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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 29, 2024

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

• (1105)

[*English*]

PRIVILEGE

NOTIFICATION OF MEMBERS FOLLOWING FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I informed your office earlier this morning, I am rising today on a matter of privilege. I will briefly outline the material facts of the case and then proceed to lay out the procedural elements as to why I believe this is a matter of privilege. I will be as brief as possible.

The member for Scarborough—Guildwood and I serve as co-chairs in an organization called the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, or IPAC. IPAC is an international cross-party group of legislators working together toward reform on how democratic countries approach China, with co-chairs representing a cross-section of the world's major political parties, Republicans and Democrats in the United States, Liberal and Labor in Australia, politicians from the left and right in Europe and diverse political parties across Asia and Africa. I am very proud of the work of this organization.

IPAC involvement is an integral part of what I do as a member of Parliament. I am sure many other IPAC members would say the same. IPAC is an association of legislators. It aims at and it does inform our parliamentary work and collaboration on a day-to-day basis. It is not some extracurricular personal or volunteer engagement; IPAC involvement is very directly part of and is informing my parliamentary service in an ongoing way.

Notably, the very first IPAC event I attended was a briefing on the situation of Uyghurs. That briefing led me to the personal conclusion that Uyghurs were being subject to genocide. At that time, I was a member of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights and following the IPAC briefing, I worked with colleagues to convene that subcommittee for special hearings in the summer of 2020 on the situation of Uyghurs, which ultimately led to the subcommittee's determination and subsequently Parliament's determination that Uyghurs were and are subject to an ongoing genocide. There was a line between information IPAC gathered and shared about Uyghurs and our own groundbreaking determination on the matter.

In early 2022, when informal debates were happening about whether to restart the Special Committee on the Canada-People's Republic of China Relationship, members of the international legislators' network expressed support for the reinstatement of the committee as playing an important role in the global conversation around China policy. The committee was ultimately re-established.

These are two of many examples whereby the work of IPAC informed the work of our Parliament. Additionally, as our party's shadow minister for international development, I would highlight that the sessions I have attended through IPAC and the relationships I have formed with legislators from around the world through IPAC, including in the global south, have shaped my awareness and understanding of a broad range of issues.

Because of its good and effective work, IPAC has, unsurprisingly, become a target for the CCP. In fact, in the Jimmy Lai sham trial in Hong Kong, IPAC's executive director Luke de Pulford and IPAC's Japan director Shiori Kanno have been accused as co-conspirators. Mr. de Pulford recently testified before Canada's Subcommittee on International Human Rights regarding this matter. Because IPAC is creating an effective global coalition of democratic legislators to challenge CCP abuses, it has become a unique target of the CCP, particularly its secretariat but also its legislators.

Five days ago, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood and I were briefed by Mr. de Pulford and other IPAC staff members about a cyber-attack launched against us and 16 other Canadian parliamentarians in 2021. This attack was launched by the group known as APT31, Advanced Persistent Threat 31. It is a known PRC state-backed hacking outfit. This was part of a coordinated attack on IPAC-affiliated legislators throughout the world. IPAC learned about this attack in general through an unsealed indictment released by the U.S. Department of Justice on March 25 of this year. The indictment is also publicly available.

Privilege

The fact that Canadians were targeted and the names of those targeted has been revealed through subsequent correspondence between IPAC and the U.S. government and covered in this morning's *Globe and Mail*. This morning's *Globe and Mail* story covers the matter in detail and lays out the chain of events.

Not all of the Canadian parliamentarians affected have confirmed that their names can be mentioned, and we have committed to not naming members without their agreement. Significant efforts have been made to ensure all are aware. I can confirm that the members affected include myself, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, the member for Humber River—Black Creek, the member for Calgary Shepard, the member for Calgary Midnapore, the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman and Senator McPhedran from the other place.

This was identified as a progressive reconnaissance attack, an attack aimed at gathering basic but useful information to be used for subsequent escalating attacks against us.

As mentioned, the IPAC Secretariat found out about this attack quite recently through the unsealing of an indictment in the United States. The relevant section of the indictment reads as follows:

In addition to targeting U.S. government and political officials, the Conspirators also targeted other government officials around the world who expressed criticism of the PRC government. For example, in or about 2021, the Conspirators targeted the email accounts of various government individuals from across the world who were part of the InterParliamentary Alliance on China ("IPAC"), a group founded in 2020 on the anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests whose stated purpose was to counter the threats posed by the Chinese Communist Party to the international order and democratic principles. In or about January 2021, the Conspirators registered and used ten Conspirator-created accounts on an identified mass email and mail merge system to send more than 1,000 emails to more than 400 unique accounts of individuals associated with IPAC. Similar to the mailing tools utilized to target U.S. officials and politicians, the mailing tool used in this campaign allowed the Conspirators to track delivery metrics on emails and receive data from victims that opened the emails, including the victims' IP addresses, browser types, and operating systems.

The IPAC Secretariat contacted the U.S. government to ask why this information had not been shared with IPAC-affiliated legislators earlier. This question is answered in an email sent by Mr. de Pulford to targeted legislators last week. Mr. de Pulford wrote, "The FBI made clear that they were prevented from informing legislators around the world directly by their own rules regarding sovereignty. For this reason, in 2022, when they learned about the attack, the FBI issued Foreign Dissemination Requests (FDRs) to every government with impacted legislators. To our knowledge, only 2 of those governments informed their legislators." This information has all been confirmed in today's *The Globe and Mail*.

The FBI has confirmed that Canadian parliamentarians were targeted with a progressive cyber-attack by a foreign government. The FBI informed the Canadian government and information was not shared with Canadian legislators.

As the member for Scarborough—Guildwood and I have already said in a joint statement, it is unacceptable that we were not informed about this. Following another incident where a member of parliament was targeted by the PRC and not informed about it, assurances have been given that members would be informed going forward, but this still appears not to be happening. The government, in fact, issued a directive last May saying that members of Parlia-

ment should be informed in such cases, and yet members of Parliament were not informed.

It would have been particularly important for us to be informed because of the progressive nature of the attack. We could have worked with the appropriate authorities to take steps to protect ourselves and ensure the security and functioning of our parliamentary and personal email accounts, but we were not able to because we were not informed. This affected the security of our work as parliamentarians and potentially allowed a foreign entity to have greater awareness of and to seek to counter our efforts.

These are the substantive details of the issue, and now I will proceed to some procedural aspects and precedents.

The House recently dealt with a question of privilege raised by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills regarding threats made against his family by representatives of a foreign government, the same foreign government we are discussing today. These cases are different insofar as this case involves hacking, monitoring and potential disruption as opposed to personal threats. However, both involve cases of parliamentarians, identified based on their parliamentary activities, where a foreign government was seeking to interfere with their parliamentary work and where parliamentarians were not informed.

Based on that, the precedent set by the ruling from your predecessor, Mr. Speaker, on the question from the member for Wellington—Halton Hills clearly applies. When raising this question of privilege regarding foreign interference three days short of a year ago, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills cited *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at pages 107 to 108, which states:

In order to fulfill their parliamentary duties, Members should be able to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed....Any form of intimidation of a Member with respect to the Member's actions during a proceeding in Parliament could amount to contempt

In the previous case, the member was not informed of threats being made. The Speaker found that the existence of those threats, which the government knew about all along, constituted a *prima facie* instance of the breach of his parliamentary privilege, and the House subsequently agreed to put the matter to the procedure and House affairs committee.

In the present case, we know that 18 Canadian parliamentarians were the subject of the first stage of a progressive attack, the full scope or intentions of which remain unknown but which was clearly targeted at critics of a particular foreign government with the goal of impacting their work in some way. The extent to which that work was impacted, through the subsequent disruption of communications or through monitoring of our activities to facilitate the disruption in other areas, remains a relative unknown. However, we do know that our work as parliamentarians was under attack and that once again Canadian authorities responsible for protecting our democracy did not pass critical information along to parliamentarians, information that they had.

Should this matter be considered by a committee, one remedy we may want to consider is having Parliament ask foreign like-minded intelligence agencies to inform Parliament directly of threats against its members. However, for the time being, the appropriate step is a referral to committee for further study.

In the interest of time, I will not cite all of the procedural arguments used by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills or read from the ruling of the Speaker at that time. All that information is clearly accessible and highly relevant.

There is one other much older precedent that I would like to put before the House, where attempted electronic surveillance of Parliament was found to violate parliamentary privilege. The case is from 1973, when the NDP caucus room was bugged, as apparently discovered by Mr. Ed Broadbent and as reported to the House by Mr. David Lewis. The matter was of such urgency that Mr. Lewis was able to rise without having given the proper notice and without even having the relevant privilege motion in readiness. Mr. Lewis informed the House that a CTV employee had bugged, and apparently later admitted to bugging, the NDP caucus room. The planting of bugs was the 1973 version of modern digital hacking and surveillance.

● (1110)

A couple of things are notable about this case and the precedent it set.

First, interestingly, Mr. Lewis considered the intentions of the CTV employee to be fairly benign. He did not see in them an actual attempt to impact the proceedings of caucus or even to report on its deliberations. Apparently, the reporter simply wanted to demonstrate the ease with which a bug could be placed.

However, notwithstanding his general willingness to view the intentions of CTV in a charitable light, Mr. Lewis noted, “Whatever [the intentions], admirable or not, the people responsible for this in the CTV network may have had in mind, I suggest to you, Sir, that it is a violation of everything I can think of in connection with the privileges of parliament.” In this case, the intentions of the bugging were not even considered. The fact that the attempt at bugging had been made was sufficient to justify the quick determination that privilege had been violated.

The second notable feature of this case is that the matter was disposed of in a somewhat irregular way. Mr. Lewis raised the question of privilege without the proper notice and without a motion ready to move. In response, the Speaker immediately told the House, “it is obvious to the Chair that there is a prima facie case of breach of privilege.” The Speaker suggested that the matter be paused until Mr. Lewis could bring the appropriate motion. However, members agreed instead to propose and adopt a quick remedy to the question of privilege right away. A motion was adopted by unanimous consent to order CTV to surrender any tapes acquired through the bugging of the NDP caucus meeting.

In this case, the view of the House was that a simple remedy was appropriate. The case in question was much less complicated than the present case, because in 1973 the person responsible for the bugging had already confessed and the House felt confident that the associated tapes could be easily accessed.

Privilege

Obviously, in the present case, the discussion of remedy is more complicated and would in my view require the usual process of a committee study.

However, regardless, the Speaker clearly indicated right away, without even needing to reflect on the circumstances, that the bugging of a caucus room, regardless of the intention of the person doing the bugging or the subsequent use of the tapes, constituted a clear prima facie case of breach of privilege. The attack on our email accounts by a foreign actor clearly much more dangerous than CTV demonstrably exceeds in seriousness the matter that a previous Speaker saw as an immediate and obvious breach of privilege. Although we do not have the benefit of a lengthy written ruling read by the Speaker, we have for the record the clear judgment of the Speaker and the subsequent unanimous judgment of the House.

In light of the facts and the precedents, I suppose it is evident that I feel this is a rather clear and obvious matter, and I expect that my colleagues and other parties will generally concur. I am ready at the earliest moment to move the appropriate motion.

Members of the House have had fine and important words to say and I believe, in many cases, to say sincerely about the need to combat foreign interference. The member for Scarborough—Guildwood and I have been able to speak with one voice on this matter. Still, despite the many professions, it seems that there is still a gap in terms of informing and protecting members of Parliament in the exercise of their parliamentary duties, and this is a matter which should be taken up as soon as possible.

● (1115)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for raising this very serious matter. I will come back to the member very quickly on this.

The hon. member from Humber River—Black Creek is rising on the same question of privilege.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for using a question of privilege this morning to raise a very important issue.

Many of us are members of the IPAC organization. What has happened here is a breach of our privileges. This goes back to 2022. It is a very serious breach of our privileges. The fact is that we continue to be so naive.

We are the voices of Canadians. Whether we are talking about China, Iran or Russia, we have to be able to speak with the protection that is required and not be concerned about being intimidated or hacked or other things that would happen to us. It is another way of intimidation in a very serious way. I would expect that our government would ensure we have the necessary information to protect ourselves and make sure our systems are protected.

Private Members' Business

I very much look forward to the motion that my colleague is interested in putting on the floor and whatever actions we can take. We all need to know that we are free to voice our concerns on behalf of our residents and be safe in doing that.

It is very important that we get some answers here as to why we were not notified, what is happening next and how we better protect ourselves in the future.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the same question of privilege, I have been listening very attentively to the interventions by both members and understand the need to proceed to a ruling as quickly as possible, but I would like to reserve the ability to intervene, in very short order, in the course of the next hour or so.

● (1120)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I am sure you and members understand and appreciate, the government takes foreign interference very seriously. I would like to review what has been said this morning, as this is the first I have heard of it, and report back to the Speaker in terms of a position on it.

The Speaker: I thank all hon. members, especially the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, for bringing this issue to the attention of the Speaker. We will come back forthwith with a determination on this.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1125)

[*Translation*]

AMENDMENTS TO THE STANDING ORDERS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC) moved:

That:

(a) in the opinion of the House,

- (i) the ability to propose amendments to the Standing Orders is essential to adapt and improve parliamentary procedures and to the rights of members,
- (ii) it is crucial to maintain open and transparent debate on proposed changes to the Standing Orders, free from undue procedural restrictions by the government or a subset of members,
- (iii) all Members of the House, not the government nor a subset of members, should be the final authority as to how long proposed changes to the Standing Orders should be considered;

(b) it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to undertake a study on the advisability of amending the Standing Orders as follows:

(i) by adding, after Standing Order 56.1(1)(b), the following new Standing Order:

“56.1(1)(c) For greater certainty, this Standing Order does not apply to proceedings that propose amendments to the Standing Orders.”,

(ii) by adding, after Standing Order 57, the following new standing order:

“57(2) This Standing Order does not apply to proceedings that propose amendments to the Standing Orders. For greater certainty, the question cannot be put on a motion pursuant to Standing Order 57 that would apply to proceedings that propose amendments to the Standing Orders.”,

(iii) by adding, after Standing Order 61, the following new standing order:

“61(3) This Standing Order does not apply to proceedings that propose amendments to the Standing Orders. For greater certainty, the question cannot be put on a motion pursuant to Standing Order 61 that would apply to proceedings that propose amendments to the Standing Orders.”,

(iv) by adding, after Standing Order 66(2)(c), the following new section:

“66(2)(d) Notwithstanding any other standing order, a motion for the concurrence in a report from a standing or special committee wherein the report proposes amendments to the Standing Orders shall:

(i) in the first instance, be considered until no member wishes to speak, upon which the Speaker shall put all questions necessary to dispose of the motion without further debate or amendment, or until debate is adjourned or interrupted, or for three hours, whichever is earlier, upon which time debate on the motion shall be resumed at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment on the day designated pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section, and

(ii) in the second and any subsequent instances, be considered until no member wishes to speak, upon which the Speaker shall put all questions necessary to dispose of the motion without further debate or amendment, or until debate is adjourned or interrupted, or for an additional three hours, whichever is earlier, upon which time debate on the motion shall again be resumed at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment on the day subsequently designated pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section.”,

(v) by adding, after Standing Order 81(13), the following new section:

“81(13)(b) If the motion proposes amendments to the Standing Orders, a question on the referral of the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is deemed put at the end of the debate and, if resolved in the affirmative, it shall become an order of reference to the committee to consider the motion and to report observations and recommendations on the motion back to the House not later than 75 sitting days after the referral”;

(vi) in Standing Order 93(1)(a), by adding, at the end, the following: “If the motion proposes amendments to the Standing Orders, a question on the referral of the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is deemed put at the end of the debate and, if resolved in the affirmative, it shall become an order of reference to the committee to consider the motion and to report observations and recommendations on the motion back to the House not later than 75 sitting days after the referral”;

(c) the committee report its findings to the House no later than 75 sitting days following the adoption of this motion.

[*English*]

He said: The purpose of Motion No. 109 is to ensure that no future government would be able to amend the Standing Orders without the consent of all recognized parties. In the time allocated to me, I will attempt to lay out the case for this motion in three parts.

First, I will explain the mechanics of how Motion No. 109 would eliminate the power to make non-consensual changes to the Standing Orders.

Second, I will explain, in a few words, the danger that exists whenever a majority government has the ability to unilaterally change the Standing Orders, as it currently does. This demonstration will consist of a brief history of unilateral changes to our Standing Orders, in the course of which I will quote some of the warnings given by MPs of all parties during past debates in which closure was used to ram through non-consensual changes to the rules.

Private Members' Business

Third, I will explain how I propose to ensure that the suggested amendments contained in Motion No. 109 are not themselves forced upon the House in a peremptory vote following the two hours of debate that is typical for a private member's motion. This is, after all, a technically complex issue worthy of discussion, review and perhaps expert testimony at a parliamentary committee.

Now, let us start with the first of these three topics.

Motion No. 109 contains a proposal to amend the Standing Orders in several places, modifying existing provisions that permit the government to unilaterally terminate debate and force a vote. The goal is to create a situation in which it will no longer be possible to apply these debate-limiting clauses to any vote to amend the Standing Orders, but not to limit the existing provisions for closure and time allocation in any other way.

Specifically, Motion No. 109 places limiting clauses immediately after the following existing Standing Orders: Standing Order 56.1(1)(b), Standing Order 57, Standing Order 61 and Standing Order 66(2)(c). The practical result is that if Motion No. 109 is adopted, it will never again be possible for a government to bring to a conclusion the debate on a proposed amendment to the Standing Orders unless there is all-party consent for the debate to end and for a vote to be taken. In the absence of consent on any future change to the Standing Orders, debate would simply continue indefinitely. Knowing this to be the case, future governments would find it necessary to obtain such consent: in other words, to build a consensus.

To be clear, Motion No. 109 does not create a situation in which unanimous consent would be required for future changes to the Standing Orders. As a practical matter, the mechanism of delay that I propose is only available to organized groups of a certain size. A group of MPs with a dozen members, which under our rules is the minimum size to achieve party status, is big enough to deny consent, but an individual MP does not have the stamina needed to hold up debate on a motion that has the support of all of his or her colleagues. Numerous examples exist to prove this point.

The description I have just given, as to how Motion No. 109 would achieve its goal, is as antiseptic and as neutral as I can make it, but of course I am an enthusiastic advocate for that goal. Therefore, let me now, in the second part of this three-part discussion, lay out the case for stripping the government of its power to unilaterally change the Standing Orders.

I have to start by emphasizing the enormous importance of the Standing Orders. The Standing Orders are the de facto constitution of the House of Commons. They are the rules of the game, so to speak. Our Standing Orders descend from those of the House of Commons in Westminster, which were already centuries old when they were imported to Canada in 1791, with the first sittings of the legislative assemblies of Upper and Lower Canada. When new constitutions were adopted in 1841 and 1867, the pre-existing Standing Orders were re-adopted, with suitable amendments. For example, when the brand new House of Commons met for the very first time, on November 6, 1867, its first order of business was to adopt what were styled the "Rules, Orders, and Forms of Proceeding of the Legislative Assembly of [the former province of] Canada".

The Standing Orders have continued evolving since 1867, and, as would be expected of a set of rules that have been steadily adjusted and improved for such a vast span of time by so many participants, they are, in many respects, the best rules of order in the world.

During the long history, on Canadian soil, of our Standing Orders, a convention has developed that governments ought not to amend the Standing Orders without all-party consent. Most governments, most of the time, have respected this convention. Regrettably, however, this convention has never quite jelled, unlike, for example, the confidence convention.

- (1130)

On several occasions over the course of the past century or so, governments have changed the rules unilaterally. They have placed time limits on debate in order to force a vote in which the government's majority ensures that the desired change will occur, despite the absence of a consensus.

The first occasion on which limits on debate were used in order to force through non-consensual amendments to the Standing Orders was in 1913. Closure has since been used to do the same thing in 1969, in 1991 and several times under the current government. It is worth noting that there is a pattern to such votes. Closure has consistently been used when the goal is to enact changes to the Standing Orders that would give new tools to the government to more effectively limit the amount of debate that takes place in the House of Commons.

When this happens, open debate is constrained in the short run in the service of giving the government greater powers to constrain debate in the long run. It goes without saying that such changes restrict the ability of the House of Commons to perform its constitutional role of limiting the power of the executive. I would note that this is a power our predecessors had to fight for and, in some cases, to die for, both in England in the 1600s and on these shores in the rebellions of 1837.

As noted a moment ago, the first time that restrictions on debate were applied to a vote on the Standing Orders was in 1913. A previously unused standing order that had existed since 1867 was employed to curtail the debate on the vote that had introduced a new standing order, Standing Order 57. Ever since, this particular standing order has made it possible for the government of the day to impose drastic time limits on the debate on any motion.

Standing Order 57 is what we MPs most frequently refer to when we speak of closure. The section 57 closure rule was used in 1969 to force a vote on the adoption of Standing Order 78, which permits the government to apply a new version of closure in debates on legislation; this form of closure is known as time allocation. In 1991, closure was used once more to impose Standing Order 56.1, which permits the government to apply yet another new version of closure, this time to motions regarding routine proceedings. Under the current Prime Minister, closure has been used repeatedly to force the House to adopt non-consensus amendments to the Standing Orders.

Private Members' Business

Specifically, closure has been used to curtail debate and to force votes on the following four occasions: May 26, 2020; November 25, 2021; June 23, 2022; and June 15, 2023. Aside from the comments I made a moment ago about the martyrs of parliamentary democracy from the 17th and 19th centuries, I do not propose today to deal with whether closure and time allocation are good or bad things or whether closure or time allocation are used judiciously or too much; I specifically want to avoid participating in comparisons of the records of the current government and the last one regarding the use of closure.

Other figures more prominent than I have already weighed in on these matters: In 1932, Mackenzie King described closure as the “most coercive and arbitrary” measure a government could enforce. In 1962, John Diefenbaker put the abolition of closure into the throne speech, only to have his government fall before it could be voted on.

I can only observe that Motion No. 109 would not reduce, eliminate or otherwise affect closure and time allocation in any way other than to prohibit their application to debates on changing the Standing Orders themselves. However, I do propose to suggest that it is very unwise to allow a situation to persist under which the Standing Orders, the rules by which all business is conducted in this place, are subject to amendment without the consent of all parties. It is simply wrong that debate on such amendments can be curtailed by a closure motion, by reference to the previous question or by any other means.

We can imagine how unfair any sport would be if, in mid-game, one side had the ability to change the rules to its own advantage for the duration of the game. It does not matter which sport, whether hockey, soccer, baseball or tennis. We can think of how meaningless our constitutional division of power with the provinces would be if the federal government could unilaterally amend the Constitution. There is, in short, a good reason for the protection of organic or constitutional laws by means of rules requiring more than mere majority consent, such as the federal Constitution's requirement that most amendments be approved only if agreed to by Parliament and by seven provincial legislatures.

It is time to extend similar protections to the rules governing the House of Commons, and that is what Motion No. 109 seeks to do.

However, members should not take my word for it; they can consider instead what the leaders of the two largest opposition parties said in 1969 when, without the support of a single opposition MP, the government gave itself the ability to curtail debate on any bill and then curtailed debate on the new standing order giving it this power. Robert Stanfield, who was then leader of the opposition, warned:

The use of closure to force through rule changes [that] are opposed by every member of the opposition [would establish] the precedent that the majority in this house can change the rules so as to permit, if it chooses, only the most nominal consideration of legislation by this house. Backed by closure the majority could put through changes in the rules that would eliminate all stages of discussion except one.

• (1135)

Tommy Douglas, who was then the leader of the New Democratic Party, expressed his alarm as follows:

If a majority can at any time use its weight of numbers in the House of Commons to change the rules, how long will the rights of the minority in Parliament continue to exist? If the government unilaterally can change the rules, as it is seeking to do now, what can it do next session and the session after that?

Well, although the changes that Stanfield and Douglas feared were not implemented in the next session, nor in the session after that, the unilateral changes that were imposed in 1991 and then by the current government showed that their words were prophetic.

I will now read a few observations made during the truncated debate on the most recent set of non-consensual changes from 2023. All the following comments were made by hon. members who still sit in this place.

The member for Hamilton Centre, who is a New Democrat, asked:

If this [set of amendments to the Standing Orders] was such a priority, why was it not introduced a bit earlier, which perhaps would have provided for a fullness of discussion and debate and might not have forced us into closure and would have allowed for all of these nuances and democratic principles to be fully fleshed out?

The member for Kitchener Centre, who sits for the Greens, stated:

there is not even a chance to propose amendments. It is already a take-it-or-leave-it approach, and on top of that, we are now being limited in our debate.... I can speak for myself in saying that I am still researching, reading and listening to inform my own vote on this measure.

The member for Montcalm, who sits for the Bloc Québécois, described the proposed changes to the Standing Orders as “despicable”; he added, “Doing it with a closure motion is even more despicable.” He went on to state that the Government House Leader “should have consulted us instead of unilaterally doing what he is doing today. I would like him to have this done to him when he is on the other side of the House after the next election just to see how he likes it.”

Of course, Mr. Speaker, the goal of Motion No. 109 is to guarantee that, whichever party forms government following the next election, unilateral changes to the Standing Orders will never take place again and no MP will ever again have to express this kind of frustration.

I will now turn to the third of the three topics of this talk and take a few minutes to describe how Motion No. 109 ensures that the amendments to the Standing Orders written into the text of the motion are not themselves the subject of only two hours of debate in this place, followed by a peremptory vote.

Motion No. 109 is divided into three parts. The first section is a preamble, explaining the rationale of the motion. The second part provides the text that I am proposing to add to the Standing Orders and states that “it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to undertake a study on the advisability of amending the Standing Orders”. The third section instructs the committee to report its findings to the House no later than 75 days following the adoption of this motion. At that time, the House would have the opportunity to vote on the committee's report.

Private Members' Business

Regrettably, as the Standing Orders now exist, they do not permit the same rules to be applied to the vote on Motion No. 109 as Motion No. 109 would cause to be applied from that point onward. There is, therefore, a certain inadvertent irony. It is not impossible that, in the vote on Motion No. 109, party discipline will be applied by one or more of the parties and that the motion could pass with one party voting unanimously against it.

I have no antidote for this except to encourage all parties to adopt the approach that was used in 2015 when a motion that I had proposed to amend the Standing Orders to allow for the election of the Speaker by preferential ballot was referred to the committee on procedure and House affairs and then was reported by that committee to the House. In the vote that followed, the whips of all parties allowed their MPs to vote freely, and every single caucus in the House split, with some voting in favour and others against but, of course, the majority voting in favour. This was the only truly free vote for every single MP in the House in the entire four-year life of the 41st Parliament, and I hope that it will serve as the model for the vote that may eventually take place on Motion No. 109.

• (1140)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I truly appreciate the efforts of the member in terms of raising what I love talking about, which is the Standing Orders and ways in which we can ensure that the House functions in a more democratic and principled way. I very much appreciate it. It might bore a lot of other people, but I find it exceptionally interesting.

Even when I was in opposition, and I have been in opposition far more years than I have been in government, there was the issue of programming. We see that in private members' bills. Does the member opposite see any way in which programming can be incorporated in terms of government legislation?

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, I actually have no comments on government legislation. As I observed in my remarks, my goal is to deal with programming motions of closure and time allocations, as they relate to motions to amend the Standing Orders, and absolutely nothing else.

There is an argument that, because of the volume of business before the House, we need to have a limited time for each debate. That is the basis on which each of the successive restrictions on the length of debates were justified in 1913, 1969 and 1991. That may or may not have legitimacy vis-à-vis legislation and other matters before the House; however, vis-à-vis discussions of the Standing Orders, I think there should be no programming motions whatsoever.

The only solution is consensus. That involves taking the time to find consensus and showing the willingness to compromise that may be necessary.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have to hand it to the opposition member. His motion makes sense. At the same time, it does not. Why would I say that? Because amending the Standing Orders of the House of Commons should be done by consensus.

As we saw last year, unfortunately, some people do not seek consensus in the House. I think it is kind of sad that anyone would have to move a motion to ensure more discussion when it is time to amend the Standing Orders, but I understand the process. The Bloc Québécois will support this motion.

Still, does my colleague agree that it is sad and strange that someone has to move this kind of motion instead of just assuming that consensus would be the norm in such situations? It is in the interest of all parliamentarians to agree on the rules that govern how the House operates.

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, I think that my hon. colleague is right. He used the word “strange”. In a way, it is strange to have a system that allows party line votes on a motion that would change that system to a consensus system. I do not have the magical power to change that. I am simply making an observation, and I hope that the spirit of consensus will prevail here.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the work of the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, who is, in a way, a dean in the House and who has always raised questions about the Standing Orders. This motion seems to be in line with all of his parliamentary work.

[*English*]

The NDP will be supporting this motion. We believe that it is time to build that consensus. I heard my colleague from the Bloc also say that he will be supporting it, but my colleague, the MP for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, indicated that there was some uncertainty around the vote as to what would come out of the procedure and House affairs committee.

Are the members of the Conservative caucus also supporting the motion?

• (1145)

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, I hope so. To remember an example from 2015, I proposed changes to the Standing Orders that would affect the election of the Speaker. The decision made at the procedure and House affairs committee caused parties to alter how they handled the vote in each case. Parties were encouraged to allow their members to vote freely. Since the report from the procedure and House affairs committee was a unanimous report, all the parties took it back and decided to make that decision.

That could happen again. That is actually what I would prefer to happen, if possible, but I cannot force that to happen. I think this model is worth examining. Of course, the committee records from that time are all publicly available. They might be helpful to all of us in this circumstance.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am quite encouraged by the member's motion. However, there are a number of questions and thoughts I would like to share with the member.

Private Members' Business

To start off, we have to look at what we have witnessed over the years, or at least what I have witnessed, which is that it is very difficult to change the Standing Orders in any form. I have personally attempted to do that on many occasions, both formally and informally. Attempting to modernize the Parliament of Canada by making changes to our Standing Orders has been exceptionally challenging, but let there be no doubt that the need for change is there and that it should be modernized.

As a good example of those challenges, all one needs to do is to look at the pandemic and the hybrid system we have today. One of the most significant changes that was incorporated was the voting application. Prior to the voting application, all members had to physically be inside the chamber in order to be able to vote. The impact of that change is so profound that I would suggest it is the most significant change we have witnessed here in Ottawa in the last 70-plus years. It has assisted in modernizing and facilitating members of Parliament on both sides of the House. One would have thought that particular change would have been supported unanimously, but that was not the case. It was not supported. If we were to take what the member is suggesting today, would that change have taken place? I suspect not. I have found, over the years, that it is exceptionally difficult to make the types of changes necessary in order to allow this Parliament's rules to be modernized.

Another good example is the question I posed to the member. We understand why time allocation is used. Even when I was in opposition, I argued that time allocation was necessary at times in order for the government to get its legislation through because it does not take much to prevent legislation from passing. If we did not have the time allocation tool, we would not be able to get legislation through, and there are many examples. I believe there are ways we could ensure that debate could take place on legislation for literally hundreds of members and could still ensure legislation is passed. We cannot use the rules to the degree that we frustrate Parliament and make it, in essence, dysfunctional. For example, we have seen private members' bills get through because they are programmed. Some of those private members' bills are fairly substantial. We have had opposition days that, because they are programmed, a vote has occurred and has been done in a timely fashion.

I would suggest that the rules could also be changed to enable some form of programming, with exceptions, on certain pieces of legislation, to ultimately give this place a healthier environment from legislative and budgetary perspectives, which would give more power to individual members of Parliament. There are ways we can do it, but it requires changes to the Standing Orders.

• (1150)

Why have I said it in that manner, when the member, in response to my question, said that this is really about the mechanism or the process of change? I like what is being suggested in terms of how it should be done on the consensus of all political parties. I love that aspect of it. However, how do we ensure that takes place so that we can at least modernize the current Standing Orders?

Let us say, for example, that the member is successful and that, in order for government legislation to pass, every member has the right to speak to that legislation. Even if that legislation is amend-

ed, we could filibuster one piece of legislation virtually endlessly. If a political party is determined to frustrate the House of Commons or to kill any sort of legislation so that it could not pass, it would not take much.

Back in the 1930s and the 1940s, we saw legislation being passed. However, if an opposition party or a group of 12 individuals, and quite frankly, it would not even take 12, is determined to prevent all forms of legislation from passing, with the exception of those that come through private member's hour because that is programmed, they could prevent legislation from ultimately passing the House of Commons.

I do not say this as a government member. I say it out of the concern I had when I was in opposition, and I am on the record as having expressed concerns about it back then. I say this as someone who has been in opposition for most of my political career, which is over 30 years. I understand the importance of the Standing Orders from an opposition member's perspective.

I am suggesting that it is all fine and wonderful, and I support the member's motion. I would like to see the motion pass through. However, along with the motion passing, we have to make changes that would at least address some of the biggest concerns.

We often hear that we need to change the dress code, and we can change the dress code. There are other rules we can change; it is the low-hanging fruit, if we can put it that way. However, there are more substantive changes that need to be made. I have commented in more detail, on some of those issues, about how we could enable more members of Parliament to participate in debate, and a possible option would be to have a dual chamber.

How can we pass a motion of this substance, which I favour, without looking at the types of changes necessary to modernize Canada's House of Commons? We should be playing a strong leadership role because provincial legislatures look to Ottawa. I know that first-hand from my involvement in the House leadership team in Manitoba. Other countries look to Ottawa in terms of how our parliamentary system works.

There is so much that needs to be done in regard to our Standing Orders. We need to modernize our Standing Orders. I say that first and foremost as a parliamentarian who has been on both government and opposition benches. I look forward to this motion going to committee, where there would hopefully be a great deal of discussion, and it would also take into consideration other aspects of how we could modernize our Standing Orders. It is time to do that and to reflect on the advantages of things like the voting application and how it has profoundly made this a better place for everyone.

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would just like to provide a definition of the House Standing Orders, since that is what we are talking about today. We are talking about amending the Standing Orders. According to Bosc and Gagnon, the Standing Orders “are seen as an exercise of the parliamentary privilege of the House to regulate its own internal affairs.” What I get from that is that these are the rules of the game. Regardless of whether one is a Liberal, Conservative, Bloc, New Democrat or Green member, we must agree on the rules of the game. This is not about the core values of each party. That is not what we are challenging each other on. There are plenty of other topics on which we can challenge each other.

I think that we are capable of agreeing about the Standing Orders of the House, which, quite simply, we must follow. It is through consensus that parliamentarians have determined the changes the House has made over the course of its history. There have been a few exceptions, but for the most part this is how things have worked. We have historically sought consensus to ensure that everyone can agree on the new rules to be adopted and the House can operate as democratically as possible. If, for one reason or another, a political party wants to change the rules of the game, even if it is the majority party, it must talk it over with the others and reach agreement with everyone. Otherwise, the process starts looking like the tyranny of the majority.

In this case, when we read the motion, we can see why our colleague, whom I salute, decided to move it. There was a rather serious case last year, and that is why we are in the unfortunate position today of having to read a motion to remind us of the duties of the House when the time comes to deal with the various rules that govern us.

When I listened to the member for Winnipeg North, I was honestly flabbergasted, to put it mildly. He told us that last year we adopted the most important rule changes in 70 years. There was no consensus. In proceeding with their overhaul, the Liberals said that regardless of what the others think, we do not care, this is the direction we are going in. That is outrageous.

He himself said that the changes were exceptional—all the more reason, then, for everyone to sit down together and try to adopt these changes. He went on to tell us that it was safe to assume that a consensus could not have been reached. However, his party did not even try to achieve that consensus, not even for a second. I know because I participated in the discussions as leader of the Bloc Québécois. That is the leader’s job. We discussed it among ourselves. That did not last long; indeed, it was over in the blink of an eye. When he says that a consensus might not have been achievable, my response is that he should have at least made an honest effort to seek one out.

The changes made in the House, such as virtual presence, electronic voting and taking powers away from the opposition, were significant changes, despite the fact that the parties had shown that they could come to an agreement. When the pandemic hit in 2020, the parties reached just such an agreement. On a number of occasions, we unanimously adopted transitional and temporary changes

Private Members' Business

in the House. Everyone agreed and showed a willingness to co-operate because we were facing an exceptional situation. I hope that people are here to work for the good of Canadians. The best way of making sure we are working for the good of Canadians is to agree on the rules that govern our actions.

The changes they brought in were the subject of 11 hours of debate, all told. The Liberals often say that the Conservatives block legislation by filibustering, but they themselves imposed closure, and there were only 11 hours of debate in total. They cannot say this time that the Conservatives tried to filibuster. We were not even there. Everything was settled before we even had a chance to say a word. We were not given an opportunity to propose any substantive amendments.

As leader of the Bloc Québécois, I approached the government House leader, who is now the Health Minister, to say that I was prepared to sit down with him and discuss the Bloc Québécois’s ideas. The Bloc members believed that the virtual format should not be the rule, but rather the exception. We did not want to stop it altogether, but rather come up with a way to regulate it. We had solutions to propose that everyone could get behind, but there was no discussion, not a word, nothing.

• (1200)

One has to ask how they could do such a thing as a minority government. How did they decide that members would vote electronically and participate virtually as much as they wanted, all while limiting the House’s powers? How were they able to get away with that? They had help from the NDP. The NDP helped them. When I read what they were proposing, I saw a lot of the NDP in it. We know that the NDP has members in British Columbia. It is more difficult for them to travel. Participating virtually is more convenient for them. That is a known fact.

As a result, two political parties managed to change the Standing Orders without asking anyone or talking for one second to the Conservative Party or the Bloc Québécois. The Bloc Québécois has a reputation of being accommodating. We can sit down, stay above the fray, discuss issues and find solutions. We can do that, and we have proven it on many occasions. However, I was not even included in the discussions. They were not interested at all. Of course, this is not right.

That was the situation I found myself in. I did not have much parliamentary experience; I had not been here very long. I came from a different world, from provincial politics, although my political colour did not change, of course. I looked at the situation, but it made no sense to me that a G7 country would change its rules like that. These rules are so important that the member for Winnipeg North called them the most significant changes in 70 years. He told us to open wide and then he shoved those changes down our throats. That is how it was done in a democratic country. In the land of the monarchy, the modern-day Louis XIV, that is what the Liberals did, and they are happy about it. They say they could not have achieved consensus, that it was impossible. It would have been as difficult to get consensus as it would be to put nail polish on a tarantula. However, they did not even try.

What does the motion say? Basically, it is divided into two parts.

Private Members' Business

The first part addresses motions such as oral motions for immediate voting that require 25 members. The motion would make it impossible to change the Standing Orders through that method. It would also be impossible to change the Standing Orders with a closure motion or through a previous question.

The second part indicates that a motion for concurrence in a report from committee should be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which will report its findings 75 days later. The same applies to motions submitted by the opposition. The same applies to motions concerning the order of precedence of private members' business. Either we cannot do what the Liberals did by imposing closure and making a unilateral decision as the government, or we can vote and then refer the report to the Standing Committee on Procedures and House Affairs, which will report its findings and its recommendations 75 days later.

The problem is that we are not obliged to vote in favour of the committee's changes.

The Liberals are a minority government, but they were still able to do it. Personally, I am afraid. No one needs a Nobel prize in mathematics to understand that the Conservatives have a chance of winning. They may form a minority government. If the Bloc Québécois has enough seats, we may be able to block the majority and they will have to listen to people. However, if they win a majority, what is going to happen? There will have been a precedent. They will say that the previous government messed around with the Standing Orders, that it had a good experience and believed nothing amiss. The Liberals will probably be an opposition party. The Conservatives will say that the members of the previous government did it a few years ago, so they can certainly do the same thing; they can start fiddling with the Standing Orders if it serves their purpose. That will be something to see. That is how Canada currently works. Canada is a great democracy with great members of Parliament who care about the interests and the value of our society. Bravo.

The Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of the motion, although we should not need such a motion. I thought that we were smart enough to reach a consensus on amendments to the Standing Orders, but we will have to live with it and we will vote in favour of the motion.

• (1205)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and add my voice, the voice of the New Democrats and the NDP caucus, and say that we are in favour of the amendments proposed in Motion No. 109.

I would just like to comment on the statements made by my colleague from La Prairie, who just made an impassioned speech about virtual Parliament. It needs to be said that 80% of the Bloc Québécois and its caucus voted virtually against a virtual Parliament. At some point, enough is enough. If they are against a virtual Parliament, they can sit in the House and say so. When 80% of the Bloc Québécois's caucus votes against a virtual Parliament but votes remotely while saying that actions speak louder than words, it clearly shows that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of a virtual Parliament.

I would point out that the Conservative Party did likewise. Two-thirds of the Conservative members voted virtually when they voted against the virtual Parliament. There can be no explanation for such contradictions, but it is now a matter of historical record. I think that in 10 or 20 years, people will still be talking about the fact that both these parties, in voting against a virtual Parliament, did so virtually. Their actions suggested that they were in favour of a virtual Parliament, yet they voted against it. This is for them to explain, but it was important to provide these responses.

There is no doubt that for the NDP, it has always been important to have a consensus in the House. When it comes to amending the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, from Tommy Douglas right up until today, we have always stressed the importance of consensus. That is why we are supporting Motion No. 109. I sang a member's praises earlier. This is not something I do often in the House, but my colleague from Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston often takes the interests of Parliament and democracy to heart. I do not doubt his sincerity on this subject. I think that Motion No. 109 is important.

This is a multi-part motion. As we know, it begins with the preamble that my colleague mentioned earlier and with which we agree. He then spoke about the six standing orders that should be amended or added in order to require a consensus before any changes whatsoever can be made to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. The third part is about referring the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, before it is returned here to the House no later than 75 days following the adoption of this motion.

All three parts are extremely important. We support the preamble. We support the principle of amending six standing orders. It makes sense. We also support the idea of referring the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for a more in-depth study. The committee will certainly need to hold additional meetings. After that, the motion will have to return to the House for debate with an eye to amending the Standing Orders to put in place the changes in question.

As my colleague mentioned, there is no telling whether all the parties will support the motion. My colleague hopes that the Conservative Party members will support it. As we have seen, the Bloc Québécois members support the motion. The NDP members support the motion. We do not know as yet, but we hope that the members of the Liberal Party will support it as well. In this way, we could implement these changes to the Standing Orders of the House, hopefully unanimously.

• (1210)

[English]

It is important that we work on a consensus model. This is why the NDP is saying very clearly that we support Motion No. 109. We believe that it is important to have these principles around the Standing Orders, which do, as my colleague from Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston pointed out, date back centuries, to ensure that there is consensus around modification of the Standing Orders. This is something that Tommy Douglas stood for and that leaders of the NDP have always stood for.

Privilege

I do want to come back, though, to the reference to virtual Parliament, to use that as some sort of precedence, when we had very clear support from all members of all caucuses in the House of Commons. However, there were two party caucuses that voted against continuing the virtual Parliament, despite the many benefits that we have seen to our constituents and to our families, etc. It is important to note that two-thirds of the Conservative MPs who voted against that change to the Standing Order voted virtually. I have the numbers right here: There were 77 Conservative MPs who voted virtually against the virtual Parliament, and 25 of the 32 Bloc members voted virtually against the virtual Parliament.

There is always an important search for consensus. However, Conservative MPs and Bloc MPs were saying that they were opposed to virtual Parliament but were voting virtually because they obviously saw the advantages of virtual Parliament. The reality, though, of members of those two caucuses in this case voting virtually against an important change to the Standing Orders is something that will remain part of the history of the House of Commons. It is something they cannot change or deny. The facts are there and will always be there. Any time we have a debate about Standing Orders, I will mention, and I think my colleagues will as well, that 80% of the Bloc MPs and two-thirds of the Conservative MPs voted virtually against virtual Parliament.

To get the good faith that is important for changes to the Standing Orders, we need to have good faith from all parties, and we need to make sure that we put into place measures that benefit Canadians: Canadian MPs, families, constituents and everyone. Virtual Parliament provisions clearly do that; they allow us to be at important events and emergencies in our constituencies in the most vast and the largest democracy on Earth. I came here yesterday. It was a 5,000-kilometre trip to get to Ottawa, and it will be 5,000 kilometres going home on Friday. That takes me halfway around the globe. My colleague from Edmonton Strathcona and my colleague from Edmonton Griesbach make similar types of trips across the vast expanse of our democracy.

It is important, of course, that we make provisions for that. If there is an emergency in New Westminster—Burnaby, we cannot necessarily be at that emergency and also be voting on behalf of our constituents in Ottawa. The virtual Parliament provisions that were supported by all parties, because of the fact that the majority of all parties voted virtually in that important vote, signify the ability of Parliament to make modifications that would provide more support to Canadians in their ridings and would give the ability to members of Parliament to work harder and smarter in such a way as to serve their constituents better. That is an illustrative example that we will need to take forward.

The reality is that Motion No. 109 and the search for consensus and having the provisions made to the Standing Orders so we could look for and build on that consensus is something we fully support. I thank the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston for bringing the motion forward. We will be voting yes.

• (1215)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in strong support of Motion No. 109, which was introduced by my colleague, the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

The motion would instruct the procedure and House affairs committee to undertake a study with respect to a series of proposed amendments to the Standing Orders that would, taken together, have the effect of preventing any government from unilaterally amending the Standing Orders without all-party consent. Therefore, consistent with that, the motion would instruct the procedure and House affairs committee to consider prohibiting the use of closure and other time limitation procedures. It would take away the ability of the government to use the hammer of closure to ram through changes to the Standing Orders.

The motion reflects what has become a convention, as our Standing Orders have been evolving since 1867, and of course, in some instances, they go back centuries to the British House of Commons. The convention has been that a government ought not amend the Standing Orders absent all-party support. As a general rule, there has been an effort to reach consensus.

We have seen a significant evolution in our Standing Orders. One such example was in the mid-1980s. At the time, there was a general view that Parliament was not in step with the times and that there needed to be a series of steps taken to modernize Parliament. Upon being elected in 1984, Prime Minister Mulroney appointed James McGrath, the then member for St. John's East, to chair an all-party parliamentary committee that looked at parliamentary reform. The mandate of that committee included reviewing the Standing Orders. Out of the McGrath report came multiple recommendations for amendments to the Standing Orders, all of which were adopted, including one of the most significant, which was the election of the Speaker of the House of Commons. Up until that time, the election was a mere formality based upon the appointment or recommendation of the Prime Minister.

My point is that there is an instance where members from all parties worked collaboratively, undertook a thorough study and came back with recommendations, and based upon that consensus, the Standing Orders were amended. It is true that convention has not always been consistently applied. There have been, up until the election of the current government, rare instances where governments have invoked closure. My colleague from Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston noted that it happened prior to the election of the Liberal government on three occasions: in 1913, 1969 and 1991. It is very rare.

Since the election of the Liberals, what was a rare instance of not respecting the convention has become the practice of the Liberals. They have run roughshod over the House and have, on multiple occasions, either sought to ram through or have, in fact, rammed through changes to the Standing Orders, underscoring the need and timeliness of the motion.

* * *

• (1220)

PRIVILEGE

NOTIFICATION OF MEMBERS FOLLOWING FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on the point of privilege that was brought forward earlier today by the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

The Budget

The New Democratic Party is very concerned about the recent news that all members of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China could have been or were targets of cyber-attacks from hackers who were linked to Beijing. I am a member of IPAC, and I am deeply concerned because I do not know the details. I do not have the information I need to know whether my personal emails were hacked or whether there were cyber-attacks made against me, other members of the New Democratic Party or, indeed, any member of the House.

I am concerned that this information came forward from the U.S. government, and our government did not provide that information to legislators. I am concerned because this is not the first time I have felt that the government has withheld information from members of Parliament, from legislators.

I think back as well to the time when the members of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights were called out and sanctioned by the Chinese government. As a member of that committee, I found all of this out on Twitter. There was no support provided to me as a parliamentarian by the government, and I find that unacceptable.

I also find it unacceptable that it seems we are repeatedly having to ask the government of the day to provide the information to parliamentarians that they need to do their work. We do not know what the Government of Canada knows. We do not know when it knew it, and we certainly do not know why it did not alert those members who may have been impacted by this work.

Legislators need to have this information. They need to be able to feel they are protected. They need to be able to feel they are safe in doing their work, that they have the tools to do it and that the information is being provided to them.

I do believe this constitutes a violation of parliamentarians' privilege, and it is vitally important we get to the bottom of this.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for the intervention.

The Speaker is looking forward to hearing from all parties on this particular issue.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from April 18 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise to speak to the budgetary measures of the government. It is one of the ways the government can clearly demonstrate the types of things that we are doing, taking into consideration legislation and budget measures.

Maybe one of the best ways to start off would be by acknowledging that, at the end of the day, to be there in a real and tangible way to support Canada's middle class, and those aspiring to be a part of it, we need to think about how government can ensure that there is a higher sense of fairness, whether that is through taxation or through providing for future generations. There needs to be opportunities to succeed. This is something that the government has taken very seriously, virtually from day one.

I have made reference previously to the types of actions we have taken, such as a reduction of middle-class taxes, an increase for the wealthiest one per cent to make a larger contribution towards taxes, an enhancement of programs for seniors through the guaranteed income supplement and an enhancement of the Canada child benefit program. This has been all the way through, and going into the pandemic, we were there to support our seniors, people with disabilities, employers and small businesses, as well as individual Canadians, through programs such as CERB.

Continuing to fast-forward, we can see very clearly in the initiatives we have taken over the years as a government, and would continue to take through the budget, that we have a government that is very much progressive, caring and fair while dealing with the economy. We realize that a healthy middle class and a healthy economy is good for all. We recognize that there are serious issues that Canadians are facing, such as affordability and housing in many different communities. These are issues that we continue to work on, and this budget amplifies that work. People who are following the budget debate know that the government is very aware of those issues, as Liberal members of Parliament from all regions of the country have expressed their thoughts.

This budget is really and truly a reflection of what Canadians have been telling us as a government and as individual parliamentarians. It is, for all intents and purposes, a budget for Canadians. I think of the types of things that one sees in the budget. On the progressive side, one can talk about one of my personal favourites, which is pharmacare, and its significant step forward on pharmacare. It is a continuation of what I believe Canadians are so passionate about, our health care, the Canada Health Act, and the way in which we, as a government in the previous budget, brought forward close to \$200 billion over a 10-year period to ensure that future generations of Canadians will have health care that is accessible, and that has the health care workers necessary. For me, that is a very important issue because it is an important issue for my constituents.

I could talk about other issues being addressed by this particular budget, such as the \$10-a-day child care or the disability benefit. There are many different aspects, but I want to highlight one of the things that I think is really important. That is the issue of the economy itself and how the rest of the world looks at Canada. In the first three quarters, on a per-capita basis in foreign direct investment, Canada was number one out of the G7. Throughout the world, on a per-capita basis, we were number three. People and businesses around the world are looking at Canada. That is no surprise because no government in our history has signed off on more trade agreements than this government has.

The Budget

• (1225)

We are starting to see the results in many different ways. By supporting industry, industries that were virtually non-existent before have come to life. There was the recent announcement, for example, of Honda, which is piggybacking off of Volkswagen. In terms of future green jobs, the government is very proactive at building a healthy economy. We see that in the generation of over two million jobs over the last number of years through the actions of the government, working with Canadians.

I connect our record of being there to having a healthier economy and building a stronger economy for Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it, for future generations. That is something we, as a government, take very seriously, as we continue to take the measures necessary to support Canadians in addressing the issues we know they are concerned about.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg North mentioned CERB, basically an NDP initiative through which everyone agreed that Canadians needed at least \$2,000 a month to live in this country, yet in this budget we have supports for people with disabilities that amount to \$200 a month. When combined with provincial supports, it is far less than what is needed for those people to live here in Canada.

I have been deluged by comments from people with disabilities. This is an insult. The government should have done nothing, almost, rather than bring this in.

I am just wondering whether he and his government will commit to fixing this over the coming months, so that we can truly support people with disabilities in this country with an income they can live on.

• (1230)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate some of the things the member is saying. Where I tend to disagree is that I would not do anything to discourage or belittle the fact that we now have a disability program, which is a significant step forward.

There are a couple of things that we need to be concerned about with regard to that specific program. One is that we do have to watch other jurisdictions to make sure that they are not going to be clawing back any supports as a direct result of the federal government program. That is a concern that I have, which I know is shared by many individuals.

In regard to the actual amount, I think this is a good starting point. We will have to wait and see in terms of how it ultimately evolves. The bottom line is that, within the budget, we will see different types of programs. That is why I mentioned those progressive programs. I think this is an excellent example where the Government of Canada has taken the initiative to ensure that we are at least moving forward in a substantial way.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to draw to the member's attention to, in the 2021 Liberal campaign platform, a promise that has been unkept, the \$4.5-billion mental health transfer. They put that promise out in front of Canadians because they wanted Canadians to vote for them, to elect them to be the government, and then

they abandoned it. There is no mention of that in the last three budgets, including this budget.

I ask the member to stand up right now and tell the House where the Canada mental health transfer is. Where is the \$4.5 billion?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would not want the member across the way to mislead because of the Conservative spin on this particular issue.

At the end of the day, no government has invested more, historically, in health care than this government has. That was prior to the commitment of \$198 billion that was announced in the last budget. No government has invested more in mental health or has highlighted the issue of mental health more than this government has.

To make some sort of false accusation that the government has been dropping the ball on recognizing the importance of mental health, when, historically, we have outshone any other national government on the issue, I think, does a bit of a disservice. I am very proud of the way in which we have advanced and continue to advance the importance of mental health, today and into the future.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was reading an article in La Presse that highlighted a win for the Liberal government's budget. At first, I thought it was a good idea too. I am talking about the Canada learning bond that the federal government created in 2004. It helps parents save for their children's education by opening a registered education savings plan.

Not all parents, however, think of opening an account like this. Since we want all children to have one, we propose opening such an account automatically for all eligible children born before 2024, starting in 2028-29. I think this could be a positive and helpful measure for students, young people and young families.

Why is the government pushing this measure so far down the road and blatantly after the next election? Is it really more of an election promise?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, members will notice that there are a number of things in the budget that have time frames. If we look at what the government has been doing, I would remind the member of the student loan commitment the government moved forward with over the last couple of years to get rid of the interest portion of student loans, again recognizing the issue of affordability.

We continue to look at ways, through apprenticeships and other programs, we can support young people to ensure life is more affordable. With respect to planning, as part of that we bring forward a program and start its promotion. Then there is an implementation period before it can take place. Going forward, I would like to think there would be many parents who would see the value of the program and participate in it.

The Budget

• (1235)

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, in particular, for pointing out the health care transfers in the budget. As the opposite member knows, mental health is health. The \$200 billion that we have dedicated in transfers to the provinces will address this.

I wonder if the member could elaborate a bit on how that \$200 billion, those very high and historic amounts of transfers going to the provinces, will help Canadians deal with the health care challenges they are facing.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, that \$200-billion commitment over 10 years has enabled the government to work with jurisdictions to make major announcements about long-term health care for Canadians in all regions of the country.

A number of weeks ago, for example, the Prime Minister was at the Grace Hospital in Winnipeg, along with the premier and the federal and provincial ministers of health, talking about how that money is going to make a difference for health care workers, emergency services, dealing with operations and the issue of mental health. There is no government in the history of Canada at the national level that has invested and raised the profile of mental health as much as this government has.

That is not to say we should leave it at that. The members of the Liberal caucus are very proactive. We realize that we still want to do more where we can with respect to health care. We know how important it is to all Canadians that we get this right, and we are prepared to work with all jurisdictions to make sure that we do.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member speaks of a progressive and fair budget, and in many ways I would agree. When it comes to capital gains, something New Democrats pushed for, I agree. When it comes to free contraceptives, I agree.

However, what I do not agree with and what I do not believe is progressive or fair is the fact that we have left persons with disabilities with a promise that has largely left them in poverty, a promise that has been broken. It is not fair to pay persons with disabilities \$200 a month when we know it requires \$2,000 at least. It is not progressive to keep persons with disabilities in poverty in this country.

When will the government begin the work to increase the benefit to \$2,000?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to a previous questioner, for the first time, the government has put into place a program that recognizes that the federal government needs to develop a disability program. This is an excellent starting point. Now we need to take a look at ensuring other jurisdictions do not attempt to claw it back and at ways in which we can enhance the program into the future.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Jonquière.

I am very pleased to be discussing the budget today. We have read it, and it looks more like a Liberal election platform than real fiscal policy, which is exactly what we feared. We in the Bloc Québécois had made some very clear demands of the government. We wanted certain things to be included, things we have been talking about for years, such as increasing old age security starting at age 65. Unfortunately, that was not included in the budget. We also noted significant federal interference in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. That is unacceptable. I will let my colleague from Jonquière elaborate on that.

When the budget came out, the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard said she was shocked that the Bloc Québécois was voting against the budget before even reading it. That is what she said. I did my homework. I did read the budget before criticizing it. That was the right thing to do. I read it and saw that there was not really anything in it for eastern Quebec, nor for the Lower St. Lawrence or for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine. It was pretty clear to me that the minister had not contributed to writing the budget or there would have been more funding for that region, which is very important in eastern Quebec.

I feel a need to quote some excerpts from a Radio-Canada article from the Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine region that appeared the day after the budget came out. The title says it all: “A budget with nothing major for the regional economy”. In the article, municipal officials say they do not really have any details on the money that was announced and they are waiting to see how this will materialize on the ground. Obviously, fishers and seasonal workers are disappointed. Daniel Côté, the mayor of Gaspé, says elements of the budget interact with Quebec's jurisdictions, such as housing and shoreline erosion. He asks, “What is that going to look like in the community, in concrete terms?”

What he is asking for is essentially to have more in terms of how the money is invested. When the federal government interferes in provincial areas of jurisdiction, adding yet more conditions, that obviously means less flexibility for Quebec and the municipalities, which is a bad thing. They are afraid of constitutional quarrels and distrustful of budget announcements that come without concrete measures. Éric Dubé, the mayor of New Richmond, says that “these are promises, but they are not accompanied by an operational program. There are announcements, but we wake up two years later and nothing has come of it.” I know that Mr. Dubé is speaking from experience.

The Budget

Like the mayor of New Richmond, the mayor of Gaspé hopes that the details will be better defined and that the terms of the federal and provincial infrastructure program will be renewed quickly. That is what the Bloc Québécois wants too, particularly for the investments in housing. Let us give Quebec and the municipalities their share, with no strings attached. The budgets for existing federal programs, such as the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's programs and affordable housing programs, need to be renewed. There are projects on hold in my riding. They are ready to move forward. They have the backing of the Quebec government, but the federal government says that there is no more money in these budgets. Let us start by renewing these types of budgets, which are extremely useful for the municipalities, especially in the Gaspé.

The mayor of New Richmond is thrilled with the announcement of funding for Via Rail. That is a good thing, which I will come back to later. It has been just over 10 years since Via Rail stopped passenger rail service to the Gaspé. For years, community groups have been calling for rail service to be restored. It is good news that initial funding has been allocated for the replacement of the fleet. It remains to be seen whether that results in passenger trains returning to the Gaspé.

In the city of Gaspé, the mayor was waiting for funds to fully renovate the Cap-des-Rosiers lighthouse, as well as additional investments for Forillon Park. I will come back to that as well.

Expectations have not been met when it comes to regional air transportation. I cannot agree more with the mayor of Gaspé that we need investments in regional air transportation. The Gaspé Peninsula's economy centres on the fishing industry. The mayor wishes the federal government had provided some support for the industry, which has been hit hard by the rapid decline of crustacean species, such as shrimp, as well as fish species, such as Greenland halibut. Unfortunately, apart from investments in small craft harbours, there is not much in the budget for this industry.

• (1240)

Claudio Bernatchez, executive director of the Association des capitaines-propriétaires de la Gaspésie, says he would have liked the budget to signal, or at least hint at, Ottawa's interest in discussing the future of our fisheries. The fishing industry is facing a crisis. People feel as though the government is seeing only the short-term picture, when we need a global long-term vision of the marine ecosystem. Mr. Bernatchez says that he wants to know how the fisheries will be restructured and how a minimum of economic activity can be ensured in our coastal communities, especially in eastern Canada.

He says, “for now, we have no resources and are powerless in the face of a government that does not seem to consider a future for this industry.” These are strong words, but the criticism is well-founded in the circumstances.

This budget is also disappointing for groups advocating for unemployed workers, who feel ignored by the federal budget. The coordinator for the Mouvement action chômage Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Nadia Mongeon, “feels that the new fiscal year will offer nothing new and no improvements for seasonal workers, apart from things having to do with an employment insurance IT sys-

tem.” Which is to say that the long-awaited employment insurance overhaul, promised years ago by the Liberal government, has still not arrived.

Basically, what the government announced regarding employment insurance amounts to “up to five additional weeks—for a maximum of 45 weeks—to eligible seasonal workers in 13 economic regions.” That is a temporary measure set to expire in October 2024. The government is proposing to extend this measure, which, I would remind members, was meant to be temporary. It seems, then, that this oft-promised EI reform has been postponed indefinitely, and there is simmering discontent in the community. People have been waiting for this for a long time, especially in a region such as ours where seasonal industries abound.

The Mouvement action chômage Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, which for years has fought for this, shared the reaction of the Mouvement autonome et solidaire des sans-emploi, which denounces the Liberal government's disdainful attitude toward the unemployed: “Apart from the extension of the temporary measures,” as I mentioned just now, “there is nothing in the 2024 budget offering respite to the thousands of people who find themselves each year without work and who receive little if any government assistance.”

Nevertheless, groups advocating for the unemployed and unions all answered Ottawa's call by proposing a common set of recommendations with an eye to the 2024 budget. The movement says it is frankly surprised that the government decided not to act on any of their recommendations for its budget. They had presented three priorities: “make the system more accessible, end discrimination against women so that they would not lose their right to employment insurance if they become pregnant, and adapt the scheme to regional realities dictated by the seasonal industry”. Obviously, none of these measures ended up in the budget.

That being said, there are investments for small craft harbours. As indicated in the budget, those investments are for harbours that were severely damaged by hurricane Fiona in 2022. We are talking about approximately \$463 million. Will that be enough to repair and maintain all of the small craft harbours in eastern Quebec? I do not think so. The government seems to intend this money to go mainly to ports that were damaged in the hurricane.

The government says, “This investment will support local economic development for generations to come, particularly benefiting Canadians working in the fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, construction, and marine engineering sectors”.

I personally do not feel like this \$463-million investment for small craft harbours is going to help all those people. Obviously, wanting to repair these harbours is good news. However, as one fisherman said, it is all well and good to have new spots to dock the boats, but that does not get them out to sea.

The Budget

I should note that there is no support for fishers affected by species-specific moratoriums. There is nothing for pelagic fishers affected by mackerel and herring moratoriums. There is nothing for shrimp fishers. Although there is no moratorium on shrimp, quotas have been slashed. There are no support measures for those fishers. The government could have proposed buying back licences. That is what the mayor of Gaspé has been proposing for a few weeks now, and it could prove helpful. There is nothing for processors either. A seafood processing plant has closed in Matane, which is in my riding.

• (1245)

Hundreds of owner-operators are at risk of bankruptcy. We need more investments in fisheries. I would like to continue, but my time is already up.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her excellent speech. It is wonderful to see just how much she takes her constituents' interests to heart. I want to give her the opportunity to highlight a few points that she would have liked to raise but could not, since she ran out of time.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, since I was unable to address half the topics I wanted to.

I was talking about support for the fishing and tourism industries, and I was going to say that it is startling to see that there are no additional investments for the restoration of the Cap-des-Rosiers lighthouse, the tallest lighthouse in Canada. It is located in the Minister of Fisheries's riding and operated by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, yet only a few pennies have been allocated to patch up the holes and replace the windows. The lighthouse requires major renovations, but there is still no investment for that.

The same thing is happening with Exploramer, a museum in the RCM of Haute-Gaspésie, the most disadvantaged RCM in Quebec. The museum needs more funding to build a shark exhibit that would draw hundreds, if not thousands, of visitors each year. Costs are skyrocketing, and this might be an opportunity for the government to invest more to allow this extremely disadvantaged RCM to have something interesting to offer the tourism industry.

• (1250)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned, in the budget speech, the Minister of Finance talked about the interest level around the world of Canada being a place to have direct foreign investment. In fact, on a per capita basis, last year we were number one in the G7 and number three in the world as a country to come to with direct foreign investments.

To what degree does the member think the trade agreements that Canada has signed over the years have had a positive impact on countries or investors around the world looking to Canada as a safe place to invest? She might also want to factor in the Ukraine trade agreement, in particular.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, the government loves to compare itself with other countries, especially other G7 nations, and say that Canada's economy is on track.

Speaking of tracks, Canada is one of the countries that invests the least in sustainable transportation and public transit. Canada is a vast country. We have a railway that is supposed to serve remote and rural regions like the Gaspé Peninsula. I touched on the subject earlier, but Via Rail stopped passenger service to the Gaspé Peninsula more than 10 years ago. It is high time that that service was put back on the rails, on properly built rails. The Quebec government is currently repairing the railway, but we need a clear signal from the federal government and Via Rail indicating that passenger rail service will once again be offered to Gaspé residents.

The initial investment will make it possible to replace the fleet, but we need to make sure that money is provided to offer service in remote regions like the Gaspé.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member speak a lot about the lack of details within the budget. She spoke about wanting more clarity on what some of these pieces within the budget would mean.

One of the things I know about the member is that she believes quite strongly in the need for action on the climate crisis, but we did not see very much in the budget on this; it was not a big priority in the budget. All things considered, when we have one party that, for all intents and purposes, denies climate change exists, and we have another party that is not making any gains in terms of decarbonizing our economy, I wonder if she has some comments on things she would have liked to see within this budget to deal with the current climate crisis we are in.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the opportunity to speak on this. Normally, I like to deconstruct the budget from the standpoint of the fight against climate change. Now I am doing so based on my region. What I notice is that, indeed, there is not much in this budget for the fight against climate change. The government prefers to invest in nuclear energy and to continue offering subsidies to the oil and gas industry, which is raking in billions of dollars in profit every year. It is extremely disappointing to see what the budget has allotted for the fight against climate change.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if we had to define this budget, if we had to characterize it, I think it could be best described as a budget of interference. However, before getting into that, I would like to return to what happened before the budget.

It was unheard of. Like me, my colleagues are discerning analysts of federal politics. None of us had ever seen such a series of pre-budget announcements. At the end of this unveiling, or striptease if I may be so bold, of the various government measures, the emperor was left without any clothes. We did not even need a lock-up. We already knew what was in the budget.

The Budget

Why did the government do this? If we take a closer look, its motivations are fairly obvious. These are electoral motivations. Like all the other parties, the Liberal Party is watching the polls. They took the pulse of the electorate. Clearly, things have not been going too well for the Liberals for quite some time, so they put out a budget designed to boost their standing in the polls. That in a nutshell is what this budget is about.

This is an election budget, that much can be said. It can also be described as a budget of interference. In reality, I see in this budget a degree of continuity when it comes to the structural problems with Canada's federation. I say that because the reality of this budget is typical of what is not working in the Canadian federation. It comes down to two fairly simple things, which stand out even more in the current context.

First, there is the fiscal imbalance and jurisdictional encroachment. Second, there is Ottawa's inability to propose an economic system that does not rely on fossil fuels. That is what we have seen in this budget. These are consistent trends in Canadian politics: On the one hand, Ottawa acts in areas of provincial jurisdiction, and on the other, it does everything it can to support oil and gas.

That leaves me with serious doubts about the alternative available in Canada. What is the alternative? Right now, it is the Conservatives. When I look at the Conservatives over the past year or two, what I see are people parroting often empty slogans. I could mention what the Leader of the Opposition says when he talks about the budget. He says he wants to "fix the budget". I do not even know that he means by that. Is he going to take a pickaxe and a hammer to it? We do not know. He says he wants to fix the budget. He says he wants to stop the crime. Those are empty slogans. What are the Conservatives' proposals for getting us back to a balanced budget? It is just another sales pitch, just more prattle. Their dollar-for-dollar policy is just political prattle. It sounds like a McDonald's ad: This week, Big Macs are a dollar. It sounds like a McDonald's commercial. It has no real substance.

When I take a closer look, it is quite clear that the Liberals and the Conservatives have similar instincts. The leader of the Conservative Party often says that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. The Prime Minister responds by saying that his government will be there for Canadians. I have even heard him say they would be there to be there. These empty phrases get tossed around during question period. One side says the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. The other replies that they will be there to be there. Who loses in all of this? Canadians lose. This can be seen in the recent budget.

I would like to come back to the fiscal imbalance and the subject of jurisdictions. When I look at the budget, it feels like Groundhog Day. A wide-ranging inquiry was conducted in Quebec in 2002 by the Yves Séguin commission. As everyone knows, Yves Séguin is not a sovereigntist. His goal was not to hassle the federal government, far from it. He wanted to explore how Quebec could keep its public finances healthy within the context of the Canadian federation. In 2002, Yves Séguin launched this commission on the fiscal imbalance and came to one glaring conclusion, specifically that the Canadian federation is dysfunctional because the federal government has much greater fiscal capacity than the provinces and yet spends less money. Why is that? It is because Ottawa is not respon-

sible for social services, which cost a little more. That is what we learned from Yves Séguin.

• (1255)

That was recently reaffirmed by the late Benoît Pelletier, a federalist, before his passing. He denounced the federal government's many encroachments on jurisdictions that were none of its business. We saw that again in the budget. We saw it encroaching and wielding its spending power left and right.

When I think about this, what immediately springs to mind is Jean Chrétien. Toward the end of his political life, he had an unguarded moment. He revealed a political strategy used by the Canadian federation that was common knowledge. He said he could reduce health transfer payments without ever paying the political price because the public, the voters, would think that the Government of Quebec and the provincial governments were responsible for the cuts to health care. It was Jean Chrétien himself who said that. That statement beautifully explained what the fiscal imbalance is.

Well, today we are seeing something similar. The federal government is trying to do the same thing, to follow Jean Chrétien's logic but in reverse. When asked by pollsters what their main priorities are, Quebecers will immediately respond health and education. These are always at the top of Quebecers' list of priorities. The Prime Minister decided that, if he wanted to be in step with Quebecers' priorities, he would have to try to get involved in health and education. At the very least, he would have to try to get involved in social matters, hence the dental care and pharmacare programs, which are no doubt the product of the Liberals' marriage of convenience to the NDP. With these two measures, the federal government is trying to run roughshod over provincial jurisdictions.

The budget even interferes directly, with amounts for long-term care, along with dental care and pharmacare, of course. The federal government has absolutely no jurisdiction over those things, and it is repeatedly interfering in provincial jurisdictions.

I would remind members that, initially, the provinces were calling on the federal government to provide \$28 billion to increase health transfers from 22% to 35%. By 2040, the federal government's share will be down to a measly 20%.

It does not stop there. The federal government is interfering in education, too. I saw two sections. The first is entitled "After-School Learning". As far as I know, the federal government does not run any school boards. The second is entitled "Coding Skills for Kids". That is bordering on meddling.

The Budget

However, what is most surprising is the government's take on one of the other major issues of our time: global warming. The federal government had pledged to end fossil fuel subsidies in 2023. According to what I see in front of me today, it is going to put into service a pipeline that cost us \$34 billion when it was originally supposed to cost us \$7 billion. The budget talks about myths like low-carbon oil. It talks about carbon capture strategies, which received massive amounts in previous budgets. While the government says it will cap emissions by 2026, Alberta is breaking records. Almost four million barrels of oil a day are flowing out of Alberta. Clearly, the polluter pays principle does not apply in Canada.

In 2023, fossil fuel subsidies amounted to \$18 billion. We are talking about \$65 billion over the past four years. At the same time, investments in clean energy have dwindled to a trickle.

I will finish my speech with the cherry on the sundae. The only worthwhile tax credit was the 15% that could have been given for clean energy. However, that was not enough for the government. It said that if it provided the tax credit, it would have to have a hand in setting rates. In Quebec, Hydro-Québec's rates are set by a board. Quebec politicians do not meddle in Hydro-Québec's rate setting. It is governed by a law. However, the federal government says that, if we want the 15% tax credit, then it will decide how much to charge for electricity.

In conclusion, this budget is all about interference and continued reliance on fossil fuels.

• (1300)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the announcements I am very proud of is that the federal government has recognized the importance of not having children in schools who are learning on empty stomachs.

We came up with a national food program, which is going to help an estimated 400,000 children. The Bloc does not like it because it says it is not our jurisdiction. I would counter by saying that a caring national government should be concerned about the children in our schools. If we are in a position to be able to assist children and have them learn on fuller stomachs, we should be doing that.

Would the member acknowledge, at the very least, that the national government does play a role? Not all jurisdictions in Canada may have the same attitude in terms of providing full stomachs to kids going to school.

• (1305)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, I would simply point out to my colleague from Winnipeg North that we do not need the federal government to take care of children in schools. Rather, it is the federal government that needs Quebec. It copied the Quebec government's child care program. It is trying to copy the Quebec government's family-related policies. It is interfering in jurisdictions in which Quebec is already quite comfortable and has the expertise. Those folks over there who have no expertise in education want to impose conditions on people who do have expertise for them to be

able to access funding. It makes absolutely no sense. All Ottawa has to do is transfer the money to Quebec. People have the skills and expertise to ensure that funding goes where it is needed and improves everyone's life. This is already the case in Quebec, where family coverage is among the best in the world.

We will take no lessons from the Liberals. These proposals have been made for purely electoral reasons, and they should admit that.

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, spending on machinery and equipment by businesses in Canada, and on research, development and innovation, has been falling as a share of GDP in Canada for many decades, in fact dating back to the large corporate tax cuts that Paul Martin introduced at the turn of the century. To compare us to the United States, in 2014, investment support per worker in the U.S. was \$20,700, and it was \$14,400 in Canada. In 2023, the U.S. spending per worker rose to \$27,800, and it is only \$14,500 in this country. It has gone up \$100 in about 10 years.

I am wondering whether my hon. colleague would agree with me and the NDP that we need to find ways to have the business sector in this country invest more in machinery and equipment and in technology and innovation, and whether he has any ideas to share with the House as to how we could do that to better support workers and, by doing so, improve Canada's economy.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, the first thing we can do is try to diversify our economy, certainly.

Today, there are massive investments of public money in something that is doomed to fail, namely carbon capture and storage strategies and efforts to try to make oil cleaner in order to increase production. In the meantime, we are not taking the same direction as the United States with its Inflation Reduction Act. We are not investing in clean technologies and we are not supporting the sectors of the future that are promising and, I must point out, are located mainly in Quebec.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague from Jonquière on his excellent speech.

There is a lot of talk about interference. We know that there are new pharmacare and dental insurance programs that already exist in Quebec. There is a considerable overlap and the Liberals refuse to give a right to compensation.

Could the member elaborate on that?

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, that compensation is essential.

The Budget

The Government of Quebec is asking for \$2.9 billion. This does not appear in the budget. In my introduction, I talked about the fiscal imbalance. Well, that is what is going to happen. The federal government generates and creates expectations. Then, it withdraws from programs. It is the Government of Quebec that is obligated to meet these imperatives. This puts pressure on Quebec. The federal government never pays the political price. It is groundhog day.

[*English*]

Hon. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for St. Catharines.

I will take this opportunity to highlight some of the transformative measures in our recent 2024 budget. A fair chance to build a good middle-class life, to do as well as your parents or better, has always been the promise of Canada. Today, for too many younger Canadians, that promise is not being fulfilled. Millennials and gen Z Canadians have so much talent and potential, and they need to see and feel that our country can work for them and that the promise of Canada can still be reached.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

We know that Canada's success depends in large part on creating opportunities for each generation. Budget 2024 will make strategic investments that will create opportunities for workers today, driving productivity and economic growth for generations to come.

[*English*]

We are giving our children the best start in life.

[*Translation*]

We know that we have to start early when it comes to preparing our children to succeed.

[*English*]

That is why, for example, budget 2024 commits to powerful investments such as \$1 billion over five years for the new national school food program, which is expected to provide meals for more than 400,000 children every year. The budget would also strengthen the affordable Canada-wide early learning and child care system, which is helping young parents, many of them millennials, to pursue their careers thanks to significantly lower fees. Budget 2024 would improve access by providing \$1 billion in low-cost loans and \$60 million in non-repayable grants to help build additional affordable child care spaces. The budget would also offer student loan forgiveness for early childhood educators who work in rural and remote areas.

With regard to coding skills for kids, starting in the early years, budget 2024 would help prime our children for success in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The budget is committing \$39.2 million over two years to advance the next phase of CanCode, a federal program that, since its launch, has helped over 4.5 million students from kindergarten through grade 12 to develop coding and digital skills. CanCode is helping young people unlock future opportunities in the increasingly digital global economy.

Next is increasing students grants and loans.

[*Translation*]

There is even more, including support for young Canadians who are pursuing their career dreams.

Budget 2024 will restore generational fairness by facilitating access to post-secondary education, investing in the skills of tomorrow and creating new opportunities for young Canadians.

Since 2016, the federal government has supported an average of 638,000 post-secondary students per year with \$38.4 billion in up-front grants and interest-free loans, making it possible for young Canadians to continue their education, regardless of their origins.

[*English*]

This is real progress, and budget 2024 promises even more. The budget proposes to extend for an additional year the increase in full-time Canada student grants from \$3,000 to \$4,200 a year and interest-free Canada student loans from \$210 to \$300 per week, an estimated total investment of \$1.1 billion in 2024-25. With this change, Canada student grants will have doubled in size since 2014. These are powerful steps that would empower so many young Canadians.

Then there is investing in homegrown research talent.

[*Translation*]

Canada's post-doctoral students and researchers are addressing some of the biggest global challenges. The solutions that they are proposing have the potential to make the world a better place and enhance Canada's prosperity. They represent the academic and scientific excellence of tomorrow in Canada. They will create new innovative businesses, develop new ways of increasing productivity and create jobs as they grow their businesses, if they get the support they need.

[*English*]

To foster the next generation of research talent, budget 2024 proposes to provide \$825 million over five years starting in 2024-25, with \$199.8 million a year ongoing to increase the annual value of master's and doctoral student scholarships to \$27,000 and \$40,000 respectively, and post-doctoral fellowships to \$70,000. This would address a real barrier.

The Budget

There are jobs and skills training for gen Z. Gen Z is a diverse group, from those starting to think about their future career years now to those just starting their first full-time jobs. Budget 2024 commits to investing \$351.2 million to create 90,000 youth job placements and employment support opportunities. These investments include \$200.5 million to create well-paying summer job opportunities through the Canada summer jobs program and \$150.7 million to provide job placements and employment supports through the youth employment and skills strategy.

The budget would empower young entrepreneurs.

● (1315)

[*Translation*]

Budget 2024 does even more to create a bright future for Canadian youth. To empower young entrepreneurs, budget 2024 commits to investing \$60 million over five years in Futurpreneur Canada, a national non-profit organization that provides young entrepreneurs with access to financing, mentorship and other business supports to help them launch and grow their businesses.

Futurpreneur will match this federal investment with funding from other levels of government and private sector partners. This will have a significant impact. By 2029, Futurpreneur estimates that this investment will enable 6,250 additional youth-owned businesses to launch and scale up.

[*English*]

We are also launching a new mental health fund.

[*Translation*]

Budget 2024 also aims to improve the well-being of young Canadians to ensure that they have what they need for a happy, healthy start to their adult lives. Young Canadians face high levels of stress and mental health challenges, including depression and anxiety. Many of them are still in school or just starting their careers and are struggling with the costs of private mental health care.

[*English*]

To help younger Canadians access the mental health care they need, budget 2024 proposes \$500 million over five years to create a new youth mental health fund.

The actions I have just described are only some of budget 2024's bold measures to help younger Canadians achieve their dreams. We are building an economy where every Canadian can reach their full potential, where every entrepreneur has the tools they need to grow their business and where hard work pays off.

[*Translation*]

With budget 2024, we will give young Canadians the opportunity to excel in an ever-changing economy. In everything we do, we strive to keep the promise of Canada within the reach of our younger generations because that is what they have earned and that is what they deserve. That is what parents and grandparents want for young people, too.

[*English*]

As the member of Parliament who has the good fortune of representing the University of British Columbia, I have been hearing

about these challenges, but also the appreciation of the support that students have been receiving from our government over the past number of years.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the young people my colleague mentions, gen Z, millennials and so many Canadians are facing a double crisis: the crisis of affordability but also the crisis that climate change presents. These two crises together present an immense mental health challenge, and \$500 million just will not go far enough.

We need to see action in the face of a devastating future wildfire season. My home province of Alberta has seen young people suffocating. When I went to visit schools, kids told me they were scared because they could not see the sun.

Why is it that the government continues to invest in the production of resource companies that are flagrantly disregarding the catastrophe that the climate crisis presents? This disconnect scares young people. What message does the member have for young people to show that the government takes climate action seriously?

● (1320)

Hon. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of our government in 2015, we have been very clear that the climate crisis is a priority. We have taken an enormous amount of action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, with a comprehensive plan that covers all sectors of society and with tools like putting a price on carbon, which ends up creating benefits for individuals when they receive a rebate in their bank account, while incentivizing the reduction in the use of climate gas-producing products like gasoline.

We are on track to meeting our goals and objectives, and in fact we are seen globally as a leader on the issue of climate gas reduction. An example is our powering past coal initiative, which has led the international community and supports other countries in moving past the use of coal-fired electricity.

We are doing the work we need to do. I appreciate all of the support from various members of Parliament for action to address the climate challenge.

The Budget

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Mr. Speaker, one item that young people have been calling my office about, and that I have heard about across the country, is in relation to this affordability and climate crisis. They presented a solution, which is the youth climate corps. It would put into action the very real intent of young people to contribute to our country, to contribute to solving the challenges of the climate crisis, and to live a life that is not just fulfilling in that the next generation can actually achieve what they would like the next generation to see, which is clean water, good environment and good air, but that would also ensure that we have real jobs and tangible opportunity for young people to get paid for the good service they do. It is unfortunate that the government was not able to fully fund this program and is only going to be launching consultations, something that I think we just have no time for. We are in a climate crisis.

Can the member commit, as a member of the government, to ensuring that the Minister of Environment, the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister commit to a dedicated program for a youth climate corps that puts young people in control of their future?

Hon. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I think that the youth climate corps is an excellent initiative.

We know that if we, as a government, launch complex new initiatives without fully involving those who will be affected by them, there can be unintended negative consequences or the initiative may not achieve all that is possible to achieve. Launching consultations is a critical part of the process, and I am proud that we are doing that. We are committed to hearing from young people as to how this might work for them and what they would be working on, as well as consulting with industry and first nations. All of that is very important, and I cheer that we are engaging in consultation on a climate corps.

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be here today to talk about the budget, called “Fairness for Every Generation”. A fair chance to build a good middle-class life and to do as well as one’s parents, or better, has always been the promise of Canada. Unfortunately, today for too many younger Canadians a fair chance to build a good middle-class life feels out of reach. That is something I hear about, not just from young people, but from their parents and grandparents.

I would like to focus on one of the issues I hear about most, not only in my role as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, but as the member of Parliament for St. Catharines. That is housing.

When I was speaking to a housing advocate some months ago, he said that the one piece of good news about solving the housing crisis is that, overall, there is one simple solution, unlike many of the crises we face in the country, and that is to build more homes. How we get there is a bit more complicated, but the government has put forward a comprehensive plan.

One of the first things that caught the attention of a lot of my constituents, especially those who are members of a previous generation, is the housing catalogue. We do not need to reinvent the wheel. Solutions can exist that existed in the past. This is not the first time, as the minister has stated, that we have faced a housing

crisis. We faced one after the Second World War, with soldiers returning and wanting to have houses of their own, and part of the solution was a housing catalogue.

Just as I go through St. Catharines, I am sure that many of the members here go through their communities as well and can still see those wartime houses that were in a catalogue, which people could just build based on the catalogue that existed. It used the building code to have series of pre-approved houses to shorten the window that it takes to get a house approved and built. This would not just be the strawberry-box houses that we have seen in the past. This would be higher-density, up to quadruplex, and we would see the opportunity of solving the housing crisis that Canadians had when they returned from war. Because we have done it before, we can do it again.

Another item that has been very successful across the country is the housing accelerator fund. We see the Government of Canada working with municipalities that have a bold plan to build more housing. I know the department received a lot of applications on the file, and we entered into agreements with those municipalities that had solid plans.

The City of St. Catharines was one of them, and one of the things I am most excited about is its municipal land development corporation. It might be a bit of a wonky notion, but what better place than the House of Commons to talk about something like that? The City of St. Catharines had no mechanism to help build housing. Surplus land would just be sold to the highest bidder. When I drive through St. Catharines, I see many parcels that have been sold off and are vacant, such as the two old hospital sites. Acres and acres of residential land that is primed for use sits there empty, the city passing up an opportunity to bid on it.

What this new municipal housing corporation would do, funded through the housing accelerator fund, is allow the City of St. Catharines to use those lands, land being one of the biggest costs in developing new housing, to build affordable housing and help sustain the corporation to go forth, get new land and keep building. Profit is not necessarily the motivating factor; it is about getting as many houses built at below-market price as possible, and this municipal housing corporation would really give the City of St. Catharines an opportunity to do that.

We have seen those items across Canada, whether it is permitting issues, these types of corporations or investments by municipalities. There has been significant success in moving the needle and taking that next step forward, and I was happy to see in the budget further funding for the housing accelerator fund.

The Budget

• (1325)

One thing we know we have to do is to make the math work on building new housing. We know the significant costs of land and the increased costs across the supply chain. That is why we have taken steps to reduce or to remove the GST on purpose-built rentals. That is why the budget is committed to low-interest loans. The government cannot do this on its own. We need the private sector. We need to move the cost of building down further to get these buildings built.

Looking to my own community, the City of St. Catharines and St. Catharines city council are eager to approve housing, eager to approve higher-density housing, and there are thousands of units of approved housing waiting to be built, but the math does not work. We need to do what we can at all levels of government. We are going to work through the budget again on low-interest financing by removing the GST.

Another item is a \$6-billion infrastructure fund because housing cannot just be created on its own. We expect that when we turn on a faucet, water will come out, and we expect it to be clean. One thing I hear from municipal officials across the country is that there is a desperate need for more housing-based infrastructure. We cannot build more housing if we do not have the supply of that infrastructure, which is usually water and waste water, and also roads, to get that housing built.

In the Niagara region again, there is so much land that cannot be developed at the moment. That region is waiting for the expansion of a water treatment facility. I have heard about this for a long time, as a member of Parliament, since I took this job, about the need to expand that water treatment facility. It is a priority for me, as I know it is a priority for the residents of Niagara. A water treatment plant in the Niagara region may not seem to be the most exciting issue, but I can see the member for Niagara Falls looking over at me with excitement. Perhaps we are the only two individuals in this place who are excited about it, but this is an opportunity to unlock a lot of housing. It is an opportunity to take pressure off the water system in St. Catharines, and it is an opportunity to develop the lands in Fort Erie and in Niagara Falls, where they are ready to build more housing.

Part of this infrastructure fund is to enter into agreements with the provinces. The federal government can only do so much. Many of the most significant levers at play for building more housing are at the municipal and the provincial levels. We are ready to step up and work with provinces. We have done it in the past. We have done it with the Province of Quebec. I hope the Province of Ontario, my home province, steps up. I know the premier and the minister of housing for the Province of Ontario understand that there is a housing crisis and that more work needs to be done. However, we need them to come to the table in the way that the Government of Quebec did, which matched federal funding when we entered into a deal, with respect to housing.

I hope we see that same level of commitment because I do want to move forward on issues like that water treatment facility, not just in Niagara but also with all the mayors and the council members I have talked to while working on this particular portfolio of housing and infrastructure.

This is a crisis that can be solved, but it will take all levels of government working together. We have shown that we are willing to work with municipalities. We have shown that we can work with the provinces. I just hope we can move the needle forward to work with them all, to get more housing built and to solve this housing crisis. We have a plan.

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member why his government is not honouring its commitment to support the unemployed with the EI reform it promised for the summer of 2022. It is 2024. The government is turning its back on workers.

Why will the government not initiate this much-needed reform immediately?

• (1335)

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, it is an important thing. I hear from many of my colleagues as well, and it is an important issue for the government.

However, I take issue with the fact that the hon. member says that we do not stand up for workers. This has been a very pro-worker, pro-labour government. There is the anti-scab legislation that the hon. member mentioned.

After a decade of watching the previous government watch manufacturing disappear across Ontario, we are seeing a resurgence, not only in Ontario but also across the country, with respect to manufacturing jobs, good-paying jobs that will stay here and that will not be exported. This is a pro-worker government. Obviously, more work needs to be done. I look forward to working across the aisle to see that happen.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague talked about the provisions in this budget that would allocate billions of dollars for housing. I think that is an excellent initiative in this budget. I think we all know, across the country, that we are facing what can only be described as a housing crisis. The generation coming up has never before faced such a difficult time finding an affordable place to rent or to own. We have to get money to pay for it, if the federal government is going to be at the table as a partner.

In 2022, the government put in a 15% surtax on bank profits over a billion dollars, yet in 2022, the oil and gas industry made record profits of \$63 billion. Never before in the history of Canada has it made more money. Why has the government not considered bringing in, at least temporarily, a 15% surtax on excess profits over a billion dollars for the oil and gas industry and using that money to help build houses for Canadians who need them?

The Budget

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, I am not opposed to what the member is suggesting, but I think it highlights a point; the oil and gas sector is creating record profits, and it is not passing that down to Canadians.

That goes into the myth of what the Conservative Party says, which is that despite the fact that eight out of 10 Canadians get more money back in their bank accounts, based on a carbon rebate, Conservatives want to end that and want to put the money back into oil and gas companies, which we will not see the benefit from. It is a good example of where the Conservative Party stands. I think the hon. member raises a good point, but the Conservative Party, unfortunately, is just in the pocket of oil and gas.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to give the hon. member a chance to expand on the whole issue of the housing accelerator fund. The average person might be forgiven for playing along with the question that was asked regarding how many houses this would build. The housing minister said that it would build none. People would ask what that is all about.

With regard to the housing accelerator fund, what is it all about?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, the housing accelerator fund is an opportunity for municipalities to partner with the federal government. We do not have a one-size-fits-all solution to this. This is to work with municipalities for the plans they have.

In my speech, I talked about how the City of St. Catharines came up with a plan for a municipal land development corporation. Other municipalities may have other plans with respect to permitting and other ways to make it faster and easier to get housing built. It is about cutting red tape. It is about getting more houses built. It is about working with the partners that are ready to take bold steps and to make bold actions, which we need a lot more of.

I would like to thank the municipalities that have stepped up and that are willing to work with the federal government. I am excited that we get to work with more.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, we are debating the ninth budget that the Prime Minister and the Liberal government have written. If people listened to their rhetoric, they may be confused into thinking it was their first budget ever. They seem to have forgotten just who has been in charge of this country for the last nine years and just who is responsible for the situation we are in.

It is the Liberals' latest half-hearted attempt to clean up the mess they have made, while pretending it is everybody else's fault, or worse, while pretending that everything is okay. They are somehow trying to say that it is global, that it is still COVID related or that it is anything but a painful addiction to spending by the Prime Minister who cannot help himself. He has lost his way in a world too complicated for his version of this idealistic, post-nationalist state he is trying to create.

We know that leadership starts at the top, and if the Prime Minister is really unhappy about the way things are going, as we have heard him say over the last couple of weeks, then he should take it up with the guy who has been in charge. We also know that we cannot ask the arsonist to put out the fire, and we cannot ask Liberal politicians to fix Liberal messes.

Anything other than that is just gaslighting to the extreme. The ministers pretend they can save the day with the same old tired ideas, repackaged nicely with a new bow and a new communications plan. It is nothing more than delusional. That is what we saw in the budget's rollout.

If we were to ask a Liberal MP or a cabinet minister to sum up the costly coalition's budget, they could probably do it with just one word. In fact, we just heard it, and that word is "fairness". We have heard it constantly from that side of the House and in weird platitudes the Liberals use on TV when answering questions that have nothing to do with that word or with the budget itself, or when anyone dares to question their intentions as being anything but good.

In fact, the word is even in the title of the budget. The Liberals call it "Fairness for Every Generation". I love the idea of fairness. Do not get me wrong. It was fairness and equality of opportunity that allowed my parents to come to Canada, to work hard, to get ahead and to build a better life for me and my brother. From the front seat of a taxi to the front row of Parliament Hill, that is the story of Canada in one generation. It is the story of hard work. A story like that is the story of so many millions of other Canadians.

However, we have to ask ourselves this: Is the budget really fair? Does the budget actually live up to the idea of fairness? What exists in the budget that would lead them to falsely label it as such? When we scratch beneath the surface, when we go past the marketing exercise we saw roll out before the budget and when we really dig deeply into what the Liberal-NDP government is proposing, it is clear that this budget is profoundly unfair for the people the government claims it would help most. Let me tell everyone why.

First of all, the budget is unfair because it does nothing to axe the costly and ineffective carbon tax. It is a tax that punishes people simply because of where they live, what kind of home they own, if they are able to own a home at all in this country, or what they do to make a living. A commuter in Charlottetown cannot ride the subway, despite what the Deputy Prime Minister thinks. A farmer in Medicine Hat has to drive a tractor to feed his family and millions of other Canadian families too. They do not have another choice, but they do have to pay the carbon tax anyhow. That is unjust and unfair.

Secondly, the budget is unfair because it continues the pattern of runaway Liberal spending, spending that drives up the cost of living and that keeps interest rates artificially high. Experts have testified in this place, and in fact Liberals have said, over and over again, that higher spending means higher inflation, which means higher interest rates and higher prices for consumers. That is how we are living in Canada because of the Prime Minister's spending in all of the budgets, spending that continues to go unchecked by a party that used to be in opposition: the NDP.

The Budget

In this budget, Canadian families now pay double what they used to pay for a mortgage, what they used to pay for a home and what they used to pay for rent. This year, they will pay over \$1,000 more for groceries than they did just last year. They pay more per litre every time they are at the pump. They pay more for everything. That is why it is known as the “inflation tax”. It is the fault of the Liberal government, the Liberal Prime Minister and his NDP supporters.

It is extra money that Canadians spend every year, simply because the government has driven up the cost of living. It is unfair that everyday Canadians should continue to be subjected to this tax, while the government pretends nothing is wrong. Every day in the House, government members get up and say that Canadians have never had it so good, while they keep up the immense spending agenda.

• (1340)

Although the government ignores the pleas of almost everybody, the Liberals know. They go out into their communities. Everybody tells us the same things: Things cost too much in Canada, they are working harder, and they cannot get ahead. I hear those things in my constituency and across the country. I would be shocked if they did not hear the exact same thing. In fact, I have been in their ridings and have heard that.

Thirdly, the budget is unfair because it means a \$40-million deficit that will cement the current Prime Minister's legacy of being the costliest prime minister in history. He has run up more debt than every prime minister before him combined. Who will pay for this deficit and out-of-control spending? It is going to be young people, the next generation of Canadians. They will be forced to scale back on their standard of living as they struggle under the mountain of debt they have been left by the once-liberal party that has turned its back on generations of Liberal consensus. Members do not have to ask me; they can ask the Liberals, who say the exact same thing.

One of the gravest injustices we can commit is to steal the future from those who have yet to come. That is what the costly coalition is doing to Canadians. Let us look at our future. Today, we are paying more for interest on our debt than the federal government pays for all health care for Canadians. That is more money than is transferred to any province. This times even more spending, even more long-term debt, is a window into the fiscal reality that is going to be imposed on our children and our grandchildren, who will have to confront it soon enough.

When we dig deep into the budget, it is clear that there is unfairness all around, so it is perhaps ironic that it is indeed called “Fairness For Every Generation”. It is the perfect title from a government that tells us less is more, up is down, left is right and black is white. When we come back to that title, we see that it accomplishes none of that. It does not do so for young people, who are going to be left holding the bag for the Liberal-NDP government's spending spree; for families, which will continue to suffer under the burden of higher taxes, higher inflation and higher interest rates; or for the seniors who still cannot make ends meet thanks to the out-of-control cost of living they will now face, with additional taxes when they retire.

With respect to fairness, it was the current Prime Minister who promised Canadians that the rich would pay for all his spending, but we know it has been everyday Canadians who have paid for his addiction to spending. They pay every single day at the grocery store, at the gas pump, with respect to their mortgage bills and for everything else. In fact, the only people who are richer after nearly nine years of the Liberal government may very well be the rich and elite in his inner circle, the bureaucrats, the friends of the Prime Minister who give themselves bonuses, who reward failed performance, who gorge themselves on public funds, who are called to the bar here and defended by the Liberals not to answer questions. More big spending and higher taxes are going to make sure that these Ottawa insiders continue doing just fine while everyone else suffers.

By the Liberal fat cats' definition of fairness, I am sure the budget is very fair. By everyone else's definition, it falls far short. Fairness is being able to afford the necessities, such as food, heating and housing; it is having a government that helps, not hinders, everyday affordability through lower taxes, lower inflation and lower interest rates. It is being able to provide for one's family, to keep the fruits of one's labour and to receive good, decent wages for work, interest on investments and returns on risk. It is being able to take those risks, work hard, put everything on the line and be rewarded for doing so.

Fairness would not be giving up on the dignity of those afflicted with addiction by giving them taxpayer-funded drugs; it would be giving frontline officers what they need to protect us. It would be a leader who unites this country instead of dividing it. It would be bringing more capital into the country, not out of the country. Fairness would be a Conservative government.

We hope not to see another single budget from the Liberal-NDP coalition, and we will vote this one down.

• (1345)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I could address the many issues the member has raised where she is misleading people, but I would rather highlight something else.

Let there be no doubt there is a Conservative hidden agenda that Conservatives do not talk about. I am talking about, for example, the disability program that is within this budget, the steps forward on pharmacare, the \$10-a-day child care program, the dental program and the guaranteed commitment to future generations on health care of close to \$200 billion. When Conservatives talk about fixing the budget, they are talking about cut after cut. That is the reality of the Conservative Party today.

Why will the member not make that commitment visible? Why does she not tell Canadians what a Conservative government would actually do?

The Budget

• (1350)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows what a Conservative government would do, and that is why he is so afraid of the eventual Conservative government.

We are going to axe the tax, build homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. We will cut the \$21 billion in consultants that cost every single family \$1,400. We will cut the waste. Canadians will expect us to cut the number of seats on that side of the House so they sit on this side, and we will do it.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is said in the financial world that the best predictor of future performance is past behaviour.

I was first elected in 2008, when there was a Stephen Harper government. I was in the House when the Conservatives ran seven consecutive deficits. When I entered the House, the debt of Canada was \$467 billion. It was \$628 billion in 2015, when Mr. Harper left office. We will not be taking any lessons or lectures from the Conservative Party on deficits or debt, since the record speaks for itself.

The capital gains provision in this budget would apply to 0.13% of people, with an average income of \$1.4 million per year. Could my hon. colleague tell us what the Conservative position is on capital gains? She has talked about transparency. Will the Conservatives keep that or endorse that policy, or do they oppose it, yes or no?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, the only difference is that, when the member entered the House, he used to be part of an opposition party. Now he has joined the government, did not get anything for it and votes with it every single day. That is what he is going to have to tell the voters in his constituency.

What the Prime Minister told us nine years ago—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, I cannot hear over the screaming.

The Deputy Speaker: We have asked the questions, and I am sure we all want to hear the answers.

The hon. member for Thornhill.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, I know that the member opposite is gutted because he used to be an opposition member and now he has joined the government. He is going to have to go back and tell the people who voted for him that he supported the government on every single thing, including raising the carbon tax by 23% on everybody, on April 1. He will have to tell them why he continues to vote with the government and gets nothing for it.

The Prime Minister told us, nine years ago, that the rich would pay for his addiction to spending. I might remind the member opposite that it was the Harper government that balanced the budget after the economic crisis in 2015, eight years after they ran those deficits.

I will say this: Canadians are the ones who pay for all the spending of the Prime Minister, including everyday Canadians, single mothers, workers and everybody in between. They pay at the pumps, at the grocery store, with double the housing costs and with

double the rent and mortgage. They pay for the Prime Minister's addiction to spending.

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are two ways to go broke: gradually and suddenly. Canada is not going broke; it is broken.

In the battle for the soul of Canada, we are confronted by two ideologies. There is that of the Liberal and NDP socialism, which is of spending beyond reproach, high crime rates, divide and division, high taxation, an unproductive economy and a monopoly economy, in which housing and food have become unaffordable for so many. On the other side lies the vision of a common-sense Conservative economy, in which government is leaner, taxes are lower, pay-cheques are bigger, and competition thrives. It is a vision where we prioritize toughness on crime to ensure equal opportunity for all who call Canada home. The problem with socialism is that it eventually runs out of other people's money.

After the government spent \$350 billion in deficit spending outside of COVID relief programs, the budget is set to spend another \$50 billion while raising taxes. Another \$60 billion in spending is projected for next year. That is \$460 in deficit spending since 2015 for bigger government and more social programs. The result is that Canadians are worse off.

After nine years, too many young Canadians feel as though the deck is stacked against them. They get a good job and work hard. However, far too often, the reward of a secure, prosperous and comfortable middle class remains out of reach for them. After nine years, we have seniors who have been priced out of their homes and are going to the food bank. Their pensions that once made sense and their fixed incomes that promised a comfortable life are now not enough to cover their basic needs.

After nine years of Liberal governance, too many Canadians feel disheartened seeing their aspiration to live a secure, prosperous life slipping away. They see the effects of big government, suffocating regulations and reckless spending. It is anything but fair.

This generational injustice has 62% of Canadians aged 18 to 34 giving up on owning a home. That number is 73% for those who are 35 to 54 years old. Taxes are going up more than \$20 billion. The GST now only covers debt payment interest. It is now the minimum payment. It should probably be called the DST, the debt service charge, at only \$50 billion a year.

Statements by Members

Grocery prices have risen to a point where most Canadians now buy less food, and food banks are recording record numbers. Crime is at an all-time high. There has been a 300% increase in car thefts in Toronto alone. Child poverty is on the rise in Canada, a G7 nation, with one in five children facing challenges.

More and more Canadians are finding out they cannot even get a doctor. More and more visits to the ER result in hour after hour of wait times.

The carbon tax has gone up 23% this year alone, raising the price of groceries, heat and gas. There is a bureaucracy that is growing with it. There are over 500 employees just to collect a carbon tax. Meanwhile, our productivity, or doing more with what we have, is at an all-time low. We lack skilled trades, education for our youth and business investment.

There is going to be an increase in personal taxes, which means we will be losing companies in Canada to the U.S., which has lower personal taxes. This is coupled with the fact that a home in the U.S. can be bought for half the cost of a home in Canada. Foreign and domestic investors are leaving Canada at record rates. Innovators and doctors say this budget will drive them out of the country.

Countries cry out for Canadian LNG, but the Prime Minister says that the increased jobs are not worth it. Poland, Japan and Germany have all been turned down for liquefied natural gas by the Prime Minister; he says there is no business case. Meanwhile, the U.S. has opened hundreds of wells and provided billions to its economy.

Our monopoly problem means that Canadians are paying the highest rates in the world for cellphones, airlines, banking and groceries. These are all worse, while the government said it has lowered cellphone bills by half. Can anyone believe this? The Prime Minister said he lowered cellphone bills for Canadians, but Canadians know the real answer is that bills have never been higher.

To top it off, high inflation because of high interest rates is driving the costs for Canadians up based on a very simple fact: The government is spending way more than it is taking in. This is not a budget about Canadian fairness; it is a socialist political manoeuvre described as fiscal responsibility, with generational unfairness that will ensure our next generation inherits the national debt. There has been \$460 billion in deficit spending, and we can remember that this is over and above COVID-19 programs. Despite this, there is just more government. Canadians are getting less, paying more and being taxed to death for it.

● (1355)

Canadians who pay taxes on every dollar earned, every dollar they spend, every dollar they inherit, every dollar invested, every dollar saved, every dollar in property tax are tired of seeing their hard-earned money wasted on inefficient government programs and bureaucracy. They deserve a government that respects their efforts and works tirelessly to ensure their prosperity and well-being.

Despite \$460 billion in deficits, we have no more doctors or hospital beds; no more affordable rent or homes; no better prices at the grocery store for groceries; no better prices for cellphones; no better prices at banks. We have no bigger paycheques and we have

more taxes. At the end of the day, we need a government that will look after Canadians, and that is a Conservative government.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

JEAN-PIERRE FERLAND

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Quebec lost one of its leading singer-songwriters on Saturday. Jean-Pierre Ferland passed away at 89 after a career spanning over 65 years, during which he wrote over 450 songs and released some 30 albums.

From his early days with Les Bozos to the Plains of Abraham, where he sang with two music icons, Céline Dion and Ginette Reno, he had a huge impact on the *boîtes à chansons* era, made his mark in Paris and won several awards. His poetry reflected his open vulnerability with powerful imagery expressed in simple words. He loved women and our beautiful French language, and his words touched the hearts of many generations.

Mr. Ferland is now a little higher up there, a little farther away, but we are lucky to have had him. As he wrote, “Whatever dies is given more weight and significance”. In his final spring, those words clearly ring true.

* * *

● (1400)

JEAN-PIERRE FERLAND

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Jean-Pierre Ferland made his mark on the history of Quebec and international music with his inimitable voice and timeless compositions. His outstanding career spanned more than six decades, and included popular hits like *Je reviens chez nous* and *Un peu plus haut, un peu plus loin*.

Jean-Pierre Ferland was a poet of song, captivating his audience with his meaningful lyrics and haunting melodies. The influence of his musical legacy will live on in future generations of artists and fans. His passion for music and his dedication to his art and his language, French, have become a lasting part of Quebec's cultural landscape.

Jean-Pierre Ferland is a true musical legend. His songs will continue to resonate across time, bringing comfort and inspiration to everyone who hears them.

I can assure Jean-Pierre that we will keep the fires burning so that our home remains the warmest, most welcoming and most enduring of places. My wife Isabelle and all Quebecers join me in thanking him and wishing him a final bon voyage.

Statements by Members

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the historic investments for national defence in budget 2024. These allocations strengthen our armed forces, confront global complexities and safeguard our nation's security and sovereignty, with special focus on national defence in the Arctic. It also marks a significant increase in defence spending, ramping up over the next few years to 1.76% of our GDP by 2030.

Under previous Conservative administrations, neglect left our military under-resourced and ill-prepared. Budget cuts hindered our ability to protect our interests, particularly in strategic regions across the north.

However, under our Liberal government's leadership, we are rectifying these shortcomings. These investments are aimed to bolster our defence capabilities, and our focus on defending the Arctic underscores our commitment to securing our northern frontier and ensuring Canada's safety and prosperity amid evolving security threats.

These investments are critical for shaping Canada's future and those of the people of the Arctic.

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[Translation]

JEAN-PIERRE FERLAND

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a truly great man passed away on Saturday. Jean-Pierre Ferland, known to all as our *petit roi*, is mourned by his wife, his family and millions of grieving subjects. Quebec swayed to his music for more than 65 years.

He was born in Montreal like a flower blooming in a cracked sidewalk and later settled in Saint-Norbert. He bestowed upon us hundreds of songs, each a masterpiece. From *Immortels* and *Écoute pas ça* to *Je reviens chez nous* and *Un peu plus haut, un peu plus loin*, his repertoire is marvellous and monumental. He sang of love and women his whole life long. His magnum opus, *Jaune*, was a massive success and perhaps the greatest album in Quebec history.

Fortunately, he is not really gone, not truly.

I will always be with you
On your shoulders, in your lap
I am because we must exist
The artist café's constant cat

I am grateful to Jean-Pierre. We were lucky to have had him.

* * *

[English]

VANIER COLLEGE

Ms. Emmanuela Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year, Vanier College's architectural technology program and department is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

The program offers hands-on technical knowledge of building and construction techniques, coupled with the study and practice of

aesthetics and architectural design. Its state-of-the-art equipment facilities, mandatory internships and field work in the industry and, of course, its skilled, knowledgeable, passionate and caring teachers, including Michael Lancione, who works tirelessly to ensure his students get the most of out of this program, are the factors that I take into account when I say that the program is a huge success.

Vanier College has produced countless architectural technologists who have contributed to the development of Quebec over the past 50 years. I congratulate Vanier College and the architectural technology department. We are proud of Vanier College's hard-working teachers and students, and we look forward to seeing what the next 50 years will look like.

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● (1405)

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, April 28 is the National Day of Mourning. It happened because two labour activists who were driving to a union meeting were stopped because of a funeral procession for a firefighter. It was through the hard work of our unions that this came to fruition when Brian Mulroney passed the act in 1990.

Progress has been made toward the safety of workers; we know this. It has happened because politicians have passed bills and changed regulations, but that happened because of the activism of unions that pushed politicians to do the right thing, to make the workplace safer for all Canadians.

However, we have not made enough progress. Last year, almost 1,000 Canadians lost their lives on the work site. One is too many. I know, and all Canadians know, that unions will be at the forefront, pushing for improved safety for all Canadians, for their brothers and for their sisters, so no more lives are lost.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been one week since Earth Day and in my riding of Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, the momentum continues.

We have had several clean-ups and tree planting events led by community members like Oak Ridges Lions Club, the Aurora Arboretum, LEAF, the City of Richmond Hill, the town of Aurora and the entire York Region community. Last week, we welcomed to Richmond Hill the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health. This is a real testament to the dedication of Richmond Hill to our environment.

Statements by Members

We are thrilled about the new partnership and leadership on a sustainable transition and innovation, not only in our region but worldwide, under Dr. Kaveh Madani. It is a testament, as I said, to the strong connection and dedication that our riding has to the environment, which makes Earth Day even more special in our riding.

A happy Earth Day to everyone, and I thank all the wonderful organizations and communities standing up for environmental protection.

* * *

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this April, we celebrated the five-year anniversary of Sikh Heritage Month becoming Canadian law.

Celebrations closed out this month with a history-making performance by Punjabi artist Diljit Dosanjh, selling out B.C. Place Stadium.

Sikh Heritage Month is as much about where we are now as it is about how we got here. It is important to continue sharing untold stories of our shared Canadian heritage, stories of how Sikhs landed on our shores as distinct military cavalry in 1897 and sparked the settlement for future change makers.

These were discriminatory times and racist times. Leaders emerged to fight for equality, people like Naginder Singh Gill who rallied our communities to lobby federal and provincial governments to return our right to vote. We were not alone. Sikhs rallied the Chinese community and found support from Montreal Liberal member of Parliament Samuel William Jacobs, who was for many years the only Jewish member of Parliament in Canada. After a few decades of struggle, in 1947, Mahinder Singh Beadall became the first Canadian of Indian descent to vote in a federal election.

I invite everyone to join in celebrating Sikh Heritage Month, learning and sharing untold stories about our shared Canadian heritage and the patriotic identity of Canadian Sikhs.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last month, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis visited Canada.

As was the case with so many other world leaders, the Greek prime minister said that his country would welcome more liquefied natural gas imports from Canada.

In an interview with CTV's Vassy Kapelos, the Greek prime minister said, "As fast as we go in terms of our renewable penetration, we will still need a reliable source of electricity, and for us, for Greece, we don't have nuclear, we're...completely, moving away from coal, so that leaves natural gas for the foreseeable future."

Unfortunately, the Prime Minister apparently still believes that there is no business case for Canadian oil and gas exports to Europe, and that Canadian oil and gas should just stay in the ground.

When is the Prime Minister going to realize that the world needs more Canadian energy?

* * *

PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a constituent wrote about a Waterloo resident who passed away on January 8 with the humane, caring, intelligent professional services of the MAID program. He shares that his older brother endured the unrelenting, cruel degeneration from Parkinson's for about five years until almost every aspect of his life was greatly diminished, with zero hope of abatement or cure.

Last year, his older brother started to look forward to departing on his own terms, in his own home, with the loving support of his wife and family. He told his younger brother to organize a farewell party the morning of his departure. He wanted no tears or unhappiness, just family members celebrating the excellent years he enjoyed so much. He wanted to participate in his own celebration of life.

April is Parkinson's Awareness Month. Life with Parkinson's is going to look different for everyone, and it is changing over time. For all those affected by PD, including people living with the disease, their care partners, medical teams and others, we are here fighting alongside them for better supports and services.

* * *

● (1410)

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE INDUSTRY

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past week I attended the Canadian Produce Marketing Association's annual meeting and trade show in Vancouver. The fruit and vegetable industry gathered to engage in effective ways they can continue to feed the nation and supply Canadians with healthy, nutritious food for their families.

I was proud to see the number, quality and quantity of exhibitors from Chatham-Kent—Leamington front and centre at the show, but I also heard about the severe challenges the industry is facing, about how the Prime Minister's carbon tax is resulting in higher food costs and about the profound ramifications of the Liberal plastics ban, which will decrease our access to fresh produce but increase the cost and amount of food waste. Every person I spoke to was adamant that Canadians want an election and a new government.

When will the Prime Minister step down, axe the tax, scrap the plastics ban and allow Conservatives to restore common sense to this country?

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for 15 billion taxpayer dollars, one would think Canada would get supply chains for batteries, some vehicles and maybe even some jobs, but not in Windsor at Stellantis, where batteries are being assembled. The battery material comes from China, the cars are manufactured in Alabama and the jobs go to those from overseas.

Of the 2,500 jobs promised at Stellantis, more than 900 have been reported to be foreign jobs and now the union, CBTU, says that Stellantis is still hiring foreign workers for jobs promised to Canadians. Stellantis has even asked its Canadian suppliers to sponsor foreign workers and refugees to perform the work, when there are more than 180 Canadian ironworkers and millwrights sitting at home unemployed.

Canadians deserve a government that will stand up for Canadian workers. Only common-sense Conservatives will ensure Canadian tax dollars are used wisely and that any taxpayer-funded job is given to Canadians, not foreign replacement workers.

The Prime Minister must release all EV battery contracts. It is time to show taxpayers how much we are paying for foreign replacement jobs.

* * *

VOLUNTEERISM

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a constituent in my riding who has single-handedly done more for his community than any other person I know. Heber Best, of Kelligrews, Conception Bay South, has been a volunteer for more than half a century, volunteering with organizations such as the Red Cross, CNIB and the local Lions Club, a group he was instrumental in introducing to our town 53 years ago. He successfully secured funding for a local skating rink, indoor swimming pool, upgrades to the local soccer field and the construction of affordable housing units for seniors, as well as the introduction of an annual youth public speaking contest.

Over the years, Mr. Best has been presented with several awards including the Newfoundland and Labrador Volunteer Medal, the Lion of the Year Award, the Judge Brian Stevenson Fellowship Award and the Melvin Jones Fellowship Award. His contribution to our community and our province should stand as a symbol of what selflessness is and we should all aspire to model our own lives by his example.

I invite all members to join me in applauding Mr. Best for his outstanding generosity and caring spirit.

* * *

WORLD IMMUNIZATION WEEK

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week is World Immunization Week. Vaccines are crucial tools in safeguarding communities worldwide, preventing up to five million deaths every year from diseases such as tetanus and influenza. Vaccination campaigns have allowed us to eradicate smallpox, defeat polio and decrease child death by over 50%, yet challenges remain. Declining vaccination rates have brought back dead-

Statements by Members

ly diseases, resulting in ongoing outbreaks. Globally, one in five children are undervaccinated or not vaccinated at all, jeopardizing their lives and futures.

This week, we shout out to organizations such as the World Health Organization and others that play a vital role in making vaccinations accessible for regions all over the globe. Strengthening health care systems and empowering local communities are essential steps. So is pushing back against vaccine misinformation.

Let us promote vaccine production and distribution. In this World Immunization Week, let us ensure that we reach every child with life-saving vaccines.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

DONALD SCOTT

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise to pay a final tribute to Donald Scott, better known as Mr. Bonbon.

A true legend in the community of Saint-Hubert, Mr. Bonbon spread happiness. He did not give up, even after losing the use of his legs to a stroke. He overcame his disability by helping others, mainly by raising funds to make the lives of his fellow residents at the Henriette-Céré CHSLD more pleasant and comfortable.

This extraordinary man brought joy to people's lives. Rain or shine, he would be sitting on the side of Chambly Road waving and handing out candy to passersby and motorists. During the pandemic, people were devastated to learn that he had contracted the virus, but being the true fighter that he was, he survived COVID-19 and was soon back out in his usual spot greeting people from his wheelchair, which was decked out in the colours of the Quebec flag.

On behalf of myself and the Bloc Québécois, I want to extend my sincere condolences to his family and friends. Goodbye, Mr. Bonbon, and thank you for everything.

*Oral Questions**[English]***OPIOIDS**

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this very week, exactly a year ago, I brought up open drug use in parks and playgrounds, how our communities were less safe and how there were serious safety concerns, with law enforcement saying it was being handcuffed, yet the Liberal and NDP MPs clapped vigorously to support their drug policies. In B.C. there are more people dying, more diversion of government drugs, more unsafe drug paraphernalia littering our neighbourhoods and more challenges for our law enforcement.

The B.C. NDP government finally acknowledged its failed drug experiment and just announced massive changes, asking the Prime Minister to reverse his drug policies.

After nine years, the Prime Minister's extremist policies allowed for deadly hard drugs to be used in public spaces, like parks, coffee shops, beaches and hospitals. The NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the crime, chaos, drugs and disorder. Conservatives would ban hard drugs, stop taxpayer-funded drugs and put money into detox and recovery.

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125TH ANNIVERSARY OF CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital on its 125th anniversary.

For 125 years, Holland Bloorview has provided care to children and youth with open doors and open arms. Its mission is global and its approach is local: helping one child and one family at a time until kids with disabilities are fully included in the social, cultural and economic life of our city, our province and our country.

Holland Bloorview is a world leader in research, education and health care. With its groundbreaking research on concussions, prosthetics, autism, cerebral palsy and more done at its campus on Kilgour Road with partners around the world, as well as its compassionate care and love for young people, Holland Bloorview is a true centre of excellence that never veers from its mission of providing world-class care to children and youth with disabilities and challenges.

I congratulate the staff, administration and volunteers at Holland Bloorview on this happy birthday.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[Translation]***FINANCE**

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the current numbers are tragic: 25% of Quebecers live below the threshold for a normal standard of living. This poverty is the direct result of the centralizing, inflationary and bureaucratic spending by the Prime Minister. That spending is fully supported by the Bloc Québécois.

When will the Bloc Québécois and the Prime Minister stop impoverishing Quebecers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, we presented our budget to ensure fairness for all generations, for all Quebecers. As things stand, a nurse or a carpenter can pay taxes at a higher marginal rate than a multi-millionaire. That is unfair.

However, the Conservative leader is opposed to our plan. He is opposed to our plan for fairness. The only thing the Conservatives want is austerity.

● (1420)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, this Prime Minister is not worth the cost to Quebecers, who are paying twice as much for rent, housing and the national debt. This Prime Minister is spending more on interest on the debt, \$54.1 billion, than on health care. Even worse than that, the Bloc Québécois voted for each and every one of this Prime Minister's \$500-billion budget allocations.

Once again, when will this Prime Minister and the Bloc Québécois stop impoverishing Quebecers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that what we just heard is not true. The reality is that Canada has a AAA credit rating. Canada has the lowest debt and the lowest deficit in the G7.

The Conservatives oppose our plan because all they support is austerity and their rich friends.

* * *

*[English]***MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS**

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the Prime Minister is not worth the drugs, disorder, death and destruction. In May 2022, he granted the B.C. NDP government's request for a Criminal Code exemption to allow crack, meth, heroin and fentanyl use in parks, coffee shops, hospitals and beaches. Overdose deaths since have exploded to a record-smashing 2,500 lost lives.

The B.C. NDP government has reversed course and asked the federal government to recriminalize some hard drugs. Why will the Prime Minister not recriminalize these deadly drugs?

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we answered the call of the B.C. government when it requested the exemption on decriminalization of personal possession of certain illicit drugs. However, what is driving this overdose crisis is the illegal drugs supply. Every life lost is a tragedy. I met with Minister Whiteside this past Friday, and we are reviewing the exemption request.

We have a clear lens on public health and public safety, because we have a plan. They do not.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister is wasting time while people are dying.

In the year after this radical Prime Minister granted the decriminalization of crack, heroin and other hard drugs in parks and hospitals, 2,500 people died. Overdose deaths, during the nine years of the Prime Minister, have tripled, the fastest rising of the 11 countries studied by the Commonwealth Fund. Nurses are afraid to go to work because they have to put up with addicts using meth, crack and weapons in their hospital rooms. Nurses are having to give up on breastfeeding, because they are worried their kids will be contaminated with the drugs they breathe in.

What the hell are they thinking over there?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member is a long-time member of the House. I would ask him to withdraw the offensive word, because it is not parliamentary.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw it. They are not thinking over there.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week we saw the Leader of the Opposition once again encourage supporters of white supremacy, anarchy and misogyny. This has been a regular occurrence.

He draws the admiration of people who dismiss the slaughter of children in schools. The leader—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I invite the government House leader to start from the top and to choose his words very carefully so that they do not cause disorder in the House.

• (1425)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, last week we saw the Leader of the Opposition once again visit with supporters of white supremacy, anarchy and misogyny. This has been a regular occurrence.

He draws the admiration of people who dismiss the slaughter of children in schools. Once I sit down, the Leader of the Opposition will have 30 seconds to speak to the House and to Canadians. I ask him to clearly disavow the views of these dangerous people. Will he do that?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I unequivocally disavow the guy who spent the first half of his adult life as a practising racist, dressing up in blackface, and

Oral Questions

who has since accepted the support of Hamas. He has accepted the support of Hamas, and now he has brought on the extremist and radical position of allowing legal drug use in playgrounds, hospitals and coffee shops, which has led to the mass death of our people.

Will he refuse the demand of Toronto to replicate the decriminalization nightmare in B.C.?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sad to say that the leader of the Conservatives, the Leader of the Opposition has shown us his true colours. He speaks without conviction and clarity on a question that should be very simple for him to address.

His silence speaks volumes. This is not leadership. This is political cowardice.

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[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister was revealing his budget, or rather his plan to interfere in Quebec's jurisdictions, he justified it by saying that people do not care which level of government is responsible for what.

However, a Leger poll found that 82% of Quebecers believe that the federal government should respect the division of powers. This proves that the Prime Minister is out of touch with reality. Quebecers are clear. They want the federal government to work with other governments.

Instead of electioneering, why will the Prime Minister not give Quebecers the money they are owed? That is what Quebecers want.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this budget, we are investing in housing. The Conservatives are complaining. Bloc Québécois members are complaining. They are going to vote against it. In this budget, we are investing in dental care. The Conservatives are complaining. Bloc Québécois members are complaining. Both parties are going to vote against it.

Basically, both parties will find different excuses to vote against the same budget. If we listened to the Conservatives and the Bloc, Quebecers would wind up with nothing.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers are not the only ones who are against jurisdictional interference. Every provincial and territorial premier added their signature to that of the premier of Quebec in a letter calling on Ottawa to respect their jurisdictions: health, education, housing. They are all calling for the right to opt out with full financial compensation whenever the federal government steps out of its jurisdiction. Everyone is against federal interference from coast to coast to coast.

The Prime Minister thinks that everyone else is wrong, but perhaps he is just looking to pick a fight.

Oral Questions

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talks about picking fights, but the people in the Bloc Québécois are the real experts in picking fights. They are speaking from experience. They have a doctorate in picking fights.

The Bloc tells us that housing is important, but they vote against it. The Bloc tells us that helping our seniors is important, but they vote against that. The Bloc tells us that we need to make sure that our children do not go to school on an empty stomach, but they vote against that.

The Bloc talks and talks. All they do is talk. They are good at that. They are all talk and no action. They do not walk the talk.

* * *

● (1430)

[English]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government stood by while food prices and rents skyrocketed. This hurts people living with disabilities disproportionately. After making folks wait more than three years, the government announced a disability benefit. It is too little, does not cover enough people and is going to be clawed back by provinces. People struggling to put food on their tables have been given crumbs by the government.

When will the Prime Minister get serious about helping people living with disabilities?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are glad to be the first federal government in Canadian history to put forward the financing for supports for people with disabilities across our country. That is a milestone. It is a very big deal. This is just the first step. We recognize there is more to do, including working carefully with provinces and territories, and we are going to do it.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is failing people living with disabilities.

[Translation]

Disability groups have been clear. The disability benefit announced by the government does not work. Two hundred dollars is not enough. The Prime Minister is giving big oil billions of dollars, while giving peanuts to people with disabilities.

Will he sit down with these groups and solve this problem?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is proud to be the first federal government to introduce a disability benefit. That is a big step forward, and we are proud to have done that.

We understand that we now need to work closely with the provinces and territories. This is just the beginning. We must and will do more.

[English]

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, crime, chaos, drugs and disorder are what we have after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government. The extremist policies of the Prime Minister have forced parents in British Columbia to protect their kids from used needles at the playground. Done openly and in our faces, there is drug use in Tim Hortons, on the SkyTrain and even in our hospitals.

The Prime Minister's negligence is killing our citizens. When will he admit that his radical decriminalization experiment has failed and end it?

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, too many Canadians are dying every day from an ever-changing, illegal toxic drug supply. The opposition leader and members of the Conservative Party talk a big talk about investing in treatment, but Conservatives cut two-thirds of the drug treatment fund when they were last in government.

Let us talk about what saves lives: safe consumption sites, accessible social and health care services, prevention, treatment and harm reduction. The Conservatives have no plan. On this side of the House, we will continue to work to save lives.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk through a clear lens. The number of Canadians who have died from drug overdoses since 2015 is 40,000. They were entirely preventable.

Last year, B.C. set a record with over 2,500 overdose deaths, and the Liberals want to talk about saving lives and compassion. Premier Eby and the Prime Minister have failed British Columbians, and now the Prime Minister is taking his deadly experiment to Toronto. Until the extremist drug policy is dismantled, people will keep dying.

Will the Prime Minister prioritize recovery and stop killing Canadians with his radical ideology?

● (1435)

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition does not want to implement the plans or the tools that are needed to save lives because its members do not have a plan. All they offer Canadians are slogans and fear. Slogans are not an evidence-based strategy. They are just words.

We have a full suite of measures that addresses this crisis because it is a public health public crisis. It is not a criminal issue. We continue to work with B.C. on the exemption it requested, with the clear lens of public health and public safety.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the crime, chaos, drugs and disorder. After nine years of the Prime Minister's extremist policies, public drug use has become the norm. The Prime Minister has made it legal in British Columbia to smoke meth on the beach beside a family or smoke crack in a hospital beside health care workers. In fact, a nurse in British Columbia stopped breastfeeding her twin girls early, at 13 months, because of being exposed to illicit drugs in the hallway.

When will the NPD-Liberals realize that time is up and end the decriminalization today?

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every life lost to the illegal toxic drug supply, every overdose and every family experiencing the loss of a loved one, is a tragedy. Our focus working with the B.C. government on its exemption request is on saving lives and providing health care.

Harm reduction is health care. Treatment is health care. Prevention is health care. Enforcement is also part of the plan. We continue to work with law enforcement in the provinces. Conservatives continue to divide.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, drug deaths are up 380% in B.C. since the Liberals took office in 2015. The NDP-Liberal coalition unleashed a horrific experiment in British Columbia, and now the NDP premier is pleading with the Prime Minister to fix this disaster.

We are learning that, for Toronto, the minister has decided to double down and expand this failed project into Toronto. After nine years, the NDP-Liberal government's drug policy is failing Canadians, and the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Instead of expanding this, will Liberals do the right thing and just end this policy today?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, around the world, opioid deaths are taking so many lives. The only way we can rise to meet that moment is with truth and evidence and not by inflaming, through spreading false information, the situation.

I would ask the member opposite, instead of trying to seek opportunity to attack in the House, to work collaboratively on evidence-based solutions that save lives. Like her, and like every member of the House, when a life is lost, it rips us all apart. We have to meet it with truth and honesty and set aside partisanship.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, overdose is the leading cause of death in my province of British Columbia. The NDP-Liberal Prime Minister's extremist drug policies have turned our neighbourhoods into war zones. Hard drugs are being used in playgrounds, coffee shops and even hospitals. Last week, a drug-addled man lit fires and consumed drugs in front of traumatized kids at the Prince George Aquatic Centre. The RCMP was called numerous times, but its hands are tied because of the Liberals' insane drug policies.

Will the Prime Minister end his deadly drug decriminalization today?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask clearly what evidence the Conservatives are basing their decisions on. The answer to that question—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. minister has the floor.

• (1440)

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, replacing science with slogans and replacing research and evidence with talking points will not fix the problem. There is not a person in the House who is not ripped apart when we watch somebody lose a loved one to this crisis, but to meet it with partisanship, to meet it with pretend solutions and to do things that have failed in other jurisdictions is a disgrace for those who have lost family members.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the crime, chaos, drugs and disorder. After nine years, the Prime Minister's extremist policy is allowing for deadly hard drugs to be used in public spaces such as parks, coffee shops, beaches and hospitals. A leaked memo in B.C. is now instructing nurses to teach patients how to inject illegal drugs into their intravenous.

Will the Prime Minister end his deadly drug decriminalization experiment today?

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we are committed to saving lives and to making sure people who use drugs do not die alone.

We moved forward with a decriminalization pilot project at B.C.'s request and have always maintained it would be rigorously monitored and adjusted as needed. We know that a full suite of tools, including harm reduction, is needed. Even the MP from Cariboo—Prince George knows it. He said himself, "I asked if safe injection sites were helping. They did say that safe injection sites probably do help."

Every tool, every resource, to save lives is what we are committed to.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this morning La Presse reported that five families of Indian origin are crammed into a single apartment because of the housing crisis. That is beneath Canada and, unfortunately, it is the norm for thousands of asylum seekers.

Oral Questions

These people are arriving here and realizing that they do not even have the right to work to support themselves because the federal government is taking two years to give them their work permit. Then they realize that Ottawa is now taking 38 months to process asylum claims.

How many more families will have to endure these inhumane conditions before the federal government addresses these backlogs?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I will address the mistake the member made. He said it takes two years to get a work permit. It actually takes three months. Clearly, we can do more, but we need to be factual in the House of Commons.

If I am hearing the member correctly, I understand that he is going to support our budget, which puts billions of dollars on the table for the provinces, for housing in particular.

As for asylum seekers and how we should be welcoming them as a country, I think we can do better, but Quebec and Canada will need to work together.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think that maybe three months is all in his head.

We are talking about the same families that are lining up at the overrun food banks in Parc-Extension and elsewhere. These families are enduring years of hardship because federal government delays are preventing them from working and from focusing on their asylum claims.

I want to quote what Frantz André from the Comité d'action des personnes sans statut had to say about these people. He said, "They live in a constant state of anxiety, which creates mental health problems. They want an answer as quickly as possible, even if it is negative."

Is it possible to have a little more humanity and fewer bureaucratic delays?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to answer the member of the Bloc Québécois, over the past few months, we have shortened existing wait times, and we can do even better.

From what I am hearing, the member wants to move toward regularization, so I expect the Bloc's support when we introduce a bill to regularize people who are here in Canada who should be Canadians.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that means he would have to listen, not just read off a sheet of paper.

This morning, Quebec's immigration minister said that Quebec is still taking in too many asylum seekers and that the federal government needs to spread them out across Canada.

First of all, Quebec has exceeded its integration capacity. Second, the federal immigration department is racking up delays in processing files. Consequently, families are finding themselves destitute because of the federal government's incompetence when it comes to immigration. These are human beings, not numbers.

Will the minister do his job?

• (1445)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the height of absurdity. It is typical of a Bloc Québécois member to stand up and read from a sheet, accusing other people of reading from a sheet even though they were not reading from a sheet.

That is the Bloc, through and through.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the current Prime Minister, Canadians are skipping meals, and food banks are overwhelmed. Eighty-three per cent of Canadians are paying \$80 more a month for food than they were just six months ago. According to Second Harvest, more than half of the food banks in the Toronto area cannot meet demand, and they are putting families on wait-lists. Families cannot afford to put food on the table, and the crisis is getting worse as the Liberal-NDP government increases the carbon tax by 23%.

Will the Prime Minister reverse his decision to increase the carbon tax, and pass Bill C-234 in its original form so Canadians do not have to dumpster dive for their dinner?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, Bill C-234 is in the hands of the Conservative House leader. The member should speak to him.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal government is not worth the cost of food. While Canadians are skipping meals, the minister who is in charge of lowering food costs for Canadians is rubbing shoulders with Hollywood celebrities and political elites at the most expensive dinner imaginable. He is dining out at the White House on the taxpayer dime. After nine years, the current Prime Minister is out to lunch and the ministers are out of touch.

Will the champagne coalition and caviar caucus lower food costs for Canadians and pass Bill C-234 in its original form?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago we presented our budget to deliver fairness for every generation, because right now a nurse or a carpenter can pay taxes at a higher marginal rate than a multi-millionaire. That is not fair, and we are changing it, but the Conservatives have said that they are opposed to our budget. That is because the only thing they know how to do is cut, cut, cut; impose austerity; and quietly keep on delivering tax breaks to their rich friends.

Oral Questions

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “Food banks in Canada are being pushed to the brink with high demand and donations not keeping pace”. After nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, that was this morning’s headline. Canadian families cannot afford to buy food, and our farmers who grow food face punishment, not progress. No farms means no food.

From high cost to empty store shelves, the Prime Minister and his costly carbon tax are not worth the cost, so will the Prime Minister finally axe the carbon tax so our farm families can stay in business and Canadian families are not forced to use food banks?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government believes in fairness for every generation, especially younger Canadians. That is why we are investing in building more homes faster. We are investing in making life more affordable with programs such as early learning and child care and dental care. We are investing in jobs and growth, and we are paying for it by asking those at the top to contribute a bit more, but the Conservatives are opposed to our plan. The only thing they believe in is austerity and quietly giving tax breaks to their rich friends.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week The Maple revealed that the Canadian government is hosting test sessions with an Israeli company, Smart Shooter, whose technology is used to kill Palestinian children. The company is even eligible for a prize. Its CEO boasted that the war is good for business. As Palestinians continue to be killed, Canada’s support of this company is inhumane and shows a shocking lack of judgment.

Why is the government showcasing weapons in Canada that are killing kids?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would simply remind the member opposite that Canada has one of the most rigorous military export regimes in the world, and we are vigilant in ensuring that all military technology being shared with any other foreign country rigorously meets the standards that have been set for us.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Israeli arms are being tested in Canada, in Alberta. Canadians do not want to be complicit in Netanyahu’s crimes against Palestinian children. Canada should not be buying from these companies and should not be selling to the Israeli government.

The minister promised the House that he would issue a notice to exporters on March 18, six weeks ago. Where is the notice to exporters, and when will Canada finally impose a two-way arms embargo?

• (1450)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our position when it comes to arms export permits is well known and absolutely clear.

When it comes to what is happening in the Middle East, we have been clear: The violence must stop. We need a ceasefire now.

Hostages must be released, and we need to make sure that humanitarian aid gets into Gaza. At the end of the day, what we need is a two-state solution where the State of Israel can live side by side in peace and security with a Palestinian state.

I have been in contact with my U.S., U.K. and many Arab countries counterparts over the weekend, working hard on bringing back peace to the Middle East.

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has shown great success in attracting historic investment in our auto industry. Can the minister highlight the recent investment from Honda and what it means for building our EV supply chain and growing Canadian jobs?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his leadership. That was a good question.

Last week we witnessed a \$15.7-billion investment by Honda. This is the largest investment in Honda’s history. It is the largest investment in our auto sector, and it is one of the largest investments by a private company in this country. This is great news for our workers across the nation. This is great news for our auto sector. This is great news for Canada. Let us celebrate as Canada becomes a hub for green manufacturing in the 21st century.

* * *

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning the Journal de Montréal reported that 25% of Quebecers cannot afford to live with dignity, and that even working 50 hours a week is not enough to ensure they do not end up in a precarious situation. This is what we have come to, after nine years of this government. The statistics are clear.

The Bloc Québécois claims to promote the interests of Quebec, but voted with the Liberals on every budget allocation to support this exorbitant, inflationary spending.

Do the government and the Bloc Québécois have the courage to admit that they have failed Quebecers and must stop their out-of-control spending?

Oral Questions

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week we saw the Leader of the Opposition, once again, encourage supporters of white supremacy, anarchy and misogyny. This has been a regular occurrence. He draws the admiration of people who dismiss the slaughter of children in schools.

The Leader of the Opposition now has 30 seconds to speak to this House and to Canadians, once I sit down. I ask him to clearly disavow the views of these dangerous people. Will he do that?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, meanwhile, what are we to make of the \$54.1 billion that Canadians and Quebecers have to pay in interest to banks in London and New York because of this government's out-of-control spending supported by the Bloc Québécois, which has voted in favour of all budget allocations for the past nine years?

Let us think about it: The Bloc Québécois voted for every budget allocation, which means that today we are stuck paying interest equivalent to all the health transfers for all the provinces. We could do so much more with that money.

Will the government stop its out-of-control spending and will the Bloc Québécois stop supporting it?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Conservative leader showed his true colours when he refused to denounce certain views. He is still refusing to do it. I wonder to what extent the Quebec caucus of the Conservative Party supports his words and actions.

The Leader of the Opposition is speaking without conviction or clarity on what should be a very simple issue. His silence speaks volumes. That is not leadership.

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years under this government, too many Quebecers and Canadians have been forced into poverty. According to the *Journal de Montréal*, 25% of Quebecers do not have a livable income. Let us think about this. Working 50 hours a week is no longer enough for people to meet their needs.

Despite all that, the Bloc Québécois continues to support the Liberals by voting in favour of the estimates. My goodness, it is costly to vote for the Bloc Québécois.

When will the government finally listen to us and stop its out-of-control spending?

• (1455)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I have a great deal of respect for him.

I am sure he noticed that the Minister of Finance's recent budget focuses on intergenerational equity. This budget gives every generation a chance by investing in the priorities of Quebecers. It focuses on housing and the cost of living, but also on growth.

I am sure my colleagues from Quebec saw our announcement last week regarding a record investment from IBM in Bromont.

This will help Quebec and Canada become a leader in the semiconductors sector.

A confident nation is a nation that invests. That is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years under this government, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. The cost of living keeps going up. An article in *La Presse* reports that despite the government's spending on helping the less fortunate, recent data from Statistics Canada show that these vulnerable people are still struggling to put food on the table. Let us not forget that the Bloc Québécois voted in favour of a \$500-billion budget.

When will the Liberals, supported by the Bloc Québécois, stop their out-of-control spending?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the last time the Conservative leader was in power he tried to change the age of retirement to 67. It was the Liberal government who reversed that.

When we lowered taxes for the middle class and increased taxes for the 1%, they voted against our plan. Today, when we are investing for Canadians through a tax on the wealthiest Canadians, they still oppose our plan.

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CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this morning's edition of *La Presse* revealed that the federal government has scrapped the Port of Valleyfield expansion. On the pretext of a lack of resources, the Canada Border Services Agency is taking away the operator's right to handle containers at this port, which is of vital importance to the region's economy. The mayor of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield and the director of economic development have both strongly condemned this senseless decision.

Will the Minister of Public Safety intervene and ask the CBSA to continue to do its job instead of undermining the future of the Port of Valleyfield?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously, my Quebec Liberal caucus colleagues and I share the member's concern about the importance of the Port of Valleyfield. I intend to raise these important questions with the CBSA. We understand how important the port is for residents and for the region's economy.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 2019, through the building Canada fund, the federal government announced more than \$12 million in funding for the Port of Valleyfield to expand a wharf. Today, however, the Canada Border Services Agency is withdrawing from the Port of Valleyfield. One minute the federal government is funding the expansion of the port, the next it is hindering its development.

Oral Questions

What is the rationale behind this reckless and harmful decision? Will the minister help me get the Canada Border Services Agency to reconsider its decision?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when there is a change of ownership and things do not automatically follow, applications have to be remade. Nothing is automatic. Having said that, we understand the importance of the Port of Valleyfield. My colleague mentioned it. We will work on this.

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THE BUDGET

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, never in our country's glorious history have we had such a free-spending government. This is a \$500-billion budget. The Liberal Party voted in favour of it. Who else voted in favour of this \$500-billion budget? The Bloc Québécois.

The Bloc Québécois is the reason this government is able to spend so extravagantly. The Bloc Québécois is the reason this government is so big, so centralist and so spendy.

Will any Liberal ministers stand up in support of the Bloc Québécois's position?

• (1500)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands how important it is to invest in Canadians and Quebecers.

That is what we are doing, and we are doing it in a fiscally responsible way. We have a AAA credit rating. The Governor of the Bank of Canada said, "The budget does respect the fiscal guardrails that the government put in place.... [T]he budget also commits to those guardrails going forward".

That is what we are doing.

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[English]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberals are spending \$52 billion of taxpayer money to subsidize international auto companies. The Building Trades Unions recently condemned the use of foreign replacement workers at the Stellantis plants for jobs like forklift driver, yet contrary to Liberal claims, foreign replacement workers keep being brought in for jobs that do not require specialty knowledge. The union calls that a slap in the face, and we agree.

After nine years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. How much will Canadian taxpayers pay to employ foreign replacement workers?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, instead of spreading disinformation, the member should be standing with all Canadians in this House and making sure that we maximize jobs for Canadians. That is exactly what we are doing.

The investment that he is talking about is going to create more than 2,500 direct jobs at this plant. It is going to be one of the largest battery assembly plants in North America. We should all be proud that Canada now ranks first in the world for the battery ecosystem we have built, and this is according to Bloomberg.

We are going to keep investing in Canadians. We are going to keep investing in jobs. We are going to keep investing in the auto industry.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the Liberal minister who is spreading disinformation, because in committee he admitted he had not read the contracts. I have read both, Stellantis and VW. Do members know what is not in them? What is not in them is any requirement that jobs at these plants be for Canadians only. Canadians do not believe the Prime Minister, and since I have read the contracts, I do not either.

The NDP-Liberals are hiding the truth. If the Prime Minister has contractual job guarantees, he will have no problem proving me wrong. Will the Liberals release the contracts, yes or no?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is amazing that the member would be against creating jobs in this country and maximizing jobs. If he read the contract, I guess he should have a lawyer to understand the terms, because it is very simple. The terms are maximizing Canadian jobs. It gives me an opportunity. We should rejoice. Just last week, we announced and we supported the largest investment in the auto sector in Canada's history. Honda is going to be investing \$15.7 billion in this country.

We are attracting record investment. We are going to create jobs. We are going to fight for every Canadian job.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government's policies have been focused on promoting diversity, respect and equality among all Canadians.

On that side of the House, however, we learned last week that the Leader of the Opposition visited an encampment set up by individuals linked to extreme far-right groups like Diagonol. CSIS says Diagonol encourages and inspires serious violence, yet the Conservative leader is refusing to denounce it or apologize for engaging with it.

Can the government please reiterate how we will keep Canadians safe from extreme groups and what our responsibilities are as political leaders?

Oral Questions

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while we can appreciate different views and political opinions, what we cannot and should not tolerate is any member of the House indulging and actively courting extremist far-right groups that espouse anti-Semitic, anti-2SLGBTQI+ and white nationalist ideologies. The Conservative leader's embrace of and refusal to denounce Diagonol in this—

The Speaker: Colleagues, I am having great difficulty trying to hear the answer from the hon. minister. I am going to ask members to please let the minister finish his statement. The minister has 20 seconds left on the clock.

• (1505)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative leader's embrace of and refusal to denounce Diagonol is incredibly alarming. That he would do anything to win speaks volumes about his values and, quite frankly, is sending chills across this country.

On this side, we will always defend Canadians and Canadian values.

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HOUSING

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, young Canadians know that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Eight in 10 people now regard home ownership as being only for the rich, as they have completely given up on their dream of ever owning a home.

Simply, will the government finally listen to Canadians and to our common-sense plan to cap spending, which would bring down inflation and interest rates so that young people can finally afford a home?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will agree, insofar as the Conservatives believe that it is essential that we do more to make sure that young people can get into the housing market.

However, the difference between our side and theirs is that they do not have a plan to achieve that reality. The measures they are putting forward include measures that would raise taxes on home building, making it more difficult to build homes in communities, and actually cut funding for programs that are supporting home building today.

We have new measures to create tax-free opportunities for young people to save up for a down payment, new measures that would help young people establish a credit score, and new measures that would reduce their monthly mortgage costs. We will do what it takes to solve the housing crisis. I wish the Conservatives would join us.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the Prime Minister, car theft in Canada is completely out of control. Two out of five Canadians have either had their car stolen or know someone who has.

Last week in Victoria, a repeat offender was arrested three times in three days for stealing cars. The police in Victoria had to put out a statement and they laid the blame for this on the Liberals' failed bill, Bill C-75.

Will the justice minister listen to the police and reverse their soft-on-crime Bill C-75?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for that member. He is my critic and he has served on the justice committee with me for a number of years. What I do not have respect for are the instructions he gets from his leader on how to vote.

When we had legislation in the chamber, the fall economic statement, that dealt with tackling money laundering and organized crime links to auto theft, he was instructed to vote against that. Before even reading the document that is budget 2024 and what it contains with respect to addressing auto theft, increasing maximum penalties, dealing with the link between using youth and organized criminality and tackling more money laundering, he was told to vote against, yet again, by his leader.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the justice minister's own vehicle was stolen three times in the last three years. The Liberals are not fixing the problem. Conservatives have a private member's bill in the House right now that establishes serious jail time for repeat car thefts.

This individual in Victoria was arrested three times in three days. He pushed a woman out of her car to steal her vehicle. He drove off and caused a collision.

It is time that we crack down on repeat violent auto theft. Conservatives will do it.

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that member knows that repeat violent offenders are already dealt with by our bail regime. He voted in favour of that. He should also know that when Bill C-75, the very bill—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to ask members to please allow the minister to finish answering the question.

The hon. minister from the top.

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, that member knows and should know that the bail reform bill, which the member actually voted in favour of, tackles serious violent repeat offenders, which include those who use serious violence in committing an auto theft.

What the member should also realize is that when the very bill he impugned, Bill C-75, was before this chamber in the 42nd Parliament, we promoted an augmentation, an increase in the penalty available for auto theft. He and all of his colleagues voted against that.

What I would prefer is some collaboration and a bit less hypocrisy.

• (1510)

HOUSING

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is making historic efforts to solve Canada's housing crisis. Not only do we need to build more homes, we need to build them faster and Canada must change the way we build those homes.

Could the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities tell the House and Canadians about the new measures introduced to solve Canada's housing crisis?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her advocacy for housing supports, particularly for the most vulnerable across the city of Halifax.

I am pleased to share that we have put forward a plan to solve Canada's national housing crisis. It includes new measures that will help make it easier to build more homes by reducing the cost and eliminating barriers, including freeing up more public land. It includes more measures to help young people save up for a down payment and to reduce their mortgage costs. It also includes measures to support those who cannot afford to have a roof over their head, including a recent investment of \$11 million to build more housing for persons with disabilities and seniors.

We are going to continue to make investments to solve Canada's housing crisis.

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HEALTH

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, B.C. police chiefs told us that it was deadly street drugs laced with fentanyl that were killing thousands, not the diversion of safer supply. They clearly have advised that preventing people from using drugs in public and preventing toxic drug deaths requires more, not fewer, safe consumption sites. B.C. has listened to the police call for more tools to deal with public use of illicit substances.

When will the Liberals ignore Conservative disinformation, recall the expert task force and formulate a comprehensive plan to end the toxic drug crisis?

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for being a collaborative partner in addressing the toxic drug supply and the tragic overdose deaths that are taking over our country from day to day. We are committed to a comprehensive, collaborative and evidence-based substance policy approach.

We appreciate the excellent work done by the expert task force on substance use, whose mandate was to provide advice to the government on a renewed Canadian drugs and substance plan.

It is important that actions be informed by independent advice of experts and evidence. I have asked the department to re-establish an expert advisory committee and work is under way.

Government Orders

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want to know how a person with a deportation order, which was upheld by a federal court, somehow still managed to get ministerial intervention to stop his removal. The person was convicted of five criminal charges and did not like to attend much school, despite being in Canada on a student visa.

Did the Minister of Immigration intend to make a mockery of our legal and immigration systems, or was this intervention guided by the hope of getting a few more votes for his party in B.C.?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, these are not matters that we talk about publicly, much less on the floor of the House of Commons.

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JEAN-PIERRE FERLAND

The Speaker: Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence in memory of Jean-Pierre Ferland.

[*Translation*]

I invite hon. members to rise.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RECONCILIATION ACT

The House resumed from April 19 consideration of the motion in relation to the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

The Speaker: It being 3:15 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the Senate amendments to Bill C-29.

Call in the members.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 741*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultarif
Albas

Aitchison
Aldag

Government Orders

Alhabra	Ali	Khanna	Khera
Allison	Anand	Kitchen	Kmiec
Anandasangaree	Angus	Koutrakis	Kram
Arnold	Arseneault	Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Arya	Ashton	Kusie	Kusmierczyk
Atwin	Bachrach	Kwan	Lake
Badawey	Bains	Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Baker	Baldinelli	Lamoureux	Lantsman
Barlow	Barrett	Lapointe	Larouche
Barron	Barsalou-Duval	Lattanzio	Lauzon
Battiste	Beaulieu	Lawrence	LeBlanc
Beech	Bergeron	Lebouthillier	Lehoux
Berthold	Bérubé	Lemire	Leslie
Bezan	Bibeau	Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Bittle	Blair	Liepert	Lightbound
Blaney	Block	Lloyd	Lobb
Blois	Boissonnault	Long	Longfield
Boulerice	Bradford	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
Bragdon	Brassard	MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
Brière	Brock	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins	Majumdar	Maloney
Cannings	Caputo	Martel	Martínez Ferrada
Carr	Carrie	Masse	Mathysen
Casey	Chabot	May (Cambridge)	May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
Chagger	Chahal	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Chambers	Champagne	McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
Champoux	Chatel	McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Chen	Chiang	McLean	McLeod
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	McPherson	Melillo
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper	Mendès	Mendicino
Cormier	Coteau	Miao	Michaud
Dabrusin	Dalton	Miller	Moore
Damoff	Davidson	Morantz	Morrice
Davies	DeBellefeuille	Morrison	Morrissey
Deltell	d'Entremont	Motz	Murray
Desbiens	Desilets	Muys	Naqvi
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal	Nater	Ng
Dhillon	Diab	Noormohamed	Normandin
Doherty	Dong	O'Connell	Oliphant
Dowdall	Dreeshen	O'Regan	Patzer
Dubourg	Duclos	Paul-Hus	Perkins
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi	Plamondon	Poilievre
El-Khoury	Ellis	Powlowski	Qualtrough
Epp	Erskine-Smith	Raves	Redekopp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)	Reid	Rempel Garner
Fast	Ferreri	Richards	Roberts
Fillmore	Findlay	Robillard	Rodriguez
Fisher	Fonseca	Rogers	Romanado
Fortier	Fortin	Rood	Rota
Fragiskatos	Fraser	Ruff	Sahota
Freeland	Gaheer	Sajjan	Saks
Gainey	Gallant	Samson	Sarai
Garon	Garrison	Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Gaudreau	Gazan	Scheer	Schiefke
Généreux	Genuis	Schmale	Seeback
Gerretsen	Gill	Serré	Sgro
Gladu	Goodridge	Shanahan	Sheehan
Gould	Gourde	Shields	Shipley
Gray	Green	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Hajdu	Hallan	Simard	Singh
Hanley	Hardie	Small	Sorbara
Hepfner	Hoback	Soroka	Sousa
Holland	Housefather	Steinley	Ste-Marie
Hughes	Hussen	Stewart	St-Onge
Hutchings	Iacono	Strahl	Stubbs
Idlout	Ien	Sudds	Tassi
Jaczek	Jeneroux	Taylor Roy	Thériault
Jivani	Johns	Therrien	Thomas
Joly	Jones	Thompson	Tochor
Jowhari	Julian	Tolmie	Trudeau
Kayabaga	Kelloway	Trudel	Turnbull
Kelly	Khalid	Uppal	Valdez

Routine Proceedings

Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Van Popta	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vignola
Willemure	Virani
Vis	Vuong
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Weiler	Wilkinson
Williams	Williamson
Yip	Zahid
Zarrillo	Zimmer
Zuberi— 323	

[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 17th report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food in relation to Bill C-355, an act to prohibit the export by air of horses for slaughter and to make related amendments to certain acts.

[*English*]

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

I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

* * *

PETITIONS

NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition. Last spring the government made legislative changes to allow Health Canada to regulate natural health supplements the same as therapeutic synthetic drugs, which will mean substantive new fees on the import, manufacturing and sale of things like vitamins, protein powders and even fluoride-free toothpaste. Constituents in my riding who rely on natural health products daily are concerned that these changes will result in the products they use being removed from Canadian store shelves. They are calling on the government to stop these changes and to work with the industry on issues such as labelling and fees. The petitioners are asking to save our supplements.

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by Canadians urging Parliament to pass Bill S-281, or Brian's bill, named in honour of the late Brian Ilesic, who was brutally murdered by a co-worker at the University of Alberta. The petitioners are calling, more specifically, for Parliament to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, such that convicted murderers would not be able to apply for parole year after year after serving their minimum sentence and would only be able to apply at the time of their automatic review.

● (1535)

NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by the great people of Windsor West, Windsor—Tecumseh, London West, London North Centre and London—Fanshawe, calling on the House of Commons to immediately repeal the new regulatory constraints passed last year on the natural health products that millions of Canadians rely upon, which have since affected their medical freedom of choice and affordability.

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Drouin	Godin
Guilbeault	Pauzé— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Senate amendments read the second time and concurred in)

[*English*]

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 14 minutes.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased today to present, in both official languages, the following two reports of the Standing Committee on International Trade: the 17th report, entitled the “The CBSA Assessment and Revenue Management System: An Interim Report”, and the 18th report, entitled the “The Strike in 2023 at British Columbia Ports: Selected Economic Impacts and Federal Actions”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to each of these two reports.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 25th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, entitled “Strengthening Canada's Diplomatic Capacity in an Increasingly Turbulent Age”.

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

Routine Proceedings

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour to stand in this place and present a petition on behalf of numerous Canadians who are asking the House of Commons to reaffirm its support for Ukraine in fighting for its freedom and for its people around the world so that it can defeat the illegal invasion perpetrated by Vladimir Putin. However, they also expressed their disappointment that the Government of Canada would choose, for the first time in history, to include a carbon tax in a new free trade agreement.

It is an honour to present this petition. I acknowledge that the Canadians who have signed it are asking the government to remove the provisions in the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement that force a carbon tax upon the people of Ukraine and Canadians.

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition. Hundreds of people in the community and area of Langdon lost their post office more than a year ago and everything they have done to get it back has not been successful. This is very difficult, particularly for seniors who have been redirected 30 kilometres away to deal with parcels, mail and special issues that come to the post office. The people in the Langdon area need a post office in this community of thousands and the petitioners would like it now.

FOOD SECURITY

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be in the House to table a petition on behalf of petitioners from Brooklyn Elementary School and Highland Secondary School, who have signed this petition. What they are most concerned about is prioritizing funding for a national school food program. They want to see it implemented as soon as fall 2024. They have a lot of concerns about young people going hungry at school and hope to see this dealt with, including a federal component, immediately.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition signed by Canadians across the country. The petitioners believe that vulnerable Canadians with mental illnesses should receive suicide prevention counselling over medical assistance in dying. The petitioners are concerned about the lack of consensus among health care experts regarding what constitutes irremediable mental illness and the inadequate supports for the mental health of Canadians. As such, they are calling upon the House of Commons to cancel its plans to expand the eligibility of medical assistance in dying for those with mental illness.

GENDER EQUALITY

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present petition e-4666, signed by some 11,000 Canadians from every province and territory.

The petition notes that, despite legal progress made with the passage of Bill C-16 in 2017, transgender and gender-diverse people continue to be denied full equality and denied the safety and acceptance that every Canadian deserves.

The signatories call on the Government of Canada to implement the 29 recommendations of the “White Paper on the Status of Trans and Gender Diverse People” tabled in the House last June. Action to implement the recommendations in the white paper would allow trans and gender-diverse people to live free from violence and hate and to have access to gender-affirming health care, access to housing and, most of all, freedom to live as their true and authentic selves.

I want to thank the author of this petition, Fae Johnstone, trans activists and the thousands of people who stood together in solidarity with transgender and gender-diverse people by signing this petition.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a petition initiated by the folks at Transport Action Canada and signed by over 9,000 Canadians who are calling for a vibrant future for sustainable, affordable, safe and public passenger rail in this country.

The petitioners call on the government to pass my bill, the rail passenger priority act, to invest in the replacement of Via Rail's long-distance fleet, to put riders and workers on the board of Via Rail and, most importantly, to ensure that high-frequency rail on the Windsor-to-Quebec corridor is procured publicly, built publicly and operated publicly in the public interest for the good of all Canadians.

They call for government leadership and for a vibrant future for passenger rail, and I hope that the government will deliver just that.

• (1540)

GAZA

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table petition e-4731, signed by 12,429 people across Canada.

The petitioners note that Canadian citizens and permanent residents have beloved family members in Gaza and that, under existing policy, these family members are subject to visa application requirements that are often impossible to meet due to limited working bureaucracy infrastructure inside Gaza and/or their inability to travel to a Canadian visa office.

They further note that current policy only allows for children and spouses to be sponsored for permanent residency, excluding siblings, parents and grandparents. They note that Canada has demonstrated an ability to facilitate visa-less travel at time of departure for spouses and children from Gaza to Canada; that Canada has supported the travel and reunification of families in international crises before, such as the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel and permanent residence policy for Ukrainian nationals with family members in Canada, including siblings, children, parents, grandparents and spouses; and that the Canadian government can update its policies governing eligibility for travel and residency as it chooses.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to immediately create direct pathways for the emergency travel of Palestinians to Canada and establish a policy for permanent residence for immediate and extended Palestinian family members in Canada.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour and a privilege to rise on behalf of the good people of the riding of Waterloo. I bring two petitions that people from within the riding of Waterloo and the region of Waterloo have signed.

The first brings to the attention of the House that tens of thousands of Palestinians have been killed over the last over three months; it is 200 days now. The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons and Parliament assembled to support the case that South Africa has brought forward to the ICJ. They are asking the House to acknowledge that the deliberate starvation of the civilian population of water, food and electricity amounts to collective punishment, which we know is clearly forbidden under international humanitarian law. They are asking the people assembled in this Parliament to uphold our responsibility to prevent and punish genocide wherever it occurs and to see that the case South Africa has brought forward helps to bring an end to the killing that is taking place.

The second petition similarly calls on the House of Commons and Parliament assembled to demand an immediate ceasefire in the Israel-Palestine conflict. They are asking that the blockades be lifted so that there is a humanitarian corridor and that emergency and humanitarian intervention can be available for these people. They go further in asking us to make sure all necessary measures are taken to protect civilians, both Israelis and Palestinians, and to help foster a climate conducive to building a lasting peace in the Middle East.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to present a petition that is of keen concern to residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands. In fact, it is a petition that other petitioners within the riding have had me present to the government and to the Parliament assembly before. It is not an unfamiliar issue, I know, to members on all sides of the House. It is the crisis of the absence of family doctors, specifically in Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Where 92% of physicians across Canada work in urban areas, areas such as Saanich—Gulf Islands have 8% left to cover the needs of constituents. Within Victoria and Sidney, for example, the aver-

Routine Proceedings

age wait time at a walk-in clinic is between 92 and 180 minutes. I certainly have experienced, recently, the absence of a family doctor and the impact it has had on my life.

The petitioners, specifically recognizing that this is not solely one jurisdiction's exclusive responsibility, call on the House of Commons and Parliament to work with the provinces and the territories to come to a holistic and fair solution to Canada's current family doctor shortage crisis.

• (1545)

NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to present a petition that has been signed by the residents of Haldimand—Norfolk. These petitioners are concerned about the legislative and regulatory changes that have significantly affected the natural health products industry.

The petitioners are concerned that the new regulations will cause consumer prices to skyrocket and consumer choices to plummet at a time when inflation is at a record high. As such, they are calling upon the government and upon the Minister of Health to adjust the regulations and to reduce the costs to the industry.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if revised and supplementary responses to Question Nos. 2142, initially tabled on January 29, and 2340, initially tabled on April 8, could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled in an electronic format immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 2142—**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:**

With regard to federal support to Canada's grocery sector, between November 1, 2015, to January 1, 2024: (a) how much federal funding was provided to Canada's major grocery companies (Loblaws, Metro, Walmart, Sobeys, and Costco) to support business development, by (i) year, (ii) dollar amount, (iii) company; (b) how much federal subsidies were provided to those major grocery companies (Loblaws, Metro, Walmart, Sobeys, and Costco) to support business development, by (i) year, (ii) dollar amount, (iii) company; and (c) what programs were responsible for managing federal funding and subsidies to Canada's grocery sector, by federal department or agency?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2340—**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:**

With regard to federal investments in Canada's grocery sector since January 1, 2006: how much federal funding has been provided to (i) Loblaws, (ii) Metro, (iii) Walmart, (iv) Sobeys, (v) Costco, broken down by company, year, and type of funding?

(Return tabled)

S. O. 52

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

OPIOIDS

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that I have received two notices of requests for an emergency debate concerning the same subject. I invite the hon. member for Carleton and the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock to rise and make brief interventions.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a matter of grave, urgent and time-sensitive importance. Your decision on whether to grant this emergency debate will be a life or death decision. If you question that, let me share with you the statistics and the background.

In May 2022, the Prime Minister announced that he was granting British Columbia's NDP government an exemption to the Criminal Code prohibition on crack, heroin, meth and other deadly drugs. In January the following year, 2023, that exemption took effect, which decriminalized those aforementioned drugs and their use in playgrounds, hospitals, parks, transit and other places where children and vulnerable people are exposed to the risks.

The results are now in, and they are irrefutable. In the 12 months that followed the decriminalization of those hard drugs, British Columbia had a record-smashing 2,500 drug overdose deaths. This represents a 380% increase in said deaths since the Prime Minister took office. In other words, in the period since these policies came into effect, we have seen drug overdose deaths increase by a factor of four.

Furthermore, Canada now has the fastest-growing drug overdose death rate and the second-highest total rate of any of the 11 countries reviewed by The Commonwealth Fund. In other words, people are dying as a direct result of these policies. This is not simply my claim; it is now the NDP government's admission. As I said at the outset, it was the NDP government that asked for the decriminalization, which the Prime Minister granted. That provincial government has now reversed itself and has asked for the government to urgently recriminalize drugs in many public places. It is an admission that this policy is taking lives.

This is where the urgency comes in. Every day in British Columbia, six people die of drug overdoses. This is by far the highest overdose rate anywhere in Canada. It is something that even the NDP government is now attributing, in part, to the decriminalization. Unfortunately, that provincial government needs the federal government's permission to reimpose criminal sanctions on those drugs, something that the minister refused to grant today.

That means that even though the NDP government in B.C. wants to recriminalize it, as I stand here and as the clock ticks, decriminalization is in place. Every single day that goes by before the Prime Minister reverses himself, decriminalized drugs will be killing people on the streets of Vancouver, on Vancouver Island, in the Lower Mainland and in other places across the province.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

● (1550)

The Speaker: I would ask the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby to please hold his comments until he has the floor.

The hon. member for Carleton has the floor.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, anyone who believes six deaths per day is not an emergency needs to give their head a shake. Anybody who says that 2,500 deaths a year is not an emergency needs to give their head a shake. Those numbers, by the way, do not include the indirect deaths caused by drug-induced crime on innocent bystanders who might just be taking their kids to a local Starbucks before they get stabbed in front of their family and die in a puddle of their own blood, which is then broadcast on social media, as we have seen.

Those are the kinds of horrific scenes that have become commonplace ever since the Prime Minister and the NDP radical policy was implemented. Given that we are losing six lives a day, given that the reversal of the policy could prevent some of those lost lives, or at the very least, that such a matter should be debated, and given that the clock is ticking as the NDP government in B.C. awaits a decision from the Prime Minister and his health minister, this is an emergency.

We ask the Speaker to join with common-sense Conservatives to allow for this debate to happen immediately so that we can stop the drugs, disorder, death and destruction that the radical NDP-Liberal decriminalization policy has caused.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also rise to request an emergency debate on the Prime Minister's dangerous and failed drug decriminalization policy. The House heard the Leader of the Opposition speak about the gravity, that it is a grave and urgent matter, and I agree with that. I particularly agree with it as a British Columbian.

B.C. Premier David Eby and his NDP government have finally admitted that these extremist policies are a failure, and now, he has come begging for major changes to the Prime Minister's hard drug decriminalization plan. For Canadians watching who are not from B.C., this plan allows for opioids, cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine to be used in public spaces such as parks, coffee shops, one's local Tim Hortons, public transit and even hospitals.

When this policy began in 2023, the province set a devastating record. In that one year, there were over 2,500 drug deaths. After nine years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, more than 40,000 Canadians have tragically died from drug overdoses; those are 40,000 completely preventable deaths.

Taxpayer-funded drugs continue to be handed out by the radical Liberal government, and those deadly drugs are increasingly diverted into the hands of organized crime and into the hands of teenagers, pushing our youth into the destructive cycle of addiction. We see videos about this pretty much daily out of British Columbia. Drug overdose is now the number one cause of death for 10-year-olds to 17-year-olds in B.C. That is pretty devastating.

Until the Prime Minister's extremist drug decriminalization policy is dismantled, it will continue to cause death, chaos and carnage across Canada. Parliament has a responsibility to attend to the ongoing destruction caused by this deadly hard drug policy. I understood from the minister earlier today in question period that they have Premier Eby's request under review. As the Leader of the Opposition just said, every day of review means six more deaths; that is every day.

I trust my request will be considered as the emergency and crisis that it is. In order to save lives, to rebuild families, to eliminate chaos in our streets and to start putting more money into treatment and recovery from drug addiction, we must put an end to these dangerous and deadly policies immediately. I repeat that it is six lives per day, every day. The time to turn this hurt into hope starts now. Please consider this as the urgent matter that it is.

● (1555)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I would like to thank the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock and the member for Carleton for giving the Speaker notice, as well as for the arguments they presented in the House. However, I do find that their request does not meet the requirements of the standing order as it is listed in the House of Commons Standing Orders.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

DECORUM IN THE HOUSE

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe the Table has received notice, and I did mention prior to the break when we went back to our constituencies that I would be intervening on the issue of the use of false titles in the House of Commons. Members will recall that this came up just prior to the constituency break. I did say at the time that I would be bringing forward further information, so I am rising on it today.

When we speak in the House, we have to follow clear rules of decorum in the way we address each other. We are guided by general principles, by being respectful, being truthful and not using false information, which is why we do not refer to each other with false titles. The *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, commonly referred to as Bosc and Gagnon, which is, of course, our procedural bible, says:

Points of Order

During debate, Members do not refer to one another by their names but rather by title, position or constituency name in order to guard against all tendency to personalize debate. A Minister is referred to by the portfolio he or she holds...

Remarks directed specifically at another Member which question that Member's integrity, honesty or character are not in order. A Member will be requested to withdraw offensive remarks, allegations, or accusations of impropriety directed towards another Member.

The Speaker will recall that, on April 18, the member for Calgary Forest Lawn had to retract his comment after stating that the member for Edmonton Strathcona was "in the government right now". The Speaker will also recall that the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes had to withdraw his comments on April 18, while we were questioning Mr. Firth before the bar, because the member was saying things that were not true. On the same day, during question period, the member for Milton referred to the leader of the Conservatives with a false title and the Speaker immediately intervened to ask the member to withdraw his statement.

We are encouraged to see that the speakership is taking the matter of false titles and factually incorrect statements to heart.

[*Translation*]

I would like to quote a ruling handed down by the Chair on March 29, 2022:

Members are elected to the House under the banner of a political party or as independents. The party that can obtain the confidence of the House forms the government. As such, it is the governing party and it consists of ministers, parliamentary secretaries and backbenchers who, without being members of the executive, are all part of the same political group. The other parties in the House and independent members constitute the opposition since they are not members of the governing party.

...

It is clear to the Chair that there is no change in the status or designation of the members of the New Democratic Party, nor in that of their officers, as a result of this agreement.

That agreement being the confidence and supply agreement.

...No NDP member is holding a ministerial post. There has been no change in the representation of the parties in the House. As a result, it seems obvious to the Chair that the NDP still forms a recognized opposition party, just like the Conservative Party of Canada and the Bloc Québécois.

● (1600)

[*English*]

Since that ruling, the official opposition, the Conservative Party, has interchangeably used, in a very false way, the terms "NDP-Liberal government" and "Bloc-Liberal government", which makes no sense. This shows the contradiction, and that they are aware they are issuing falsehoods. They have repeatedly used these false titles, these false comments, in the House of Commons. Repeating in the House over and over—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are, of course, heckling because—

The Speaker: I will ask the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies to hold his comments until he has the floor.

The Budget

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby will please continue with his point of order.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, repeating in the House over and over a statement that is factually untrue is a serious problem and a serious breach of parliamentary practices.

The members in the Conservative Party know that. They have repeated something in the House thousands of times that is false and misleading. They have admitted it is false and misleading by using a false title that is different in English than it is in French. In French, they continually refer to a Bloc-Liberal government, which is factually untrue. That is a falsehood, the same way that calling it an NDP-Liberal government is a falsehood. It is factually incorrect.

[*Translation*]

I would like to point out that the French term “gouvernement bloquiste-libéral” is equally incorrect.

We have a duty to do everything in our power to limit the use of false titles and incorrect terms in the House.

[*English*]

Quite simply, the Conservatives have raised the question of false titles, and we believe very strongly that you should make a ruling on the issue of false titles. You did say that you would be coming back to the House on this issue.

We believe this additional information will help you to make the appropriate decision that the use of false titles, including the use of a falsehood that the Conservatives love to repeat but is factually untrue, is something that is inappropriate for the proceedings of this chamber, the House of Commons of Canada, the highest body of political discourse in our land.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the member for New Westminster—Burnaby's intervention, he made a number of incredible claims. One was that I had said something that was not true. He is indirectly accusing me of lying, but is offering no proof of such because that did not happen. That is the first problem.

The second problem is that the member is saying that we cannot give false titles to individuals. Of course, what we are talking about is that the NDP-Liberal government should not be talking about that member.

The third thing is that, just seconds after the leader of the official opposition raised the emergency of the effects of the dangerous decriminalization that has been causing deaths in our communities, this member was falling all over himself to make sure that he could be comfortable with the signed contract he has with the Liberals to support them.

There are two million people at food banks and more than a half dozen people a day dying. He should be ashamed, and he needs to withdraw the falsehood he said.

An hon. member: Debate. That is debate.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, the member wants to shout me down. He should be asked to withdraw the blatant falsehood that he said about me, unless he is willing to point to the falsehood

that he is alleging I said. If he cannot, he should be instructed to withdraw it and to apologize.

• (1605)

The Speaker: I see the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex is rising. Is this on the same point of order? I am coming very close to hearing all that was mentioned to be heard on this issue.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby was extended the opportunity to intervene as he had given notice that he would comment on this point of order before the Speaker made his ruling. Because there was a reference made to the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, that member was also extended the opportunity to raise his point, to counter or to clarify the record.

The hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex was not mentioned, so I want to make sure that we would be hearing something new. The Speaker has heard enough on this debate to be able to come back to the House with a ruling.

Ms. Lianne Rood: Mr. Speaker, I would just ask for unanimous consent to table the NDP-Liberal government's supply and confidence agreement.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member was not following the rules, and we just heard there is no unanimous consent.

I thank all hon. members. The Speaker will come back to the House with a ruling on this front.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am happy to come back to this debate.

I was debating the battle for the soul of Canada, a battle between, on one side, the left and NDP-Liberal socialism, with its spending problem approach, high crime rates, divided division, high taxation and an unproductive monopolistic economy and, on the other side, the vision for a common-sense Conservative economy, where government is leaner, taxes are lower, paycheques are better and competition thrives. Of course, we also talk about democracy. Democracy works when there is public trust and good fiscal stewardship. We are trying to make the lives of Canadians even better.

The Budget

Canadians enjoyed a good life in the middle class nine years ago. Canadians, young and old, now see the truth after nine years. They see, now, a government that is, instead of working hard for the middle class and those looking to join it, shutting the door to the middle class and those very Canadians it promised help to nine years ago. To top it all off, we have a monopoly problem and more pain, where people are paying higher fees for airlines, groceries, banking and cell phones.

The government approved, mere months ago, the merger of RBC and HSBC, which was the number one bank buying the number seven bank. One can already see the costs of mergers and acquisitions to those Canadians and to all Canadians across Canada. The five-year variable for HSBC, before the merger, was 6.4%. Now, after the merger, just today, that variable rate is at 7.2% under RBC, meaning that, if those mortgage holders had a \$500,000 mortgage, which is pretty low for Canada, they are now paying over \$333 a month. The monopoly problem means that we have less competition, and it means that Canadians are paying higher rates.

When we look at open banking as a solution for our problem with banking, we do not get the legislation promised out of this budget. Just like a caterpillar, it says that it is coming soon.

The reality is that legislation on open banking would bring savings to Canadians. In the U.K., introducing open banking brought \$400 per family, yet this legislation would just kick it down the road once again, six years after the government promised to introduce it. Another one, called real-time rail, which would bring modern payments and make payments faster between Canadians, has been delayed, deferred and postponed.

There have been no new announcements on grocery prices. The government says that it has done enough with Bill C-59. Of course, Canadians have the highest grocery prices in a whole generation and are buying less food.

We have false statements about halving phone bills. The Prime Minister said that he would halve phone bills. Canadians are paying more and specifically more for data, as Canadians consume more data, especially for doorbell cams, as they are seeing increases of auto theft and they have to monitor their cars. Canadians are using data. Companies, of course, are profiting from that.

Canadians, instead, are broke because capitalism without competition is not capitalism, where prices are freely negotiated. We do not have competition in this monopoly-centred Canada and, what is worse, the budget aims to tax those who stay.

Canadians in Canada are broke, but it does not have to be that way. The state has no money other than the money people earn themselves. If the state wants to spend more, it is only by borrowing from one's savings or taxing one more.

In contrast, Conservatives champion the principles of individual responsibility and limited government, greater revenues and growth. We would have a dollar-for-dollar rule. For every dollar we spend, we must find a dollar in savings, just like a family does.

As Canadians, we must have the conviction to embrace the principles of that conservatism, to reject the false promises of Liberal-

NDP socialism and to defend the values of freedom, opportunity and prosperity.

We would fix the budget, build the homes and axe the tax, and we would make sure that we bring Canadians home a capitalist government that would bring home their paycheque and bring back the middle class.

• (1610)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, members can do the contrast. I am game for that.

He says that they would be a capitalistic government. Do members know that, last year, Canada was ranked number one in the G7 in direct foreign investment? Canada was ranked number three in the world. I would suggest to members that those who are investing, those countries abroad and those people abroad, realize that Canada is a good place to invest. The facts demonstrate that from last year.

I would suggest to members that it is in good part because of things like the number of trade agreements that we have signed off on. That is important. No government has signed off on more free trade agreements than this government has. That is a fact.

Why did the hon. member vote against the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind members that, when the hon. member was making his speech, nobody was interrupting him. If those members who are speaking out of turn are trying to answer the question, they should ask to be part of the debate and wait to be recognized instead of trying to take part when they are not supposed to.

The hon. member for Bay of Quinte.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, there were a lot of questions there.

When we look at trade agreements, the government just lost a trade agreement with the U.K. It could not get it signed. The EU agreement was signed because of the work done by the previous, Conservative government, which got that rolling. When we talk about foreign direct investment, of course there are records when the government has spent \$50 billion of its own money to create subsidies for those companies to come in. However, when we look at growth rates for the OECD, Canada is dead last; right now, its economy is performing with five times less growth compared with the U.S. economy. That growth is buoyed by public spending, which is five times any other spending by the private sector.

Government spending is driving inflation and high interest rates, but more, the higher cost of living. It is hurting Canadians, and we need to change that.

The Budget

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, does my hon. colleague agree with the government spending \$34 billion to build the Trans Mountain pipeline, which the private sector had decided was not profitable and something it was not going to pursue? Every billion is 1,000 million, so it was \$34,000 million.

Would the hon. member like to comment on that waste of public funds?

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, it was a waste of public funds just for the fact that it cost that much to do, when the private sector probably could have done it for about one-fifth of that or 10% on the dollar. Of course everything the Liberal government has touched has been more expensive.

When we talk about the oil and gas sector in Canada, which is still very important, we talk about LNG. This week Poland was asking, screaming, for LNG to help offset the Russian gas that they are buying. I was in Germany last year with the industry minister, and Germany was screaming for that gas. The Green Party of Germany was asking for LNG. They said it was the way they were going to cut their emissions and not rely on coal.

We could do that in Canada. Let us support LNG. Let us support our oil and gas industry.

• (1615)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, one of the Bloc Québécois's budget requests was to reimburse Quebec for taking in asylum seekers. We estimate the cost at roughly \$900 million.

My colleague's political party boasts that it would interfere less in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces.

Does my colleague think that decent reimbursement of the money that Quebec spent on an area of federal responsibility should have been included in the budget?

[English]

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, no, we do not think we should be interfering in provincial politics.

As a second part of this, I am going to give one stat. When we look at what is coming into Canada, we had 1.3 million immigrants last year. We need immigration. I need immigration big time in Bay of Quinte. When that is related to how many people it is, the U.S. had 3.3 million migrants last year, and if we had the 1.3 million contributors to the U.S., that would be equivalent to 11 million migrants. It is massive.

When we look at 1.3 million Canadians, we only brought 4,300 home builders to this country. No wonder we cannot build homes. We do not have the people. We have to ensure we work with the provinces to get the people we need to those provinces, number one, to build homes and to provide workers. That is going to help productivity in this country.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Ottawa—Vanier.

Budget 2024 is taking bold measures to build more homes, make life more affordable, support those most in need and keep Canadians safe.

The best way to make housing prices more affordable is to build more homes, faster. We are cutting red tape, fast-tracking development, converting public lands into housing and using innovative technologies to build smarter. Our plan will unlock 3.87 million new homes by 2031.

For renters, we are putting home ownership back in reach. We are helping them save for their first down payment tax-free. We are giving renters credit for rental payments, so when it comes time to apply for that first mortgage, they will have a better chance of qualifying. We are also protecting affordable units and creating thousands more across Canada.

We are strengthening Canada's social safety net for every generation. Ten-dollar-a-day child care is already saving parents thousands of dollars a year and giving young Canadians the security to start their own families. Our affordable child care and family-focused programs are also smart economic policy, supporting a record-high labour force participation rate for working-aged women of 85.4%.

New programs such as the Canada dental care plan, the national school food program, the Canada disability benefit and national pharmacare, including insulin and contraceptives, will help Canadians realize even more savings and improve health outcomes.

The Canadian economy is outperforming expectations. Both the IMF and OECD project that Canada will see the strongest economic growth in the G7 in 2025. In the face of higher interest rates, Canada has avoided the recession that some had predicted. Headline inflation has fallen significantly from its June 2022 peak to 2.8% in February 2024, and it is projected to fall even further throughout the year. Canada is also maintaining the lowest net debt-and deficit-to-GDP ratios in the G7, preserving Canada's long-term fiscal sustainability.

I would like to talk about some of the measures contained in the budget.

I already mentioned housing, an issue that requires an all-hands-on-deck approach. I know that home ownership is out of reach for many young Canadians. We have a plan to build a Canada that works better for every generation, and we will work with all levels of government and the private sector to get more homes built faster.

The Budget

I am proud to have been part of the efforts of our government to ban assault-style firearms in 2020. We are now moving forward with a plan to buy these assault weapons back from retailers and Canadians to ensure that they never fall into the hands of criminals. We are also providing funding to modernize the telephone and case management systems of the RCMP, something advocates have long asked for.

PolySeSouvient has said that they are “pleased to see that the federal government has reiterated its commitment to implement the long-awaited buyback program for firearm models prohibited in 2020”. It has also said, “the government remains determined to deliver on its promise to Canadians to remove these dangerous guns from circulation”.

One issue that has impacted those in Oakville and Burlington, as well as other communities across the country, is auto theft, and this has been a top priority for me. As former parliamentary secretary of public safety, I have been pleased to see the government take such strong and rapid action to combat auto theft, particularly over the last few years. These actions have yielded tangible results.

Earlier this month, representatives from the Canada Border Services Agency, alongside police forces from Ontario and Quebec, announced remarkable progress in intercepting vehicle theft in Canada through Project Vector. They reported the recovery of 598 vehicles, with an estimated value of \$34.5 million, that were designated for illegal exportation. Budget 2024 cracks down further on auto theft by establishing new criminal offences and providing the government with greater authority to prohibit or restrict the importation and sale of the devices used by auto thieves.

While I am disappointed that budget 2024 did not fund the Canada disability benefit at the level that many disability advocates had called for, I am also happy to see that this transformative investment has been made. Funding for the Canada disability benefit is the single largest line item in budget 2024, which demonstrates our government's strong commitment to ensuring a meaningful benefit that enables people with disabilities to participate in the labour force, grow our economy, have better outcomes and be full participants in all aspects of society and our communities.

● (1620)

I will continue to call for more for people with disabilities, but in these tight fiscal times, this is a meaningful initial investment to get this benefit flowing to those who need it. Moreover, it will bring provinces and territories to the table.

The government remains devoted in its commitment to protect the rights and dignities of all Canadians, fostering an inclusive Canada that is welcoming for all, regardless of race, faith, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability. Hate has no place in Canada. Everyone deserves to feel safe in their home, on the street, in places of worship and in local communities across our country. Budget 2024 invests in and scales up efforts to combat hate in order to strengthen the resiliency of our communities and institutions so that, together, we can build safer, more vibrant and inclusive communities.

I have been working to see our government implement a national red dress alert that would notify the public when an indigenous

woman, girl or two-spirit person goes missing. In budget 2023, the government made investments to launch a red dress alert. Since then, I have been part of our government's engagement with provinces, territories and indigenous partners, to co-develop the national red dress alert. The government heard the need for specific, regionally tailored approaches to meet the diverse needs of indigenous communities across the country.

To move forward on this needed national alert system, budget 2024 proposes to provide \$1.3 million over three years to co-develop, with indigenous partners, a regional red dress alert pilot system.

The budget implementation act would include required legislative changes to implement budget 2024 that address and prevent unintended and harmful uses of therapeutic products, such as addictive nicotine replacement therapies, from being marketed to youth. It would also amend the Tobacco and Vaping Products Act to implement a tobacco cost recovery framework. This framework would increase the tobacco industry's accountability by ensuring that tobacco companies contribute to the government's costs of responding to the tobacco epidemic and allow Health Canada to introduce new compliance and enforcement tools. Both measures have long been called for by the Lung Health Alliance and the Canadian lung foundation.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, the increase in the tax rate for e-cigarettes in budget 2024 will help protect youth from nicotine addiction. It supports this measure to counter high rates of youth vaping.

Non-emitting nuclear energy is one of the key tools in helping the world reach net-zero emissions by 2050. Canada stands out as one of the few countries to have developed and deployed its own nuclear technology, the CANDU, and the robust Canadian supply chains built around CANDU not only generate high-skilled jobs and foster research and development but also play a role in creating affordable and clean electricity.

Canada's nuclear sector also produces medical isotopes, which are essential for radiation therapy and diagnosing heart disease. Canadian Nuclear Laboratories conducts nuclear science research that helps advance clean energy and medical technologies, as well as environmental remediation and waste management of historic nuclear sites. Budget 2024 proposes to provide \$3.1 billion over 11 years to support ongoing nuclear science research, environmental protection and site remediation work.

The Budget

I have long been a supporter and advocate for the entire Terry Fox organization, including the Terry Fox Humanitarian Award program. This program, first established in 1982 in honour of Terry Fox, is a national scholarship program that awards scholarships to university students who exemplify the humanitarian ideals of Terry Fox by volunteering and giving back to their communities. The Terry Fox Humanitarian Award recognizes some of the best and brightest Canada has to offer. To support the program to expand on its important mission by increasing the value and number of awards for Canadian students, budget 2024 proposes to provide \$10 million to the Terry Fox Humanitarian Award.

Kids cannot learn if their bellies are empty. In Halton, two amazing organizations, Halton Food For Thought and Food4Kids Halton, ensure that students are not going hungry. With the creation of a national school food program, we are filling the gap to support our kids. The Ontario Public School Boards' Association has said it is “extremely pleased to see the federal government's investment of \$1 billion over five years to support a new National School Food Program.”

• (1625)

These are just a few measures contained in budget 2024. There are real challenges facing our country, which demand sensible, practical solutions. It is our government that has actually put forward a plan to address these challenges, focusing on investments in Canadians.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the time to participate in this debate. What is interesting is that when we listen to the government, it is unicorns, rainbows, gumdrops and lollipops. However, when we look and dig deep into the situation, we can see some of the news headlines that are happening, such as “Oakville food bank sees greatest demand in its history” and “Dramatic and alarming increase' in food bank use reported in Burlington”. Two million Canadians visited the food bank last year. It is expected that one million more, so three million people, will have to visit the food bank this year alone.

Is that a record to be proud of?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, the hon. member mentions very disturbing trends in food bank usage. That is why our government has implemented things like \$10-a-day child care. The cost of child care for families in my community has been astronomical. I know of families that are now able to have both parents participate in the workforce because of that child care program, which is not even fully implemented yet in Ontario.

We have things like the Canada child benefit and the Canada carbon rebate going to families in my community to offset the cost. Eight out of 10 families in my community are getting more back. We are addressing affordability issues, but we are doing it in a way that is supporting families and people in my riding and across the country.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, the division of powers between the different levels of government dates back to the Constitution. It comes under the authority of the Constitution Act, 1867, and it is also the basis of federalism. I

would like my colleague to tell me what we should make of all this interference.

Is the government telling us that the Canadian Constitution needs to be reviewed or reopened?

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, I would use child care as an example. The province of Quebec has had an outstanding affordable, quality child care program for many years. In negotiations with the province, we were able to accommodate and respect provincial jurisdiction.

When we are stamping forward with programs, we want to work with provinces and municipalities on things like housing, being respectful of their jurisdiction but also being at the table to make sure that we are actually advancing on issues that are important to Canadians.

• (1630)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I am glad that the member mentioned a bit about housing. Unfortunately, the budget does not do enough for indigenous housing.

For example, the Assembly of First Nations reported, in 2021, that the first nations housing need to close that gap is \$44 billion. The Auditor General, this past March, reported that 80% of first nations housing needs are not being met. In fact, she said, at our indigenous and northern affairs committee today, that what the Liberal government is doing is contradictory to reconciliation.

What can the government do to make sure that it is not in contradiction of reconciliation? What can it do to show the importance it places on reconciliation and investing more in first nations housing?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, I want to start by thanking the hon. member for her very important advocacy on this and many other issues of importance to indigenous peoples in this country. She asked what we can do when it comes to indigenous housing, and my answer would be that we have to do more.

I firmly believe that indigenous peoples have the right to housing as much as people in my community of Oakville North—Burlington. The Auditor General's report was quite clear, on both housing and first nations policing, that we have not done as much as we should. I will continue to advocate for more investments in housing in indigenous communities across this country.

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is important for me to rise today on behalf of the residents of Ottawa—Vanier to talk about our government's budget, which is entitled “Fairness for Every Generation”.

The Budget

Our government recognizes that Canadians are facing many challenges today. Whether it is housing or affordability, many of these challenges are leading to growing generational inequality in Canada. That is why this budget focuses on the investments needed to build a fairer future for Canada.

Today, I would like to focus my remarks on some of the budget measures that will have a significant and direct impact on my community of Ottawa—Vanier and the national capital region.

[*English*]

Like many of my colleagues, I have been hearing from my constituents about how concerned they are with the current housing crisis. Students, young professionals and newcomers are worried that they will not be able to find a place they can afford to rent near their school or job. Families increasingly believe that they will never be able to afford a home. Senior homeowners are concerned that their children and grandchildren will miss out on the dream of home ownership that they enjoyed, while seniors who rent are watching their housing costs eat up more and more of their retirement savings. This is why our government is taking decisive action to solve Canada's housing crisis with budget 2024.

[*Translation*]

The housing measures in budget 2024 build on previously announced policies, such as eliminating the GST on new purpose-built rental construction and allocating tens of billions of dollars to the apartment construction loan program, the affordable housing fund and the housing accelerator fund. These policies will help increase the supply of housing in communities across the country, making it easier for Canadians to find a place to call home.

In February, for example, Mayor Sutcliffe, city councillors and the Ottawa Liberal caucus joined me in my riding of Ottawa—Vanier to announce an investment of more than \$176 million from the housing accelerator fund for the City of Ottawa. This is part of an agreement that will see the construction of more than 4,400 housing units over the next three years and more than 32,000 new housing units over the next decade.

• (1635)

[*English*]

Budget 2024 also includes a number of new measures that will continue the government's commitment to solving the housing crisis in Ottawa—Vanier and across the country. One of the measures that will have a direct impact in my community is the public lands for homes plan. This project will see lands owned by the federal government being unlocked for the construction of new housing, leading to over 250,000 new homes by 2031.

Ottawa—Vanier, in particular, has already benefited from such a program, such as in Wateridge Village, where a former military base has become a thriving residential community with a variety of affordable and market-rate housing developments. These include real examples of affordable housing, such as Veterans' House and housing built by Habitat for Humanity and Ottawa Community Housing with the Mikinak project. Just last week, again, I was in Wateridge Village announcing how the public lands for homes plan will lead to the construction of 500 new homes in that community. This is real action on housing for Ottawa—Vanier.

[*Translation*]

Budget 2024 also takes steps to make more rental housing units available for Canadians. We are investing billions of additional dollars for the construction of new rental apartments, and we are making changes to the apartment construction loan program to make it easier for builders to build. Our government knows that by making it cheaper and easier to build new homes, we will be able to create the housing supply that Canada needs to address the housing crisis.

[*English*]

Another important priority shared by many people in my riding, including community groups, local businesses and everyday residents, is the revitalization of Ottawa's downtown core, including the ByWard Market. Even before the pandemic, we knew that the way downtown Ottawa was designed would have to change.

The current model of office towers full of workers commuting in from the suburbs, and businesses that close at 5 p.m. when the workers return home, is becoming increasingly unsustainable. In the wake of COVID, we know that the new reality of hybrid work has only exacerbated the situation.

Alongside my friend, the hon. member for Ottawa Centre, and his downtown Ottawa revitalization task force, as well as all my colleagues in the Liberal national capital region caucus, I have been working diligently to reimagine the core of our nation's capital as a vibrant, mixed-use downtown where people not only work, but live, raise families and go to school, as well as partake in world-class cultural amenities and visit an outstanding array of local businesses.

[*Translation*]

Budget 2024 takes a big step toward revitalizing the downtown core, including the ByWard Market, by committing to reduce the federal government's office portfolio by 50% over the next decade.

In Ottawa, the sale of these office buildings will free up space for all kinds of new uses. These buildings will make room for a new dynamic, mixed-use community, with some offices being converted to residential buildings, creating the new housing that Ottawa needs. Other buildings will be redeveloped for various other sectors, from small business to arts and culture, in order to inject new energy into the downtown core.

*The Budget**[English]*

Ottawa's core, from downtown to the ByWard Market, is an important part of our city, with lots of untapped potential. Revitalizing this area and unlocking this potential have been a key priority for the 12 members of the Liberal national capital region caucus.

I am so pleased to see budget 2024's measures convert federal office space, which I believe will be the spark necessary to revive communities like Ottawa's core, which have been impacted by a changing workforce, and will lead to the creation of a vibrant new community that people can be proud to call home.

[Translation]

Budget 2024 also addresses another issue that is very important to many people in my riding and in the national capital region: the public service.

Our government knows that it is important to manage the federal budget responsibly. That is why we plan to refocus government spending where it will have the most positive impact for Canadians. Based on historical rates of attrition in the public service, budget 2024 provides for a reduction of about 5,000 positions. This will help the government generate savings that it can redirect to other key programs, while maintaining a strong and healthy public service that will continue to deliver results for Canadians.

• (1640)

[English]

Budget 2024 also recognizes that government procurement can be an important tool to drive innovation and growth. A diverse array of small and medium-sized businesses in Ottawa—Vanier, including Black, indigenous and women-owned businesses, already benefit from federal procurement contracts. Our government will propose procurement targets for small and medium-sized businesses and innovative firms so that procurement can be leveraged to grow the economy, drive innovation and create good jobs for Canadians.

[Translation]

In November, I spoke in the House about the importance of school food programs. I am pleased to say that budget 2024 provides \$1 billion to create a national school food program. Many dedicated individuals in my riding of Ottawa—Vanier, along with activists and advocacy groups across the country, have been working on this program for several years. I was delighted to be in Ottawa earlier this month to announce this national program with them.

[English]

The national school food program builds on our government's efforts to radically decrease child poverty in Canada, which we have cut from 16.3% in 2015 to only 6.4% in 2021 with impactful programs such as the Canada child benefit.

I have so much more to say, but I know my time is running out.

I will conclude by saying that the national school food program will be a game-changer in my community. I recommend that everyone here, as parliamentarians, support the budget.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, all MPs make Ottawa home when we are here. It is frightening to walk down Bank Street now, to see the homelessness and to see the people lying in the street at night. I had company come, and they were actually afraid to walk down the street. This would be a state of emergency in York—Simcoe.

That brings me to rural Canada. I am from a rural riding. Of all things, now the government is actually taking our money in York—Simcoe because it has classified us as Toronto under the goofy carbon tax regime. The Chippewas of Georgina Island in my riding, a first nation in the middle of Lake Simcoe, are not entitled to the rural top-up, and yet the government classifies them as rural and remote. I would like the hon. member to comment on that.

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Speaker, that is exactly why the government is currently investing to address the housing crisis and to support the most vulnerable members of our society.

My hon. colleague understands full well that we need to pass last fall's economic statement so that we can continue to support our communities, including the community of Ottawa—Vanier. I would therefore invite my colleague opposite to ensure that he supports the economic statement and, obviously, the budget that we just introduced.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, since my colleague and I both serve on the Standing Committee on International Trade, I will ask a question related to those issues.

Budget 2024 says that it reaffirms the federal government's commitment to introduce legislation to eradicate forced labour from supply chains. However, it is not reaffirming this commitment. This is a new commitment. Budget 2023 said the same thing. It said that legislation would be introduced by 2024.

My colleague and I both voted in favour of a motion that I moved in committee to remind the government of its commitment to introduce such a bill by the end of the year. We moved that motion with a month to go, saying that time was running out, but nothing was done. Now, we are seeing a new commitment and a new target date. However, time is of the essence for many reasons.

We can, of course, look at this issue from a social justice perspective. Obviously, forced labour is a terrible thing. However, we can also look at it from a geopolitical perspective. The United States has a law with real teeth and it sees Canada as a leaky sieve. The United States has seized millions of dollars in goods. I recently got an answer to a question on the Order Paper. Canada has not seized anything.

When will legislation be introduced?

The Budget

• (1645)

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for raising this subject.

I think the government has made its position quite clear. We will keep working together to make sure we can do better. We will keep doing that work not only in committee, but also here in the House, to advance the agenda the government set forth in budget 2024.

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am sure the member has heard from constituents in her riding about the Canada disability benefit and the insultingly low value that has been placed on that benefit by the government. It is \$200 a month, \$6 a day, and this is supposed to somehow lift people out of poverty. It is insulting to a lot of folks who live with disabilities.

Earlier today we heard the Deputy Prime Minister characterize it as a “first step”. Does the hon. member know when the next step will be available for people living with disabilities? How long are people with disabilities going to have to wait?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Speaker, I have to say that I am actually very happy that we are starting the first step with a meaningful investment. We have to do more, and we should continue to do more. However, this is a game-changer for community members in Ottawa—Vanier. It needs to pass, and then we could continue to build on this first step.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, Housing; the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, National Defence; the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville, Finance.

[*English*]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

It is always an honour to rise in the House to represent the people of London—Fanshawe. I am incredibly proud to do so and am happy to speak to this year's budget.

I, like so many I know in the House, am worried when I talk to constituents who are falling further and further behind. My constituents are working hard, paying their fair share and contributing to our country and our economy in so many ways, but the programs and systems upon which they rely are not supporting them in the ways that they should. I am a proud New Democrat and member of a party that worked continuously to create programs that support Canadians, but we know that not every party believes we should all pay our fair share, and other parties, time after time, work to ensure that only those people at the top, those with the most power and wealth, do not contribute to the benefits we should all enjoy.

That is not the NDP approach. As Jack Layton often said, it is the opposition's job not only to oppose but also to propose. The role of opposition is not to spend four years campaigning or using slo-

gans to divide people, and I am proud to say that I can return to my constituents and speak about the real wins that New Democrats have secured. We have used our power to lay the foundations for public single-payer pharmacare for Canadians, beginning with free birth control for nine million Canadians and diabetes medication and device coverage for 3.7 million Canadians. We used our power to deliver dental care, with 1.7 million seniors already registered for the single biggest expansion of our health care system since Tommy Douglas.

We have also used our power for solutions to the housing crisis, and we do see some of that in the budget. For years, the NDP has raised concerns about the financialization of housing. I believe that housing is a human right, but the financialization of housing has eroded that right by turning homes into commodities for the wealthy. Across Canada, 30% of purpose-built rental housing is owned by institutional investors. That means that young people are not only being shut out of owning a home but also, even when they are renting, being put at the mercy of greedy corporate landlords. Successive Liberal and Conservative governments decided to hand over our right of housing to the free market alone, and since the 1990s, the federal government has completely stepped away from investing in non-market housing.

The government used to partner in the development of non-profit, co-operative and social housing to ensure that those who needed it had a place to live. It should be the role of government to create a balance on housing that benefits everyone. When housing is not ruled by a handful of corporations, it does so much better, and we need renters to be empowered so they are not accepting incredibly high rental hikes. However, since the government got out of housing, we have lost affordable housing units. When the Conservatives were last in power, we lost 800,000 affordable housing units that were bought up by corporate landlords.

Londoners know what happens when the housing market is left, unchecked, to the free market. According to a report by Acorn Canada, London is one of the top five Ontario cities for renovations. I have spoken to the House repeatedly and asked the government repeatedly about renovations in London. Last year, the leader of my party and I joined a rally for tenants of Webster Street apartments. The tenants' homes had been sold to a Toronto-based corporate landlord, and the tenants were immediately issued eviction notices. They included an 83-year-old woman on a fixed income. She had been living there for years, and rent increase caps meant she could afford her home, but when she got the eviction notice, she had no affordable options. The greedy corporate landlords have forced her and other tenants on Webster out of their homes so they can gouge the next tenants on rent.

The Budget

According to a January CMHC report, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in London was \$1,479. That is already unaffordable, but it gets worse when tenants turn over because of renovations. The report found that rent for a two-bedroom unit with a new tenant averaged 27.6% higher than for other apartments in the same building. We need to protect renters on Webster Street and across Canada. That is why New Democrats pushed for meaningful action in the budget and why I am very happy to see that we were able to secure the \$1.5 billion for the rental protection fund. That money will be used to protect renters from losing their affordable homes to corporate landlords and will purchase and transition buildings for sale into non-market housing.

• (1650)

That is not all we fought for in the budget. A UNICEF report ranked Canada 37th out of 41 countries in nutritious food for children. At a time when corporations like Loblaw are making \$1 million in profits every day, millions of Canadians are turning to food banks. Parents are doing everything they can to take care of their kids, but Galen Weston and his friends just keep driving up the cost of food. Let me be very clear that decades of consecutive governments have peeled away Canada's social safety net. Successive governments have prioritized the bottom line of folks like Galen and his friends over working families, and have ignored warnings about food insecurity for our children.

The leader of the NDP and I joined the Lunchbox London group, a not-for-profit organization that provides over 600 food bundles to families in need and addresses some of the food insecurity of kids in school from kindergarten to age 12. Its work is essential for our community, and after decades of neo-liberal cuts, one in six London-Middlesex households faces food insecurity.

The NDP could have solely opposed progress in this way, and we could have spent years pointing to the horrible insecurity statistics for kids, but instead we chose to use our power to fight for those kids, so there is now the \$1-billion national school food program. Until now, Canada was the only G7 country that did not have such a program, but now more than 400,000 more children will be able to access nutritious food each year, and I am very proud of the NDP's work to secure that food for children. However, this is only a first step, as has been mentioned many times in the House, and the NDP envisions a truly universal national school food program where every kid, no matter their postal code, knows they will have a nutritious meal.

I am also very proud of a lot of the things we have accomplished over the last couple of years. The New Democrats, with our small but mighty caucus, have made real gains for Canadians, but we are not the government, as much as the Conservatives will debate otherwise, and this is not an NDP budget. At the end of the day, the New Democrats have pushed as far as we can, but so much of the budget does not go far enough, and if it were not for the NDP, the budget would not address the concerns of Canadians.

However, I do want to address one of the concerns I have with the budget, something I and many of my colleagues are not happy with. Of course, this is the disability benefit. Of Canadians living with a disability, 1.4 million live in poverty, and those with the most severe disabilities often live in the deepest poverty. Liberal

and Conservative governments, provincially and federally, have balanced the books on the back of legislating persons with disabilities into poverty.

My office has heard from so many community members facing legislated poverty. We have worked with community members who have even gone on hunger strikes to raise awareness of the horrific conditions imposed upon them. We know that it is not enough to raise people out of poverty, and we know that attaching the benefit to the disability tax credit will create serious systemic barriers to access. I hope that when the government said that this is a first step, it truly means that it is only a first step and that we will soon see additional measures to ensure that people living with disabilities do not continue to suffer.

To wrap up, I wanted to reflect on the state overall of what we are seeing in Canada and in politics. On one hand, there is a Liberal government whose arm has to be twisted to come close to meeting its own promises. Time after time, it resists every step toward dental care, pharmacare, renters' protection and the school food program. On the other hand, there is an ideologically driven Conservative leader who tries to divide Canadians and exploit our real pains for electoral gain while his advisers take out big cheques from big corporate interests.

Canadians are facing an incredible cost of living increase, and the NDP, instead of spending the four years just in opposition, decided to use its power to deliver for Canadians, and we want to continue to fight for those solutions. This is not an NDP government and this is not an NDP budget, but this is what happens when enough Canadians reject the legacy parties and dare to elect a party that has the courage to fight for what is right. New Democrats will keep fighting against the corporate coalition and will put people first.

• (1655)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member across the way for highlighting the disability benefit and the opportunity that it is going to provide going forward.

Could the hon. member comment on how important it is that the benefit, as we are structuring it now, does not get clawed back by provincial and territorial governments, that it is a tax-free benefit that, once we have established the pattern of payment, will not revert to a clawback program?

The Budget

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, this is one of the key things the government has to work for: to ensure that those funds, as meagre as they are at six dollars a day, are not clawed back. It will do people living with disabilities in this country absolutely no good if that money is given with one hand and taken back with the other.

It is fully incumbent upon the government to do that work. I would love to see that happen, sooner rather than later, to ensure that people do not continue to suffer.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member opposite has told us that she does not belong to part of the government, but in my hand I have a copy of the supply and confidence agreement that was signed by the NDP. It is the agreement between the NDP and the Liberal government. I would like to table this document. I have it in both official languages. Perhaps—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member already tried to table that earlier today. I do want to remind her that when she is speaking, she cannot point to a document as it is considered to be a prop.

Does the hon. member have a question?

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Speaker, I have heard from constituents across Middlesex and across London who are facing hard times right now. They cannot afford food. They are going to food banks in record numbers. Of course, we have a rural area around London where people are paying a high carbon tax.

Would the member for London—Fanshawe like to comment on why she continues to support the Liberal government with the carbon tax and why she will not vote in favour of Bill C-234 to axe the tax for our farmers?

• (1700)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, I always find it very interesting when Conservatives stand up to talk about who they are trying to help. Ultimately, “axing the tax”, as they call it, would help the wealthiest in this country. I would like to ensure that Canadians do not fall for that misnomer. Conservatives try to sell it as if they are fighting for people when they are actually fighting for corporate profits.

Maybe, later on in debate, the member could tell us why her party refused to vote for a national school food program, which we know will help students and families with the nutrition they need. Why would they vote against pharmacare, which would go directly back into the pockets of women who deserve and need contraception, as well as the pockets of people who live with diabetes?

Why would the member vote against that sort of measure and why would she vote against the dental benefit? Those measures would help people across Middlesex, across London, and across this country with the everyday costs that seniors, especially, are facing. I would like to know why she would vote against those things that would actually help people's pocketbooks.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, people have been saying for years that we should be in-

vesting more in the environment and reducing our dependence on fossil fuels. They will always be there; we just need to stop using them so lavishly all over the place.

That said, this government's budgets keep giving money to the oil and gas industry indirectly or in the form of tax credits. Is my colleague comfortable with that part of the budget, which undermines our environment year after year? Amounts allocated to the environment are laughable compared to investments in the fossil fuel industry.

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, New Democrats have been at the forefront of pushing back against those corporate giveaways to the oil and gas sector. It is incumbent on those corporate owners to pay their fair share.

As I said in my speech, we will continue to push against that. This is not an NDP budget. I will fight for the day when we see a fair share being paid by everyone in order to ensure that we have a safe, healthy future, both with all those social programs and in terms of our environment.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, today, as we have heard, we are debating the budget introduced by the Liberal government a couple of weeks ago. We have also heard, time and time again, how Canadians are struggling to make ends meet. They are having a hard time finding housing they can afford, facing soaring rents and rising mortgage costs, or even finding anywhere to live at all. They are seeing rising food costs at grocery stores and paying more for gas at the pumps.

On the other side of the coin, Canadians are seeing big corporations, oil and gas companies, grocery giants, corporate landlords and big banks making absolutely record profits. The more we pay for gas, for food, for housing, the more those corporations and their CEOs are making billions of dollars in profits. People are looking for ways the government could be helping them get by, because it does not have to be this way.

In this budget, the NDP has used its power to force the government to help Canadians. It is a glimpse of what an NDP government would be doing, which is what is best for ordinary Canadians and not for big corporations and the wealthy. However, I will say that this is not an NDP budget, and I will certainly spend some time talking about how it could have been improved greatly.

What did the NDP accomplish for Canadians? First is dental care, which will change the lives of nine million Canadians when it is fully rolled out to all qualifying people next year. Free birth control will benefit another nine million Canadians who now have to pay for those products. Free diabetes medication will benefit 3.7 million Canadians with this disease. Insulin was discovered in Canada, but every year thousands of Canadians, many of them younger Canadians, die prematurely because they simply cannot afford the medication needed to control diabetes. These are completely preventable deaths, and it is shameful that Canada has been allowing this to happen for many years. Thanks to the NDP, this will get fixed.

The Budget

These provisions are the leading edge of the NDP's program of a universal, publicly funded, single-payer pharmacare plan that will be developed over the next year through legislation outside of this budget. It is a program that will save Canadians billions of dollars every year. Estimates from the Parliamentary Budget Officer and expert studies done for the government estimate savings of between \$4 billion and maybe more than \$10 billion per year through a single-payer plan.

Thanks to the NDP, this budget also contains funding for school meals, which will help all children, no matter their situation, with the nutrition and energy they need to succeed in their studies. Education is the great equalizer, but we have to provide all students with the conditions for success, and this school meal program will be an important part of those conditions.

The housing crisis is affecting millions of Canadians and there are some real steps in this budget to address that, such as a rental protection fund, a program to use federal lands to build new affordable housing and a \$400-million top-up to the housing accelerator fund. There is \$1 billion set aside for non-market housing to build truly affordable homes, again, something the NDP has been asking for, in contrast to the Conservatives who seem to think that if we just build more units prices will magically become affordable.

In my riding, we are building more housing units than we have ever built before, but according to municipal planners, every day we have fewer affordable housing units. These additional units that are being built are simply bought up by people who already own homes and people who are using them as investments. We need more affordable units, and to accomplish that the federal government has to get back into the affordable housing business like it was 30 years ago.

I would like to highlight a couple of smaller line items that may not have gotten as much publicity but will still make a huge difference to all Canadians.

I entered politics to provide a voice from a scientific background to Parliament. Science and research are the real basis of a successful economy in this day and age, and I have been calling on the government for two years now to provide more support for researchers, especially young researchers.

● (1705)

Postgraduate students do most of the research in Canada and are expected to work full time at that job. The best and brightest of these are funded through federal scholarships and fellowships that have remained at the same level since 2003, over 20 years ago. Master's students have been expected to live on \$17,500 a year. Out of that, they have to pay their tuition fees, which are \$7,000.

Finally, in this budget, the government has recognized that shameful situation and has significantly increased the amount and number of these supports, as well as provided an overall increase in research grants to investigators, which will help even more young researchers do the work they want to do and that we need them to do.

On another front, I want to give a shout-out to my colleague, the MP for Courtenay—Alberni, who has been leading the charge for

an increase to the tax credit for volunteer firefighters. Previously, those brave and generous members of communities across the country have received only a \$3,000 tax credit for the work they do to keep us safe. This budget would increase that to \$6,000, short of the \$10,000 we were hoping for but still a significant increase for very deserving community members.

What is missing from this budget? How does it differ from one that an NDP government would bring in?

First of all, there is the Canada disability benefit, something the NDP has been fighting for. We were hoping that it would finally be there in this budget, to really lift people with disabilities out of poverty. It is there but it is a paltry \$200 a month, a complete insult. The NDP will continue fighting for people with disabilities, to make sure this benefit will be enough and to make sure they will have at least \$2,000 per month to live in dignity.

I was also disappointed that there is no provision for a national wildfire fighting force, which could really benefit every community facing the rising threat of wildfires every summer.

Once again, the government has been timid in its willingness to try to address one of the biggest threats to this country and its economy, and that is the growing gap between the rich and the rest of Canada. Harper Conservatives cut the corporate income tax in half, immediately putting a \$16-billion burden on middle-class Canadians. That cut was made in the name of trickle-down economics, the outdated and debunked belief that, if we give tax breaks to the wealthy, it would trickle down to the rest of us in the form of more jobs and benefits. It has not happened. The profits of corporations have climbed steadily over the past 30 years, while wages have remained stagnant.

Most Canadians are paying more in tax and getting nothing in return. The Liberal government, and the Conservatives would certainly be no different, refuses to put a windfall tax on big oil and gas companies that are making a killing on the backs of Canadians. Other countries such as Spain and the U.K. have brought in such a tax, a measure that would bring in about a billion dollars a year. We could also bring in a wealth tax that would affect only those very few Canadians with personal wealth of over \$10 million. Such a tax would bring in another \$12 billion per year.

The Budget

It is often said in this place that budgets are about choices. We have to make choices on both sides of the ledger, spending wisely to make sure that Canadians have the programs that make this the best country it can be and leave no one behind, and finding revenue options that ensure that the costs of those programs are borne by those who can afford it.

We know that this budget could have been better. We know that, under a Conservative government, it would have been far worse. An NDP government would truly put the interests of ordinary Canadians first, not the interests of big corporations or CEOs. We would listen to workers and other Canadians who are really struggling, not to lobbyists for grocery giants, fossil fuel companies and big pharma.

We are proud of what the NDP has accomplished by using the power we have to take a big step in making this a fairer and more prosperous country.

• (1710)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member across the way for his tireless advocacy on behalf of science in Canada and the work that he did on the science committee to bring forward the recommendations to have additional investments in science.

Could the hon. member comment on how this is a beginning of a new era for science in Canada and how we can continue to support citizen science as well as indigenous science in the future?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member for Guelph's work as chair of the science and research committee.

I hope this is the start of a new future for science and research. It is certainly a big step in that direction, where we actually recognize the very important work that not only young researchers do in Canada, but also scientific researchers in general. There was a considerable uplift in the amounts of the grants given to researchers across the country, and that will also help fund students.

Canada is so far behind other countries in the OECD and in the G7. I had someone from the British High Commission come into my office a couple of weeks ago, and it was kind of embarrassing when I heard what the U.K. has been doing for research compared to what Canada has been doing. This is where we are going to form a really solid economy for the future. We have to make those investments in research and have to develop the information technology that will make this, and continue to make this, a great country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech. He has a big heart, and it shows in everything he says.

Where this budget talks about health care, it directly infringes on a jurisdiction of the Province of Quebec. Health care is a shared jurisdiction, and the federal government should not interfere with it.

I think that the budget before us shows interference. Despite the good intentions voiced by my colleague, I would like to know how much importance he places on that interference.

• (1715)

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I would have to say that Quebec has been leading the rest of Canada in many of these areas, in parts of health care, in education, in child care, and the list goes on. I salute Quebec for that leadership in showing the way, literally, for the rest of Canada.

Here, we have a federal government that is trying to make sure that Canadians can live better lives when we have better health care and better education, and when we have child care so that everyone can get back into the job market. Perhaps these are ideas we are getting from Quebec, but I think that if the federal government has those initiatives and has the money, we have to put some sort of boundaries on where that money is going to be spent. Right now, we send money to the provinces to fund post-secondary education, and they can spend it on filling potholes in roads. We want to make sure the money is being spent for the reasons we are providing it. Those are taxpayer dollars.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I would like to thank my excellent colleague from South Okanagan—West Kootenay. I always enjoy his interventions, his great work and his leadership on educating us in the area of science.

I want to ask him a quick question about what the budget could do to make sure that we are doing better to address climate change. I know he is in a riding where that is a huge issue. I wonder if he could speak to that.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, of course residents of Nunavut are really at the pointy end of climate change as well. Things are changing there much faster. Yes, we have to put everything we can into fighting climate change, fighting our emissions and adapting to climate change.

My riding is in the middle of all those wildfires we hear about, and there are floods everywhere as well. Therefore, we have to spend more on preventing climate change, doing our bit not only to bring down emissions, but also to adapt to climate change. I mentioned the wildfire fighting force. We have to do more things on the ground ahead of time to make sure communities are safe from the floods, from fires and from other disasters being fuelled by climate change.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak to the urgent action in budget 2024 that would help Canada build the homes needed to restore fairness for every generation.

The Budget

Last week, our government released Canada's ambitious plan to build homes by the millions, to support renters and to lower the costs of home ownership so that no hard-working Canadians have to spend more than 30% of their incomes on housing costs. With budget 2024 and with Canada's housing plan, we are going to do what is necessary to put money on the table to build more affordable housing, to create the market conditions necessary to get more homes built and to change the way cities build homes.

We will restore the promise of Canada for everyone, building more homes faster. We know that the higher interest rate environments have made it difficult to build homes. That is why we are proposing significant action in budget 2024 to boost housing supply and to remove barriers that often slow down construction of new homes. For example, we are reviving and modernizing Canada's post-war housing design catalogue, which will provide blueprints that can be used across the country to speed up construction of new homes.

Budget 2024 proposes to allocate more than \$11 million in 2024-25 to support the development of this catalogue for up to 50 housing designs, including row housing and fourplexes that provinces, territories and municipalities could use to simplify and to accelerate housing approvals and builds. This first phase of the catalogue will be published by fall 2024.

Speaking of supporting municipalities, our \$4 billion housing accelerator fund is already cutting red tape across the country with 179 agreements with municipalities, provinces and territories, including Surrey Centre, enabling the construction of over 750,000 new homes over the next decade. To continue this momentum, budget 2024 would top up this program with \$400 million to build more homes faster from coast to coast to coast.

Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member of Parliament for Whitby.

To help developers get that capital, they need to build more rental homes. We are also topping up the apartment construction loan program, or ACLP, with \$15 billion, starting next year. This proposed investment alone would build more than 30,000 additional homes across Canada, bringing the program's total contribution to over 131,000 new homes by 2031. This program has already been kick-started in Surrey Centre with thousands of homes already under construction.

We know that there is no single player who could fill Canada's housing shortage on his or her own. That is why we need to take a team Canada approach to getting this work done for Canadians, and that means all of us working together and using every tool in our tool kit to get more homes built. To that end, budget 2024 announces Canada builds, which would help to leverage the apartment construction loan program so that we could better partner with provinces and territories to build more rental housing across the country.

Truthfully, we could not do any of this without Canada's builders, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, construction workers and similar tradespeople. They are incredible people who love their jobs and who are good at them, and to whom we should all be grateful because we could not build homes without them.

To help train and recruit the next generation of skilled workers, budget 2024 proposes to provide \$90 million over two years for the apprenticeship service to help create placements with small and medium-sized enterprises for apprentices, and \$10 million over two years is also being proposed for the skilled trades awareness and readiness program to encourage Canadians to explore and to prepare for careers in the skilled trades.

In addition, budget 2024 proposes to provide \$50 million over two years for the foreign credential recognition program, at least half of which would be used to streamline foreign credential recognition in the construction sector to help skilled trades workers build more homes. We need to do everything we can to make it easier to build homes more quickly and more cost effectively, and the measures I just outlined do exactly that.

• (1720)

Young Canadians in my community of Surrey Centre, and across Canada, are struggling to find housing that fits their budgets. That is why the government launched the tax-free first home savings account and why, in budget 2024, we would take action to unlock additional pathways for young renters to become homeowners and to protect middle-class homeowners from rising mortgage payments.

To help first-time homebuyers keep pace with rising costs, budget 2024 announces our intention to amend the Income Tax Act to increase the home buyers' plan withdrawal limit from \$35,000 to \$60,000. The budget also proposes to temporarily extend the grace period, during which homebuyers are not required to repay their home buyers' plan withdrawals to their RRSP by an additional three years. This first measure would enable first-time homebuyers to save up to \$25,000 for their down payment, faster. For a couple who withdraws the maximum in 2023, extending the grace period could allow them to defer annual payments as large as \$4,600 by an additional three years.

Thanks to our new Canadian mortgage charter, more Canadians know about the fair, reasonable and timely mortgage relief they can seek and receive from their financial institutions. Budget 2024 would aim to enhance this charter by enabling first-time homebuyers purchasing new builds to get 30-year mortgage amortizations, among other enhancements. The government would bring forward regulatory amendments to implement this proposal.

Additionally, budget 2024 proposes to call on banks, fintechs and credit bureaus to prioritize tools that would allow renters to opt in to reporting their rent payment histories to credit bureaus so that they could strengthen their credit scores when applying for a mortgage.

We are also committed to protecting tenant rights and ensuring that renting a home is fair, open and transparent. For that reason, budget 2024 proposes action to protect the millions of Canadians who rent and who have been exceptionally impacted by recent drastic rent increases across the country.

This action would include the development of a new Canadian renters' bill of rights to be developed and implemented in partnership with provinces and territories, a new \$15-million tenant protection fund and a new \$1.5-billion Canada rental protection fund that would help housing providers keep rents at a stable level for a long time. That is how one makes the playing field fairer for renters.

Our government is also redoubling our efforts to build homes wherever and whenever possible in the face of Canada's housing crisis. We are accelerating and streamlining the process of converting surplus federal properties into housing, and we continue to work with Canada Lands Company to enable the construction of additional housing units.

In fact, budget 2024 proposes \$5 million over three years, starting in 2024-25, to support an overhaul of Canada Lands Company to expand its activities to build more homes on public lands.

Budget 2024 also announces that the government would take steps to enable Canada Post to prioritize leasing or divestment of post office properties and lands with high potential for housing, where doing so maintains high service standards for Canadians.

Lastly, as part of our work to build more homes on public lands, budget 2024 proposes to explore the redevelopment of National Defence properties in Halifax, Toronto and Victoria that could be suitable for both military and civilian uses. We are currently working to divest 14 surplus defence properties that have potential for housing and that are not needed for National Defence operations.

Recognizing that we need better infrastructure to support an uptick in housing supply, our government has also revealed that the budget would feature a new \$6-billion Canada housing infrastructure fund to help communities increase their housing supplies and to upgrade water, waste water, stormwater and solid waste infrastructure.

Because many Canadians rely on public transit to go to school, to get to work and to see their friends, budget 2024 also announces that any community seeking to access long-term predictable funding through the federal government's forthcoming permanent public transit funding would be required to take action that directly unlocks housing supply where it is needed most. Our focus as a government is on building more homes at a pace and a scale not seen in generations and on restoring fairness and affordability for every generation. We did it when soldiers returned home from the Second World War, and we can build homes like that again.

The Budget

With this upcoming budget, we would make it easier for every Canadian, no matter who they are or where they come—

● (1725)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I apologize, but the hon. member is quite over time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, despite the good intentions of wanting to create health programs and build housing—all good things—I would like to know, on a scale of one to 10, what number best reflects the federal government's contempt for interfering in Quebec's jurisdictions.

[*English*]

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, I do not think this government has any contempt for the province of Quebec. If anything, I think Quebec has been treated extremely well in this budget. There will be more homes built in the province of Quebec than have ever been built before, more assistance to the cities that have joined this program to build more homes, and more infrastructure dollars to build thousands more homes in Quebec.

I think the residents of Quebec are going to be overwhelmed with this budget and the number of homes it will be able to unlock in their jurisdiction to keep the costs of housing down.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member knows, earlier today the opposition party asked the Speaker to grant an emergency debate on the issue related to drugs in the member's home province of British Columbia.

The government can schedule a debate on this issue if it chooses. Would the hon. member support not just an emergency debate, but a debate on the catastrophic drug issue going on in his home province?

The Budget

• (1730)

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, Conservative members are more than welcome to debate this topic in the budget debate as much as they want. When it comes to this particular topic, I think this was done at the request of the Vancouver Police Department, along with other police chiefs and the Province of British Columbia. This was their call and their request to decriminalize certain aspects, certain drugs in certain quantities. The federal government and the Minister of Health responded accordingly. They have now requested amendments, and our government will similarly respond to that based on the needs and requests of the people in the province of British Columbia.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the work I do with the member on the veterans committee, so my question is going to be around that issue.

We have done a report in this place around marriage after 60. We know that many veterans who find love after 60 cannot leave a pension for their survivors. We also know that in 2019, the government made an announcement saying there was \$150 million it would be sharing with women who were already in that circumstance. There are many very impoverished women who looked after veterans during the hardest parts of their lives and got absolutely nothing upon their passing. I was saddened to see there was no mention of that in this budget.

When is the money from 2019 actually going out to these vulnerable women?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, like my hon. colleague, I also enjoy working with her on the veterans committee. She contributes a lot and pushes veterans advocacy to great heights, specifically for the plight of female veterans. When it comes to this issue, it is an ongoing issue. It needs to be worked out. I think the commitment of our government stands and we will continue to do that.

I believe similar implications arise for the pensions of members of Parliament as well, where if they get married after 60, it does not apply to their spouses. These are things that, as times have changed, we need to amend, and I think the Minister of Veterans Affairs will be looking at it accordingly.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the member talked much about fairness and housing. Unfortunately, the budget does not do enough for first nations housing. The AFN said there needs to be \$44 billion to close the gap. This budget promises only \$918 million over five years.

How can the member say this is fair to first nations, when they are getting meagre pennies out of the budget?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, I respect the hon. member of Parliament on this issue. I think housing for indigenous folks, the Inuit, first nations and Métis populations in this country, is a paramount responsibility of the federal government. A lot of neglect has happened in the past, and therefore a lot of repair and upgrading has to be done.

A billion dollars is not an insignificant amount. If we look at it from the perspective of \$15 billion, it is almost 7% or 8%. I think

more has to be done, and we will continue to work to make sure all indigenous people have the right type of housing they need.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have been a member of Parliament for almost nine years now, and the number one thing I try to do is listen to what my constituents want in terms of how we operate here in this House and the resources that we are able to provide to them to make sure they are able to thrive and succeed in everything they want to accomplish.

Over these past eight-plus years that I have been a member of Parliament, in all the budgets we have been able to deliver to Canadians to deal with what was a phenomenon across the whole world, the coronavirus and COVID-19, we were able to provide support to Canadians. Now that we are trying to recover from that time, I think budget 2024 really does make sure that we are looking out for every single generation that has been impacted over these past number of years, with all the challenges we have been faced with.

I talk to my constituents, and in fact, earlier this week, I was at my local high school for an announcement, where we talked about the national school food program. We learned how many kids are going to school hungry. I personally watched, as part of delivering the food program, how many kids put an apple in their pocket for later. I now understand and appreciate what food insecurity means. It is something that our government has really tried to tackle in this budget with the national school food program. It will have a significant impact in building our next generation of Canadians who are going to take the helm, fight climate change, make sure that the economy is where it needs to be and make sure that Canada is a successful nation, not just internally but internationally as well. This is a good program for us to invest in.

When I talk to seniors about the New Horizons program, for example, I see the local impact of our government providing supports to seniors who are going through isolation, health issues and so many other challenges internally, giving them support to enable them to thrive. That is what our government stands for.

When we talk about the disability benefit, it is about creating a foundation of what a disability benefit is going to look like over the next number of years for those who really need the help and support from our government that we can deliver. The question is, are we going to be able to deliver it? I challenge every single member in this House to say that it is our brand as Canadians and who we are to support one another. Whether it is about the disability benefit, or whether it is about ensuring that seniors have the support they need through the New Horizons program or the dental care program, are we providing support to Canadians when they need it the most? It is not about supporting people who have support already. It is about providing a foundation to those who need it the most, so they can give themselves a boost up and take care of themselves. That is literally what our Liberal government has been all about. It is about providing support to people who need it at the time they need it.

The Budget

• (1735)

When we went through the COVID-19 pandemic, what did Canadians expect from us? As they were told by their provincial governments that they had to stay at home, that they could not interact with friends and family, that they could not go to work, it was our government, the federal Liberal government, that really put in the effort to make sure that we were delivering CERB to everyone, that people had the ability to put food on the table, that they were able to pay their rent through our rental subsidy program and that they were able to run their small businesses through our CEBA program. That is really what the role of a government is all about. It is about making sure that Canadians have the support they need.

When we talk about fighting climate change, it is all of Canada coming together and making sure that we are all pitching in a little bit, but through the carbon rebate program, Canadians are actually getting more into their pockets than they would without having to pay into this program.

When we are talking about building housing for every single person in my riding of Mississauga—Erin Mills, for people in the region of Peel and indeed across Canada, we are talking about ensuring that our millennials, our gen Z Canadians, or whatever name we want to call it, are able to have secure housing that they can afford. In my region, we have been able to invest hundreds of millions of dollars to ensure that Canadians have the ability to afford housing within our region.

When we talk about ensuring the safety of Canadians, we have put in investments to make sure that auto thefts are taken care of, and we are doing our level best to make sure that auto theft is curbed within our communities. We are also talking about gender-based violence to make sure that women and gendered communities within the communities that we all serve, that we all represent, are going to be safe and have the security to be able to live healthy and safe lives.

We are trying our level best to ensure that Canadians have the supports they need, and budget 2024 is a great reflection of that. It is reflective of the young people who are trying to buy homes, trying to look for jobs and trying to ensure that their careers are secure. It is a great support for those who are raising young families, to ensure that our young people are secure, as well as for our seniors, whether it is through the dental program or ensuring that GIS and old age security are there for everyone. We are really doing our level best, as the Liberal government, to ensure that everybody in our country has the best to be able to boost themselves up.

A lot of people say that it is not the responsibility of the federal government to make sure that every household is taken care of. However, I believe that it is the responsibility of our government to ensure that we give everybody the leg-up they need to be able to thrive and to live with respect, dignity and prosperity within our communities. That is how we build a better Canada, and budget 2024 is the way to do that.

• (1740)

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member opposite spoke a lot about the cost of food. One thing that the Conservatives wanted to see ahead of the budget was a plan to immediately pass Bill C-234 in its original form, which would support

farmers and farm families by taking the carbon tax off food and making it a lot more affordable for everyone to buy groceries.

Can the member speak to why the government has been dragging its feet to do that? It is a very simple action that could make groceries more affordable for every Canadian across the country.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, I would really appreciate it if the members opposite would work with a team Canada approach to do a lot of the things we all want to do. It is the Conservatives who are actually dragging their feet on this. We are trying to ensure that Canada has food security, whether it is through our grocery rebate or through our carbon rebate, so that Canadians have the support they need in their lives on a daily basis.

Unfortunately, we have seen time and time again that our Conservative colleagues have voted against this. In fact, they are gaslighting our country as to how that support is to be delivered. I would appreciate it if they would come to the table to make sure that we are continuing to work on a team Canada approach and ensuring that Canadians are well taken care of.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her intervention.

What we have here is a budget that is full of interference and inefficiency. That is what happens when, for example, the government encroaches on areas under the jurisdiction of the provinces and Quebec and subcontracts projects to private companies. Arrive-CAN recently showed us what happens when projects are subcontracted to private companies. The same thing is going to happen. It is just going to make things more inefficient.

I know that my colleague is going to say that she supports the government and its budget. However, is she not bothered by the fact that this is going to create inefficiency and waste public money, all to benefit private companies?

There is a very simple and easy initiative the government could launch at the same time. It could increase old age security starting at age 65. We have been asking for this for years, but the government stubbornly refuses to do it.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. I am practising my French a bit.

[*English*]

I will continue to practise.

However, the thing is that we have to work with private companies and to make sure that these partnerships exist. We have to make sure that we are building a community that is effective for our private industries and for research and development, as well as for our social causes so that those who need the support are able to get it. Without the support of the private sector, we are not able to do that. The government is not in the business of making money; it is in the business of providing support and a leg up to those who need it the most. If we are able to build those partnerships with private entities and with industry to ask how we can provide support to Canadians better, then I think we should do it.

The Budget

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, certainly there are things in the budget that we support and that we worked hard to deliver. However, there is a lot of concern and dismay around the Canada disability benefit.

I heard the parliamentary secretary describe it as a foundation earlier. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance described it as a first step. That was never the way it was conceived. The first step, the foundation, was the legislation. People were expecting a viable disability benefit that would actually lift people out of poverty, yet what we see is something that amounts to \$200 a month, or \$6 a day. I think the disappointment and dismay that we are hearing from the disability community is evidence that it is inadequate.

How many steps are there in the government's incremental, multistep approach to lifting people out of poverty, and how long are people with disabilities going to have to wait?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, as members know, politicians rarely have very brief answers, but on this issue, I take the criticism. I understand and appreciate how important it is for us to support the disability community. As I said in my speech, this is a foundation for us to really build upon, and we will continue to build upon it based on the feedback we get from the community. I hope that this really flourishes into something that we can work with provinces and territories on to ensure that—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to ensure the debate can continue.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge has the floor.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is another year and another broken 2015 election promise. Let no Canadian or anyone on those benches who ran in 2015 forget what the current government promised. In 2015, the Liberals promised that more spending, more taxes, more deficits and more borrowing would lead to a magical utopia where budgets would balance themselves. They promised they would take a balanced budget that they inherited from the Conservative government and turn it into a deficit, but Canadians were not to worry: It would be a small, short-term deficit.

The Liberals ran on a commitment in 2015 that they took door to door to Canadians, telling them they would run deficits to fund unprecedented national infrastructure spending. Within three years the budget would balance itself. Here we are nine years later, and everything in that promise they made and were elected on turned out to be false. They broke that promise in the very first budget they tabled. For nine fiscal years in a row, the government has promised more spending, more borrowing, more taxes, more deficits, more interest payments, more inflation and more debts amid a further deterioration of the national balance sheet and declining living standards that are hollowing out the middle class. The government has broken the main election promise it made to Canadians in 2015. It promised it would not do that. It promised that a limited deficit would be it and that the budget would then balance itself.

However, budget 2016 was almost Orwellian in the way it pretended that the promises the Liberals made in the previous year had never happened. In 2017, they brought in what some called the “Se-

infeld” budget, a budget about nothing, just more of the same. In 2018, I called it the “Britney Spears” budget: *oops!... I did it again*. In 2019, they promised the debt-to-GDP ratio would shrink forever.

In early 2020, the country was on the brink of a recession, the credit rating had been downgraded by Fitch and the debt-to-GDP ratio was rising. This was all before the pandemic. The government had already squandered its fiscal inheritance and abandoned its promises and so-called fiscal anchors and guardrails.

After the pandemic, the Liberals tabled the “pants on fire” budget, which continued to ignore every fiscal promise and projection they have made in successive election campaigns, previous budgets and fall economic statements.

Budget 2024 says, “we can make sure that Canadians at every age can find an affordable home.” However, the 2015 Liberal platform said the same thing: “We will make it easier for Canadians to find an affordable place to call home.”

The government is repeating old, broken promises verbatim, never mind that housing prices have doubled in that time and rents in some cities have nearly tripled in the nine years since it made those identical promises. Just how much credibility does it think it deserves for anything that it claims in its various announcements?

After nine years, we have unaffordable rents, home ownership no longer an attainable middle-class ambition, record food bank use and another budget that promises more of the same pattern of out-of-control spending and new tax increases. Let us call this one the “Hall and Oates” budget, because it is obvious to Canadians that the government is out of touch and Canadians are out of time.

It is not just with respect to fiscal mismanagement; the government has lost control of the institutional machinery of government. It is a government that has presided over a record expansion of the bureaucracy and an exponential expansion of the use of private consultants. Despite this record bloat, access to government services has never been worse.

The immigration decision queue is 2.5 million people long. The CRA call centres continue to give false information to Canadians or are unavailable when they need them. Most distressingly, the Canadian Armed Forces are in a “death spiral” crisis of retention and recruitment. Those are not my words, but the words of the minister himself.

The Budget

• (1750)

For nine years, the government has pursued an anti-energy, anti-industry, anti-jobs policy that has resulted in Canadians dropping to near the bottom of peer countries in productivity. This is driving down the standard of living for Canadians at a time when they desperately need economic leadership in order to sustain program expenditures and our national security and public safety.

Conservatives do not want to fix the budget simply because we like the look of a nice tidy financial statement. The budgetary madness of the NDP-Liberal government threatens the prosperity of ordinary Canadians, the sustainability of programs that vulnerable Canadians rely on, Canada's national security, and Canada's ability to be a trusted and meaningful ally in global affairs. This then threatens our trade relationships, our diplomacy and our national security.

The budget has the same formula that has seen the gap in the standard of living between Canadians and Americans widen rapidly. That is not my opinion; it is what economists and the government's own reports are saying. Statistics Canada said, "Real GDP per capita has now declined in five of the past six quarters and is currently near levels observed in 2017." This past January, Jack Mintz said, "real GDP per capita has stalled since 2018, fell in 2023 by 2.4 per cent and will likely fall again this year."

According to the Royal Bank, "The Canadian economy is sharply underperforming global peers.... Since 2019, Canadian gross domestic product per capita has declined 2.8% versus a 7% increase in the U.S." The bank notes that this is the single largest underperformance of the Canadian economy in comparison to the United States since 1965, almost 60 years ago. We should let that sink in: Per capita GDP is now lower than it was five years ago, while in peer countries, it is higher. We have Canada's worst underperformance in comparison to the U.S. economy in that time.

The OECD expects that Canada will record the worst economic growth among advanced countries for decades to come. The C.D. Howe Institute says:

Comparing investment in Canada to that in the United States and other OECD countries reveals that, before 2015, Canadian businesses had been closing a long-standing gap between investment per available worker in Canada and abroad. Since 2015, however the gap has become a chasm.... Having investment per worker much lower in Canada than [in other countries] tells us that businesses see less opportunity in Canada, and prefigures weaker growth in Canadian earnings and living standards than in other OECD countries.

To put it another way, the government is chasing business investment out of Canada, and the result is a lower standard of living for Canadians. The budget itself reveals that interest on the national debt is now more than the entire Canada health transfer. It is also way more than the entire national defence budget. Taxes from Canadians are increasingly going to pay Canada's creditors instead of paying for health care and defence.

Nine years of budgets that spend, borrow and tax more than they promised in their election platforms are making Canadians poorer, and they know it. Canadians know that they cannot afford rent, home heating, gasoline and mortgage payments. They know that inflation is ruining the purchasing power of their wages and the value of their savings. They know that, as government piles on more debt from more spending, they are going to be the ones who will have to

pay for it all. They know it is not going to be the ultrawealthy who will just cheerfully pay a little more because it is only fair. Canadians know it is going to be the workers, seniors, small business owners and especially the young who will end up paying for the intergenerational theft that is contained in this budget.

That is why Canadians are increasingly ready for a government that would axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. That is why I will vote against the budget. I will vote non-confidence in the government. The Liberal government is out of touch. Canadians are out of time. Let us have an election and bring in a Conservative government to clean up this mess.

• (1755)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member talk about energy in this country, and I hear Conservatives talk in this way all the time. I just want to understand what he means.

Conservatives always say that the government is anti-energy, but, in reality, we are in favour of looking at various different forms of energy. Conservatives talk about energy as though the only possible form involves fossil fuels.

Can the member explain to the House why Conservatives do not regard renewables and other cleaner forms of energy as "energy"? If they did, they would not use this anti-energy narrative.

• (1800)

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, we said no such thing. We are pro-energy, all kinds of energy. I did not differentiate between different forms of energy.

I will say that the government is explicitly anti-fossil fuels, to the extent that it refuses to allow Canadians to develop, export and provide LNG, for example, to the world. Just recently, countries like Greece, Poland and Germany have been begging and crying out for Canadian LNG as both a transition fuel and as an alternative to Putin's energy products, which fund his murderous war on Ukraine.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, since this morning, the Conservatives have been presenting worst-case scenarios involving the budget. They are taking a bulldozer approach, but that is not the Bloc's style. We try to be somewhat constructive and see the positive points. We try to help, be accommodating and improve what is presented to us. That is our approach. We are obviously going to vote against the budget, but not for the same reasons.

The Budget

I would like to ask my colleague if he can find just two or three small items in the budget that he agrees with.

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, the approach of the government is hollowing out the Canadian economy and the Canadian middle class. I see no reason to support it whatsoever. We need an immediate election.

I am glad the hon. member and his party have finally decided to stop propping up the government. We will see what the NDP does.

I am ready to go next week. Let us have an election.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know my colleague is going to oppose this budget, but maybe he would like to be a little specific about some of the reasons why this is such a challenging budget for small businesses.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, as I said, we all know who is going to end up having to pay for the ongoing debt, the ongoing borrowing, which is starting to choke out the rest of the budget. We can see how interest payments are now choking out other expenditures. It is going to be the young, it is going to be seniors, it is going to be workers and it is going to be small businesses that end up paying the price for the government.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have often made reference to the Conservative Party and its leader being on the far right. I know that upsets the member across the way, but that is the truth.

Could the member reflect on the leader of the Conservative Party and his flirtation with Diagon, which is an extreme right group that preaches hatred and who knows what else? It is a far-right group. That is the driving force being enabled by the his leader, the leader of the Conservative Party. I would be interested in his comments on that.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, that member has nothing so he just blathers nonsense. We are debating a budget. That member is obviously not prepared to debate my speech or to offer a question or a comment on the speech or the matter at hand.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, what is the legacy of the current Liberal Prime Minister? Sadly, his entire legacy amounts to one thing. The Prime Minister has grown the national debt more in nine years than under every other prime minister in Canadian history before him combined. That is his legacy. That is the end of it. That is the only thing that he stands for and has as a legacy. That debt now stands at \$1.3 trillion, which is an enormous number. It is actually hard to comprehend or even imagine for just about any Canadian. It is really hard to visualize how much money we are even talking about there, so I want to break that down just a little bit.

First of all, our national debt of \$1.3 trillion is relative to a \$2-trillion national economy. For every dollar the Canadian economy generates, about 65¢ of it has an obligation attached to it. Now, a trillion dollars is a massive amount of money. If we cashed it into \$100 bills and stacked those bills into billion-dollar piles, we would have 1,000 piles, each climbing about a kilometre high. That is what we are talking about in terms of what this money would

look like. However, that is still viewing the situation from 20,000 feet, so let us zoom in at the ground level for a little better perspective.

For Canada's population of about 39 million people, the share of the total national debt is now about \$34,000 for every person in the country. For every family of five in Canada, there is about \$170,000 in debt. We can think about what that could mean for the average Canadian family of five and what they could do with that \$170,000, if they had that for themselves instead of it being their share of the national debt.

Let us say a person has kids in hockey. A good, reasonably decent youth composite hockey stick, which everyone uses nowadays, is about \$90 or so. The kids in that family of five would certainly never have to worry about breaking a hockey stick ever again. In fact, every one of their friends would never have to worry about it again either, because that \$170,000 would buy about 1,800 hockey sticks.

A family of five can easily spend \$400 or more a week on groceries these days with all the inflation, which means that \$170,000 would cover food for that whole family for over eight years. Instead, under the Liberals, Canadian families are struggling to feed themselves. Food banks in Canada received a record two million visits in a single month last year, with a million additional people expected this year.

Examples of what Canadians could do with their own money is endless, but those dollars are not enriching Canadian families at all under the Liberal government. Those dollars represent the money that is owed to bankers and bondholders as their share of the Prime Minister's debt. It is interesting to be able to visualize that, but it is not a theoretical exercise. It is actually having real impacts on Canadians right now here today. The Prime Minister's inflationary deficits are driving up interest rates. He is endangering our social safety nets and our jobs by adding more inflationary debt. His government has caused rent and mortgage payment costs to double and made it harder to save for a down payment for so many young families who are just dreaming of getting into the housing market for the first time but wondering how that will ever be possible.

Those are the problems facing Canada right now, but what is the fix? Common-sense Conservatives have solutions. In fact, we have offered the Liberals a starting point to fix it. We told the Prime Minister that we would support his budget if he would just take three very simple, small little steps towards addressing the affordability issues that are plaguing Canadians by starting to address the debt. We needed to see the Liberal government, at minimum, axe the Liberal tax on food, focus on building homes and not building up more federal government bureaucracy and cap the out-of-control government spending by finding a dollar in savings for every new dollar in spending.

● (1805)

The Liberals did none of that. Instead, they went further down the road of recklessness, adding \$40 billion more to the growing federal debt.

The Budget

Common-sense Conservatives cannot support a budget that continues to further indebt Canadians. We will vote non-confidence in a Prime Minister that has driven this country into the ground. I want to know this: Will the NDP have the backbone to do the same?

The government needs to be run in the same way that people have to run their households. A Canadian family that found itself paying more on their credit card debt and on interest than on their necessities would quickly realize that they had to address their debt load. The government, in a similar circumstance, chooses to open new lines of credit to keep on spending. If the government approached budgeting the way Canadian households have to, with actual needs weighed against available resources, the craziness of paying more to bankers and bondholders in one year than what it funds the provinces for health care would be apparent to every single other Canadian, but not to the people sitting on those benches over there in the Liberal government.

Under this government, the promise of Canada has become a promissory note to its debt holders. The Liberals have tried to re-brand their undisciplined fiscal policy as equal to the aspirations of Canadians, but let us look at the real promise of Canada. It is not the agenda of bigger government that the government promotes. It is certainly not about transforming society to reflect Liberal ideology, despite what Liberals would have people believe.

The promise of Canada is, in fact, about the opportunity and freedom to forge one's way in life. Canada has long held out the hope of achievement and prosperity for those who do the work and follow the rules, that a comfortable, secure, middle-class existence is open to anyone from any walk of life, from anywhere in the world, who works to earn it.

In year nine of the Liberal government, life in Canada has never been more unaffordable. The middle class is just a distant dream for far too many. Canadians looking for the Liberals to change things in their budget this year must be feeling incredibly disappointed, with reckless spending, deeper debt and deficits and, of course, the harmful carbon tax.

With these and other policies, Liberals are fuelling inflation and an affordability crisis, pushing middle-class aspirations even further out of the reach of many. Struggling families cannot afford more inflationary spending that drives up their cost of living. They cannot afford the interest rates on their mortgages, their taxes, all of these things.

Even Liberal spending on social programs is not as it actually seems. Many of the measures announced in the budget are deferred, so that the government can make feel-good promises now and then try to find loopholes to get out of them later. We have seen that with dental care and the other social spending Liberals have rolled out that did not quite come anywhere near as advertised. We are seeing it with defence spending promises that stretch out 20 years into the future, when they are needed now.

After nine years, the Liberals' budget is just more of the same that brought us into this mess in the first place. The Prime Minister is proving that he is not worth the cost for any generation, and it

will be generations well into the future that will have to repay all of his debt.

It is clear that only common-sense Conservatives have a plan to stop the inflationary deficits that are driving up interest rates. We will protect Canada's social programs and jobs by stopping the piling-on of more federal debt.

Only common-sense Conservatives have a plan to bring down the cost of energy, food and everything else. We will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Conservatives will govern with common sense for this country, for all its people, in all its regions.

Canada's middle-class dream can once again eclipse the Liberals' debt and deficit nightmare.

● (1810)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am sitting back here and I am listening to the member recite something that might have been written by the Conservative spin doctors behind the curtains, trying to put a little bit of passion into it.

Let me try to portray what the Conservative Party is really all about. When Conservatives talk about issues such as the deficit and the "dollar for dollar" in spending and cutting, what it really means is that things such as pharmacare, dental care and child care programs are all on the axing block. The Conservatives are all about cuts and austerity. They do not believe that the national government has a role. Instead, what they really believe in are things such as the Diagon group, which is the extreme right, which preaches hatred, among many other things, and revolution.

Can the member explain to Canadians why it is that the leader of the Conservative Party allows himself to be tied to an organization such as that? All it does is reinforce the idea that the Conservative Party is being driven by the extreme far right.

● (1815)

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Speaker, how pathetic is the desperation we hear over there in bringing up these ideas? What we are talking about is a Liberal budget that will burden future generations of Canadians, so far into the future that we cannot even imagine it. It will endanger all of the things Canadians rely on, as a result of the Prime Minister's desire to spend money like it is going out of style. The only thing the member can come up with is, "Oh, the Conservatives. There is some group that likes them." What desperation there is over there. The Liberals know that Canadians want a government that will bring common sense back to this country. They are desperate to hold onto the jobs they are about to lose in the next election.

The Budget

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on how often these budget measures interfere in Quebec's jurisdictions. I could give one example after another. It is starting to get ridiculous.

[English]

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Speaker, I think there is a government right now that has created division in our country among different groups of Canadians, among the regions of Canada and among the different provinces. What we have seen as a result of that is that people, whether Quebecers or all other Canadians, are looking at the government and seeing that it is tired and does not have anything to offer Canadians other than division, corruption and all the things that Canadians are so sick and tired of.

It is time to get rid of the government. It is time to replace it with a common-sense government that will govern for all Canadians.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, recently the Conservative Party voted line by line against a number of different projects, including finishing the Gordie Howe bridge in my riding, a multi-billion-dollar project that is just about ready to connect. The Conservatives voted against \$324 million to finish that job. Why have the Conservatives changed their position on supporting the project, doing a specific line-by-line vote against it when it is almost built? If they had it their way, it would be the most expensive viewing platform in North America. Not completing it is bad for our economy, and billions of dollars have been wasted leading up to the bridge and on the bridge itself.

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Speaker, the first thing I would do is remind the member that the Gordie Howe bridge was actually a project brought forward by the previous Conservative government, under Stephen Harper. Second, I will remind him that what Conservatives voted against was a tired and corrupt Liberal government. We voted non-confidence in the government. The NDP should finally grow a backbone and do the same.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to highlight some of the important actions in budget 2024 to ensure that Canada's social safety net works for every generation.

When our government was first elected in 2015, we recognized that the economy had changed. People needed more supports and supports of a new kind. The government got to work very quickly after 2015. We introduced the Canada child benefit, which has helped cut the child poverty rate by more than half. We reinforced the security and dignity of retirement income by strengthening the Canada pension plan and increasing old age security for seniors aged 75 and over.

We permanently eliminated interest on federal student and apprenticeship loans and made generational investments in early learning and child care with \$10-a-day child care, cutting child care costs by at least half, giving families money back in their pockets and giving children the best start in life. That equates to thousands of dollars per year. The average family in my area pays about \$1,800 per month for child care. If we think about cutting

those fees in half, that is substantial savings for each family. These have been investments in people, unprecedented in the history of Canada. With budget 2024, we are making transformative investments that will continue levelling the playing field and lifting up every generation.

At the heart of Canada's social safety net is the promise of access to universal public health care. We have made a promise to each other as Canadians that if we get ill or injured or are born with complicated health issues, we do not need to go into debt just to get essential care. Here in Canada, no matter where one lives or what one earns, people should always be able to get the medical care they need. That is why last year the federal government announced our 10-year health care plan providing close to \$200 billion to clear backlogs, improve primary care and cut wait times, delivering the health outcomes that Canadians need and deserve.

With budget 2024, we are introducing new measures that will strengthen Canada's social safety net to lift up every generation. That includes national pharmacare. It includes our landmark move toward building a comprehensive national pharmacare program. Bill C-64, the pharmacare act, proposes the foundational principles of national universal pharmacare in Canada and describes the federal government's intent to work with provinces and territories to provide universal single-payer coverage for most prescription contraceptives and many diabetes medications. The pharmacare act is a concrete step toward the vision of a national pharmacare program that is comprehensive, inclusive and fiscally sustainable today and for the next generation. With budget 2024, the government is proposing to provide \$1.5 billion over five years to Health Canada to support the launch of the national pharmacare plan.

Another aspect of strengthening the social safety net is the Canada disability benefit. Last year, Parliament passed Bill C-22, the Canada Disability Benefit Act. This landmark legislation created the legal framework for a benefit for persons with disabilities. The benefit fills the gap in the federal government's robust social safety net between the Canada child benefit and old age security for persons with disabilities, and it is intended to supplement them, not replace them. That is very important. We are not replacing the provincial and territorial income support measures, but offering to top them up. We strongly urge the provinces and territories not to claw back those supports for people living with disabilities.

The Budget

With budget 2024, we are making this benefit a reality by proposing funding of \$6.1 billion over six years and \$1.4 billion per year ongoing for the new Canada disability benefit, which would begin providing payments to eligible Canadians starting in July 2025. The Canada disability benefit would increase the financial well-being of low-income persons with disabilities between the ages of 18 and 64 by providing an income-tested maximum benefit of \$2,400 per year. As proposed, the benefit is estimated to increase the financial well-being of over 600,000 low-income, working-age persons with disabilities. It is just a start. We know that those individuals who are living below the poverty line and who are living with a disability are going to need more support, and we are committed to increasing that in the future.

• (1820)

With respect to the new youth mental health fund, our government is also well aware that young Canadians are facing high levels of stress and mental health challenges, including depression and anxiety. Many of them are still in school or just starting their careers and are struggling with the cost of private mental health care. The rising cost of living has further exacerbated this issue. This is a top issue for my youth constituency council that has been meeting for years, and the youth on the council have often said it is important for them to have greater access to mental health care. That is exactly why we have set up the \$500-million youth mental health fund, which will provide resourcing for five years to help younger Canadians access the mental health care they need.

Supporting children is another aspect, and this is something I feel very strongly about as a father of two young girls. We know that children are the future of Canada. They will become tomorrow's doctors, nurses, electricians, teachers, scientists and small business owners. Every child deserves the best start in life. Their success is certainly Canada's success. With budget 2024, the government is advancing progress through investments to strengthen and grow our Canada-wide early learning and child care system, save for an education later in life, have good health care and unlock the promise of Canada for the next generation.

This includes a decisive action to launch a new national school food program. This is something I advocated for well before I became a member of Parliament, and it was a pleasure to see us get over the finish line and get it included in this year's budget. That national school food program will help ensure that children have the food they need to get a fair start in life regardless of their family circumstance. The \$1-billion commitment to the program is expected to provide meals for more than 400,000 kids each year.

We are also supporting millennials and gen Z, for whom we must restore a fair chance. If one stays in school and studies hard, one should be able to afford college, university or an apprenticeship. One should be able to graduate into a good job, put a roof over one's head and build a good middle-class life in this country. In budget 2024, the government is helping to restore generational fairness for millennials and gen Z by unlocking access to post-secondary education, including for the most vulnerable students and youth; investing in the skills of tomorrow; and creating new opportunities for younger Canadians to get the skills they need to get good-paying jobs. More specifically, with budget 2024 we are announcing the government's intention to extend for an additional

year the increase in full-time Canada student grants from \$3,000 to \$4,200 per year and interest-free Canada student loans from \$210 to \$300 per week. The increased grants will support 587,000 students, and increased interest-free loans will support 652,000 students, with a combined \$7.3 billion for the upcoming academic year.

We are also helping to lower costs for everyday Canadians. While I am proud of the social safety net support that our government has provided to Canadians since 2015, we are well aware too many Canadians today are feeling like their hard work is not quite paying off. I am here today to reassure Canadians that it does not have to be this way, and that our government is working hard to help Canadians keep more of their hard-earned dollars. To do this, we are taking action to hold to account those who are charging Canadians unnecessarily high prices, whether it is corporations charging junk fees or unnecessary banking fees. The budget will help better ensure that corporations are not taking advantage of Canadians, and it will make sure the economy is fair, affordable and set up to make it easier to get a good deal.

As Canadians, we take care of each other. It is the promise and the heart of who we are, and it goes back generations. From universal public health care to employment insurance and to strong, stable, funded pensions like the Canada pension plan, there has always been an agreement that we will take care of our neighbours when they have the need. It gave our workers stability and gave our businesses confidence that the right supports were in place where we live. This supports our economy and keeps people healthy, ready and well supported. It keeps the middle class strong.

• (1825)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 6:29 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the subamendment now before the House.

The question is on the subamendment.

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

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois requests a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Call in the members.

The Budget

● (1910)

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

(Division No. 742)

YEAS

Members

Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Bergeron	Bérubé
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Brunelle-Duceppe	Chabot
Champoux	DeBellefeuille
Desbiens	Desilets
Fortin	Garon
Gaudreau	Gill
Larouche	Lemire
Michaud	Normandin
Perron	Plamondon
Rayes	Savard-Tremblay
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Ste-Marie	Thériault
Therrien	Trudel
Vignola	Villemure— 32

NAYS

Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alhabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Berthold
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blaney	Block
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Bragdon	Brassard
Brière	Brock
Calkins	Cannings
Caputo	Carr
Carrie	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Chambers	Champagne
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Chong
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cooper	Coteau
Dabrusin	Dalton
Damoff	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
Deltell	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Doherty
Dong	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Dubourg
Duclos	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Epp	Erskine-Smith
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Ferreri	Fillmore
Findlay	Fisher

Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Gaheer
Gainey	Gallant
Garrison	Gazan
Genuis	Gerretsen
Gladu	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Green	Hajdu
Hallan	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Hoback	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Jeneroux	Jivani
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Kelly
Khalid	Khanna
Khera	Kitchen
Kmiec	Koutrakis
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lake	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lamoureux
Lantsman	Lapointe
Lauzon	Lawrence
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lehoux	Leslie
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lightbound
Lloyd	Lobb
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Majumdar	Maloney
Martel	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	Mazier
McCaughey (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
McLeod	McPherson
Melillo	Mendès
Mencicino	Miao
Miller	Moore
Morantz	Morrice
Morrison	Morrissey
Motz	Murray
Muys	Naqvi
Nater	Ng
Noormohamed	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Patzner	Paul-Hus
Perkins	Petitpas Taylor
Poilievre	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rood	Rota
Ruff	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Seeback	Serré

Sgro
Sheehan
Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Small
Soroka
Steinley
St-Onge
Stubbs
Tassi
Thomas
Tochor
Trudeau
Uppal
Van Bynen
Van Popta
Vandenbeld
Vidal
Viersen
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Wilkinson
Yip
Zarrillo
Zuberi — 285

Shanahan
Shields
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Singh
Sorbara
Sousa
Stewart
Strahl
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Thompson
Tolmie
Turnbull
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandal
Vecchio
Vien
Virani
Vuong
Warkentin
Weiler
Williams
Zahid
Zimmer

PAIRED

Members

Drouin
Guilbeault

Godin
Pauzé — 4

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment to the amendment defeated.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1915)
[English]

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC) moved that Bill C-368, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (natural health products), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today and talk about the changes that have been made to Canada's natural health product regime by the Liberals, with the support of the NDP and the Greens, in the budget implementation act, Bill C-47. For Canadians watching at home, what is Bill C-47 and what happened? Last year at about this time, Bill C-47 was passed in the House of Commons. This is a budget implementation act. It is supposed to only change the law insofar as what the budget policy of the day is talking about. However, somebody snuck a few clauses into the bill that changed the definition of "natural health products" to be the same as that of therapeutic products, such as drugs that require a prescription and have a drug identification number. That is the problem.

The underlying problem with all that, for folks watching at home, is that the industry was not consulted at all about these particular changes. As a matter of fact, I do not remember a single member of Parliament debating that during the budget implementation act debates. I do not remember it coming up at committee. No-

Private Members' Business

body from the industry was called to the committee to testify about these issues. It was only several months after the bill had passed that people began to wake up and realize that Health Canada was proceeding with its self-care framework, because it had these new-found powers under Bill C-47.

That basically goes back to Health Canada now trying to get care and control of natural health products to the same effect that it has with therapeutics. However, if we go back to 1998, the health committee in the House of Commons issued a report with 53 recommendations. It basically said, in no uncertain terms, that natural health products are not therapeutic drugs. I will remind everybody in this House that this happened under a majority Chrétien government, so there would have been a majority of Liberals on that committee at the time. That is the conclusion they drew, and that was the template going forward.

If we fast-forward to 2014, when Vanessa's Law was passed, there was a lot of debate and discussion at that particular point in time. Again it was reaffirmed that natural health products are not therapeutic products and are exempted from Vanessa's Law. Then, if we fast-forward to 2021, the Auditor General's report came out. The Auditor General was very critical of Health Canada's ability to properly manage certain aspects of the natural health product regime, particularly when it came to looking at post-market monitoring, testing samples of the products that were on the shelves and so on.

Most importantly, in that report, the Auditor General took the strange step of actually taking 75 products. These were not random products off the shelf in Canada; these were 75 products that were deemed problematic from the beginning. The Auditor General used that for a false narrative that somehow natural health products in Canada are unsafe. I can assure everyone that this is simply not true, but Health Canada, nonetheless, is using this information to claim that it needs the powers under Vanessa's Law. What would that entail? Health Canada would now have a self-funding methodology, so it could apply massive amounts of licensing fees and product registration fees to a very small industry, when we compare it to the size of the pharmaceutical industry. According to everybody in the industry, this would likely cause a massive loss of products and a lot of chaos. The primary impact, for Canadians watching at home, is cost.

For those who do not already know, people should know that Canada is already the most regulated natural health product industry in the world. As a matter of fact, Canada's brand on natural health products is better than that of the United States, Mexico and virtually anywhere in the world. Our products, manufacturers and exporters already had in place, prior to Bill C-47, the best regulatory reputation out there. We are a growing industry in this country. The industry is growing so fast, in leaps and bounds, because of the proper regulation that existed prior to Bill C-47, whether in terms of our producers, manufacturers or distributors, as I said.

Private Members' Business

However, under the new self-care framework, Health Canada started out with these new site licences. People might not know this, but manufacturers, packagers and distributors have to have something called a site licence from Health Canada. They cannot conduct business without a site licence. This was free up until Bill C-47; with the new proposed regulations coming into force, the initial site licence fee was going to be \$40,000 per year. I think it has been negotiated with the industry down to \$20,000 a year.

● (1920)

Just imagine if someone has a traditional Chinese medicine establishment, or is doing Ayurvedic medicine or homeopathy, and has to get a site licence fee of \$20,000 every year. Everybody, basically, in those three parts of the natural health product industry has already said that this is going to shut them down. It is a very onerous fee. There would then be a new product fee. For any new natural health product that one wanted to bring to the market, it would be upward of \$4,000 to get one's natural product number. If someone buys their vitamin C, they go to the store and there is a little natural product number on it. There are about 50,000 natural products registered in Canada right now. If someone is going to bring a new product to the market, it will cost them an additional \$4,000 per product. In that particular year, if one has a site licence and a new product, one is looking at \$24,000 before one even gets anything coming in for revenues.

If a person is practising traditional Chinese medicine, and if somebody needs a new remedy and the practitioner needs to import some of the ingredients from China or someplace else in the world, they are going to bring those products in and be paying thousands of dollars to get a product registered in Canada. One might be in the market to sell only 10 bottles to a client that has a need for a very specific thing. This is going to basically kill traditional Chinese medicine practice in Canada. Of course, the right-to-sell licence that Health Canada is bringing in for each product will be over \$300 per product, so now one is dealing with thousands of dollars every year for this industry. It is going to kill innovation. It is going to stifle growth. It is going to basically drive the innovation and product development out of Canada.

What is the impact? The industry experts are saying that up to 70% of products that are currently on our shelves in Canada with a natural product number on them, and it is very important that they have that natural product number, will be likely disappearing in the years to come when Health Canada implements the self-care framework. Three out of five manufacturers, retailers, practitioners and distributors say that they will actually have to close their doors. We are basically losing approximately 60% of the industry if Health Canada goes ahead with implementing the cost recovery fee program for the natural product industry. The job losses are direct and indirect. People may be interested to know that right now about 54,000 people in Canada are directly employed in the natural health product industry. They figure that about 66% of those jobs will be negatively impacted once the self-care framework is brought in.

One would think that the Prime Minister, being the self-professed feminist that he is, would have actually done a gender analysis on the impact of Bill C-47 when it comes to natural health products, but there was no gender-based analysis. One might be surprised to know that over 80% of the consumers of natural health

products in Canada are women, as well as 90% of practitioners, such as homeopathic doctors and so on. Well over 50% of the micro-businesses are female-owned in this particular industry, and 84% of direct-to-customer sellers are women. This is very important. It is a very important industry to women in Canada, and we are going to lose these businesses.

It is too bad, because we are already, like I said, one of the safest and most well-regulated environments around the globe when it comes to natural health products. Over 80% of Canadians, according to the most recent information that we have, are users of natural health products. Of those 80%, when one asks them how satisfied they are with their natural health products, over 99% say they are very confident that the natural health products that they acquire from the shelves in Canadian stores are safe and healthy and work for them. That is true. One will find that across the country. I have been travelling across the country and can say without any hesitation whatsoever that Canadians are very concerned about losing access to the only part of their health care system that they have care and control over, which is natural health products.

For those who are interested, Deloitte has done an audit on some of the findings that Health Canada has been using. It has claimed that over 700 people over a two-year period were adversely affected by natural health products, but if someone actually digs down into the data, and it is Government of Canada data, they will find that only 32 people over three years were actually affected. Unfortunately there were three deaths, but if one takes a look at the other factors associated with those deaths, all of those people were also taking prescription drugs at the same time. There is a lot more misinformation out there right now that is attacking the industry unnecessarily.

We certainly should not be making a hasty decision in this place by bringing legislative changes in the back door like we did with Bill C-47.

● (1925)

I want to talk a little about consumer protection because I think this will be the argument the government will use. Members may also not know this, but if one buys products online from outside of the country, those are not necessarily regulated in the same way. In fact, I can guarantee they are not regulated in the same way they are in the Canadian marketplace. They will not have that natural product number on them.

One can buy a 90-day supply. Right now, Health Canada allows one to buy a 90-day supply. It can be shipped in with Amazon, or any number of these direct-to-customer purchasing apps or opportunities out there, and it will all be unregulated by Health Canada. They very likely will not have a natural product number on them.

These are marketed to Canadians on social media, such as Facebook, and through other types of marketing methods, and Canadians are buying them. Umary is an example. It is made in Mexico and marketed as a natural health product to seniors. Seniors are buying this product up, but it contains diclofenac, which is a prescription drug. This is the problem, not the industry within the borders of Canada.

Health Canada, in its attempt, would do the opposite of what its intended results. It is going to drive the businesses through regulatory burden costs and overhead. Businesses are going to say they can go operate in Mexico or the United States far cheaper than they can operate in Canada. They are going to be down there in the same environment selling direct-to-customer over the border with 90-day supplies. Health Canada is going to lose care and control over the quality assurance Canadians have come to depend on. It is not good for consumers at all.

I should let people know who are watching Health Canada already has incredible powers. We are going to hear some members of Parliament stand up in this place to debate this bill and say that Health Canada has no mandatory recall when it comes to natural health products. However, I will list some of the powers one might not know Health Canada already has. It already has the ability to issue a stop sale, and it does that from time to time. A stop sale order will go out, and that means that all that product on all the shelves in all the stores in Canada has to immediately stop being sold.

Health Canada does have the power, if it chose to implement it, for personal use import at the border. If it wanted to take a look at what was coming across the border, it would be a great place for Health Canada to start looking for opportunities to keep Canadians safer. It has the ability to seize. It has seizure provisions already in the legislation and regulations, which means it can seize any product from any of the points along the line, from manufacturing through packaging through distributing at the retail stores. It already has seizure capabilities in the law and regulations.

Health Canada can revoke the site licence for any manufacturer, any packager, any labeller or any importer. It already has the power to revoke that site licence. It has the ability to mandate a label change. If there is a health concern brought up from the Canadian public, it can investigate and then can tell the manufacturer or the labeller they need to change the label to reflect some health concern or some other information. It can do that.

Health Canada can inspect any site that has a site licence. It can go automatically into a manufacturer. It can go into a producer anywhere where a site licence is required. It can go in and conduct an audit anytime it wants. It can inspect any product off the shelf. It can take it, send it to the lab and do a verification check. It approves every natural product number being sold on the shelf right now. Nothing is sold without its pre-authorized consent. As well, it can revoke a natural product number anytime it wants.

That is already an immense amount of power. It does not need more. When we hear about the mandatory recall, that is simply a red herring. Health Canada already has an immense amount of power.

Private Members' Business

When something is defined as a therapeutic drug, that also subjects them to \$5-million-a-day fines. There is nobody in the natural product industry who can afford a \$5-million-a-day administrative penalty fine. Health Canada would unilaterally, without an ombudsman, without any process to appeal, have the ability to basically shut this industry down at its earliest whim or convenience. It is already causing a chill in the industry. It is driving businesses away from Canada.

We need to stop this. Canadians need to call their Liberal MP, their NDP MP or their Green Party MP and tell them to change how they voted on Bill C-47. They need to get them to vote in favour of Bill C-368. Let us get this bill to committee. Let us have an actual proper consultation with the industry. If there is something that needs to be changed, we can at least have an honest conversation and Canadians can be involved in a transparent way.

Passing this bill through the back door, tucking it into a budget implementation act, is shoddy law-making and shoddy policy-making. It flies in the face of everything we have done to this point. I encourage my colleagues to vote in favour of Bill C-368.

• (1930)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate both the member who is presenting this legislation and also his speech, which was well-informed and provided good information for Canadians.

The member is right to point out that this provision was included in Bill C-47, omnibus legislation, which is something that the NDP has always opposed, both under the former Harper Conservative government and under the current government. The idea that the government would put, in the budget implementation bill, a whole range of other measures simply does not allow for the legislative scrutiny that is so important. The member is right to point out that Bill C-47 did that. It made those changes, just as Bill C-51, under the former Harper Conservative government, purported to do the same thing.

I thought he was very eloquent about the fact that we need to move forward with this legislation. The NDP will be supporting this legislation at second reading. We want to send this to committee. We want to have the committee do the fulsome work of finally consulting the industry and natural health practitioners, so that we finally get something that has not happened under either Bill C-51 or Bill C-47, which is the scrutiny that is so important.

I consume a lot of natural health products—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member has to have time for more questions. Can I have a question, please?

Mr. Peter Julian: I want to know what my colleague uses in terms of natural health products.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Madam Speaker, notwithstanding the back-handed compliments he gave me in the preamble to his question, I will say that I have used quite a few of these things. My wife uses these products. I use L-lysine to help with cold sores. I take a pack of electrolytes every morning to make sure I have enough salts and things to get through my day.

One day I was sitting here in the House of Commons and I was starting to have what I thought was a convulsion from listening to the Prime Minister speak, but it turned out I was magnesium deficient. I just had a tic in my face. Natural health products have made listening to the Prime Minister palatable for me, if members can believe such a thing.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for bringing this bill forward. It is truly a critical bill, and I hope everybody listened to his speech, which outlined everything.

If I could, I have sort of a two-part question for him. The first is why. Why would the Liberals do this? Why would they want to demolish an industry that is so important, in particular, like he said, to women, but also for so many families who rely on their vitamin D, vitamin B12 and magnesium. These are things that are very critical, especially for people who may not have access to a doctor because we have a health care crisis in this country.

I am curious about what the member thinks about that.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Madam Speaker, my friend and colleague from Peterborough—Kawartha is exactly right.

Generally speaking, when we see something being changed in a manner like this, we ask, “Who benefits?” Who benefits from this? Health Canada would actually have the ability to charge whatever fees it wanted in order to regulate the industry. Can members imagine the power to actually generate revenue in such a way? Who knows what pressures they are getting from other outside actors. Lots of people have speculated about who they think is putting pressure on Health Canada to do this.

As I outlined in my speech, Health Canada has lots of power. If it needs a little more resources to do inspections post the products' getting to the shelf, or if they need a little more help at the border, those are reasonable conversations we could have.

This industry is \$3 billion a year in Canada. This is how much Canadians rely on these products for their own health. It is the health care prevention that keeps people out of the hospital and out of our health care system. This is the beauty of it. It is something that gives people the ability to make personal health choices. They have the freedom to make those choices for themselves.

If Health Canada needs more money to do something, this industry generates \$150 million in GST revenue every year. There are plenty of resources if they need a few more people to do something. They can simply go talk to the finance minister, rather than taking the underhanded approach of going—

• (1935)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Montcalm, for a brief question.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, does my colleague not find that Health Canada is using a bazooka to deal with a credibility problem it had, revealed by the Auditor General's report?

[*English*]

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Madam Speaker, I would say the member is exactly right. If there are any problems, and I actually do not think there are any, the negotiations that came out of Bill C-51, the consultation with the industry back at that time in 2014, left our industry in a very good sweet spot, where we have just the right amount of regulation and enough freedom and opportunity so that our industry is actually growing.

I simply cannot understand why the current Liberal government wants to kill another industry in this country.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to speak before the House today to discuss an issue of paramount importance to the health and safety of Canadians, which is the safety and the availability of natural health products, also known as NHPs.

In order to make the natural health products market safer for consumers and support Canadians in making informed choices, last year our government expanded Vanessa's Law to include NHPs. Doing this allows the government to act when serious health and safety risks are identified, such as the ability to require a recall if products are unsafe. Our number one priority is to keep Canadians healthy and safe. Bill C-368 would remove the government's ability to ensure the safety and the efficacy of these crucial health products. Passing this bill would mean that the government could mandate the recall of a tube of lipstick or a head of lettuce, but not a contaminated supplement. That is why the government will be opposing this bill.

I am aware that some members of the opposition may be supporting this bill. We look forward to it going to committee, if that is the case, to further cover the points I am about to cover. My remarks today will delve into the vital role that NHPs play in the lives of Canadians, the current landscape of NHPs and the need for greater oversight of NHPs to guarantee public safety.

Before proceeding further, I must highlight the exceptional engagement from the community of Richmond Hill on this matter. Our office has received over 1,200 communications, including emails, petitions, phone calls and pamphlets from constituents who are deeply concerned about the regulation and the safety of NHPs.

Private Members' Business

Since 2020, I have also met with the Canadian Health Food Association, which represents many NHP small business owners in my riding. One of those businesses is Platinum Naturals, whose team I met with this past February to hear their important feedback and their concern with respect to the impacts of the NHP regulations on their business. This overwhelming response from my constituents underscores a national discourse on the necessity of a regulatory framework that ensures the safety of NHPs and that supports small businesses operating in the industry, as well as respects the autonomy of Canadians in their health management practices.

As I delve into the implications of Bill C-368, I want to first focus on the vital role NHPs play in the lives of Canadians, followed by the current landscape of NHPs and, lastly, the need for greater oversight to guarantee public safety.

NHPs, which include vitamins, minerals, herbal remedies and daily-use products like toothpaste and sunscreen, are part of our integral health care practices. Their popularity is undeniable, with the number of authorized products in Canada skyrocketing from around 50,000 in 2004 to over 200,000 today. This demand underscores the critical importance of ensuring these products are not only effective, but also safe for Canadian families.

It is fundamental to understand that although NHPs are lower risk, they are not without risk, especially if products are contaminated, advertised in a misleading manner or used improperly. As much as NHPs offer potential health benefits, the risks associated with substandard or improperly labelled NHPs underscore the need for appropriate oversight.

I will now highlight the previous and the current legislative landscape of NHPs.

In Canada, NHPs are regulated under the Food and Drug Act, and specifically under the natural health products regulations established in 2004. A pivotal moment in Canadian legislative history was the enactment of the Protecting Canadians from Unsafe Drugs Act, also known as Vanessa's Law, in 2014. This introduced improvements in Health Canada's ability to collect post-market safety information on drugs and medical devices and to take appropriate actions, such as issuing a mandatory recall when a serious risk to health care is identified. However, NHPs were not yet incorporated under the scope of this law. As a result, for close to a decade, Health Canada's ability to take action on NHPs when health and safety issues occur has been limited.

● (1940)

This lack of equivalent safety power for NHPs has compelled Health Canada to depend on voluntary intervention by industry, which has not consistently worked in the past, to protect Canadians against real health and safety risks.

A significant shift in NHP regulations was marked by the adoption of Bill C-47 in 2023, which incorporated NHPs under the scope of Vanessa's Law. This empowered Health Canada with enhanced authorities to better protect consumer safety, such as by recalling unsafe products from the market and mandating label changes where serious harm to health is identified. This goes into my third point, which is the pertinent need for greater oversight of NHPs.

Between 2021 and 2022, Health Canada conducted inspections to assess the regulatory compliance of 36 NHP manufacturers and importers. All of the inspections identified compliance issues ranging in severity, with 15 of the 36 sites reporting issues serious enough to be considered non-compliance. Between 2021 and 2023 alone, there were also 100 voluntary recalls of licensed NHPs due to safety concerns, including contamination risks and the presence of harmful substances. These figures are not mere statistics. They represent potential harm to Canadian families and highlight the need to have stronger tools available to protect consumers from serious health and safety risks.

With all that said, it is important to consider the crucial need for oversight of NHPs as we consider the implications of Bill C-368, which could significantly alter the government's ability to regulate the safety and efficacy of these important products. As the NHP market has grown significantly over the years in Canada and continues to grow, we continue to support access to a safe NHP marketplace for Canadians to maintain and improve their health. The extension of Vanessa's Law to NHPs underscores this commitment.

As we navigate this conversation, let us prioritize the safety and trust of Canadians in their health product choices and ensure that the regulatory mechanisms in place are equipped to address the complexity of the NHP industry.

I am thankful for the opportunity to voice these considerations on behalf of my constituents in Richmond Hill and Canadians everywhere who rely on NHPs for their health and well-being.

● (1945)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will begin my speech this evening with two images. The first is that the cure is worse than the disease. The second is that we should not use a bazooka to kill a fly, but rather the appropriate tool, in other words, a fly swatter.

Private Members' Business

The government is being sneaky about it; that is the worst part. That is the story behind Bill C-368. The government introduced this provision under the radar, in an annex to budget 2023, in Bill C-47. From day one we have always made a distinction between natural health products and drugs, and rightly so. In the drug industry, in the pharmaceutical industry, people may have to bear the recovery costs, but they have 20-year patents. They are able to break even. What is more, there are no taxes on drugs.

The government makes a lot of money in taxes on natural health products so it can afford to pay for an inspection service that will guarantee the effectiveness and safety of natural health products. When we met in September, everyone agreed that consumers deserve to have effective products that are safe. Health Canada has to do its job in that respect.

What did the Auditor General's report reveal? First, in my opinion, there was a minor methodological problem. Rather than proceeding randomly, products, places and companies were targeted where problems were known to exist. Obviously, if problems are already known to exist, the audit will reveal a high percentage of problems.

There are approximately 91,000 natural health products. Of that number, 75 were analyzed in a targeted way, leading to the conclusion that Health Canada has not been doing its job to ensure product safety since 2014. That is what was found after checking the sampled products. Health Canada was caught with its pants down, so to speak. It played tough, tried to assert its credibility and brought out the big guns.

As legislators, we have always wanted to ensure that there is a balance when it comes to natural health products and access to those products, in order to guarantee free choice for consumers while also ensuring that when Health Canada approves products, it does its job after the fact and inspects those products. From 2004 to 2014, 53 recommendations were made. In September, when we heard from Health Canada representatives and the chief scientist, we realized that the answers were not credible.

I asked whether an impact study had been done on the industry, on small and medium-sized businesses, concerning the recovery costs required. I was told that it was based on Treasury Board guidelines. I imagine that the Treasury Board's main interest is getting its money's worth. What kind of service is it going to provide when, after all this time, and with all the taxes generated by the industry, it has not even been able to ensure an audit or any inspections throughout its mandate?

There are a few problems today. I asked the chief scientist how many adverse reactions there had been to natural health products in 17 years. I asked her to provide the numbers. We have yet to get an answer to that question. I also asked her what the numbers were for adverse reactions to pharmaceutical products. She replied that she had some numbers, but she still has not provided those either.

● (1950)

We know very well that, even though they are approved by Health Canada, pharmaceuticals can still sometimes have very serious side effects. However, that is no reason to discredit the entire industry. We are just doing our job and making sure that we do it

properly. Contrary to what people might think and what the government tried to have us believe, the shell game that I am talking about, the one in Bill C-47, happened in June, when we were voting on the March 2023 budget. Now we are getting letters and the public is starting to find out about this.

As legislators, we do not have any say over the regulations. We vote on laws. Regulations are then drafted on how the legislation should be applied. The problem is that we need Bill C-368 to be sent to committee so that we can do our job as parliamentarians and look into the regulation that was brought in under which natural health products are now considered therapeutic products under Vanessa's Law.

It is very clear that we would not be where we are today if the government had been a little more transparent, if it had carried out the consultations it needed to and if it had worked with everyone to find some common ground to ensure that no harm would come to an industry that Quebeckers and Canadians have the right to have access to by choice. Natural health products are not forced on anyone through a prescription. No one is forced to buy them. When people choose to buy them, it is because, in a way, they have educated themselves.

It is true that they can pose risks, and it is also true that people have to follow their pharmacist's instructions. There are interactions, true. However, these interactions are between drugs prescribed by a doctor versus a pharmaceutical product that I am going to buy. We are not trying to trivialize anything, but just because there are a few bad apples in one industry does not mean that the entire industry should be discredited. That would undermine small and medium-sized businesses, which want to sell safe products. Their main motivation is people's health.

We would not be here if there had been a bit more transparency and if the people who came to testify in September had the courage to point this out to us. When they were told that their cost-recovery model was modelled on the pharmaceutical industry, they did not say one word, as if we would not figure out Bill C-47's sleight of hand at some point. They took the entire model from the pharmaceutical industry and transposed it to the natural health products industry without allowing us to debate it. That is why there were two meetings on this. It was to get information about the problem.

There have been no more consultations so far. That is why we are going to vote in favour of Bill C-368. We want to ensure that the legislator, who never has access to the regulations and can never review them through legislation, brings this to committee. There we will be able to work on it and find a balance regarding the government's claims that 88% of the 91,000 natural health products are deficient and have misleading labelling. This is a serious methodological bias that does not reflect reality, because in 2015, a randomized study showed that more than 90% of products were fully compliant. What happened in the meantime, then?

Maybe if the people at Health Canada did their job and carried out inspections, and maybe if they sent people their criteria, guidelines and information about where they want people to focus so that, during production, they can be certain that the product is okay, we would not be here today. The Bloc Québécois will indeed vote in favour of the bill.

• (1955)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I said earlier, in thanking the member of Parliament for Red Deer—Lacombe, that we support this legislation. We support Bill C-368 for a number of reasons.

I want to start by saying that, as are over 70% of Canadians, I am a consumer of natural health products. I use those products, as 70% of the population does. This includes vitamins and minerals, herbal remedies, homeopathic medicines and probiotics. Many Canadians use traditional medicines, such as traditional Chinese medicines or indigenous medicines, as well. There are a wide variety of products on the market.

As has already been stated, the reality is that we have a very robust natural health product sector that is carefully regulated in a way that ensures that the products are of good quality. That is why, when we look at the natural health product sector, we see so many Canadians consuming them and, at the same time, we see no side effects or downsides to the consumption of those products.

It is because the products are effective. If they are not, we stop using them. I have tried a number of products over the years. Some work really well; others, not so much. As consumers, we have that ability to distinguish and make sure we are choosing products that are appropriate for us.

This is not the pharmaceutical sector. These are not prescriptions that are given out. I have a family doctor who is very good at sometimes suggesting products that are not part of a prescription, but simply a suggestion. He has turned out to be right every single time about the kind of products we can take.

As an example, there is magnesium, which is a vitamin product. My friend from Red Deer—Lacombe mentioned it earlier as well. Some of us are on flights back and forth across the country, travelling 5,000 kilometres twice a week, every month. My colleague from North Island—Powell River is in the same situation. We are going around this planet every month in terms of the amount of time we spend on airplanes, getting back to our constituency to ensure that we are serving our constituents and then coming to Ottawa to do the important work we do here.

The reality is that, when we are doing this, we are in a cramped space. We need to ensure we take magnesium if we want to avoid leg cramps. My doctor was the one who suggested it, and ever since then, I have made sure that I take the appropriate product. It makes sense. I know you agree, Madam Speaker, even though you do not have as far to go when you go back to your constituents.

There is a wide range of products that are available and that make a difference. For consumers who find that their products just

are not up to speed, they can change, try another product or simply decide they are not going to use something anymore.

What is already a flourishing and effective sector was diminished by the government incorporating into Bill C-47, an omnibus legislation, these clauses that simply put natural health products in a completely different situation. They are heavily regulated with costs, which a number of speakers have already indicated were absolutely inappropriate. Ever since I have been here, and certainly for years before that, the NDP caucus has decried omnibus legislation.

We saw this under the former Harper Conservative government. We see this under the current Liberal government. There are massive budget implementation acts that are 700 or 800 pages. Incorporated within them are really what I call poison pills. Certain clauses are put in there that ultimately serve as changes in legislation. However, then we can see they have regulations that are not part of Parliament's purview or the government's purview, and they can actually have detrimental impacts.

This was the case with Bill C-47. This was tried before with Bill C-51 under the Harper Conservative government.

• (2000)

The government tried to, very heavily and inappropriately, apply additional regulations to natural health products. That was pushed back on, but with Bill C-47, as omnibus legislation that led to the regulatory changes, we are in the situation that we find ourselves in now, and that has to change. That is why we are supportive of Bill C-368.

What it would do is provide for the kinds of hearings at the committee stage that would allow us to really determine the full extent of how the existing sector is regulated effectively and how detrimental these changes are, both those suggested in Bill C-51 a few years ago and those currently in Bill C-47, to the industry itself, which is a Canadian success story, as well as the impact on consumers who are using these vitamins, probiotics and homeopathic medicines effectively and potentially finding it more difficult to access these natural health products because of the actions of Health Canada and the actions of the government.

As such, it makes good sense to take Bill C-368, to put it in place, to have those hearings, and then to determine what is appropriate. It is very clear that those regulatory changes were absolutely excessive and have had a profound negative impact.

[*Translation*]

What we are saying is that the government, through Bill C-47, is taking action with Health Canada without holding consultations and without conducting an impact study or a management fee study. As my colleague mentioned, this means that small businesses that market natural health products are now subject to a regulatory framework that is far better suited to the pharmaceutical industry.

Private Members' Business

The pharmaceutical industry is the most profitable industry in North America. It makes huge profits, which is why the NDP is pushing for pharmacare. In countries with pharmacare, pharmaceutical companies have been forced to lower their prices. The case of New Zealand, where the price of some pharmaceuticals has dropped by 90%, is often cited.

These pharmaceutical companies are extremely powerful. It makes no sense to establish a regulatory framework that puts small businesses, which are safely selling a whole line of products to smaller markets, on the same footing as big transnational pharmaceutical companies that are raking in huge profits. That is why the government's approach was inappropriate. It was inappropriate to include this small provision in omnibus legislation that is several hundred pages long. The consequences of this regulatory change are unclear, which has led to the outcome before us today.

It is clear to the NDP that this bill is important, because it was unacceptable for that provision to be included in an omnibus bill. It was unacceptable for the former Harper government to do that, and it is unacceptable for today's Liberal government to do the same.

Thanks to the bill introduced by my colleague from Red Deer—Lacombe, we have the opportunity to correct the mistake that was made and to really look at this provision's impact on the natural health product industry. We have the opportunity to determine the financial impact and the impact on consumers. We have the opportunity to see the full impact of the decision that was made last year to include this provision in an omnibus bill. The NDP has been very clear in this regard: We support the bill and we look forward to the important discussions that will take place in committee.

• (2005)

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-368, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act, natural health products.

In a time when we are seeing more businesses close than open each month and when business insolvencies are skyrocketing, the last thing we need to be doing as Parliamentarians is putting higher costs and more red tape onto the backs of small business owners in the natural health sector.

I have heard from small business owners across Canada that the government has turned its back on them. They simply cannot keep up with the higher costs and burdensome red tape that the Liberals, with the support of the NDP, keep piling on them. According to Statistics Canada, more businesses closed than opened in December, and this is the fifth time in six months that this was the case.

On January 1, the government increased payroll taxes. In February, insolvencies rose 58.1% year over year, according to the superintendent of bankruptcy. In March, the senior deputy governor of the Bank of Canada called the lack of productivity in Canada's economy an emergency. On April 1, the government hiked the carbon tax by 23% and, just last week, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business reported a drastic decline in both short-term and long-term business competence, with both dropping by 5.4 points in their monthly business barometer.

What does all of that have to do with natural health products? Last spring, the NDP-Liberal government passed Bill C-47, which allowed Health Canada to regulate natural health products in the same way as therapeutic synthetic drugs.

Canadians depend on natural health products, which include vitamins, protein powders, probiotics and even fluoride-free toothpastes. Members can think of the young guy in the gym taking a supplement or the mom who uses eastern medicine and frequents the local Chinese herbal medicine shop. Those are the people Health Canada is going after.

As a British Columbian, I would be remiss if I did not mention that, at the same time the government is trying to prevent our teenagers from getting the supplement powder they want, it has legalized possession of fentanyl, which led to record deaths from illicit substances the very same year, over an argument about stigmatization in British Columbia.

After nine years, Canadians can see clearly that there is no common sense in the approach that the government is taking for natural health products. The changes made will reduce choice, increase costs for consumers and drive businesses, investment and product development out of Canada.

What is exactly changing for natural health products? First, Health Canada is implementing new regulations that treat natural health products the same as over-the-counter synthetic drugs, placing significant red tape on the small- and medium-sized businesses that produce and sell these products. This will result in fewer options for Canadians, pushing consumers to foreign online retailers, where consumers may have no idea where the product came from or what, in fact, is in it. Second, Health Canada is introducing new fees on licensing, manufacturing, labelling, importing and packaging that could cost a business more than \$100,000. I looked up cost of those fees before my speech tonight. There is a licensing fee of over \$20,000, a site amendment fee of close to \$5,000, a class III product license application of up to \$58,000 and a product license amendment of up to \$23,000.

I have spoken to owners of health food and supplement stores in my riding and across Canada. They are terrified about what these changes will mean for their businesses and their customers. These new fees and regulations will mean fewer products at higher prices on their store shelves, potentially depriving consumers of the benefits they rely on for their health and well-being. For many stores, these changes could mean they close entirely.

Adjournment Proceedings

● (2010)

Mike Bjørndal is a buddy of mine. We went to high school together. He left a stable job. He started a small business with a few other partners in the natural health food supplement industry. Mike told me directly that if these changes go through, they are moving their shop to America, reducing their taxes paid in Canada and shutting their doors. That is the consequence of what Health Canada is doing right now.

Then, there is the Vanderwall family. Mrs. Vanderwall runs a side business of supplements, which adds a little to her husband's income, just to get by with their seven kids. They rely on the current regulatory framework to pay their monthly bills.

The natural health product industry continues to introduce new ideas and improve products. However, higher licensing fees would discourage companies from investing in research and development, meaning fewer new products being developed or manufactured here in Canada. Natural health products play a crucial role in addressing unique health concerns that conventional medicine may not adequately address. Higher fees would invariably lead to fewer options, and consumers would be forced to turn to pharmaceutical alternatives or products that are not made in Canada.

I referenced the alarming statistics on business insolvencies earlier, and these changes are only going to make things worse in an industry that generates billions of dollars in economic growth in Canada. Given all that, I am very proud to stand and support the member for Red Deer—Lacombe's bill, Bill C-368, to repeal specifically sections 500 to 504 of Bill C-47 and to restore the status quo on natural health product regulations. As he mentioned in his speech, under the current rules, the government can already have a stop-sale order provision. It has seizure provisions and inspection provisions, and it already pre-authorizes the products on Canadian store shelves.

Health Canada's 2019 summary report, "Adverse reactions, medical device incidents and health product recalls in Canada", highlighted that of the 96,000-plus adverse reactions filed, only 3.8% were related to the natural health sector. We know that these products are safe and that existing regulations are sufficient.

Since last spring, my office, like the member for Richmond Hill's, has heard from literally thousands of people who are concerned about what the government is doing and about the increase in red tape it is suggesting through these regulations. Instead of saying that we need these regulations because of the growth in the industry, I would point out that his constituents, like mine, are simply scared of more government overreach that is going to impact their economic well-being and the viability of their businesses.

No matter where one goes in Canada, on every main street, in practically every single shopping mall in our country, we are going to have a natural health or supplement-style store. These stores provide valuable products that keep Canadians healthy and that improve our mental and physical well-being. The last thing we should be doing right now is attacking those very businesses that millions of Canadians rely upon.

With that, I implore everyone in this chamber to support this legislation and to stand behind our small businesses and our wealth

creators who provide real and adequate services for Canadians under the existing regulations.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the time I have, I am going to identify what I see as some myths that have unfortunately been created in the dialogue around this piece of legislation. One of those myths is that there is no data to support the need for the changes the government is making in the NHP program. In reality, in two years, Health Canada has received reports of over a thousand adverse reactions where NHPs had a suspected role, of which 772 were serious; they either required hospitalization or were life-threatening. Here is another fact to back up that myth not being true. A recent audit found that 88% of sample NHPs were advertised with false and misleading product information, and 56% had misleading label information.

I look forward to continuing this later.

● (2015)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member will have an opportunity to do so when this piece of legislation comes back before the House.

[*Translation*]

The time provided for consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

HOUSING

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, it is just not worth the cost. Canadians know that and, sadly, they know that in many ways. The housing hell that the Liberals and NDP have created under their watch is being seen in every part of this country. Cornwall and SD&G are no exception to this chaos and this burden.

I want to talk about some stats here to frame the context for we know nationally and what has happened locally here in eastern Ontario.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Cornwall and District Real Estate Board says that the average house price in 2015, the year the Prime Minister came into office, was \$179,900. Today, the average house price in SD&G and Cornwall is \$422,000, which is a 135% increase. The down payment needed used to be \$9,000, nine years ago, and it is now \$21,000.

Also, in this country, it used to take 25 years to pay a mortgage off, and now the stats show it takes 25 years just to save up for a home. The average mortgage payment needed to buy this average residential house in SD&G and Cornwall, using a conventional five-year, fixed average, as per Stats Canada, in 2015 would have been \$895. Now it is \$2,600, which is nearly triple the mortgage payment for somebody buying a new home in our part of eastern Ontario. It is no wonder food bank use is skyrocketing at the House of Lazarus, the Agapè Centre, Saint Vincent de Paul, the Salvation Army, and the list goes on.

Rentals.ca talks about rent, which has gone up 107% in this country. In Ontario, the average now is up 8.8% in the last year alone. The average rental cost is nearly \$2,200 a month in the province of Ontario. It is broken.

The problem framing the seriousness of this is that its cause is the continued failure of the government. The Liberals promise but just do not deliver on anything they say they are going to do. They bragged about a \$90-billion national housing strategy. I went back and looked at the announcement. The Prime Minister literally said that it is going to be “life-changing”. It was life-changing all right, in completely the wrong way.

The more the Liberals and NDP spend on housing, the worse it gets. They add red tape. They add layers. At a time now when we need to pick up the pace of housing starts to keep up with demand, we are actually seeing, right in the city of Cornwall as well, and the Cornwall year-in-review chart showed it last year, that residential starts and permit values collapsed last year, at a time when we actually need them to increase.

We are building the same number of houses today as we did in the 1970s when the population was half the size. It is time to get rid of the red tape. It is time to get rid of the broken promises.

I will follow up, because it was the Liberal platform in 2015 that said that the Liberals were going to conduct an inventory of all available federal lands and buildings that could be repurposed. Nine years later, they have not fulfilled that yet. In the budget, they now promise a rapid review of the entirety of federal lands. After nine years, there are zero results and just a promise to do a rapid review. We have seen that in Cornwall with the Transport Canada lands that are blocking housing.

Will the government smarten up, get out of the way and allow more housing to be built in Cornwall?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know that the only way to effectively address the housing crisis is to involve all partners on housing: municipalities, provinces, and the public and private sectors. We all have a part to play in the solution. The Government of Canada cannot do it alone. That is why we have signed agreements with cities and municipalities across the

country to accelerate the construction of housing in their jurisdictions. We are seeing that municipalities have their own regulations, unique to their respective jurisdictions. Sometimes it is a limit on building height; in some cases, it is a restriction on secondary housing construction. In some situations, the residents themselves are resistant to new developments because they want to keep their neighbourhood as it is.

As this crisis evolves, it is unacceptable for such obstacles to prevent or hinder the development of new housing. Municipal governments understand this well, and many have stepped up to work with the federal government to rectify the situation; we are looking for more to do so. In total, the housing accelerator fund has signed 179 agreements with cities and small, rural or northern communities. It is changing the way cities build homes right across the country. The fund was designed specifically to help cities build on their ambitions by fundamentally changing their residential construction approval process. All their initiatives, such as zoning modernization, adoption of new permitting technologies, legalization of secondary suites, process streamlining and more, ultimately allow for more housing to be built more quickly.

We can no longer continue to build housing the way we have for decades. This is not sufficient anymore. Programs such as the housing accelerator fund are creating a whole new way to work together, which is key to increasing housing supply. We must find solutions to the housing shortage and pool our resources to implement them. This is indeed true for collaboration among the different levels of government; it is also true for everyone here. As elected officials, we all have the same goal in mind: to improve quality of life for Canadians. We ultimately work for the same people, and it is our duty as a team to deliver.

● (2020)

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, after nine years, the Liberals have doubled housing costs and down payments. They have tripled mortgage payments in our part of the country alone, when we do the math. The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.

Our solution, many Canadians would say, is common sense. The Liberals must stop promising to give money to cities and instead give money when they show results and complete houses.

We are going to require cities to increase their permits by 15% to get federal infrastructure dollars. If they do not keep their promises, they do not get paid. A real estate agent gets paid when they sell a house. A home builder gets paid when they build a house. Municipalities and big cities should be paid when they permit housing.

At a time when we need to increase the supply to meet the demand, the Liberal record is a decrease.

I will ask again: In Cornwall, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry and right across the country—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that the hon. member does not know how the housing accelerator fund actually works, because it does have targets that municipalities have to meet. If they do not meet their targets, they will not receive additional funding.

We are leading the national effort to solve the housing crisis by working with municipalities to remove outdated approaches to permitting and zoning that have blocked the housing Canadians need. Through our agreements, we have secured ambitious housing reforms in communities big and small, in every region of the country. This represents the largest upzoning movement in Canadian history. The Conservative leader's plan would rip up these agreements and gut housing funding to communities.

There is more work to do to solve the housing crisis, and Canadians cannot afford the risks of the Conservative leader's reckless right-wing plan on housing.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, Canadians are struggling to find a home. This includes the brave men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces.

This is why, on April 10, I pointed out to the government that its new defence policy for Canada, entitled “Our North, Strong and Free”, is just the latest in a long list of Liberal smoke and mirrors. I do not think it is a coincidence that this policy rightfully abbreviates into NSF, which Canadians increasingly know of late also means “non-sufficient funds”.

That is because this pretend policy starts out with insufficient funds. In fact, it provides zero dollars in 2024. There will be nothing for tactical helicopters, nothing for maritime sensors and nothing for badly needed military housing. On this latter item, perhaps it is just the Liberal way of making sure our military does not feel left out from the very same experience that many Canadians are struggling with, which is the inability to find a home, all under the government's watch.

If that is not enough for this farcical defence policy, it is spread out over 20 years, two decades. I hope Canada does not need any defending during this period. I just do not get it. Do the Liberals not care? We have CAF members who have to line up at food banks to ensure they do not go hungry. We have CAF members who have to sleep in tents because they cannot afford rent. These should be red flags. Instead, the Liberals continue to bury their heads in the sand, providing literally nothing for military housing while we are in the midst of a very real housing crisis.

In my initial question, I asked if the Prime Minister was aware that the government's facade policy would keep CAF personnel and their families in tents for years. I hope the parliamentary secretary can provide some insight this evening on the rationale for why the

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Prime Minister has allocated zero dollars for military housing in 2024 and 2025, because the Minister of National Defence's response to my question was ludicrous.

The Minister of National Defence had the audacity to offer to send me a copy of the new defence policy because he was concerned I may not have read it. I wonder if the minister has. I am happy to personally chip in if he needs a new pair of reading glasses, because it is clear he has trouble seeing the funding table on page 30, which clearly shows zero dollars for military housing. He classified the policy with a straight face as “a historic investment in new capabilities”. Well, it is historic, all right. It is historic that any government in the midst of a housing crisis would allocate a historic zero dollars for two years while we have men and women sleeping in tents.

Just in case the parliamentary secretary has not had a chance, like the minister, to read the policy, I would like to tell him more about the historic investments: zero dollars for maintaining national defence infrastructure, zero dollars for civilian capacity, zero dollars for housing in 2024 and 2025, zero dollars for tactical helicopters, zero dollars for satellite communications, zero dollars for enhancing our long-range missile capabilities, zero dollars for maritime sensors, zero dollars for airborne early warning aircraft, zero dollars for satellite ground station this year and next year, and zero dollars for northern operational support hubs.

I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary to explain to me and, more importantly, to explain to Canadians how she can invest in anything with zero dollars.

● (2025)

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for this opportunity to talk a bit more about the critical investments we are making in the Canadian Armed Forces through Canada's new defence policy, “Our North, Strong and Free”. First and foremost, through this policy we are increasing defence spending by \$8.1 billion over the next five years and \$73 billion over the next 20 years. This translates to 1.76% of GDP spent on defence by 2029-30, which is a significant step toward reaching our NATO commitment of 2%.

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We developed the policy based on extensive consultation with the Canadian public, indigenous partners, industry, parliamentarians, defence experts, allies and partners, with the goal of ensuring that the policy provides the equipment we need to protect our country and our continent, to stay engaged with allies and partners across the globe, and to better support our people in uniform. This includes critical new investments in military housing on top of the \$475 million already earmarked for CAF housing prior to the policy's being released.

As part of these efforts, we will establish a Canadian Armed Forces housing strategy, rehabilitate existing on-base housing and build additional new houses on base so that our military members have better access to housing when they are posted. As per National Defence policy, shelter charges should not exceed 25% of the combined gross household income of all occupants residing in the housing unit in any one year. In accordance with Government of Canada policy and National Defence regulations, the government reviews and adjusts shelter charges annually to reflect changes in the local rental market and to aim to meet these requirements. This review helps to ensure fairness and equity, regardless of whether our members choose to live in private sector accommodations or in National Defence housing.

In addition, last year the government approved the Canadian Forces housing differential, also known as the CFHD. The program, which came into effect last July, provides a monthly payment to members of the armed forces living off base who require the most financial support, particularly lower-salaried members posted to the most expensive locations, to adjust to housing costs when relocating in Canada. Rates are adjusted yearly. In fact this year's rates were published this month. This year, 24 locations will see a rate increase greater than 10%, effective July 1. Along with this program, we introduced a provisional post living differential to reduce financial stress for CAF members transitioning from the previous system, the post living differential, to the new CFHD. This temporary benefit will allow a more gradual transition to the new entitlement.

We know that housing is a concern for CAF members and their families, as it is for all Canadians. We share this concern, and we are taking critical steps to help those who have dedicated their lives to safeguarding our country and its people when they are looking for shelter.

● (2030)

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the parliamentary secretary's file is tourism.

I was following along as she was going through her remarks, and I was following the Canadian Armed Forces housing strategy. It talks about it at page 19. I flipped to page 30, which specifically has the funding table. I think it is important to point out, yet again, that this year and next year, there is literally zero dollars for military housing. In five years, there is a total of a whole seven million dollars for the housing strategy.

Does the parliamentary secretary know that the government is actually spending \$10 million on Iraqi youth employment this year? Does she think that, with CAF members, men and women in uniform, sleeping in tents, we should be prioritizing Iraqi youth em-

ployment, or should we prioritize military housing for our brave men and women in uniform first?

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Madam Speaker, in addition to critical new investments in military housing, as well as a new CAF housing strategy, the "Our North, Strong and Free" policy also includes a number of other critical supports for CAF members. These include efforts to modernize how the military manages its personnel, including providing improved career support and service delivery, and re-examining policies around compensation and benefits, HR, leave and other supports for work-life balance. Likewise, to help ease the stresses that come with deploying here in Canada or abroad, we are investing \$100 million to improve access to child care services for military families across the country.

We know how difficult it is when our people are called away from their homes and their loved ones in the line of duty, especially when they have to worry about finding safe, affordable and reliable child care. Through our new defence policy, we are redoubling our support for CAF members through policies such as these, policies that support them and their families throughout their entire careers in good times—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

FINANCE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a sobering statistic for all of us tonight. This year, the government will spend more on servicing its debt than on the Canada health transfers. Just let that sink in for a moment. Governing is about making prudent choices. It is about respecting the taxpayers by being wise stewards of their money for the long-term prosperity of Canada.

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For about 30 years, there was a common-sense consensus that ruled the day in Ottawa. Regardless of party affiliation, it was understood that keeping taxes low and keeping spending in check would pay dividends for Canadians in the future. For the most part, this came to pass. While not immune to global turmoil, Canada weathered the economic recession better than most. Before it hit, the Conservative government paid down \$37 billion in debt, bringing Canada's debt to its lowest level in 25 years. When the global recession occurred, Conservatives made a deliberate decision to run a temporary deficit to protect our economy and jobs. While the NDP and the Liberals demanded reckless spending and higher taxes in the years that followed, the previous government remained on track and delivered a balanced budget in 2015, all while cutting taxes 180 times to their lowest levels in 50 years. Canada was looked to for leadership in the world. Canadians were in control of their lives.

Cut to today, and we have lost our way in Canada. We no longer have a government that is interested in governing wisely today for the prosperity of future generations. That is why Canadians have rejected the federal budget and find its claim of fairness beyond insulting. Because of the choices of the government, Canadians of today and of tomorrow are being robbed of their livelihoods by their own government's ineptness.

We never used to see food bank demand in Canada mirror the dreadful bread lines of the depression era, and now it is commonplace. One million more Canadians will seek the help of a food bank in this year, due, in large part, to the Liberals' spending addiction that drives up inflation and their punitive carbon tax.

Housing is a crisis that will continue to worsen as long as the government is in power. Put aside the fancy photo ops and the empty promises. The Bank of Canada has affirmed that the government's spending is a factor in the most aggressive interest rate hike that this bank has ever done in its history. The millions of Canadians renewing their mortgages know that the Prime Minister is directly to blame.

We are also falling behind our neighbours. While the American economy has seen an increase in GDP per capita of 7% since 2019, the Canadian rate has declined by 3%. This is the single largest underperformance of the Canadian economy in comparison to the U.S. in 60 years.

It is for these reasons that Conservatives have been on our feet every day offering solutions to the Prime Minister's debt addiction before it causes irreparable harm to Canada.

One such solution is the dollar-for-dollar rule, which would bring down interest rates and inflation. It would require the government to find a dollar in savings for every new dollar it spends, but, like a broken record, Liberal ministers repeat ad nauseam that they will not take lessons from us on this side of the House. If they will not take it from us, why do they not take it from their friends? Both the Bank of Canada and former Liberal finance minister John Manley have told the Prime Minister that he has been pressing on the inflationary gas pedal with spending that balloons interest rates. Something has to be done.

A dollar-for-dollar rule is just common sense and sound advice, but Canadians know the government has no intention of correcting its course. Its budget proves it. Canadians have had enough. They know there is hope, though, with a Conservative majority government that listens to them, cares about them—

● (2035)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise this evening to speak about the measures that our government is taking to ensure that all generations are able to get ahead and doing so in a fiscally responsible way. Inflation is down from a peak of 8.1% in June 2022 and has now been within the Bank of Canada's target range for three months in a row.

[*Translation*]

We know that for too many Canadians, especially the younger generations, the promise of Canada is at risk. Our plan is a plan to build a Canada that benefits all generations.

[*English*]

A good example of this is our Canada-wide early learning and child care system. While it allows parents to save thousands of dollars per year on child care, it has also allowed Canada to reach a record high for working-age women's labour force participation in our history.

[*Translation*]

I am proud to say that we are in the process of making further investments to create even more child care spots so that more families can benefit from the system.

[*English*]

Another example of this is the Canada dental benefit. More than 1.7 million Canadians who have already signed up and nine million uninsured Canadians will have dental coverage next year. With the tabling of the pharmacare act just a few weeks ago, we are paving the way to build a Canada that is not only equitable, but also more affordable for all.

[*Translation*]

The first phase of our pharmacare program will give more than nine million women better access to contraceptives and help more than 3.7 million Canadians who rely on diabetes medications such as insulin.

*Adjournment Proceedings**[English]*

As announced in budget 2024, we are delivering more measures to get more houses built in Canada faster. This is what building an economy that lifts everyone up and creates fairness for every generation looks like. We are committed to making investments to ensure all generations get ahead, while doing so in a fiscally responsible way. Canadians know how important it is to responsibly manage a budget. That is exactly what we are doing, and it shows.

Canada's net debt-to-GDP ratio is well below that of our G7 peers. Our deficits are declining, and we are one of only two G7 countries rated AAA by at least two of the three independent credit experts. That enviable fiscal position gives us the ability to invest in our economy and the people who power it. We are making transformative investments in clean energy, creating lifelong careers, improving housing affordability and supporting a business environment that gives investors confidence in Canada's economy. All this while sticking to the fiscal objectives laid out in the fall economic statement, setting both deficits and the federal debt on a downward track.

- (2040)

[Translation]

While the Conservatives offer nothing but slogans and want to cut services to Canadians and their families, our government will continue to build an economy where every generation has a real and fair chance to succeed. Our economic plan will lead our economy toward growth that lifts everyone up, because it is about fairness for all generations.

[English]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, Canadians know there would be hope with a Conservative majority government that would listen to them, care about them and provide the national

framework to replace their fears with confidence in Canada's economy, sovereignty and individual freedoms.

The Prime Minister, in his nine years, has amassed more debt than all other prime ministers combined. That includes Mackenzie King, who brought us through a world war. He brought Canada back to the conditions necessary to build much of the social safety net Canada takes pride in the world over. That also includes Stephen Harper, who led our country out of the great recession by offering a path to balanced budgets.

As long as the government keeps spending like there is no tomorrow, it will be remembered for depriving our children and grandchildren of that bright future they deserve. When Conservatives serve Canadians after the next election, we will be remembered as the government that restored hope in that future.

[Translation]

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Madam Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that has a plan to ensure that everyone has a fair chance to build a good middle-class life. The Conservative leader was quick to say that he will not support this year's budget. Our economic plan clearly shows that we can support fairness for every generation while protecting our fiscal anchors. The Conservatives have no plan other than cuts and austerity.

Will the member opposite support our budget?

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:42 p.m.)

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