this type of weapon.

Bill C-281 seeks to expand the list of people who would be targeted by the Canadian restrictions. I wonder whether, as members of Parliament, we are not running the risk of being lobbied by American weapons retailers to ensure that shareholders or people involved in these companies, for example, are not targeted by the bill.

Does my colleague share my concern?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her excellent question.

[*English*]

The question is extremely well framed. I actually ran a bit short of time and wanted to talk about this so I thank the member for the opportunity. Political pressure has been shown to be incredibly powerful. Textron, which is one of the largest arms manufacturers located in the United States, stopped producing cluster munitions and specifically stated it was because of political pressure. Therefore, with things like this legislation, which would prevent the funding through Canadian businesses of cluster munitions, not only do we have a hard line in stopping them but we also continue to ramp up the political pressure. I would be glad to work alongside the member to stop the manufacturing of cluster munitions throughout the world.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I would like to thank the member for introducing this important bill. Canada has not yet responded to the United Nations call for Canada to develop an international human rights action strategy. I wonder if the member would agree to amend the bill so that it would require Canada to develop such an important strategy.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, as I said to the other member's question, I am happy to have discussions in committee about any amendments that may make the legislation better. I am not overly familiar with the issue that the member raised, but I am happy to sit down and would love to go to her home riding and discuss it there.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for bringing this legislation here to the chamber. I am proud to have seconded it.

My question is around the Magnitsky act and just the importance of it. The member highlighted clearly why it is so important, but specifically he did indicate that it has not been used nearly as well or as much as it could be. I want the member to elaborate on what that does to Canada's reputation on the international stage as a leader for defending human rights right across this globe, and how our taking these actions would be much more beneficial and why it is so important.

● (1350)

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the excellent question as we want to continue to project Canada's image as a country that protects the most vulnerable and fights for human rights. Every time that we do not go forward when we should with imposing of the Magnitsky schedule, that reputation unfortunately takes a little damage.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I begin my speech, I would like to take a moment to wish a happy Thanksgiving to all members and all employees of the House of Commons.

[English]

I hope everyone has an opportunity to spend time with their loved ones this holiday weekend.

Canada's commitment to uphold human rights abroad, as well as policies and actions undertaken to protect these rights internationally, are a frequent focus of parliamentary attention. Recent events on the international stage have continued to shed light on grave and reprehensible human rights violations, and our government has promised to continue to explore all options when it comes to holding those responsible to account and defending human rights here and around the world.

Therefore, I welcome the opportunity to elaborate on Canada's active engagement in advancing international human rights efforts globally, including with regard to human rights issues raised in Bill C-281, which was introduced in the House of Commons by the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Bill C-281, an act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act, the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, the Broadcasting Act and the Prohibiting Cluster Munitions Act, would amend various pieces of legislation on which I will expand. I believe MPs around the room agree that Canada should continue to uphold its commitment to human rights in a strong and meaningful way.

We know that only so much can be changed in the halls of power. Without the active and meaningful engagement of those whose human rights have been violated or who are in situations of particular vulnerability, change cannot last nor can our policies be effective. That is why Canada continues to engage with indigenous peoples, diaspora communities, activists, women's rights organizations, civil society, journalists and human rights defenders. Without their

lived experience, expertise and efforts to promote and protect human rights in Canada and around the world, human rights violations and abuses would remain unacknowledged.

“Voices at Risk: Canada's Guidelines on Supporting Human Rights Defenders” is a clear statement of Canada's commitment to supporting the vital and courageous work of human rights defenders. The guidelines outline Canada's approach and offer practical advice to Canadian diplomats to support human rights defenders. They reflect the experience gained by Canada through multilateral and bilateral engagement, and are informed by the work and advice of Canadian civil society organizations and human rights defenders themselves.

However, the colloquial term “prisoner of conscience”, as used in the bill, does not have an agreed upon international or domestic legal definition. Even labelling an individual as a human rights defender based on available definitions can be challenging in all but the most unambiguous cases.

A publicized list that sets out the names and circumstances of human rights defenders detained worldwide for whose release the Government of Canada is actively working on may impede diplomatic actions and Canada's support for these individuals, potentially endangering their safety and, in more serious cases, their lives.

I would like to thank the member who introduced this bill for his agreement to be amendable. We should be mindful to apply the principle of doing no harm. It respects the well-being and privacy of individuals and needs to be considered before sharing information with the public.

The Government of Canada takes the matter of imposing sanctions very seriously. As stated by our Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada will continue to coordinate with like-minded partners to seek to change the behaviour of those who commit human rights atrocities. We consider autonomous sanctions as just one component of Canada's wider foreign policy options in the protection of human rights.

● (1355)

Canada is judicious in its approach to imposing sanctions, both against individuals and against states, and is committed to their targeted and coordinated use when appropriate. Canada has established a rigorous due-diligence process to consider and evaluate threats to international peace and security and possible cases of human rights violations or corruption anywhere in the world within the context of other ongoing efforts to promote human rights and combat corruption.

Canada has a history of taking action to rid the world of cluster munitions, including through our ratification of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, known as the convention, in 2015, and by support demining efforts. We recognize the devastating impact they have on civilians, and we will continue to support a wide range of activities in this regard, knowing that these actions will actively save lives.

Private Members' Business

Cluster munitions pose an immediate threat to civilians during conflict by randomly scattering submunitions or bomblets over a wide area. They continue to pose a threat post conflict by leaving remnants, including submunitions that fail to explode upon impact, becoming de facto land mines. These explosives kill and harm victims around the world indiscriminately.

International humanitarian law prohibits the indiscriminate use of any weapon, including cluster munitions, and prohibits the deliberate targeting of civilians. We call on all states to join the convention, cease to use these weapons and destroy their stockpiles. We would also stress that non-party states already have a legal obligation during armed conflicts to refrain from indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks with any weapon, including cluster munitions.

Canada is fully committed to the goals of the convention and has ensured, through the Prohibiting Cluster Munitions Act, that it will meet all obligations of the convention that will require implementation through domestic law. Among other things, Canada cannot itself use, develop, produce, acquire, stockpile or transfer cluster munitions or expressly request their use when the choice of munitions used is within our exclusive control.

Canada welcomes the large number of actions dedicated to gender mainstreaming within the Lausanne Action Plan, committing member-state parties to the convention to stronger gender inclusion in combatting cluster munitions.

I will now discuss the Broadcasting Act.

Media can play an important role in the promotion of human rights. Communication regulators like the CRTC need to be mindful of their role in advancing regulation in the public interest, particularly when it comes to fundamental issues related to the rule of law, democracy and human rights. As the CRTC recently stated, “Freedom of speech and a range of perspectives are a necessary part of our democracy. However, it is a privilege and not a right to be broadcast in Canada.”

Our ability to address human rights issues as parliamentarians directly affects Canada's ability to create change and effectively impact other intersecting issues, including COVID-19, migration, climate, emerging tech and counterterrorism, which all have human rights dimensions. Bill C-281 canvasses many of these intersecting themes.

We look forward to working with the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South, as well as with all members of this House, to find concrete and durable solutions to address the human rights challenges of tomorrow.

● (1400)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-281 introduced by the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South. This bill has a relatively long, but rather clear title and, as the member mentioned, it is a good exercise in diction. It is the act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act, the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, also known as the Sergei

Magnitsky Law, the Broadcasting Act and the Prohibiting Cluster Munitions Act.

In this first hour of second reading of the bill, I will end the suspense right away and say that my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois and I are voting in favour of Bill C-281. The underlying principle of Bill C-281 is quite commendable because its provisions seek to better combat human rights violations in the world. I think that Bill C-281 should definitely be debated, discussed and perhaps improved. I commend the member's openness to the idea of improving this bill in committee. I will even make one or two suggestions in the House that I hope will fuel the work of the committee.

Bill C-281 proposes changes to four current pieces of legislation and I propose to go over them one by one.

The first act to be amended is the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act, more specifically section 10, which lists the powers, duties and functions of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Bill C-281 would add two obligations for the minister to fulfill every year, that is publishing a report outlining measures that Canada has taken to advance human rights internationally and a list that sets out the names and circumstances of prisoners of conscience detained worldwide for whose release the Government of Canada is actively working. In our opinion, the first obligation represents a way of ensuring that when the minister makes an announcement, it is followed by concrete action.

Recently, the Department of Foreign Affairs has not had a shining record of walking the talk. For example, after announcing a freeze on the assets of Russian oligarchs in the spring, it was impossible to subsequently ascertain if they had actually been frozen or who was responsible for the file.

Then, after it was announced that these assets could be liquidated in order to help Ukraine financially, we learned that the bill probably could not be implemented. Simply put, for sanctions to work, just announcing them is not enough; they have to be implemented. The same goes for measures to advance human rights internationally.

As for the list of names of prisoners of conscience, I think it would be worthwhile to ask some experts whether exceptions should be made in terms of making that list public, for instance in the case of political prisoners whose safety could be compromised if their names were published. It might also be worth thinking about a way to allow a group of parliamentarians, for example, to determine whether a name should indeed be excluded. This could be examined by a committee working in camera.

Private Members' Business

The second act amended by Bill C-281 is the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, as known as the Magnitsky act.

Bill C-281 states that the minister must respond to committee recommendations regarding the application of Magnitsky sanctions against an individual and that the minister must table that response within 40 days after the adoption of a report recommending such sanctions or within the time limit specified by the committee. The minister's response must include a response to the committee's recommendations. The minister must indicate whether an order or regulation is to be made and set out the reasons for the decision to impose or not impose sanctions.

This new legislation would ensure a diligent response on the government's part to alleged human rights abuses. It will allow for faster follow-up on committee recommendations than the current standard, which gives the government 150 days to respond and states that the committee can request a response, but there is no obligation. Furthermore, under normal circumstances, the response to a committee report can be "comprehensive", a term that Speakers of the House have always declined to define. The requirement to set out reasons for a decision is more precise and more in line with the principles of natural justice.

The third act that Bill C-281 seeks to amend is the Prohibiting Cluster Munitions Act. Cluster munitions are weapons made up of a number of submunitions. They scatter a large number of explosive devices over a wide area.

- (1405)

These weapons are notorious for leading to many deaths and serious injuries each year. The victims are often children, since the small, brightly coloured, baseball-sized bombs do not always explode on contact with the ground. They can remain there for many years, even decades, before being handled by children.

This type of weapon is not prohibited under international law, with the exception of using them in built-up civilian areas. However, there is the 2008 Dublin convention, to which 110 countries are party, including France, Germany and the United Kingdom, but which countries such as China, India, Brazil, Russia and the United States have neither signed nor ratified. Canada signed the agreement in 2008, but the legislation allowing for its ratification did not come into force until 2015, and it is precisely this legislation that the current bill, Bill C-281, seeks to amend.

As currently written, the legislation prohibits all persons from using, manufacturing, acquiring, possessing, moving or importing cluster munitions. The amendment broadens the group covered by these prohibitions to include any person or corporation that has a financial interest in a group or person that has committed, aided or abetted a third party in committing the wrongdoing that I have just listed.

We believe that Bill C-281 is a step in the right direction towards a safer world, especially for children in the long term, but we are aware that the bill may be met with resistance from the American arms lobby, given that many companies still manufacture this type of weapon. We hope that our parliamentary colleagues will not give in to this pressure when it comes time to discuss amendments to the bill and vote on it.

Finally, Bill C-281 will amend the Broadcasting Act to facilitate the revocation of licences for television or radio broadcasts in Canada when they are influenced by a foreign national or entity that has committed acts that the Senate or the House of Commons has recognized as genocide, or if these broadcasts are influenced by officials subject to sanctions under the Sergei Magnitsky Law. This bill would give the House the power to use simple motions to block foreign media, if those media are vulnerable to being influenced by entities that have committed crimes. Whether or not the content of these media is neutral or the fact that the content is beyond reproach would not be the basis for the assessment. State media are used to spread ideas, information about a culture, a viewpoint of the country in question, in short to promote a country directly or indirectly. We can think of the example of China and its vaccine diplomacy. China widely publicized the fact that it distributed massive amounts of vaccines in Africa. The purpose was to bolster its image by making people forget about its dubious management at the outset of the pandemic, and also to make people overlook the crimes committed against the Uighurs within its borders.

As for non-neutral content, unfortunately there is no shortage of examples of that, too. The war in Ukraine brought to light the full arsenal deployed by Russia to destabilize Ukraine and NATO through a hybrid war effort, which includes using the media to sow doubt or to destabilize the government by creating internal tensions among citizens. For example, Russian media gave a huge platform to anti-vaccine and anti-health measure conspiracy theorists, especially those who criticized government policies, giving them greater exposure to criticize local governments and whip up public discontent. We have also seen this kind of tactic used on another scale elsewhere in the world. Russian media specifically targeted Canadian soldiers on a mission in Latvia with the aim of discrediting them and stirring up mistrust among locals. This kind of disinformation campaign can go on for years.

Both in cases of neutral content and in the case of content that is explicitly not, banning such a broadcast through a motion does not seem excessive when the country in question is recognized by Parliament as having committed an act of genocide.

For all these reasons, my colleagues and I support the bill at second reading. We hope to have the opportunity to follow its progress through committee, which I am sure will be very interesting.

Private Members' Business

• (1410)

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I thank the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South for this thoughtful bill. I thank my constituents from Nunavut for trusting in me to represent their voice on such important matters as Bill C-281. I especially appreciate this opportunity, as I learned more about our laws in this bill and where our work as parliamentarians can make a difference for human rights domestically and internationally.

The amendments proposed have four different pieces of legislation that are important, given the gaps in Canada's efforts to meet international human rights obligations. While much more could have been proposed, the New Democrats will vote in support of this bill because it addresses concerns about some of the weaknesses in Canada's approach to human rights.

The four instruments that would be amended are the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act, the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, the Broadcasting Act and the Prohibiting Cluster Munitions Act.

My intervention will continue with each set of amendments to the acts in that order.

Regarding amendments to the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act, New Democrats agree that the minister, in exercising his or her powers, must annually report publicly measures taken to advance human rights. New Democrats agree this amendment would increase transparency and accountability.

Canada's current international human rights mechanisms, obligations and reporting are complicated and difficult to measure. This bill would make it easier for Canadians to find out what Canada is doing through the work of the minister through the suggested report and publishing the list as suggested.

Requiring an annual publication could bring to light the need for Canada to be more consistent in its approaches to meeting its human rights obligations. I will highlight two cases. Everyone is aware of how hard Canada worked to have the two Michaels released from China. More attention needs to be brought to Canadian Huseyin Celil who has remained in prison since 2006. According to Amnesty International, "Huseyin has spent much of his time in solitary confinement. He lacks healthy food and is in poor health" and "Huseyin has been in prison for 10 years after an unfair trial [in China]."

Regarding the production of a list of prisoners of conscience that Canada may be working to have released, this legislation would be a good step toward transparency and accountability. There is, however, a concern that there is no international legal definition of the term "prisoner of conscience", and this creates a risk that individuals could be excluded from this important process. At debate, New Democrats would suggest wording that would tie it closer to international human rights laws and standards.

For the above reasons, I put in the record that the United Nations has recommended for years that Canada should have an international human rights action strategy. Adding that requirement for the preparation, completion and annual reporting of the national action

plan could strengthen this bill. New Democrats will advocate for a whole-of-government approach and would suggest further discussion on whether requiring a singular focus on the minister's obligation is sufficient.

On the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, New Democrats have always said that Canada's sanctions regime needs improvements. Canada's transparency and enforcement must be at the crux of this. We currently do not know how the government makes decisions about who should or should not be on this list. New Democrats expect that the foreign affairs committee would undertake this study shortly.

• (1415)

This bill would not fix all of the problems in the current system. However, it would create a mechanism to allow committees of the House or the Senate to nominate designations to Canada's sanctions lists. Experts like Bill Browder have recommended this and we support it.

On amendments to the Broadcasting Act, the New Democrats support the proposed changes. We only have to mention last February to see how foreign content influences Canadians' views in a very negative way. While there is existing legislation that allows de-authorization, this act will strengthen the bill by automatically prohibiting the issuing, amendment or renewal of broadcasting licences in cases where the House or the Senate have recognized genocide or where Canadian sanctions apply.

On the Prohibiting Cluster Munitions Act, this amendment attempts to make improvements but does not go far enough. Cluster bombs have caused over 20,000 casualties since 1960. This bill does not address the major problem in our current legislation, which permits Canadians to transport or directly use cluster munitions as part of joint operations with another country's military. This is an issue the New Democrats have asked the government to fix for years.

Overall, this bill has many opportunities to provide more transparency for Canadians regarding international human rights. This bill would not fix everything. We have an important role regarding international human rights. We set the stage for other countries to look up to the choices we make. We must do more to set the example of what we want to see and hold people accountable for their actions. We must be seen as a country that will truly uphold international human rights standards.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of Bill C-281, the international human rights act.

Private Members' Business

Let me take this opportunity to commend my friend and colleague, the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South, for championing this important piece of legislation, which will strengthen Canada's position to advance international human rights. The bill will do so in several concrete ways.

It strengthens the Prohibiting Cluster Munitions Act passed by the Harper Conservative government. Cluster munitions are having a devastating impact on civilians, given their indiscriminate effects. The bill will give additional teeth to Canada's international commitments, codified under the act, by restricting investments in entities that are in contravention of it.

The bill further strengthens international human rights by giving the government tools under the Broadcasting Act to stop the proliferation of foreign propaganda from genocidal regimes.

The bill also provides important new reporting requirements on the part of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. More specifically, the bill requires the minister to publish an annual report on the actions the government is taking to advance international human rights, as well as to name and provide background on the plight of the prisoners of conscience Canada is seeking to release.

This has two positive impacts. First, it enhances transparency and accountability by requiring the Minister of Foreign Affairs to spell out in writing exactly what the government is doing to advance international human rights. Second, it provides a platform to shine a light on the individual cases of prisoners of conscience and, further, to draw attention to human rights abusers who are responsible for serious crimes.

Importantly, this bill provides a new accountability mechanism for the government in the realm of sanctions policy. Pursuant to the bill, if the foreign affairs committee of either the Senate or the House of Commons recommends the imposition of Magnitsky sanctions against human rights violators, the Minister of Foreign Affairs would be compelled, within 40 days, to table in Parliament a response indicating the government's position on the imposition of such recommended sanctions, as well as its reasons for imposing or not imposing sanctions.

This is needed and timely, especially having regard for the track record of the government, which for the past several years has failed. It has refused to impose Magnitsky sanctions, notwithstanding the fact that there is no shortage of human rights violators and that the Magnitsky sanctions are an important tool the government has to sanction human rights violators.

For example, when the special committee on Canada-China relations tabled its report in February 2021, it made a unanimous recommendation that targeted Magnitsky sanctions be imposed on the Chinese communist regime officials responsible for serious human rights violations in Hong Kong. The response of the government was to ignore that unanimous recommendation. The Liberals did absolutely nothing. What was the rationale for why they did nothing while allies such as the United States imposed sanctions? We do not know. The government did not need to say or provide a rationale. The bill changes that.

• (1420)

Hong Kong is not the first time that the government has ignored the will of Parliament with respect to international human rights. A little more than four years ago, the House voted overwhelmingly to designate the IRGC as a terrorist entity. More than four years later and 1,003 days after the IRGC shot down PS752, killing 176 passengers, including 85 Canadian citizens and permanent residents, the government continues to drag its feet. The government still has not implemented the will of Parliament in designating the IRGC as a terrorist entity.

This is the same IRGC, by the way, that an Ontario superior court judge determined committed an act of terrorism in shooting down PS752, and the same IRGC that is arresting, torturing and murdering peaceful pro-democracy protesters in Iran as we speak.

Earlier this week, the Prime Minister was asked, not once, not twice, but on four occasions, by the leader of the official opposition, if the IRGC is a terrorist organization. The Prime Minister could not bring himself to state the obvious, that the IRGC is a terrorist organization. It was a total abdication of leadership on the part of the government and absolutely shameful.

It is not just about designating the IRGC as a terrorist entity. The government has failed to sanction any of the perpetrators responsible for the downing of PS752.

Dr. Hamed Esmailion, president and spokesperson for the Association of Families of Flight PS752 Victims, appeared before the Subcommittee on International Human Rights in June. He said that, the previous year, his association hand-delivered to the Minister of Foreign Affairs more than 50 names of perpetrators responsible for the downing of PS752. More than a year later, there was no action and no Magnitsky sanctions. There is nothing at all.

What is the government's rationale? We do not know. It will not say. This bill is a mechanism that provides some level of accountability.

What we have over there is a government that is soft on terrorism, that will not even call the Uighur genocide being perpetrated by the Chinese Communist regime what it is, a genocide. We have a government that has repeatedly dragged its feet in imposing Magnitsky sanctions on human rights violators who are committing crimes against humanity.

In the face of the disgraceful record of the government when it comes to international human rights, at the very least it is imperative that parliamentary committees have a tool to compel the government to respond and explain its lack of action. This bill does precisely that, and it is why it has my full support.

Private Members' Business

• (1425)

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I will likely be the final speaker here today before we rise for Thanksgiving, I want to wish everyone in the House, the Speaker, all the staff, the clerks, the pages, who help make everything run, and security a very happy and prosperous Thanksgiving. I am certainly looking forward to getting home and seeing family, as I am sure everyone is.

Canada's commitment to fostering respect for democratic values and the promotion and protection of human rights is long-standing. Over the last 70 years, we have played a prominent role in the development of significant human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Canada is recognized for its system of justice and strong institutions that positively reinforce the rule of law. Canadian expertise is sought to help others strengthen their own efforts to respect human rights, and our government has taken active measures to stand against human rights violations and support the brave work of human rights defenders around the world.

Canada's efforts in this domain are considerable, especially in contexts where impunity for gross and systemic violations of human rights are evident and where there are protracted political crises at play. In such contexts, the international community must be able to signal its concerns and work collectively to change behaviour. Sanctions are a key part of the tool kit that can be deployed.

Bill C-281, introduced in the House of Commons by the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South, seeks to amend the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, also known as the Sergei Magnitsky law. It is within this vein that I wish to speak and elaborate on Canada's robust sanctions regime and our role as a global leader in holding the violators of human rights to account.

In our challenging contemporary landscape, with its mounting disruption and global uncertainty, sanctions remain a valuable tool

for addressing the violations of international norms and standards and pressuring states to change their behaviour. Indeed, Canada and the wider international community have worked together for decades to build this strong foundation of peace, prosperity and security for the global community.

Canada continues to stand shoulder to shoulder with our closest allies in the deployment of sanctions as part of a principled but pragmatic approach to foreign policy. Under both of our pieces of autonomous sanctions legislation, the Special Economic Measures Act and the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, Canada has become a global leader in the sanctions effort to end impunity for those who violate international human rights.

I see my time is almost over, so I will simply wrap up by again wishing everyone an amazing long weekend and Thanksgiving. I want to wish all constituents in Cambridge, Ontario, and those across Canada a happy Thanksgiving too.

• (1430)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. The order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

Before adjourning the House, on behalf of the speakership, I would like to wish a happy Thanksgiving to all members and to all employees of the House, who do extraordinary work, from the Parliamentary Protective Service to the interpreters, not to mention the pages. I cannot name everyone so I will sincerely thank you all.

It being 2:31 p.m. the House stands adjourned until Monday, October 17, at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:31 p.m.)

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