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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 22, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Special Joint Committee on the Declaration of Emergency.

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[*English*]

PUBLIC SECTOR INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion. I move:

That, in accordance with subsection 39(1) of the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, S.C. 2005, c. 46, and pursuant to Standing Order 111.1(2), the House approve the reappointment of Joe Friday as Public Sector Integrity Commissioner, for a term of eighteen months.

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

UKRAINE

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two very important petitions to present this morning, both relating to Vladimir Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine and both signed by the Ukrainian community in Regina and southern Saskatchewan.

The first petition calls on the Government of Canada to implore the United Nations Security Council to fulfill its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and find a resolution to the conflict. It is self-evident at a time like this that international law is very important. Finding a resolution to the conflict is what the United Nations and the Security Council are for.

The second petition calls on the Government of Canada to recall Canada's ambassador to Russia and to sever all diplomatic ties with Russia. It is very clear that Russia needs to become a pariah on the world stage just like North Korea. Certainly, severing diplomatic ties and recalling the ambassador is a good place to start.

I am pleased to present these petitions here this morning.

AFGHANISTAN

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while our attention is certainly on Ukrainian refugees, we still have to deal with the matter of Afghan interpreters who served our Canadian Forces.

I have a petition from a former member of the armed forces, veteran Wayne Pickering. He circulated a petition across Canada, and within a matter of two weeks he had over 1,000 signatures from serving and retired members of the Canadian Armed Forces. At the top of the list is retired Major General Lewis MacKenzie. The petitioners are calling on the government to put all its efforts into getting these people who served with our soldiers in Afghanistan to Canada.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am very honoured to present a number of petitions focused on Bill C-350 and Bill S-240 regarding the organ trafficking that continues to occur. These are things we have to bring forward to Parliament and discuss for the greater good, and I am hoping everybody in this chamber will agree.

• (1005)

HEALTH OF ANIMALS REGULATIONS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a number of petitions that I am prepared to raise, and I will wait for the appropriate signal when I am finished.

Business of Supply

The first petitions draw the attention of the House to concerns with respect to health of animals regulations, livestock identification and traceability. The petitioners are concerned that these would pose a threat to the future of agricultural exhibitions, fairs and rodeos. They are concerned about the impact of these regulations. They note that provincial and national associations for agricultural societies, exhibitions and fairs have raised serious concerns over these proposed regulations, and they call on the government to consult with agricultural societies, exhibitions and fairs in developing these regulations.

I think I will leave it at one for today.

* * *

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 ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—TAX REDUCTION ON GASOLINE AND DIESEL

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC) moved:

That, given that,

- (i) Canadians are facing severe hardship due to the dramatic escalation in gas prices,
- (ii) the 5% collected under the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST), and the Quebec Sales Tax (QST) creates increased revenue for the federal government as fuel prices rise which compounds the pain on Canadian consumers and the economy,

the House call on the government to immediately provide relief at the pumps to all Canadians by introducing a temporary 5% reduction on gasoline and diesel whether collected under the GST, HST, or QST which would reduce the average price by approximately eight cents per litre.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to something that concerns virtually every single Canadian: the skyrocketing cost of living in our country. Fifty-three per cent of Canadians today say that they cannot keep up with rising prices, and I suspect that percentage is going to keep going up. Things are going to get worse before they get better.

Yesterday, at the finance committee, we had a number of Canadian economists speak to us, and they very clearly said that the cause of the inflationary spiral we are in today, which is leaving so many Canadians behind, is our federal government. Our federal government has claimed that this is a global phenomenon and there is nothing to see here, and it has washed its hands of that problem. However, these economists noted that there are two types of inflation. One is CPI, consumer price index inflation, or the cost of everyday goods and services. The second is asset price inflation, which is for some of the big assets we purchase, like housing, that are not subject to the whims of the world markets.

What is the reason this is happening in Canada? We have this inflationary spiral, where millions of families no longer have the dream of owning their own home, and the cause is profligate borrowing and spending on the part of the Liberal government, facilitated of course by the Bank of Canada through its quantitative easing, asset purchases and government bond purchases. At the end of the day, the problem is this: We have an inflationary crisis in Canada because the government has pumped excessive stimulus into our economy, effectively pumping hundreds of billions of dollars into our economy beyond what it can manage. What has happened is that we have more dollars chasing the same number of goods and services, and that drives inflation.

I know that my Liberal friends are laughing at me, saying that is not true. However, we had some of the highest ranking economists in the country at our committee, including an economist from the C.D. Howe Institute, who confirmed that the liquidity in our economy now is driving inflationary pressures. Even the Governor of the Bank of Canada admitted that things will get worse before they get better.

I will let members know that I will be splitting my time with the member for Brandon—Souris, who is also ready to speak to this very important issue.

Today, we are calling on the government to pause the GST on fuel. We are talking about gas and diesel at the pumps. We are asking the government to at least temporarily lift the GST.

Members may be asking why we are using the GST to perhaps diminish the impact of inflation on Canadians. Well, the reason is that GST is a tax on a tax. When Canadians go to the pumps and pay for their gas, there is already a fuel excise tax built into the cost. There is a carbon tax built into it too. On top of that is layered the GST. Of course, the problem with that, and the pernicious part of it, is that as the price of gas goes up and up, GST revenues go up. The government has actually reaped windfall revenues from the oil and gas sector in Canada and has this windfall because the GST is generating more and more revenue due to the escalating price of gas at the pumps, so we are suggesting that it would only be fair for the government to at least temporarily lift that GST and provide Canadians with a break.

• (1010)

We are calling for the government to finally, after months and months of calling for a plan, fight inflation. We as Conservatives are coming forward now to say that we have a plan. This is part of the plan. It is not the whole plan, but part of the plan is to lift the GST. There are millions of Canadians across Canada who would appreciate the 8 to 10 cents per litre at the pump they would pay less if the government heeded our call for this GST relief.

Giving Canadians a GST break is actually a simple, common-sense solution to help Canadians who are suffering because of inflation. I used the term “common sense”. That is a rare thing in the House under this Liberal government, but we are asking colleagues to listen. We are coming forward not only with complaints, but also with solutions for the government. I am asking the government not to pour cold water on our motion. We are asking for the government to support our motion and to provide relief for Canadians, because we need real action to help Canadians make ends meet.

Colleagues know that we, as Conservatives, are always the defenders of the taxpayer. This, of course, would help taxpayers who go to the pumps to pay less GST. I would also note that this is all driven by the fact that we have an inflationary crisis in Canada. It is a significant cost-of-living crisis. Today, millions of Canadians have been priced out of the housing market. Why? The economists yesterday told us that it is because the government has pumped so much stimulus into the economy, with so much cash sloshing around, that it is driving the spiking prices for houses across Canada.

In my own community, since the Prime Minister was elected, housing prices have doubled. A house that used to sell for \$500,000 in Abbotsford is a million plus today. In fact, recently some friends of ours sold their home and were expecting to get about a million dollars for it. Of course, there was a bidding war. They got \$1.2 million for a house that, five or six years ago, was half a million dollars. I feel happy for this couple because this is a tax-free gain that they are experiencing, but what about all the millions of families that are lining up behind this couple and waiting to get into the housing market? Their dream of home ownership has been dashed. It has been shattered, probably forever.

Day after day in the House, we have been asking the Liberal government for a plan to fight inflation. I have been doing it and my colleagues have been doing it. Where is the plan to fight the cost-of-living affordability crisis that is facing most Canadians across the country? There has been no plan and no response from the government. In fact, the finance minister effectively has washed her hands of the whole problem by saying it is a global phenomenon and there is nothing we can do about it. Yes, there is something the government can do about it. We have brought forward a motion that would be a start. It would be a head start to addressing the inflationary crisis we have in Canada.

It is time for the government to step up for Canadians and temporarily remove the GST on gas and diesel. The least we elected parliamentarians can do is to heed the voices of Canadians who are being left behind. Inflation is at 5.7%. Wages are only increasing by somewhere in the order of 2.5%, so Canadians are being left way behind as inflation roars ahead. We need to address this problem. We have come up with a solution, or at least a partial solution. I hope my Liberal friends are listening.

• (1015)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member said that the Conservative Party is the great defender of tax breaks, yet one of the very first votes after Conservatives were put in opposition was on the tax decrease to Canada's middle class. It was hundreds of millions, going into billions, of

Business of Supply

dollars in tax relief for Canada's middle class, and they voted against that tax break.

The member now speaks about common sense and applying it to housing prices. Does the member not realize that it is more than just Ottawa? One could talk about municipality responsibilities, from zoning to building permits, or about the role that provinces play in housing. The best way for us to address the housing crunch today is by the different levels of government working together.

We know that the national government has put a great deal of money on the table. What would the member like to see the provinces and municipalities do to deal with the housing crisis in Canada today?

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, the member is part of the governing Liberal-NDP coalition government. They are the ones who have the power to introduce policies within the House that can make a difference in the lives of Canadians. They have not done so. We have asked them repeatedly. Now the member is asking me to pass the buck over to the municipalities and the provinces. That is typical Liberal baffle-gab.

At this point in time, Canadians just want to see their federal government, the Prime Minister and the member do something about the housing crisis and the affordability crisis. Conservatives are starting to do that on this side of the House. We are offering a solution to lift the GST on fuel, at least temporarily.

• (1020)

Mr. Charlie Angus: I have to get a better suit.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleagues to quiet down so that I can ask my question.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

[*English*]

We will take a minute. I know there is a lot of go-between. It is interesting go-between, but I think maybe we could get to the point.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, my Conservative colleagues told me I am the new minister, but I have not gotten my suit yet. I am going to get the suit and then they can ask me the questions.

The Deputy Speaker: We are getting into debate.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Jonquière.

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, the childish antics are finally over.

Business of Supply

I have often heard the Conservatives claim that they champion respect for jurisdictions, including Quebec's jurisdiction. However, in their motion, they indicate that they want to revoke part of the Quebec sales tax.

I would like someone to explain to me how the House of Commons can magically lower a tax that falls under the jurisdiction of the Quebec National Assembly.

I am anxious to hear my colleague's answer. I am breaking out in a cold sweat.

[*English*]

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, we want this GST relief to apply equally across Canada so that Canadians in all provinces, such as Quebec, enjoy a reduction in GST that allows them to at least buy gas at a lower price. That goes to affordability.

As to how this will be executed in Quebec, we have simply said that the federal portion of the GST, or the QST that is applied in Quebec, would be temporarily lifted to provide relief to Canadians: to Quebeckers. We are not in any way proposing that we intrude on provincial jurisdiction, and certainly not on Quebec's provincial jurisdiction.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that a huge part of the extreme gas prices we are seeing is the egregious price gouging by the huge oil companies, yet this motion from the Conservative Party would do nothing to address the windfall profits that the big oil companies are making.

Could the member please inform the House why he has entirely missed dealing with the primary source of this affordability issue?

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from British Columbia rolls out this often-articulated trope that somehow extreme prices are due to price gouging by the oil companies and retailers. That is nonsense. There is not a shred of evidence to support that.

He did note that oil companies are making windfall profits right now because of the high prices of oil and gas. He is right, but in reality that money is also taxed. It translates into tax revenue that the federal government receives, which is why we have these windfall revenues at the federal level. We believe those, at least in part, should be applied to lifting the GST on gas and diesel.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for Abbotsford for moving this opposition day motion to give some immediate relief to Canadians.

Life is getting expensive. Inflation is at the highest point in a generation. Every time people fill up at a local gas station or go through the checkout at the grocery store, they are constantly reminded that their paycheques and pensions do not go as far as they did once.

While we have been raising these issues for months, I cannot point to a single policy change the Liberal government has enacted to respond to this cost of living crisis. Instead, the NDP-Liberals made a backroom deal with the NDP to hold on to power until 2025. This is no benefit to Canadians struggling to feed their families and pay their bills.

I fear how bad it must get out there to finally shake the government out of its slumber. The bears are coming out of hibernation at this time of year, and I urge the Liberals to do the same. Time is of the essence and inaction is inexcusable. There are going to be a few more bumps, or perhaps potholes, along the way for Canadians, and I urge them to brace themselves and their wallets.

The federal carbon tax is about to go up on April 1. According to the Canada Revenue Agency, the price increase translates to 8.8 cents per litre of gasoline for the regular consumer. Supply chains are struggling to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. As well, the war crimes committed by the Putin regime and the Russian military are not only killing thousands of innocent Ukrainians, but the impact of this illegal invasion is also being felt around the world. Its shock was immediately felt on global markets, such as in the price of energy and the price of commodities.

While I am fully aware there are external pressures driving up the price of energy, as my colleague for Abbotsford just said, and the price of food, there is no excuse for the government not to act now.

As we stand here in this chamber, I am thinking of the seniors who have reached out about how the prices of groceries, rent, utilities and putting gas in the car are getting out of reach. I am thinking of the parents in my riding who go into town to drop off their kids at school or to pick up their groceries. I am thinking of the students who must drive into the city to go to Brandon University or to Assiniboine Community College on a daily basis.

No one is immune to the rising price of gas. The only difference is that some people can afford to pay extra hundreds of bucks per month, while most others are getting crushed by it. Seniors on fixed incomes and working families are struggling, and the government is drowning in its own talking points rather than proposing solutions.

Just yesterday, when my colleague to the north asked about removing the GST from gas and diesel, the Liberal associate finance minister responded by talking about GDP growth. Try telling that to a pensioner unable to fill her car and see what she has say to the government. His answer reflected the typical Liberal arrogance and the disconnect to everyday Canadians. Maybe the minister should lecture a single mother about GDP growth while she cannot afford to drive her kids to music lessons or to sports practice. What an incredibly tone-deaf thing to say. It is insulting, it is arrogant and it shows how out of touch the Liberal government is with reality.

With the price of gas skyrocketing in the past month, it has resulted in hardship and hard choices for families and seniors. Politicians must have their heads further in the sand than an ostrich to not recognize what is happening. The simplest and easiest way to provide some relief to my constituents and Canadians facing the rising cost of gas is to temporarily waive the GST from gas and diesel fuel. This policy could be implemented without needing to set up one new program. It would not involve growing the size of government or need people to fill out a form. It could be implemented quickly and would provide at least some relief for those who are struggling most.

I want to outline some of the reasons why I am advocating for this motion and how it would impact the people I represent. I represent a vast rural constituency. From communities such as Alexander, Pierson, Elkhorn, Pilot Mound, Ninette, Medora, Goodlands, Waskada, Tilston, Kola, Minto, Lyleton, Baldur, Glenora, Belmont, Elgin and all the others, commuting and travelling long distances is just a fact of life. As a fierce defender of the rural way of life, it is my responsibility as a parliamentarian to ensure these voices are heard.

• (1025)

While the city of Brandon is the largest community, it is also the regional hub where people drive in to from all over the region every single day. It is not unusual to drive 75 to 100 kilometres every day just to get to work or go to school. In some cases, someone who lives in one town must drive to the next town over to go to work.

It is very common for a teacher, a nurse, a social worker or someone in the construction industry to drive from one town to another, or for a senior to need to drive to their doctor's appointment or the pharmacy. These examples are not just unique to my constituency. They are happening in every province in the country.

I fear that too many members of the government, this NDP-Liberal government, have no idea what happens in rural constituencies. I fear they have either forgotten, or they simply cannot or do not care, about the realities of living in a small community or on a farm.

People drive pickup trucks to work, for their daily lives or simply due to the fact they need four-wheel drive for the blustery prairie storms that we get. There are no buses, subways or LRTs anywhere in sight. There are no taxis, Ubers or Lyfts. There are no bike lanes, but there are snowmobile trails. There are simply no public transit alternatives for people who must get from point A to point B in rural Canada.

While the reward for living in rural Canada is too great to put in to words, the consequence is paying for a lot of fuel. That is the cost of living in a small community, one that many do as they decide to raise their family or retire outside of a major town or city.

It is not only the odometers in rural Canada that are worth mentioning but also the gap in earnings cannot be ignored. As Statistics Canada has reported, the variation in earnings from urban to rural areas accounts for a large part of the variation in provincial earnings. Some of the poorest regions in Canada are found in rural and remote communities.

Business of Supply

As well, I will complement my colleague on the doubling of the price of housing that has taken place under the Liberal government. It has not made it any easier for any Canadian.

These are the people who are hardest and fastest hit with the rising price of fuel. They feel it immediately and have few options to avoid the rising cost of gas. They do not have the money to purchase a more fuel-efficient car. They do not have the luxury of working virtually, and they do not have the savings to get them through this prolonged cost-of-living crisis.

Today we are pushing for one way to provide immediate relief, which would be to temporarily remove the GST from gas and diesel. For those wondering why we would target the GST and not other taxes, it is because, unlike other static taxes, the GST is also a tax on a tax. When the price of gas goes up and the carbon tax goes up, the GST goes up as well.

Our proposal is targeted, timely and can be implemented in short order. It is just one way the government could acknowledge that our constituents are facing severe hardship due to the dramatic escalation in gas prices.

In closing, the time for inaction and excuses is over. People are tired of hearing nothing but platitudes. This proposal is guaranteed to provide that tax relief. It acknowledges that the government can reduce the financial pinch that families and seniors are facing at the pump. It acknowledges that rural Canadians and those who must commute are struggling to get fuel in their cars and trucks to get to work or take care of their families.

These are extraordinary circumstances. I call on all my colleagues to support this motion, to stand up and to vote to provide some relief for those seniors living on fixed incomes and those families struggling to put fuel in their cars or trucks.

• (1030)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very sympathetic to the issue of gas prices. In fact, I am seeing the Conservatives in opposition here in Ottawa taking a popular consumer-related issue and trying to score political points, albeit it is up to the opposition to do so.

In the prairie provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta, all of which have Conservative governments, have any of those Conservative governments taken an initiative to reduce the price of a litre of gas in recent weeks?

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An hon. member: Yes, Alberta has. All the provincial parliaments have.

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to make sure we have a question and an answer. If members want to ask questions, they can ask a question and even make a comment.

The hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Calgary is right. He just answered the member for Winnipeg North's question, and I am proud to reiterate what he was saying.

The member for Winnipeg North was the one who was laughing when I got up and during the first two lines of my speech about how life is getting expensive and inflation is the highest it has been in a generation. I do not know where he has been. His own constituents in Winnipeg North have to feel the same as what I just described in my speech.

My colleague from Calgary is right. The provincial government of Alberta does not have a PST to start with, so that is a big break. My federal colleague from Winnipeg North could use his power to reduce a tax on a tax, which he is proposing to continue to have. That is also on top of the GST.

• (1035)

The Deputy Speaker: We will continue with questions and comments.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. As much as I do not mind a bit of banter back and forth, we are not going to call each other names. I have let a lot go here and maybe that is what is creating this free flow. I want to make sure we are not calling each other names. I do not mind a quick snap once in a while, but let us not start that.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am always surprised by this ability to put on blinders. The price of oil definitely includes taxes, but it is also determined by the oil companies themselves.

The price per barrel of Brent crude doubled from March 2021 to March 2022, rising from \$64 to \$128. Oil companies also make a profit on refining a barrel of oil. The profit margin went from \$1.15 in February 2021 to \$4.40 in February 2022.

The profits from Brent and oil refining do not go to the government. They go to the oil companies. They are the ones exerting upward pressure on gas prices. I agree that supply and demand is a factor, but greed also has a role to play here.

When will the government take action against the oil companies, which are lining their pockets to benefit their shareholders rather than workers, the government and the people?

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I have a simple answer for my hon. colleague: yes. My colleague from Abbotsford talked about the increases in oil prices, and I just want to add that they have gone up 30% since we came back to the House after the new

year. If she thinks that is due to the gouging, which is the word I heard earlier, from the oil companies, she is definitely wrong.

There are profits to be made in this industry, but the biggest one is the taxes that are on the cost of fuel today, and the increase puts a lot more money in the government's coffers than it did in those of the oil companies. That is why we are reasonably asking today for the GST to be taken off of the price of gas. The government has the full authority and mandate to do that overnight.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was surprised to hear the Conservatives say there is no evidence of price gouging. I invite the hon. member to come north of Highway 17, where we often pay 30¢ more a litre in towns such as Kirkland Lake and Timmins than they pay in southern Ontario. In 2019, the British Columbia Utilities Commission, under the New Democrats, found out there was price gouging of at least 13¢ a litre.

Does the hon. member agree that we need to push the Competition Bureau to start making sure that in isolated, northern communities, we are not getting ripped off at the pumps because of these arguments that we are a little further away from the centre? If we deal with price gouging, people will at least have a fair chance, especially with the outrageous prices we are paying because of Putin's war.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I am on the natural resources committee with my colleague and yes, there is some gouging at all levels of the pricing of the cost of fuels in Canada and perhaps not just within our fossil fuel area.

Coming from a farming background, I know exactly what has happened to the price of fertilizer in the last year. It has doubled for both nitrogen and phosphorus. They are coming from natural gas products in those areas, so there are exacerbations in the increases of these products due to things like the Suez Canal blockade. That started that whole process in fertilizer pricing of the changes of costs, and the delivery mechanisms have slowed because of COVID.

We have certainly got a problem with the taxes on taxes the government has today. All I am saying is there is something that the government can do immediately and it is not doing it.

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to take part in today's debate.

I have not had an opportunity to congratulate the member for Abbotsford on his new role in the House. I would like to do that now. Of course, this is a return to a role he held previously, and I am always excited to work with a fellow British Columbian on policy.

The motion under consideration before us today brings to mind the musings of a 20th century journalist who said that for every complex problem there is a solution that is simple, elegant and wrong. Make no mistake, our government cares about tackling global inflation and making life more affordable. In fact, I gave a speech in the House yesterday where I outlined many of the very real solutions our government has put forward to make life more affordable. I will raise some of these initiatives later on in my speech, but I would first like to turn to the issue of rising energy prices.

Certainly we can all agree that the problem of rising gasoline prices is a complex one that must be seriously considered. Canadians and people around the world are facing higher prices at the gas pump as a result of the unprecedented challenge of restarting the world's economy in the wake of a global pandemic and the significant global oil market disruptions arising as a result of Russia's illegal war in Ukraine.

The proposed solution is wrong because gas taxes represent a small portion of the total price that consumers pay at the pump, so cutting them would be ineffective in protecting Canadians from these global market forces. Daily changes in gas prices can be greater than the 5% proposed in today's motion. That means that any positive impact of the proposed fuel tax cut could be wiped out the day after it was implemented. Canadians could literally wake up paying the same price for gas as they did the day before.

The government would also be in the uneasy position of having spent tens, if not hundreds of millions, of dollars trying to unsuccessfully fight market forces over which it has very little control. What would happen then? Would the opposition have us further cut gas taxes? How long would the measures last?

More importantly, what programs would the Conservatives cut to make up for the shortfall in revenue? They voted against our tax cuts for the middle class. They voted against decreasing the age of retirement from 67 to 65. These are all programs that make life more affordable for Canadians, but also programs the Conservatives would rather us do without.

It is interesting, but it seems that, according to the Conservatives, the solution to almost every problem we face in Canada can be solved by further subsidizing the oil and gas sector. Our government has cut taxes for the middle class twice, reduced the cost of child care, improved retirement security and made post-secondary education more affordable. The Conservatives vote against these important measures and then move a motion to cut the funding source for these important programs, which actually do make life more affordable for Canadian families.

This is because taxes help pay for the government programs and services that benefit Canadians. They provide a safety net on which all Canadians can rely in times of crisis and allow us to make the sort of investments that could help our economy grow and create more opportunities for future generations. Funding these investments means ensuring that everyone pays their fair share of tax, and taxes on gas are an important component of the Canadian tax system in this regard.

Moreover, there are very real costs associated with fuel consumption with respect to carbon pollution and climate change,

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which all Canadians have to pay when fuel is consumed and released into the atmosphere. The member for Abbotsford knows all too well the very real costs of the floods and forest fires that have affected so many families in British Columbia and across Canada. The fact is that climate change presents a threat to our long-term health and economic prosperity. Putting a price on carbon pollution is the most effective policy to address it.

Fortunately our government, along with most Canadians and provincial governments, understand this. That is why we recently confirmed our plan to increase the carbon price through to 2030. At the same time, we will continue to return the direct proceeds from the federal carbon pollution pricing system to their province or territory of origin. In jurisdictions that do not have their own fuel charge consistent with the federal backstop criteria, such as Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, approximately 90% of direct proceeds from the fuel charge are returned to the residents of those provinces through climate action incentive payments. As a result, in most households, these climate payments actually represent more than the increased costs they face from the federal carbon pricing system.

● (1040)

What is more, the remaining fuel charge proceeds are used to support small businesses, farmers, indigenous groups and other organizations. Going forward, the federal carbon price will continue to be revenue-neutral for the Government of Canada.

This is one thing that has always confused me about the contemporary Conservative policy. In 2019, Conservatives promised to eliminate carbon pricing entirely, a strange promise as both the member for Abbotsford and I live in B.C., where a price on carbon has been in place for more than 10 years. That particular promise essentially meant no savings for British Columbians and no fighting climate change in other jurisdictions. This of course is a lose-lose proposition for the people of British Columbia. It would be much more effective to ensure that the B.C. carbon price is revenue-neutral, a position I have supported since its inception.

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In 2021, Conservatives reversed their position and promised to eliminate carbon pricing by getting rid of our revenue-neutral system and creating a less efficient special bank account where they would collect money on Canadians' behalf and tell them how to spend it. Now in 2022, Conservatives are again calling to eliminate carbon pricing, basically abandoning any real or serious climate plan that will allow us to hit our IPCC targets.

This motion in itself would potentially save up to eight cents a litre, which is remarkably close to the current carbon price of approximately 8.8¢ per litre. With revenue-neutral carbon pricing in place, we are making sure Canadians and Canadian businesses have positive incentives to make consumer choices that are good for them and good for the environment, and that encourage innovation and create clean solutions that Canada will be able to export to the world as demand for clean technology continues to grow rapidly.

Our policy is benefiting the majority of Canadian families, helping to fight climate change and helping to create clean jobs. I am confident that any future generation who might study contemporary Conservative climate policy or the lack thereof would see it as short-sighted and not meeting the real needs and challenges that Canadians are facing today.

At the same time, I think we could all agree that it is important that our government continues to focus on measures that make life in Canada more affordable for the average family. That is why our government is cutting taxes for the middle class while raising them on the wealthiest 1%. We have delivered on that commitment in real terms.

We have increased support for families and low-income workers through programs such as the Canada child benefit and the Canada workers benefit, which have helped lift over one million Canadians out of poverty since 2015, including 435,000 children. In fact, our anti-poverty measures helped reduce Canada's poverty rate to all-time historic lows. We have increased the guaranteed income supplement top-up benefit for low-income seniors and enhanced the GIS earnings exemption, and we are increasing old age security for Canadians aged 75 and older in July of this year.

As well, to protect Canadians from the impact of inflation, the government indexes the Canada child benefit to inflation, as well as the Canada pension plan, old age security, the guaranteed income supplement, the goods and services tax credit and other benefits that our most vulnerable Canadians rely on. This means that, as inflation rises, so too do these benefits. To further offset the impact of inflation and make life more affordable, we have increased the basic personal amount that Canadians could earn before paying any federal income tax. To ensure that this support is targeted at the middle class, the benefits of the increased exemption are phased out for high-income taxpayers.

When this measure is fully implemented next year, single individuals will pay \$300 less in tax each year and families will pay \$600 less. We are also working with provinces and territories to implement a Canada-wide, \$10-a-day, community-based early learning and child care system that will make life more affordable for families, create new jobs, get parents back into the workforce and grow the middle class, while giving every child a real and fair

chance at success. These are the right ways for the government to make life more affordable and offset the impact of inflation.

I have primarily discussed government fiscal policy, but I think it is worth discussing monetary policy as well. A strong monetary policy framework is also crucial to keeping prices stable and keeping inflationary pressures in check. Our government and the Bank of Canada believe that monetary policy could best serve Canadians by continuing to focus on price stability. That is why, last December, the government and the Bank of Canada announced the renewal of the 2% inflation target for another five-year period.

● (1045)

The renewed framework will keep the bank focused on delivering low, stable and predictable inflation in Canada. Since Canada's adoption of the inflation-targeting framework 30 years ago, inflation has averaged close to 2%, which has contributed to our country's strong labour market performance, to our economy's growth and to our prosperity. Maintaining a stable environment for the prices that Canadians pay is the paramount objective for Canada's monetary policy. That policy is independently administered by the Bank of Canada and has been tremendously successful since its implementation.

There are very real challenges with regard to global inflation and strong fiscal and monetary policies help Canadians work through these challenges. These are the right ways to make life more affordable for Canadians and protect them from the impacts of inflation.

The proposal put forward in today's motion is not. It is wrong because it would be ineffective and it would be costly. It is wrong because it would undermine important goals like protecting Canadians from the impact of climate change and ensuring we can afford to invest in our highest priorities. It is wrong because the federal government does not have the authority to cut the Quebec sales tax, and it is wrong because our government is already taking more effective and appropriate steps to make life affordable for Canadians and protect them from the impacts of inflation.

I am thankful for the opportunity to make this case.

Business of Supply

• (1050)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Burnaby North—Seymour for his thoughtful speech on this Conservative opposition day motion. However, one of the things I feel is lacking in his response is a real concern about the immediacy of the crisis many Canadians are facing in their household budgets when it comes to increasing prices.

While I agree with his statement of the long-term things that we must do, what exactly does the Liberal government have in mind to help out those people who are finding it hard to make ends meet at the end of the month?

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, it is true. There is an immediacy to this crisis and we need to make sure that we are tackling inflationary pressures right away. Certainly we had economists come and speak at the finance committee who talked about making sure that expected inflation is not anchored into the economy.

We have taken concrete measures that have helped with affordability and are going to help Canadians deal with these inflationary pressures. They include reduced costs of child care, which is going to not only reduce costs for families but give those children a better head start. That is going to provide benefits to Canadians in the long term, but it is also going to help those family members get back to work and give them more flexibility around their jobs.

We have implemented real changes that have helped seniors and students, and we have a national housing strategy that is working to make life more affordable and allow individuals to be able to afford their first homes as well. Those are some of the measures. There are many more and hopefully I will be able to talk about them in further questions.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, in which he talked about the importance of helping Canadians get through this inflationary period. He talked about helping families, but there is another group of people living on fixed incomes and that is seniors.

My colleague just talked about an affordable housing strategy. Having an affordable place to live is one thing, but having a fixed income is another.

Does my colleague understand that seniors need help? The government is planning to help those 75 and over by upping old age security, but seniors 65 and up need help too. That is what it means to help people on fixed incomes who need support during this inflationary period.

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, this is one of the most important challenges that we as a government have to tackle. When it comes to our most vulnerable seniors, we needed to make sure that every Canadian retires in dignity and that is why our government moved to reverse the Conservative change that increased the age of eligibility for retirement to 67 years. We lowered that back down to age 65, which gives thousands of dollars to seniors right when they need it at retirement.

We have also moved to increase the OAS and the GIS to make sure that seniors have the resources they need. Importantly, and this is crucial, we are indexing those measures to inflation, which means that, as inflationary pressures grow, those benefits will grow as well.

• (1055)

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member for Burnaby North—Seymour's thoughtful response to this motion this morning. I appreciate his focus on measures that would address affordability. If we are talking about affordability in this place, we should be talking about affordability for those who need it most and recognizing that it is Canadians with disabilities who are disproportionately living in poverty. Up to 40% of those living in poverty across the country are Canadians with disabilities.

I wonder if the member would comment on the need to go further and to fast-track a Canada disability benefit or any other measure he would put forward in order to meaningfully address affordability for a group of people across the country who need it most.

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for raising the issue of Canadians with disabilities. I have members of my own family who are in that situation and there are many families in my constituency of Burnaby North—Seymour who are also in that situation.

The member opposite is correct that we need to do more to make sure that individuals with disabilities have the supports they need, not just the financial supports but the accessibility supports and the ability for many individuals with accessibility issues to be strong members of our workforce. Canada does not want to have any members of our team sitting on the bench when it is not necessary to do so. I would be very happy to sit down with that member to discuss any ideas he has on how we can go further.

I can guarantee that any funding for programs that are going to help vulnerable Canadians with disabilities, who are also trying to deal with an inflationary crisis, would not be helped by the motion that is on the table today. In fact, it would cut revenue that could be invested in programs that could help Canadians with disabilities.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could provide his thoughts on the issue of what is happening around the world with regard to inflation, and possibly even the impact on oil prices, more specifically, because of what is taking place in Ukraine.

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, certainly I do not think anyone in this House on any side or any aisle would dispute the impact of the illegal war in Ukraine on energy prices. That, of course, is putting further pressure on a global inflationary environment that has seen pressures from supply-chain bottlenecks, that has seen pressures from climate change, that has seen pressures from increased demand on hard goods as opposed to services during the pandemic and, of course, seen pressure from the reopening of the global economy from the pandemic.

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While the member for Abbotsford is correct that inflation in Canada is currently at 5.7% and that we need to work to reduce that inflation, I would remind him that our health-based and economic-based policy has led to better results than our neighbour's results in the U.S., where the inflation rate is at 7.5%. Of course Canada's average is less than the OECD, which is at 6.5%, and lower than the G20 average, which is at 6.1%.

Therefore, in all, through measures that our government is taking, Canada is working to tackle the inflation crisis and to improve affordability for Canadian families.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the cheering crowd has me feeling generous, so I will be sharing my time with the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

The member for Abbotsford's motion reminded me of a university class I used to teach on populism. A fairly simple definition of populism is proposing simplistic solutions to complex problems. Inflation is a complex problem to which people can propose simplistic solutions. Let us unpack that together.

One good approach to analyzing populism is to look at populist themes, which I find even more interesting. What are those? A stock populist theme is telling people we are going to put more money in their pockets. Beware of politicians who say that. It is not as though public services pay for themselves. These are tough times. COVID-19 put our health care system through the wringer. We need health transfers, and that money does not grow on trees. It comes from taxes. Nevertheless there will always be politicians who say they are going to put more money back in people's pockets. That is a populist theme.

Another populist theme involves denying global warming. Some people simply want to keep things as they are and not make any effort, because they believe global warming does not exist, so the oil and gas sector is not to blame. People who study populism often see this type of discourse.

To my great delight, both of these populist themes have been included in the motion moved by my Conservative colleagues. We are not in an election period, but I already have concerns about the electoral intent of provoking discontent among the population. It seems to me that that is what this motion is all about.

I say this because that kind of discourse is completely inconsistent. During the last election campaign, the leader of the Conservative Party came to Quebec and said that he would respect Quebec's jurisdictions. This motion proposes that the House reduce the GST, which is perfectly feasible, because the GST is federal. It also proposes reducing the QST, the Quebec sales tax, which I think is entirely impossible. The House of Commons can adopt as many motions as it likes, but it cannot change Quebec's laws. Suggesting to Canadians that Ottawa can reduce the QST is pure fiction. This is really just a figure of speech, a kind of populism.

The other thing the motion calls for is a 5% reduction of the price of gasoline at the pumps. That may appear to be interesting and attractive. It is easy to understand and is just another populist theme. In the meantime, their motion was tabled on March 17 and

gas prices have already gone down by 5%. In fact, the purpose of the motion is to use inflation to rally the discontented.

Then the Conservatives also talk about a temporary reduction. I wonder what they mean by "temporary". In the context of fighting climate change, when we really should not be giving people any incentive to consume more gas but instead maybe encourage them to use an electric vehicle, I wonder what temporary means. The motion says that "the House call[s] on the government to immediately provide relief at the pumps to all Canadians". If that is not an attempt to get people to consume more oil, then I do not know what is.

Another key aspect of my colleagues' motion is a very Conservative intention to get everyone but the oil companies to pay. The oil companies are the main beneficiaries of the increased price of crude oil. It is not the government who is pocketing the huge profits being made at the extraction stage with the increased price of oil, it is the oil companies.

● (1100)

However, that is not all. Oil companies also pocket exorbitant profits at the refining stage. The refining margin, or the amount oil companies charge to refine crude oil, has quadrupled in one year, rising from \$1.15 U.S. per barrel in February 2021 to \$4.40 U.S. today. We might wonder who benefits here. Certainly it is not the government that benefits from the rising price of oil and refinery costs.

According to the Conservatives, the government is never generous enough towards the oil companies. The best way to protect consumers from the oil companies that are fleecing them is to ensure that the oil industry contributes to relief measures for Canadians who bear the burden these companies have created.

Just yesterday, the Conservatives opposed the idea of asking the oil companies for a special contribution to finance measures that would help Canadians deal with inflation. With today's motion, the Conservatives are proposing that all taxpayers contribute to the relief for gas consumers, whether through taxes or service cuts. To put it bluntly, that is a very bad idea.

In conclusion, I want to say that being irrational is the worst thing that a politician can do. Being rational is essential in politics. We must be aware of where our own interests lie, because many things can make us act irrationally. Love makes us irrational. I am irrational when it comes to my partner. I often forget my own interests.

Allow me to explain by referring to French singer Johnny Hallyday. Although I am not a big fan, some of my colleagues may know him. Some might say that Johnny Hallyday sounds a little irrational when he cries out about his feelings of love. That is the kind of irrationality that comes with love. I sense something irrational when I hear my Conservative friends shouting, “build a pipeline”.

The background on my phone is a photo of my son and my partner. On my computer, it is a Quebec flag. I am also irrational when it comes to Quebec. When I look at my Conservative colleagues' computers, I always see “I love oil and gas”. That is irrational.

Much like I have an indescribable love for my partner, the Conservatives have an irrational love for oil, and they cannot get out from under that spell. This irrational love can make our political processes ineffective because the oil lobby is given too much weight.

Let us see what is coming down the pike. Oil Change International estimates that the federal government invested \$78 billion to support the oil and gas industry in 2019–20 alone. In 2015–17, it invested \$111 billion. Export Development Canada hands out \$14 billion to the oil and gas sector every year. We paid \$21 billion for a pipeline.

At the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, I am currently studying carbon capture and sequestration strategies. Everyone agrees that they do not work. However, billions of dollars will be invested in them. Moreover, the Conservative Party is telling us today that if we want to solve the inflation problem, we might have to give the oil companies more money. That is the epitome of irrationality.

What I am hearing from the Conservatives is all the more shocking because the Liberal Party is caught up in this crazy fossil fuels spiral and it, too, feels compelled to add to it. Canada is therefore trapped in the oil industry's stranglehold and it cannot escape it. Everything is analyzed from the oil industry's perspective. The Conservatives are analyzing the crisis in Ukraine solely in terms of the oil industry. It is outrageous.

Now inflation is only being analyzed from the oil industry's perspective. This is very dangerous. I therefore call on my Conservative colleagues to see the light at the end of the tunnel and put an end to this toxic relationship they have with oil. I am doing this for their own good.

• (1105)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that times are tough for Canadians. Costs are rising, and it is hard to make ends meet.

I would like to ask my colleague if he has any ideas for the federal government to help Canadians pay their bills during these difficult times. Does he have any suggestions for helping people make ends meet at the end of the month?

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, the first thing the federal government can do would be to respect its areas of jurisdiction.

We can see that the NDP has reached an agreement with the Liberals. We will have dental and drug coverage, which is not the re-

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sponsibility of the federal government, but hey, if it makes them happy.

Perhaps the federal government could respect its areas of jurisdiction and the purchasing power of seniors, the only ones who have been left out throughout the pandemic. That might be a good thing. If we want to fight inflation, we need to support the most vulnerable people. That does not seem to be a priority in the Liberal-NDP alliance, but that is another matter.

• (1110)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to pick up on the theme of love, I have a love for our country, Canada. The government needs to provide many support programs, whether they are for seniors, such as the 10% increase for those 75 and older or the GIS increases or the many other types of programs that the government needs to provide to support real people in tangible ways.

I wonder if my colleague could continue his thoughts on how important it is to have revenues to provide these programs, and how the revenue comes from a multitude of sources, including oil and gas.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right.

I rarely agree with my colleague from Winnipeg North, but I agree with him. We need revenue to support seniors. I can easily find some revenue for him. If we stopped supporting the oil and gas industry, we would have some revenue.

From 2015 to 2017, \$111 billion was allocated to support the most polluting sector in the world. We must reconsider this. From 2018 to 2020, \$78 billion was allocated. Maybe if we ended all these oil and gas subsidies, we could use that money to do something more logical, by which I mean increase health transfers.

I invite members to think about that. That is a good starting point.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, logically speaking, if not for oil, we would be standing naked in the House of Commons.

Oil is used for many things besides gas for our cars. We were lucky we had oil to get the goods we needed to fight the pandemic. That said, my colleague comes from Lac-Saint-Jean, an area far from major centres. I am guessing that the people of Lac-Saint-Jean need gas to get around. Paying 5% less for gas would be a good thing.

What would my colleague propose as an alternative?

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Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, the one thing that should never be said to someone from Saguenay is that they are from Lac-Saint-Jean. It is a huge no-no. It is just not done.

I hardly think that we would all be going around naked if not for oil. I do not know what nonsense my colleague is talking there. I have often heard the Conservatives say that, if not for oil, we would all go back to living naked in the forest. Oil is not the basis of human evolution. The Greeks did not have oil, but they were not all going around naked, as far as I know. These days, we have electric vehicles.

The alternative I would suggest is that my colleagues consider the idea that oil companies should do their part. Is it not up to the oil companies to reduce their profit margins?

Why did they not think about that rather than reducing the government's fiscal capacity? It is their problem, not mine.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, unlike my colleague from Jonquière, I am proud to say that I come from a united region, Abitibi—Témiscamingue, and I am equally proud to be from both Témiscamingue and Abitibi. In fact, there are some great debates about where one region begins and the other one ends. I am extremely proud of this.

We had a lot of snow this winter, but fortunately the snowbanks are beginning to melt, and good weather is returning. This has been a source of inspiration for me this week, as I go about my business. When I heard that we would be debating gas prices, I was told not to worry because sometimes it is worth listening to the Conservatives on energy and the environment, since their solutions are often precisely the opposite of what needs to be done. This might be the case here.

It is a well-known fact that the current spike in gas prices is partly related to the economic sanctions imposed on Russia. Lowering the price at the pump might sound like a good idea, but it is important to understand that doing so will in no way address the real problem.

Of course, this will not solve the problem of inflation. What are we talking about? The motion proposes a 5% reduction, which represents about 8¢ or 9¢ on the price of a litre, which I saw advertised as \$1.84 on my way here this morning. Remember the outrage when another space had to be added to the signs at gas stations because the price per litre had risen to over \$1? Someone will have to explain the other 80¢ and how we got to \$1.84. Obviously, that is the oil companies' profit margins.

Does this motion solve the problem? Not at all.

However, I do agree with people when they tell me they are feeling the pinch in their wallets. I empathize with them. Plus, knowing that this price increase could very well affect food prices makes me empathize even more. This price increase will also affect the cost of plane tickets and other consumer goods.

Runaway inflation is a major worry. It affects everything, and it calls for comprehensive measures to address it. We have to find solutions that will strengthen our economy and eliminate subsidies for dirty western Canadian oil, or as Barack Obama put it, the tar sands.

The Bloc Québécois has been saying for some time that Canada needs to rid itself of its reliance on fossil fuels, make choices, and adopt Quebec's innovations, but the Canadian government continues to subsidize western Canadian oil and is in fact still doing so. Quebecers know this choice does not make sense for the future of Quebec's youth.

This week, I read what Quebec's Minister of Finance, Eric Girard, had to say about cutting the QST on gas and diesel. He said it was a bad idea. Quebec is not ashamed of its push to electrify transportation because we headed in that direction a long time ago. This is actually a fantastic opportunity, a gold mine even.

Apparently the Conservatives are admitting to us that they made bad choices in the past and that the only way to address these sudden jolts to the Canadian economy is oil independence. The future is making that clear, and so is what is happening in Ukraine.

Quebec has made investments in knowledge building, because it cares about the future of the planet at heart and has green energy available. As a result, all of its industries are carving out a prominent place for themselves.

My colleague will be pleased to hear that this week, the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology is wrapping up its study on critical and strategic minerals. I am very proud to say that we heard about major advances in the development of value chains. I am talking about batteries for electric vehicles, chemical industries returning to Quebec with international investments, and growth in the aerospace and heavy-duty vehicle industries, as well as the quantum industry, the pharmaceutical industry, and many others.

The future is not in oil. It is in the green transition. Quebec is benefiting because it has been preparing for this for a long time. Every SME that is part of the economic fabric of Quebec has repeatedly said that we must ignore what is going on and categorically reject the industrial shift that is happening around the world. I am hearing some regrets here.

Carbon capture and sequestration is a mirage that the Conservatives are desperately hanging onto in a bid to keep us in the 20th century for as long as possible. It is not a real solution. The longer we stay entrenched in the economy of the last century, the greater the shock will be because our shift will come too late.

● (1115)

The Conservatives keep resorting to sophistry by making arguments that are logically flawed. That is what this motion is about. The Conservatives have moved this motion for debate so that they can repeat the same arguments over and over until they are believed. That makes no sense. Repeating a bad idea over and over will not make it good. They want to abolish the carbon tax, jump-start Canada's oil industry and develop pipelines.

We believe that we must continue with the energy transition at a slow and steady pace. The transition cannot be interrupted every time the price of oil goes up, no matter how high it goes. Listening to the Conservatives would be like changing a ship's course based on the ocean's waves. Good luck to anyone trying to navigate like that.

I want to point out to Quebeckers that the federal carbon tax is imposed on provinces that have not yet set a price for each tonne of carbon they produce. Which provinces have yet to do so? It will shock no one to hear that the stragglers are Alberta and Ontario, but not Quebec, since we have our own carbon market.

On April 1, the price will go up from \$40 to \$50 a tonne, and that will translate to a 2.32-cent increase at the pump. Compared to the 30-cent jump a week ago, that is pretty minor.

The carbon tax does not reduce purchasing power. It is simply intended to encourage Canadians to make greener choices. The energy transition is both vital and economically viable. Quebeckers are increasingly making green choices in their investments by entrusting their nest egg to companies that honour agreements and fight climate change. I have been doing it myself for the past 15 years or so, and I must say that those investments have been the most profitable ones over that period, so imagine how they will do in the future.

Unfortunately, investment funds in Canada have still been slow to divest from fossil fuels. Few funds have a policy of excluding fossil fuel companies. However, plenty of companies honour the agreements or have made consistent investments to help keep temperatures from rising by more than 1.5 degrees Celsius, like climate science tell us we need to do.

There is so much at stake, and the transition needs to happen now in our pension funds, which are still packed with fossil fuel investments. I urge my colleagues to take a closer look at this and to write to their banking professionals. That would be a much more meaningful solution than lowering a tax.

The Conservatives are a predictable bunch. Whatever the problem is, their solution is always the same: helping the oil companies. On their last opposition day, they put forward a motion saying that the best way to help Ukrainians is not to help Ukrainians, but to increase oil sands production. That is frankly bizarre. We know very well that this would have no impact in the short term.

This week, the measure that the Conservatives are proposing to help people deal with runaway inflation in all areas is not to help people, but rather to target one area, which is oil again. Today's motion is a false solution to a real problem.

I have personally made the green transition. I bought a 100% electric vehicle. I am making a little heartfelt plea. One of the issues is not what it cost me. When President Zelenskyy addressed the House, I took the opportunity to attend in person. It was a bit foolhardy because it was not very warm out, it was a long distance to travel, and the charging stations are very far apart. I had a bad experience. I came over to the Ontario side, and in Mattawa, whose residents I salute, in passing, I found out the two charging stations there were not working. In the end, I did not get home until 7:15 in the morning. That is the problem.

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If we truly want an energy transition, we will have to have high gas prices. There is no harm in sparking interest in a genuine energy transition and encouraging people to purchase electric vehicles. Also, since everything in life is based on supply and demand, there is a basic economic principle at play here. The higher the demand for electric vehicles, the more companies in the United States and around the world will offer electric vehicles in Quebec, because demand will be high. The more tax credits are available for the purchase of an electric vehicle, the higher demand will be. That is an advantage.

Speaking of supply and demand, I want to close by saying that in my view, the more electric vehicles are available, the less demand there will be for gas, and the less demand there is for gas, the more prices will drop. That may be the solution, rather than cutting social programs and taking money out of Canadians' pockets.

• (1120)

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech, although I am definitely at odds with his conclusions. Given the fact that there is an immense amount of tax already on gasoline, would it not make sense to just remove the GST for the folks who do not have an electric car or for those who have to drive great distances? The member mentioned that he took his electric car to Ottawa. I have driven to Ottawa from my riding several times, but I do not think that an electric car would be an efficient way to get here.

For the folks who are not able to afford an electric car or are unable to take public transit, would pulling the GST off not be the minimum we can do to ensure that we are not paying two dollars a litre for gasoline in this country?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, the answer is simple. The answer is no.

Normally, it takes me six hours to drive to Ottawa. Driving an electric car required me to form new habits. Before I can get to where I am going, I have to remember to plug in my car. While waiting, I can buy a sandwich at the corner store to fuel myself up. Then I can drive off with enough energy to last me a while. After that, it is time to eat. It is just a matter of habit.

The real issue is the availability of charging stations in rural areas. The federal government has a responsibility in this respect. Fast charging stations must be accessible. My colleague could travel long distances if he had access to fast charging stations. The federal government could invest in such stations. If there are stations all along the way, it will make a big difference.

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• (1125)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is in fact investing in charging stations in Canada. However, in good part, the debate is about the issue of inflation, and one of the things we have to take into consideration is the world dynamic. What is taking place, unfortunately in a very horrific fashion, can be witnessed every day on the news. We are seeing first-hand what is happening in Ukraine, and that has had a severe impact on the price of oil worldwide.

I am wondering if my colleague could provide his thoughts with regard to that aspect. We are seeing oil increase as dramatically as it has been because of what is taking place in Europe.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, Ukraine certainly is a sensitive issue now.

It is likely that one of the reasons for the Russian government's invasion was not to gain access to oil, but to take control of Ukraine's critical and strategic mineral deposits. The energy transition is going on worldwide. We need critical and strategic minerals to build tomorrow's electric vehicles. As we know, China controls a huge part of the market. Russia wants its share of the pie, but Canada can take action to forestall it.

We are talking about economic sanctions on Russia. The best way to reduce our dependence is to make sure we no longer need oil because the industry has changed. We want all modes of transportation and energy sectors to be electrified.

There are mines in my riding that want to become 100% electric. I think that is part of the solution, because some of these mines can consume up to 100,000 litres of diesel a day. That makes us more and more dependent on Russia and the financial problems that lead to war.

Let us shift the paradigm and make a genuine energy transition. I think that will also be a solution for peace.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue for his speech and his calls for action concerning the climate crisis.

If members of Parliament were really serious about addressing affordability and climate change, what could they do with the \$18 billion that goes toward subsidies for fossil fuels?

How could we use that money to make life more affordable for Canadians and Quebecers?

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from the Green Party for his question and remarks.

Unfortunately, we have given oil companies much more than that. That is part of the problem. What we can do is accelerate the transition. Let us take that money and invest it in every region of Canada to develop innovation. We must look to innovation and rely on the bright people at our colleges and universities to find alternatives. In my opinion, that is part of the solution.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to speak to the motion today.

I commend the sponsor of the motion for putting some concrete ideas on the table about how we could try to provide relief to Canadians who are living through very difficult economic times. That certainly has been a focus of the work of the NDP over the last number of years. I will not belabour the history of our attempts to make sure that working people and vulnerable people in Canada have what they need in order to live a life of dignity, but it has certainly been a focus of ours through the pandemic.

That is why I think we have seen a real willingness on the part of New Democrats to come to this place with the understanding that while we may not have liked the outcome of the election, we respect what Canadians did in building a Parliament with the expectation that parliamentarians would come here to work on their behalf and try to navigate the Parliament that they elected and try to come to agreement on concrete policy ideas that would make a difference in their lives.

That does not mean that every idea put on the table will find agreement in this place, but I think we are doing our job well when we take those proposals seriously and make counter-proposals in the event that we do not like the initial offering. I think Canadians enjoy seeing their parliamentarians engaged in that kind of work.

There is no question that these are difficult economic times. I had the opportunity yesterday to speak to some of the reasons that Canadians are having such difficult times and why, even sometimes in the face of good-news announcements about the economy, we are not seeing that news translating into financial and economic security for the many Canadians who are worried about losing their jobs in an economy that still needs more workers. We hear there is a labour shortage, but many Canadians are living with pretty serious job insecurity. They are already either out of work, working reduced hours or concerned about the future of their industry. That is true for industries that have been affected by the pandemic. We could think of the tourism and travel industry, the entertainment industry and others that are still reeling from the impacts of the pandemic and wondering what they might look like in the future.

It also because of climate change. Many Canadians see the impacts of climate and extreme weather events on supply chains and understand the need for the Canadian economy to become more sustainable if we are to prevent the worst scenarios of climate change. Canadians are right to wonder about their own individual place in that and the meaning of those changes for their families. That all comes back to what I said in my opening remarks, when I said it is incumbent upon us as elected representatives to work in good faith to find solutions and create a path that gives Canadians a better sense of certainty about where the economy is heading so that they can better plan their individual futures and the futures of their families and neighbourhoods.

The question before us today is in light of rising prices in this intense period of inflation that we have embarked upon and what that means for Canadians who are struggling with income and job security and rising prices. What can we do to provide some relief? We have talked many times about longer-term things that the government ought to be doing. Certainly we need to see policy action in the housing market, but that situation is not going to change overnight. It would be very hard to affect the affordability of housing overnight, but that does not mean there are not things we could be doing right now to put us on the path toward lowering the cost of housing. We certainly need to see better action in that area.

It is sad that we are so far away from an effective housing policy in Canada, but one thing the government could and should be doing right now, and New Democrats are working hard to get the government to do it, is just ensure that the public funds that we do spend now to build affordable housing actually build affordable housing.

• (1130)

Of course, the definition of affordability in the national housing strategy has been a barrier to that, because the way the Liberals initially chose to define housing affordability has actually kept so-called affordable housing out of the reach of far too many Canadians. One thing we could do is change that definition to make sure that the projects that are receiving public funds do in fact create housing that is truly affordable for those who find themselves in the greatest housing need. That is something we could be doing in the longer term.

As well, the NDP ran on child care many times. We were always told by the Liberals that it was unrealistic and could not be done, that there was so much jurisdictional negotiating to do that the provinces would never get behind it and it was not the role of the federal government. Some Liberals may be nodding because they remember these lines from the 2015 campaign, when they repeated them ad nauseam. They may remember them from the subsequent Parliament, where for four years, in a majority government, they chose to repeat those lines rather than to get to work and do something. What we found, when they found the political will after years of pressure from the NDP, from civil society and from Canadian parents who knew better and needed the help, was that they were actually able to conclude those deals rather quickly. What is remaining is for them to cement that in legislation to make sure those things cannot be undone in the way that a Conservative government subsequently undid the Canada health accord arrangement. Then to their shame, the Liberals chose to perpetuate that by not convening new rounds of negotiations on a Canada health accord and instead went around signing bilateral deals.

Are there things the government could be doing to create a context in three, five or 10 years where some of the price pressure on Canadian households would be reduced? Absolutely, there are. Another important place where Canadian households are suffering is dental care, because too many Canadians do not have coverage or the money to be able to pay for dental care. Someone told me a story earlier today about how their brother, who had a decent job but did not have dental care, had to move back in with his parents as an adult because the money he had to borrow in order to get his mouth fixed meant that he could not live independently anymore and he was going to have to remain living with his parents for some time

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until his financial situation improved. The government can work on that area right now to bring those costs down for Canadians into the future, next year and the year after.

There is still the question of whether government could do something that would have a truly immediate impact, and that is the proposal we find ourselves discussing today. In this case, the Conservatives have proposed lifting the GST off of the price of gas at the pump. Again we have a concrete proposal that can provide immediate effect, but we have to ask whether this is the right proposal and whether it is going to have all of the right consequences.

I would first say that part of the issue I have with this proposal is that it really prioritizes reducing the price on just oil and gas. That is only one of the issues that are confronting Canadians in this difficult time. I think we want to try to find financial relief for Canadians that is not simply about putting more emphasis on oil and gas when we know, in the face of the climate crisis, that we need to de-emphasize the role of oil and gas in our economy. That is one flag that goes up in respect of this proposal.

Another flag that goes up from the point of view of equity is that while many Canadians rely on cars to get to and from work and to drop off their kids and pick them up from school, not all Canadians do that. There are other Canadians who are not using a car, sometimes because they cannot afford it and sometimes because they have made a choice to use other means of transportation, whether active transportation or public transportation. There are seniors who do not drive because their eyesight is not up to it and they have had their licence revoked or they have made the decision themselves not to drive anymore. These people are also experiencing these very real cost pressures, so if we are going to provide immediate financial relief, it is important to find something that can apply to as large a category of people as possible and is sure to capture the most vulnerable. That is not to say that it has to be limited to the most vulnerable, but it certainly ought to capture them. I think we have to look in the mirror and wonder if we are really getting that balance right. That is a very important consideration.

• (1135)

The other thing I would say is this: While I think that tax relief is a mechanism can sometimes be appropriate, I would like to propose an amendment near the end of my speech on this motion, and I would be remiss if I did not think that this motion coming from the Conservatives is part of a larger project to always find a way to simply blame government when we know that there are a lot of other things that are driving cost pressures.

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High prices at the gas pump are not a new thing. Oil and gas companies have been finding ways and pretexts to raise the price at the pump for years. Sometimes they pertain to, in this case, a global crisis that is well outside the immediate control of the Canadian government, but sometimes a long weekend is good enough for them to jack up prices. Tax relief on the cost at the pump without any further guarantee that prices would remain low and that those savings would be transferred to the consumer raises the question of whether oil and gas companies would simply see this as another reason to raise their own prices in order to capture that extra bit of revenue, instead of having it go back to consumers. While I am glad to see a real proposal come out of the Conservative Party, and I might hazard to say it is the first in this Parliament, I think those are all reasons that we do not think this proposal is quite on the mark.

What I do think might be on the mark and still within the scope of this motion, because it is about providing tax relief on an energy product in the context of significant inflation, would be to instead see the lifting of the GST not at the price on the pump but on home heating, because that is something that applies to everyone. While I respect that driving one's car, whether it is for work or for other reasons, is well integrated into the lives of many Canadians, and this is true for me at home, there is a little more flexibility for people on how much they drive and how often they drive than there is on whether they heat their home.

If we are living in Canada in the winter, we are going to be heating our homes. It does not matter if we are a vulnerable senior who can no longer drive. It does not matter if we have made the choice to use public transportation or active transportation and it does not matter if we are using an electric car: We are going to be heating our homes. If we are serious about trying to provide widespread relief to Canadians and if we are serious about ensuring that this is not just another way to talk about oil and gas in Parliament because some people feel that makes the government feel uncomfortable or because it is a nice thing to say to lobbyists from the oil and gas industry when they come visit our offices, then I think a proposal around home heating is a better way to go.

Of course, this idea was touted for a long time by Jack Layton, and as far as we are concerned, it is a bit of unfinished business. There are a lot of other essential goods that the GST does not apply to because we recognize that Canadians simply cannot go without certain things and we think it is reasonable to withhold charging the GST on those things. I think home heating is another example of how that can be done.

There is another thing I would add, and I am going to speak from the Manitoba experience here as I am not an expert on public utilities across Canada. In the Manitoba context, if a public utility wants to raise rates, they have to go through a public process. They have to make submissions to the public utilities board. They cannot just wantonly raise their rates, unlike oil and gas companies at the pump.

By withholding the GST on home heating, not only would we have a tax relief measure that would apply more broadly across the board, but we would also have better assurance that companies will not simply make up the difference and take that revenue for themselves while charging the consumer more, because, at least in some

parts of the country, the companies that might consider doing that would have to go through a process of public review in order to raise the prices.

● (1140)

I think this proposal, which I am going to formally move shortly, is better in that regard. It is better in that it actually captures more people. I think it is more likely to provide real relief to some of Canada's most vulnerable, while also still providing meaningful relief to Canada's middle class, which is also really struggling through this time of inflation. It is a better proposal because we have more reason to expect that tax relief will not simply be eaten up by companies raising their prices. It is also a better proposal because it does not prejudice any one particular type of energy. There are people who heat their homes with renewable energy. There are people who heat their homes with electricity. There are different ways of heating a home, so this is not focused specifically on oil and gas.

It can also continue to benefit Canadians as we transition toward a lower-carbon economy. It is not a proposal that predicates tax relief upon the persistent use of fossil fuels. It recognizes that people are using fossil fuels to heat their homes. It provides tax relief to them anyway, but it does not build oil and gas into the tax relief remedy. I think that is important in the context of figuring out how Canada can provide meaningful help to Canadians in this difficult time, while continuing to honour our very real and important commitment to doing our part to ensure that climate change does not run away on us and cause even more hurt, turmoil and economic dislocation than it is already likely to do.

Those are all the reasons that I am glad to be having this debate in the House today. I have said before that the New Democrats are here to work in the spirit of collaboration with anyone here prepared to work with us to do things that we believe are in the best interests of Canadians. That should come as no surprise to anyone, particularly on this day, when I think the New Democrats have proven that we are prepared to work with people. We do that with eyes wide open. Our eyes would be similarly wide open in working with the Conservatives on improving this motion, and that is something that we are prepared to do. We will continue to be prepared to work with anyone in the House who is prepared to work with us to make a difference in the lives of Canadians. That is what we are here to do. It is what Canadians expect of us. It is not just what Canadians expect of the New Democrats; it is what they expect of every member elected to this chamber.

It is in that spirit that I move, seconded by the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, that the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the words “provide relief” and substituting the following: “to Canadians by removing the federal sales tax from the home heating bills of Canadian households”.

● (1145)

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may only be moved with the consent of the sponsor of the motion, or in the case that he or she is not present, consent may be given or denied by the House leader, the deputy House leader, the whip or the deputy whip of the sponsor's party.

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Since the sponsor is not present in the chamber, I ask the whip if he or she consents to this amendment being moved.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, it is odd that the NDP-Liberal government member would want to take over an opposition day motion, so there is no consent.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no consent. Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 85, the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Drummond.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague for his speech and say that I sympathize with inability to move his amendment.

I would like to start by talking about this amendment. I was a little surprised to hear my NDP colleague propose an amendment that, rather than incentivizing the transition to green energy, proposes to continue encouraging the consumption of petroleum products. My own house is heated by electricity, and I think the same goes for many Quebeckers and Canadians who are going green. I would have expected my colleague to table an amendment proposing incentives to switch to more environmentally friendly home heating methods, rather than once again encouraging the use of petroleum products.

Also, putting the financial burden on consumers and citizens rather than oil companies is one of the things we disapprove of about this Conservative motion.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about those two things.

• (1150)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I think that one of the advantages of my suggestion was that it could apply to all home heating methods, including electricity. The goal was to not presume that oil and gas are the only heating methods.

We agree that it is important that the world undergo an energy transition, and we acknowledge that this will take more than a couple of days. Right now, people are really struggling with costs, and we see this measure as a way of helping them out in these trying times.

We obviously have to make the transition, but not only with respect to oil and gas. I thought my amendment would achieve that result.

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague.

[*English*]

I listened intently to what he said and there are a number of items we agree with. We were all elected to Parliament to represent our constituents and to work collaboratively through partnership to make lives better for Canadians. As we all know, revenue comes to government from so many different sources, and government needs revenue to provide support for seniors, families and people of different abilities, and to continue the great programs for early childhood education and all others.

Can you please comment on increasing sources of revenue? How can government work better on that to provide Canadians with affordable housing and all the services they deserve?

The Deputy Speaker: I cannot comment, but I will ask the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona to respond.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to comment on your behalf.

I would refer the hon. member to our opposition day motion from yesterday. We proposed a 3% surcharge tax on industries that have done very well in the pandemic, whether it is big banks, box stores or oil and gas companies, which are the beneficiaries of these incredible increases at the pump. That is just one proposal that we managed to table yesterday.

However, there are many things we think the Liberal government ought to be doing on the question of tax fairness. We ran on a wealth tax. I think that is a far more fair way to raise revenue, rather than asking the middle class, which is already struggling, to pay more in taxes to fund these things. That is another way we can fund something like temporary relief from the GST on home heating.

We should be working to close the agreements we have about tax havens given the PBO has said we are losing \$25 billion a year in revenue there. Beyond the 3% surcharge tax that was proposed yesterday, we need to be looking at an excess profit tax for the companies that did extraordinarily well during the pandemic on top of their normal healthy earnings and profits.

There are absolutely a lot of ways we could be raising revenue in Canada. There are other jurisdictions that have shown far more leadership on this, both in closing tax loopholes and in ensuring that the wealthy pay their fair share. It is high time we did that, and we will continue to be a voice pressuring the government to do those things in the months and years ahead.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the amendment the member wanted to put forward, but I want to really focus on what we are doing today.

In his comments, he mention that seniors do not drive and there are a variety of reasons this does not impact each and every Canadian. I fully disagree with him on that. We recognize that many things coming into stores are GST exempt, but we use fuel and gasoline when we are doing shipments. When a person is being driven to a medical appointment, maybe by a taxi, there is going to be an increase. There is that 5% sitting there in taxes.

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There are so many ways we can look at this, and although it is not cut and dry because there is not a direct link, we know that overall it will have a bearing. A reduction of 5% will reduce the cost of things for people because gas is being used, or fuel.

Will the member be supporting the motion?

• (1155)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are here to co-operate and negotiate. However, of course it takes two to tango, as I think the phrase goes, and we heard a pretty clear message from the whip that he is not in the mood to dance on behalf of the Conservative Party, so it is difficult. I do not think that precludes us from co-operating in the future on other things, but we were clear that if we were going to go the route of tax relief, we wanted something that would apply more broadly than simply providing tax relief at the pumps.

We wanted something that did not principally focus on oil and gas in the future and where there was a better sense of certainty that companies that could raise prices to eat up the price differential of lower taxes would not be able to do so. That is why we felt that home heating was a superior choice, because there are usually public processes for rate increases on public utilities that do not exist for oil and gas companies at the pumps.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his attempt to make this motion a bit better. Unfortunately, it did not turn out that way.

Yesterday in the House, I listened to Conservative members discuss our opposition day motion. They were talking about the needs of big corporations. We insisted that there needed to be increases in tax measures and they said that big corporations needed tax decreases and that their profit margins were not really that large.

I know it is difficult for the member to get into a Conservative mindset, but perhaps he could try to explain why the Conservatives are so resolute about not moving toward progressive taxation and so convinced that we cannot tax big corporations for excessive profits.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, indeed, I often struggle to put myself in the mindset of my Conservative colleagues. To be charitable, I might hazard an attempt. Too often the Conservatives have a tendency, and in fact a deep kind of driving need, to blame every problem on the government. Government can certainly sometimes be the problem. I believe that. It is why I bothered to get elected and why we work so hard in this place to change the disposition of government and influence government actions. It certainly has a role to play. However, there are other actors in the world that have real power and also contribute to some of the problems that Canadians are facing.

Sometimes the Conservatives, because they are so narrowly focused on the problems of the government and trying to blame every problem on it, become apologists for everybody else. To admit there might be a problem somewhere that is not in the halls of government kind of undermines their entire intellectual political framework. It is a difficult thing for them to focus on, and that is why sometimes they might end up apologizing for large companies that

are doing very well and are themselves part of the problems Canadians are facing.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member just insulted the Conservatives' constituencies and those who voted for us when he made reference to the intellectual framework of our party. We are all elected to the House, and it is very disappointing to hear any type of reference to the intelligence of either the Conservative members or those who voted for us.

I am going to give the member an opportunity to apologize for that, because it was uncalled for.

• (1200)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, the member just answered her own question. We were talking about the intellectual capacity of the Conservative caucus, and they did not hear anything about ordinary voters. We were talking about the Conservatives, particularly their backbench.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond, and I have two things to say. First, I note that a comment about the intellectual framework of a political organization is not a comment about people's intelligence. Those are two separate things. Second, I would say that pointing out the shortcomings of certain elected representatives says nothing of the voters. Voters elect people in good faith. People do not always live up to the expectations of voters. Pointing out that this may be the case is no insult to the voter. It might be an insult, but it is not an insult to the voters.

Mr. Larry Brock: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I took great offence to the member who now questions the intellectual capacity of the Conservative backbench. I am a proud member of the Conservative backbench.

For the member who questioned my intellectual capacity, I have enjoyed a 30-year legal career. I have a BA honours in political science. I have a law degree. I have had a distinguished career as a public servant for the Ontario government. Now I am a proud member of the Conservative Party.

The Deputy Speaker: We are descending a bit into debate.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I was fascinated to see the member read his resumé, but I am not really sure what the point was. It is nice to hear from the member in the backbench once in six months with his resumé, but was there a question pointed at me? I did not hear anything.

The Deputy Speaker: We have descended far too far and I have let this go on far too long. I believe we have gotten into too much debate on this issue. I do not think that is a point of order, but I do give opportunity to the members to rephrase things if they need to.

I do not see anyone standing to try to rephrase, so we will move on to the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Business of Supply

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my great privilege to split my time with the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, and I thank him for his work in his constituency.

Perhaps people are excited. We should be generous with the other members, and perhaps the member for Timmins—James Bay was just excited about his new cabinet position in the coalition. I look forward to his testimony and discussion of the WE scandal and other things in the coalition. It will be quite riveting testimony from the member.

Today, I rise on behalf of the hard-working people of Northumberland—Peterborough South who are struggling every day just to get by. Across our country, we are facing a cost of living crisis from coast to coast. The number of Canadians who are struggling to fill the gas tanks in their cars, who are struggling to finish off this heating season in a cold spring, and who are struggling to put food on their tables is getting larger and larger. More Canadians are struggling and unfortunately, in my beautiful riding of Northumberland—Peterborough South, we are not immune to this crisis.

What is the government's suggestion or solution to this? It may very well be, with coalition partners, to foist one of the largest tax increases in history on Canadians. Let me explain. When a government prints money to spend, prices increase. The more that the government has to print money, the more it spends. It just keeps going. It is a cycle. The government keeps spending money and printing money. That drives down the value of money. Everything costs more, from our houses to our cars to buying groceries. It is driving down money. Inflation has a real effect, just as taxes do. That \$10 we had in our jeans is now worth \$8. It is exactly the same as if taxes were increased by 20% when we have inflation that has increased over the last couple of years to 20%. It is the same impact. This is indeed an inflation tax.

We see the evidence everywhere. Not since 1991 have we seen inflation at this rate of 5.7%. Everyone's paycheque is going down 5% per year. People have been given a pay decrease of 5%, and that is shocking. Things were not good before. The last seven years have been tough on Canadians. Just last year, over 53% of Canadians said they were within \$200 of insolvency. The government's solution is more inflation, or "Justinflation".

We have, year over year, increasing grocery bills of an additional \$1,000. The members of the House can probably all afford that. The many productive, upper-middle-class and wealthy individuals can afford it, but it hurts the single mother in Orono who is working every day to pay for her children's future education and put food on the table. She has gone to work every day on the front line during the pandemic making minimum wage and now is struggling to fill up her car. She would probably love an electric vehicle, as many Canadians would, but increasingly now many more do not have \$100,000 for an electric vehicle.

We can take the approach of "let them eat cake" and ask why do they not just buy an electric vehicle. It is unreasonable. The modern incarnation of "let them eat cake" is to say, "Go and buy that EV," to someone who cannot afford \$100 to put in their gas tank.

When we add the inflation tax to the carbon tax, we get a particularly nefarious combination. I had the opportunity to ask the Governor of the Bank of Canada about the impact of the carbon tax. It was strange to me that the Governor of the Bank of Canada did not know the answer to a relatively simple question when I asked what the inflationary impact was of the carbon tax. He did not have an answer, but he was kind enough to write a response. In that, he ascribed nearly 10% of the inflation we are experiencing to the carbon tax.

• (1205)

Once again, the government is tone-deaf to the needs of the people of Northumberland—Peterborough South. Its response is not to maybe pause the carbon tax or even pause the increase on the carbon tax, because the goal of the carbon tax is to make gasoline more expensive so that we look at other solutions. That goal is accomplished, guys.

People cannot afford gasoline and they cannot afford an EV, so the government is driving people into poverty. Why not just pause the increase to the carbon tax? The prices of gasoline and diesel have already increased. That goal has been accomplished. At this point it is just punitive.

There are many, including those in rural Canada, who just do not have that alternative, including in my riding and elsewhere in rural parts of Canada. I invite those in urban ridings to come to my riding and meet the great folks of Northumberland—Peterborough South. I invite them to come and meet the soccer mom who puts gas in her SUV to take her kids to soccer practice, and tell her "No, you cannot do that." They could meet the factory workers who are making a reasonable dollar but are still struggling to get by because of the carbon tax and the inflation tax. I invite them to come and tell them that they cannot put gas in their cars and cannot go to work, because that is what the government is saying to them.

I want the government to think hard about that and the impact it is having on rural Canada. I want it to think about the farmers out there who are paying tens of thousands of dollars in carbon tax every single year. We will be more reliant on Canadian farmers, not just in this country but around the world, given what is going on in Ukraine. We will be dependent on them, and what are we doing to them? We are making them pay tens of thousands of dollars in carbon tax.

It is not because farmers do not want to fight climate change. They do, but there just are not alternatives. We heard testimony in the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food that there just are not alternatives to things such as drying grain and heating barns, so farmers are reliant on fossil fuels.

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The government is not driving people to fight climate change. In fact, it is driving them away from fighting climate change because they cannot invest in the innovation and the technology they need. The exact opposite of what it wants to happen is happening.

Let me talk about what the opposition motion is. The opposition motion starts by acknowledging that we are in an affordability crisis: We are in a financial challenge as a country and Canadians are struggling to get by. Then it says that Canadians should be given a bit of a break. They are going through a lot with the opioid crisis, the housing crisis and now an affordability crisis. It says that we should reach out our hands and give them a 5% break on the gasoline and diesel they need to put in their cars to drive their kids to school, to go to work and to build our country. To me, this is entirely reasonable and it is a break Canadians need.

In conclusion, Canadians have had a tough go over the last two years. It has become increasingly challenging for people to buy a home. There are 20-year-olds and 30-year-olds who have good jobs and did everything they were told to do. They went to school, got a trade and worked hard. They have done everything asked of them, but they still cannot afford a house.

The pensioners, the seniors, who gave their lives building this country can now barely afford to buy groceries. Their prosperity and the prosperity of our country is being undermined by this coalition's dedication to the inflation tax and the carbon tax.

We need to return to making Canada affordable again. We need to return to prosperity. Right now, we need to give Canadians a break, and that is why I am proud to vote for the opposition motion.

• (1210)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talked a great deal about the carbon tax. It is hard to say exactly where the Conservative Party is on the carbon tax. There was a time in which, speech after speech, Conservatives would stand up and say that they would get rid of the carbon tax completely. Then they had a flip-flop in position prior to the last election, where they told Canadians they did not want to get rid of the carbon tax and in fact wanted a new and improved carbon tax.

Can the member enlighten Canadians about what his personal position is on a price on pollution? Does he believe there should be a price on pollution?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his lengthy service in the House and have appreciated many times his comments.

I will tell him that what I know for sure is that Canadians are struggling, that they are in pain and that now is not the time to increase the carbon tax. I believe climate change is real. I believe it is a fight worth fighting and one that Canada can win, but I do not believe that should come on the backs of Canadians who are struggling every day to work hard to build this country.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He talked about farmers, saying that they want to contribute to the environment, not harm it, but they cannot afford to do that.

Instead of continuing to supply them with oil, what does he think about helping our farmers to be part of the solution by promoting good practices and investing in greener measures?

Speaking of helping farmers turn to more renewable resources, why not stop investing in pipelines and oil? Why not instead move toward something greener, initiatives like the one on wood put in place by colleagues from the regions, including the member for Jonquiere, so that energy sources are much greener and more renewable?

Transferring the money to other areas of research and development could help with that transition.

[*English*]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, with respect to farmers and the investment in our agriculture, I think often the best solution the government can offer is to get the heck out of the way. Farmers want to invest in climate change. The reality is that, with the inflation tax, the carbon tax, the income tax, the sales tax and the property tax, farmers simply do not have the money to do it because it is all coming to Ottawa. If we return that money to the farmers and allow them to keep it, they will make the investment because they are the stewards of the land. They will protect our land. They will protect our environment. They will fight climate change. We just need to get the heck out of the way.

• (1215)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with the member that there are so many people in our country who are struggling with the cost of living. The Conservative motion really focuses on people who use diesel and gasoline, who admittedly are a large portion of the population, but many of the people who are struggling the most with affordability are people who do not drive. They are people who are living in poverty, people working minimum-wage jobs or seniors who are not able to drive for a whole host of different reasons. Those people are also struggling with the cost of living, in many ways more than the rest of the population.

Why did my hon. colleague's party not put forward or craft a mechanism that would more broadly help people who are struggling with the cost of living?

Business of Supply

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, there are two responses I would have to that. One is that energy grounds all of us and it affects all of us, so when we reduce the cost of energy in gasoline and diesel, it reduces the costs throughout. One of the greatest achievements of mankind is bringing people out of poverty. One of the keys to bringing people out of poverty, and this is just economics, is cheap energy. When we reduce the cost of energy, we give everyone a better chance.

However, if the NDP wants to sit down and talk about tax relief, my office is open any time and any place. I am more than willing to have that conversation. We can reduce income tax, sales tax or whatever they want. We are in the business of reducing taxes and the burden on Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today after a two-week adjournment, which my colleagues and I spent in our respective ridings.

As the saying goes, just because we are in our ridings does not mean we are not working. Some people think we are off duty, but nothing could be further from the truth. It is in our ridings that we have the pleasure, the opportunity, the privilege and the duty to meet the people we represent here in the House of Commons and to speak directly with them. We are first and foremost the representatives of our constituents, no matter who they voted for.

Over the past two weeks, I met and talked with hundreds of Louis-Saint-Laurent residents at charity and community events, restaurants, cafés and gas stations. One issue that affects them directly, along with people in all ridings in Canada, is inflation.

Here we are with inflation at a 30-year high of 5.7%. Some members of the House were not even born the last time the inflation rate was this high.

Inflation affects everyone. It affects people who have to buy groceries and realize that putting food on the table costs a lot more, around \$1,000 more per year for a family. Buying fruits, vegetables and meats can cost 10% to 15% more than last year.

Inflation is hitting housing even harder because of the housing bubble our country is currently contending with and prices that have gone up over 29% in the past year.

Inflation affects everyone, but it comes as no surprise. It did not show up on the weekend or two weeks ago while we were in our ridings. Inflation reared its ugly head many months ago and is not going away anytime soon. It is actually gaining momentum, not losing it.

This is not the first time we are addressing this issue here in the House of Commons. A few weeks ago, I asked the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance what she planned to do to help Canadian families struggling with inflation.

If there is someone powerful in cabinet right now, it is the Deputy Prime Minister. We will see how things go, but, today, she is especially powerful in her capacity as Minister of Finance, since she has full control over the economic levers that can help and not harm Canadian families.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance answered that, according to the IMF, Canada has the second-highest growth rate among the G7 countries. That will certainly not help people who are having a hard time buying groceries today. The IMF says that things are going well: That is great for the IMF, but not so great for people buying their groceries.

What did she say next? She said that Canada was doing well, since its real GDP has grown by 0.6%. That is outstanding, and it will certainly put more food in Canadians' grocery baskets, right? I do not know where she found that concept of the real GDP, but I did not find anything like it at the supermarket this weekend. The people I meet never talk about the real GDP, except the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

She is totally disconnected, but she is still very influential right now. We will see how things play out.

What did she say next? She said that we should not worry, that other countries are also facing inflation, and that the situation is worse in the United States. It is unbelievable that she would compare us with the worst case. The Conservatives and all Canadians worth their salt want to compare themselves with the best, not the worst.

Telling Mrs. Tremblay that she should not worry and that there is no problem because the situation is worse in the United States will certainly not help her do her shopping. It will not add any food to Canadians' grocery basket. However, that is what the Liberal government has to say about inflation.

That is why we propose temporarily eliminating the GST in the fuel sector. I will explain why we chose this approach.

First of all, who benefits the most from high inflation? Unfortunately, the government does. I say "unfortunately" because it is unfortunate that the government benefits when inflation goes up. Indeed, when prices go up, revenues also go up. Of course, the tax is still 5%, but when people pay \$20 for something today that cost \$15 last year, that generates more tax. The one who benefits is the government, because the government increases its revenues with inflation. That is exactly what is happening right now.

● (1220)

That is why our motion uses the word "temporary". At a time when we are in an inflationary spiral and the government is receiving millions in tax dollars because inflation is high, prices are high and more money is being collected, our temporary measure is meant to give Canadian families a little breathing room. We want to reduce the gas tax to zero, essentially eliminating it temporarily.

Why are we targeting that sector?

Business of Supply

First, it is important to know that the gas tax brings in \$3.5 billion for the government, generally speaking. That is the amount of money that will stay in the pockets of Canadian families. Let me be clear. Canadians know best how to manage their money. It is up to them to keep that money in their pockets and make the choices that are right for them, rather than paying a tax and giving that money to the government. Indeed, the tax increases when inflation rises.

Some people live in an area where they do not need to use their car. They do not need to drive anywhere. We can understand that. However, not everyone is in that situation.

I will paraphrase my friend from Louis-Hébert, who made an extraordinary statement a month ago about how we must be aware of the fact that not all Canadians are at the same level, but that everyone must be heard, listened to and, above all, respected. As he said so well, not everyone can earn a living on a MacBook at a cottage. That is the reality. He sharply criticized his own government in an extraordinary statement in which he repeated almost word for word what the Conservatives were saying. Unfortunately, two weeks later, he voted with his government. He will live with his decisions.

That is why we believe that temporarily removing the GST on gas is the right thing to do. Yes, that directly affects families and workers who must travel. However, we must stop thinking that the gas tax pertains only to the gas that we put in our vehicles. This gas tax has a much greater impact.

Do we think that the fruits and vegetables we buy at the grocery store just fall from the sky? Of course not. Food is not processed and transported from one place to another just by blinking as Jeanie did. Likely it is transported by gas-powered vehicles. That is why the impact of the GST on gas does not just affect those who fill up their big pickup with gas. It affects all Canadian families, especially the poorest among us, who we must respect.

In our view, this is the best measure. Now, what does the government plan on doing? First, which government are we talking about? Are we talking about the government that was duly elected about six months ago or the new NDP-Liberal government, which was just put into our Constitution? If that is the case, watch out dude, it is not going to be pretty.

• (1225)

[*English*]

What we have learned this morning is that now we have a brand new government in this country.

[*Translation*]

Did you vote, Mr. Speaker? I did not either. Canadians did not go to the polls, yet we learned this morning about a new NDP-Liberal government.

Who would have thought? Certainly not some of the current government ministers I saw this morning who did not seem to be in a good mood. Maybe they woke up on the wrong side of the bed or forgot to put sugar in their coffee. What I can say is that it is not party time for everyone on the other side. I say that, but we will see. Things are just getting started.

I am being sarcastic here, but I should not be. This is very bad news for Canadians, because although 80% of them did not vote for the NDP, both the NDP and the Liberals now have their hands on the wheel, or, at least, there is one big NDP hand on the wheel. This will unfortunately mean more taxes, more spending, more debt and more deficits.

The Conservatives are thinking about Canadian families. We are thinking about Canadians' wallets. We want to help Canadians directly, which is why we are proposing that the government temporarily stop collecting GST on gas.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my friend could provide his thoughts regarding the impact of the motion with respect to the province of Quebec. Is the Conservative Party trying, through this motion, to instruct the province of Quebec to reduce a tax?

I would be very much interested in his thoughts.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, that was a great question. A great answer would be, "No."

Why? It is because we are talking about the GST. We are not talking about the Quebec sales tax.

Why do we have that term in our motion? This is a great question from my colleague. I asked my friends the same question. I asked why we had that in our motion. It is because, when we talked to Revenue Canada, it was explained to us that when we are talking about the GST, we are also talking about the Quebec sales tax. It is to be respectful because, on this side of the House, we do respect the rules and the laws.

To be respectful of the law, we have to include everything, but specifically we are addressing the GST. I can assure everybody, the Conservatives will not interfere with the provincial jurisdiction, compared to the new NDP-Liberal government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that the English-speaking colleagues of my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent are as nuanced in their arguments. In short, let us ignore the convoluted explanation.

My colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent said that inflation benefits the government. In this context and in the case of the oil and gas sector, inflation does not benefit the government; it benefits the oil companies.

Between 2021 and 2022, the price of a barrel of oil rose from \$1.15 to \$4.40. There was a profit, and the oil companies got the lion's share. The oil companies are the ones with their hands in taxpayers' wallets.

Business of Supply

We are proposing to the Conservatives that special measures be put in place to ensure that oil companies pay their share. We must keep in mind that year after year, these companies receive the lion's share of federal government funding. They are therefore double dipping into public funds, both directly at the pump, from taxpayers' pockets, and through their taxation, by the financial support provided by the federal government.

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent said that they would cut taxes for the benefit of the oil companies. That is absolutely deplorable.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, what is deplorable is being unable to understand a totally logical explanation that falls under the law as defined. It is not convoluted, these are the laws and regulations we follow. That is exactly what we did.

What is deplorable is to forget the fact that I clearly said that governments are among those who do benefit. Unfortunately, facts can be stubborn. When prices rise, the tax and revenues stay at 5%. If prices rise, that increases government revenues. That is basic math. Since rising prices increase government revenues, we need to use this money to help taxpayers, which further increases revenues.

In conclusion, as long as we need so-called fossil fuels, I will always be the greatest champion of Canadian energies.

• (1230)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

Fossil fuels are not "so-called" fossil fuels. They are simply fossil fuels. Although I share my colleague's analysis of the situation, I unfortunately do not agree with his conclusion and the solution the Conservatives want to apply.

Obviously, they do not want to touch the oil companies' profits. These profits are sacrosanct, and we cannot touch them.

However, I wonder why the Conservatives refused the NDP's amendment, which would have provided Canadians with assistance for residential heating, regardless of the source. That would have gone much further than simply dealing with the price of gas, which is a real problem. It could have helped all the families struggling with the increase in the cost of living, including the price of groceries.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I am also disheartened to see that my NDP colleague has come to conclusion to vote against abolishing a tax. It is too bad, but unfortunately that is what we can come to expect over the next few weeks, the next few months, and, unfortunately, the next few years.

Until October 2025, we have a new government, one that was not elected but magically showed up all of a sudden last night, or last evening, or possibly this morning, it is hard to say. According to the announcement made, we have an NDP-Liberal government. This will be interesting to watch, but it will not be good for Canadian taxpayers, since we are already seeing that the NDP is against lowering taxes and the current Liberal-NDP government is also against lowering taxes. Unfortunately, the best way to help Canadians directly is to lower taxes.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Davenport.

I want to take this opportunity to share some thoughts with members on my basic understanding. I can honestly say that the issue of the price on gas has always been of interest to me, since I was a 12-year-old young man pumping gas at Turbo for 51¢ a gallon. Members can do the math to figure out the cost per litre; it would have been a whole lot cheaper.

Ever since then, and this goes back to the 1970s, it has been about supply and demand. I can recall being at the station and there would be lineups of cars because of the fear that the earth was running out of fossil fuels. At least, that was one of the conspiracies that were talked about back then, when I was but a 12-year-old young man. Today we are again talking about the price of fuel. We have seen dramatic increases in fuel prices.

It is fair to say that we have to put it in the context of time. With respect to what is happening in Europe and the horrors that are taking place in Ukraine today, and we have to just turn on the news to get a very good sense of some of the horrors I am talking about, this House has unanimously recognized that what is happening in Ukraine is wrong. We have recognized how offensive the Russian government, in particular President Putin, has been. At the end of the day, there has been a cost. We are starting to see that cost firsthand at our pumps as the world demand for oil is somewhat in turmoil today.

We have seen the government, in particular the minister of industry, come forward to talk about the Competition Bureau. The Competition Bureau has been notified in the strongest way to monitor the price of fuel and to act wherever it can on the whole issue of collusion and how oil companies might be jacking up the prices, which would affect all of our constituents. We are very much aware of the issue.

The Conservative Party, through an opposition motion, has taken it to another level and another step. The Conservatives are saying, let us reduce the tax on the price of a litre of gasoline. I have a bit of a problem with that. I understand the value of general revenues overall to our national governments and provincial governments. They are what enable us to provide the many different social programs that we have been providing throughout the years. The Conservative Party are saying to do this on a temporary basis. The Conservatives have not given any explanation of what they mean by temporary.

Business of Supply

However, I posed a question earlier. We have Progressive Conservative or Conservative governments in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. I asked which one of those Conservative governments has actually reduced the price of a litre of gas by reducing their tax on gasoline. To the best of my knowledge, that has not taken place. It has not taken place because, at the end of the day, I suspect the concern is the overall pricing of gasoline and what we can do to ensure gouging is not taking place at our pumps. The different levels of government do have a role to play. As I pointed out, for us it is through the Competition Bureau, which is monitoring the situation.

Inflation is something we take very seriously. If we look at the Liberal Party of Canada's agenda on the issue of inflation, from the 2015 election all the way to today, we will see that from day one we have been very progressive in our thinking and in being there to support Canadians.

● (1235)

In yesterday's debate I made reference to the tax breaks for Canada's middle class and pointed out how the Conservative Party voted against those tax breaks. However, for the first number of years, the focus of our government was on Canada's middle class and how we could expand the middle class. The results of the policy measures we had in those first few years had a profoundly positive impact. Canada's economy was doing exceptionally well in comparison to other countries around the world, in particular in comparison with the United States and European Union countries.

Then we hit the pandemic, and we saw Canadians come together once again to take on something that was happening around the world. The impact it had on our economy was quite severe. If we look at what we were able to accomplish by working with Canadians and the different types of support programs we brought in to support Canadians, whether it was the CERB or programs for direct support for seniors, people with disabilities, students and just vulnerable people in general, we were there and we had the backs of Canadians through that difficult time. It paid off, just like our first four years of dealing with the middle class did when we generated over a million jobs in those four years up to the pandemic.

If we compare Canada to other countries around the world, whether the U.S. or G20 countries, we did exceptionally well in comparison. Well over 100% of the jobs have returned from prepandemic times. I like to believe it had a lot to do with the government programs that were rolled out. Somewhere in the neighbourhood of 80% to 85% of all new money spent on pandemic relief came from Ottawa to again support Canadians.

Inflation is something that has come up as a major issue over the last couple of years and the government continues to give more attention to it. With respect to making comparisons, we have to put that into perspective with what else is taking place in the world. The speaker before me said we should compare it to the United States. In Canada, our inflation rate is at 5.7% compared to the U.S., which is 7.5%. Then we were criticized as to why we were only comparing it to the U.S.

Let us look at the G20 countries. If we average out the inflation rate of the G20 countries in the world, it is over 6%, which is higher than Canada. For a government, that does not mean there is no

room for improvement. There are things we have put in place and have taken action on to ensure we are contributing as much as possible in a positive way to our economy and the growth of our economy. We are trying to minimize some of the negative impacts of inflation. For the Conservative Party to give the impression that there is a huge black cloud over Canada because of inflation is somewhat misleading.

At the end of the day, the government policies we have put in place have done exceptionally well, especially if we compare ourselves to other countries in the world. That does not mean there is not more work to be done. There is a lot more work to be done, such as the presentation of the 2022-23 budget, which I know will be a true reflection of what Canadians believe is the right thing for this time and age.

● (1240)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my fellow Manitoba MP for his thoughtful speech. A quick Google search shows that Maryland and Georgia have cut a 36¢ excise tax on fuel until the end of May. Florida passed a one-month gas tax suspension on a temporary basis. Maine and Washington have introduced similar measures, as have other states.

If these states can all take up this great idea, why will the member's government not do the same?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, one of the comments that I made reference to was the fact that, as my colleague pointed out, we are both from the province of Manitoba with a Progressive Conservative government. We have Progressive Conservative governments in other jurisdictions here in Canada. It is interesting to see that none of them have picked up on this Conservative idea.

There is a fundamental difference I have with many of my Conservative friends, and that is that I understand and appreciate the true value of government expenditures to support Canadians at a time of need. What we have seen in policies is a government that continues to support our vulnerable, investing in our seniors, investing in infrastructure and so much more.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his speech. Once again, we see that the Liberal Party can do no wrong. When my colleague is no longer a politician, I recommend that he get a job at an advertising agency, where he will just write ads for the Liberal Party. He would be the best one there.

It might surprise members to hear me say this, but my colleague from Jonquière made some good points. When he spoke earlier, he mentioned Oil Change International. It had released numbers that include not only the subsidies themselves, but also all the support that oil companies in Canada get from the federal government. From 2015 to 2017, that was \$111 billion and from 2019 to 2020, it was \$78 billion.

The Conservatives' motion today starts with good intentions, namely to reduce the burden for Quebeckers and Canadians and make their lives easier. However, could the federal government take a quick look at the tens of billions of dollars it hands out in various supports to the oil industry and create a fund from which it can draw to redistribute some of the money to Quebeckers and Canadians in these times of crisis?

• (1245)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, one of the things that I do not find difficult at all in terms of being a Liberal member of Parliament is being open, honest and transparent. There are a lot of wonderful things we have done as a government, so it is only natural to talk about those policy actions.

With respect to the issue of subsidies of fossil fuels, which often comes up as a matter of debate inside the chamber, one of the things that we need to recognize is that some of those subsidies go toward assistance for remote regions. I would like to think that all members would recognize the true value of that, at the very least for the short term.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am going to ask a question in the same vein as that from the member for Drummond.

The ones really benefiting from the crisis right now are the oil companies, which are lining their pockets. The Conservatives' solution is to cut government revenues, when we need that money to help people.

Why not go get the money where the money is, specifically in the oil companies' profits, to then be able to help ordinary people who are having a hard time right now?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect that there are some individuals within the Department of Finance who are much more able-minded than I am in terms of taxation policies and how we could ultimately ensure there is a sense of fairness in taxation. There will be additional revenues coming in as a result, no doubt, of the higher oil prices that these corporations will have to pay. The details of it I do not know offhand.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a true pleasure for me to rise in the House on behalf of the residents of my riding of Davenport to speak on the opposition day motion put forward by the Conservatives that calls on our government to introduce a temporary 5% reduction on gasoline and diesel, whether collected under GST, HST or QST, which would reduce the average price by approximately eight cents per litre.

The federal government is acutely aware that many Canadians are being squeezed by higher prices for gasoline and by elevated inflation in general, but I believe that this motion will not help Canadians. A tax holiday on oil and gas could result in energy companies pocketing the difference in cost. There is no guarantee that savings will pass on to Canadian consumers at the pumps.

Business of Supply

Increases in prices for a variety of goods is a global phenomenon, driven by the unprecedented challenge of restarting the world's economy, as well as the instability of global markets as a result of Russia's attack on Ukraine, which has jolted commodity markets with a surge in prices, particularly for oil, natural gas and wheat. Obviously, the most direct impact of the war is on the people of Ukraine. As we have repeatedly said, we remain steadfast in our support for Ukraine and will continue to put pressure on Russia and choke President Putin's ability to fund his unprovoked and illegal act of aggression.

As we know, and as do the members of this venerable House, the federal government has been swift and decisive in its actions, along with Europe, the United States and the United Kingdom, to put in place aggressive sanctions on Russia. Indeed, they are the toughest sanctions ever imposed on a major economy. However, in order to really be effective and in order to really have an impact, we have to be prepared for there to be some adverse consequences for our own economy, which could also affect Canadians' cost of living temporarily.

Along with higher prices for a broad range of commodities, the Russian invasion threatens renewed global supply disruptions, all of which are expected to add upward pressures on prices. The OECD recently estimated, in a special report on the economic and social impacts and policy implications of the war in Ukraine, that global growth could be reduced by over one percentage point over the next year, while global inflation could be 2.5 percentage points higher.

While Canada's natural resource sectors will benefit from higher commodity prices, higher prices will additionally disrupt supply chains and will have significant further impacts on inflation in Canada, including what we are currently seeing at the gas pumps.

The pandemic also remains a threat to global supply chains and inflation with the recent surge in cases in China and another wave beginning in Europe. As global economies have unwound COVID-19-related restrictions and reopened their economies, the price of goods has gone up around the world. Indeed, the Bank of Canada and private sector economists anticipate that inflation may stay higher for somewhat longer than initially expected, but they expect it to ease back toward the 2% target over the next two years as pandemic-related forces fade. As we have always said, restarting the economy is a complex process, and the Canadian and global economies are still feeling the impact of the pandemic.

Business of Supply

That said, Canadians should rest assured that when it comes to government benefits and concerns over inflation, the federal government indexes the Canada child benefit to inflation, as well as the Canada pension plan, old age security, the guaranteed income supplement, the goods and services tax credit and other benefits for the most vulnerable people. I am very proud that the key government supports for those most vulnerable in our society are indexed to inflation, so that while inflation will have a huge impact on our society, our most vulnerable are protected. This is not the case in many other countries.

Other measures we have implemented to support Canadians include the cutting of taxes for the middle class while raising them on the top 1%. We are also working very hard to address housing affordability.

• (1250)

In addition, we are also working with provinces and territories to implement a Canada-wide, \$10-a-day, community-based early learning and child care system that will make life more affordable for families, create new jobs, get parents back into the workforce and grow the middle class, while giving every child a real and fair chance at success. All provinces and territories have signed on to this national plan except for Ontario, and I know Ontarians, especially the residents of my riding of Davenport, are hopeful that they will sign on to this plan very soon.

A strong monetary policy framework is also an excellent weapon in our arsenal to keep prices stable and keep inflationary pressures in check. The federal government and the Bank of Canada believe that monetary policy can best serve Canadians by continuing to focus on price stability. That is why, last December, we announced with the Bank of Canada the renewal of the 2% inflation target for another five-year period. This renewed framework will keep the bank focused on delivering low, stable and predictable inflation in Canada. Since Canada adopted an inflation-targeting framework 30 years ago, inflation has averaged close to 2%, which has contributed to our country's strong labour market performance. It has also contributed to our economic growth, as well as to our prosperity.

Maintaining a stable environment for the prices that Canadians pay is the paramount objective of Canada's monetary policy. That has been the case for the past 30 years and will remain the case for the next five years as well. Doing so supports a strong and inclusive labour market that provides every Canadian with opportunities for a good quality of life. That is why the review and renewal of Canada's monetary policy framework every five years is such an important moment. This renewal of Canada's monetary policy framework is fundamental to Canada's economic success. It is about continuity and about continuing to do what we know works.

As colleagues can see, the federal government is already working hard to address the cost of living and to make life more affordable for Canadians. Thankfully, by delivering significant fiscal policy support to Canadians during the pandemic and avoiding harmful austerity policies, we have seen a rapid and resilient recovery so far. The vast majority of the government's recovery plan is targeted toward growth-enhancing and job-creating initiatives, initiatives such as the investment to support child care and the adoption of new technologies that will help boost supply, increasing space for

the economy to grow without the risk of higher inflation. The federal government has moved from very broad-based support to far more targeted measures that will provide help where it is needed the most, when it is needed.

I am pleased to say that our plan is working. Canada has exceeded its goal of creating a million jobs well ahead of expectations and has the strongest jobs recovery in the G7. In fact, as of February, despite the temporary effect of omicron on Canada's labour market, 112% of the jobs lost since the peak of the pandemic have been recouped in Canada, significantly outpacing the U.S., where just 90% of lost jobs have been recovered so far. Canada's GDP has now returned to prepandemic levels with the economic recovery well on track and the focus now shifting to sustaining and enhancing Canada's growth potential.

However, we know that more can be done, especially as we emerge from COVID-19. Despite impressive economic performance in certain parts of the economy, as I stated earlier, the government is mindful of the global phenomenon of elevated inflation and its impact on the cost of living, including higher prices at the pumps.

The federal government has and will continue to focus on actions that will create jobs and growth and make life more affordable for Canadians, not through a temporary 5% reduction on gasoline and diesel but through meaningful and concrete actions that will grow our economy, provide good-paying jobs to the middle class and create prosperity for Canadians now and into the future. This will be a core priority that will form the foundation of the upcoming budget.

• (1255)

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, that was more of the repetitive discourse, the government narrative, they want to bring forward, this NDP-Liberal coalition.

The question I have is this. I spoke to Bev this morning. Bev is having a very difficult time. She lives in rural Nova Scotia. As a lot of our members have pointed out, she does not have access to transportation and a mass transit system. She relies on her vehicle to get to doctor's appointments, to buy her groceries and to attend the events she needs to get to and the appointments she needs to have.

The government talks about targeted opportunities. What more targeted and time-limited opportunity could this NDP-Liberal coalition have than to reduce the GST portion of the tax on fuel for Canadians suffering today?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question, and it is a really good one.

Business of Supply

I want to remind everyone that since we were first elected in late 2015, we have been very focused on trying to support Canadians in terms of costs. To support seniors, we have increased the guaranteed income supplement. To support families, we have introduced the Canada child benefit and now the national child care system. There have been a number of items that we have introduced to support Canadians and reduce income inequality, and we will continue to provide additional supports for Canadians as we move forward.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, in her speech, my colleague talked about the war in Ukraine, day care programs, and the guaranteed income supplement for seniors. We agree on one thing: We disagree with the Conservatives' proposal. We, too, disagree with it because it is a false solution.

What is not clear to me or to my constituents is the inflation piece, which affects the price of food, supply chains, the labour shortage, the housing shortage, and a bunch of other factors. Inflation seems to be here to stay.

What meaningful steps will the federal government take to address all these problems and offer people some reassurance?

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I mentioned the old age security, the Canada pension plan and the child benefit in my speech because I wanted to remind everyone that all of these supports are actually indexed to inflation, which will help the most vulnerable in our society. This is not the case in many other countries.

In terms of what additional supports we will be providing to Canadians, we have and continue to implement the national child care plan and we continue to provide support for our seniors. As I mentioned, we increased the guaranteed income supplement and we plan on supporting and increasing old age security for those seniors 75 and older. We are also looking at the housing affordability issue and we are looking to take urgent, concrete steps to help resolve this issue moving forward.

• (1300)

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, the oil and gas companies in Canada have increased their already excessive profits, even throughout the pandemic, when others are suffering. The NDP has pushed for many years for the creation of an oil and gas ombudsman to work for and protect consumers against that kind of price gouging. Does the hon. member support this kind of initiative?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I support any type of effort that is going to ensure that our oil and gas sector decarbonizes and works with all other Canadian sectors to move to a low-carbon economy, any effort that works to transition their workers into decarbonized areas and anything that will support Canada in achieving our net-zero targets by 2050.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am happy to be here today.

[*English*]

It is always an honour to rise on behalf of the good people of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola on an issue that is so incredibly important.

Kelowna has seen high gas prices of about \$1.84 a litre. In Merritt, an area that often has protests for high gas prices, it is at \$1.93. These are challenging times, and these prices aggravate many problems we have in our country right now.

Before I go any further, I will say that I will be splitting my time with the wonderful member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

I hear from pensioners who say the cost of groceries is going up all the time. Those high costs are going to be aggravated by increased transportation costs because of the high cost of both gasoline and diesel. Commuters need to be able to get to work, and because of rising house prices in this country, people are now living farther and farther away from where they work. There is a price to be paid for that, and these record highs in gas prices are making life less and less affordable.

In fact, the Conservative Party of Canada was talking about these issues in the 2019 election, when my friend from Winnipeg joined us. We talked about it being time for people to get ahead. As a party, we have been speaking to the very real pressures Canadians have been feeling, but the Liberal government has simply been adding to the pain.

Liberal members may say they added an inflationary clause on this program or that program, but the rank and file, the working poor and those low-income families who do not have children are paying higher Canada pension plan contributions. As of April 1, they are going to be paying higher carbon taxes, whether in my home province of British Columbia as it goes to \$50 a tonne or in any of the other regimes we have in Canada, including the backstop.

The government continues to add and add and add. It is incredibly important for us to be proposing things that will help make it better. Someone told me once that sometimes life cannot be easy, but it can always be made easier, so this common-sense plan for a 5% reduction in GST or its harmonized equivalent across this country to give every Canadian a break when they fill up at the pumps will be incredibly important for many reasons.

The first reason is that obviously we are seeing large increases in gas prices. Contrary to some of the rhetoric we hear from the NDP and others, who suddenly say it is big oil that is causing this, we know there is international instability that has to do with the situation in Ukraine. Again, my heart goes to those people who are suffering in Ukraine right now and fighting for their very freedom and their very sovereignty. This has caused international prices to go up, and therefore that variable, when we are adding up the bill, goes up as well.

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Then we have fixed gas taxes, such as the excise tax that goes toward municipalities. Then we have the carbon tax on top of that. What sits at the very top and multiplies and compounds all the pain is the GST. The GST on gasoline and diesel is multiplying and compounding that pain, making it absolutely intolerable and worse.

• (1305)

[Translation]

Inflation hurts people, especially the most vulnerable. It affects rural and remote communities that are totally dependent on food and basic goods that have to be trucked in.

The Liberal government has not yet responded to our calls for action to make the cost of living more affordable. Because of the high cost of crude oil, the GST on gas and diesel is one way for the government to boost its revenue.

[English]

I have to stress this. This is windfall revenue that the government is receiving. Usually it gets between \$3.5 billion and \$5 billion depending on the year, but that is under regular conditions and not what we see today.

[Translation]

As I said earlier, on April 1, the carbon tax will increase in British Columbia and in all provinces that have their own systems or are subject to the federal carbon tax.

The GST will be added to that. In other words, it is a tax on the tax. This will add to the pain caused by high gas prices and the increase in the carbon tax. That is why we want a 5% decrease. That way, every Canadian will have more money to deal with the highest inflation rate in 30 years.

[English]

Those are 30-year highs, the highest I have seen in my lifetime, and the government just seems unmoved. Some may say it is a stoic quality; I would say it is just indifferent. More needs to be done. Again, this is a common-sense measure that would deal with the escalation of gas prices caused by the costs of crude.

Also, while I am on my feet, I will point out the issues we have in our country with pipelines. In British Columbia we actually have a net deficit every day, a structural deficit of gas that is not refined in British Columbia, and that raises the price there. Having pipelines and having a proper system would help with that. Unfortunately, the government has been relatively indifferent to this problem. It may say that it has bought a pipeline, but again, it is billions upon billions of dollars. I think the original estimates were \$5.5 billion for the original and around \$12 billion for building the expanded TMX, but guess what? It is now over \$21.5 billion and counting, and the government still will not say when it is going to get finished. All those costs get incorporated and magnified by the GST. If we want to see how truckers could get foods to stores as cheaply as possible so that pensioners and families could buy affordable, nutritious food, they need to see a break.

In previous years when we have said the government should defer or cut the carbon tax, it has been completely opposed. I hope that the government will. When I first came here in 2011, the first

thing I noticed was that often it is not whether an idea is good or not; the merit of an idea is often based on who proposes it. I do hope that members opposite in the government and in other opposition parties, including the Bloc, recognize that ultimately a good idea is a good idea. I cannot say what the NDP is anymore; maybe NDP members could clarify their position for me.

Across this great country, people in all our ridings, not just mine, are feeling the pinch. If we want to get them to continue to support other measures that are important to members, they need to feel that we are taking care of them, that we are thinking of them as we walk and chew gum, that we are trying to support them as we have supported people internationally, and trying to make sure that our children and our pensioners have affordable access to nutritious food. Do not even get me started on our northern communities. Again, rural and remote areas always pay through the nose.

I am not sure how much time I have left, so let me just sum up.

Please, to all members in this place, take a look at the proposal. It is for a 5% reduction at a time when government is getting so much windfall. Whether it be through inflationary means or a higher carbon tax or higher crude prices, the government is loading up and receiving a ton of revenue, so let us just say, "Stop. Pause. Give a temporary reduction. Zero-base the 5% and let Canadians keep a little more of their money when they go to fill up with gasoline at the pumps."

It is a simple suggestion, and I look forward to questions and comments. I always love hearing what my colleagues have to say.

• (1310)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to get a sense from my friend opposite about the following point. There are a number of provincial Conservative governments in Canada. Could he identify any provincial government that has reduced its taxes with respect to gasoline at this time?

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, the member asks a very good question.

Right now all provinces are feeling the strain of their health care system from the pandemic. They have all asked for an increase in transfers, which the federal Liberal government has refused to listen to for such a long time.

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Alberta is also receiving a windfall right now because of its resource revenue, and it said that at \$90 a barrel, it would then forgive a certain tax. Other provinces do not have the same ability. In my home province of British Columbia, the premier has actually said publicly that it should be the federal government taking action on this. That is why I am so happy to be from British Columbia, to be standing up and actually saying, "Here is the common-sense solution." A 5% reduction at the pumps would help people in Merritt, Kelowna and right across this great country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I still have the same big question mark over my head. I understand the desire and intention to reduce the burden on Canadians and Quebecers in these times of crisis, but what I do not understand is that this effort is always going to be directed at the government and the taxpayer. Oil companies are raking in huge profits, and they are receiving huge government subsidies and support.

Why would the Conservatives' proposal not go directly in that direction? Why not force the oil companies to reduce the price at the pump, reducing their profits, so that they too can make their own war effort in times of crisis?

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, it is really simple. This member, being from Quebec, knows that the province does get some of its gas and energy from outside of Canada. There is going to be a different approach in every different province. For example, if the international price of gas goes up, we are going to be paying more. Again, the issue we ultimately end up with is that whatever that price is gets magnified by the GST. In my home province, the government has been saying for years that it is going to come down on those gouging gas companies. The government has not, because oftentimes it is a competitive marketplace, so what ends up happening is that it finds its natural level. International instability has led to skyrocketing crude prices, which magnify the GST and increase the windfall revenues the current government is having. Let us just let Canadians keep a bit more of their money, whether they are in British Columbia or la belle province.

• (1315)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, my fellow British Columbian colleague's last comment about price gouging seemed to suggest that price gouging by oil companies is not a big issue when it comes to gas prices, but he will be familiar with the fact that, in 2019, the B.C. Utilities Commission did a study and found that 13 cents of what were then much lower gas prices were attributed to factors that could not be explained by the competitive market. Today, that 13 cents is likely much more.

Could the member speak to this discrepancy and uncompetitive gouging that is happening at the pumps?

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, I am very happy that the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley is asking about this. He should actually get on the phone and talk to John Horgan. John Horgan has repeatedly said he is going to be taking action on this. In the B.C.

Utilities Commission process the member talked about, it was actually said that they could not talk about government taxation whatsoever. If there are information gaps, the B.C. government should be able to say what it knows and what it does, but instead there is more rhetoric from the NDP, whether it be provincial or federal. They just say, "those big, bad oil companies". We see that international crude prices have gone up. Canada's government is getting a ton of extra cash from the GST on top of that, because it is on everything, including other taxes. Let us just focus on the basics here. Let us try to put a little more money in our constituents' pockets when they go to fill up.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I wish I could say it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to this motion, but that would be misleading in this place. The circumstances that have led to the necessity for this opposition day motion completely efface the normally noble feelings I have to expect when standing in the House.

The price of fuel has been increasing: This we all know. We can sit here and debate the macroeconomic reasons for how we got here. We can point fingers at various governments, regulatory bodies, international associations, etc., but what would that do? What would pointing the finger at government agencies do for the business owners who I spoke to during question period in the last sitting week? The reality of the situation is that no amount of bickering in this place about past governments will lower the out-of-control fuel bills Canadians are being stuck with.

People of all ages and stages of life are grappling with these costs. Their budgets do not have room for the increase when paying the minimum payment on their exhausted credit cards is their primary concern. Bickering about OPEC or about allegations of corporate greed among oil and gas companies does nothing to help the young couple from Stirling I spoke to earlier today, the retiree from Bath last week, or the gentleman from Tamworth who emailed this morning begging for relief. Empty words and pit-bull rhetoric from wordy politicians gets old and will not help.

However, this motion would help. This is why it is critical that we pass this motion today and do so unanimously, so we can all go back to our constituents and say that we did this together. We set aside any professional grudges we held. We set aside our pride. We set aside our loyalty to our parties and we delivered a financial reprieve to those suffering from these ridiculous fuel prices.

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It is no surprise at all that those in the House who are lucky enough to represent the more rural ridings in Canada feel particularly strongly about this issue. To be clear to my more urbanite colleagues in all parties, I do not mean to minimize the effect that these fuel prices have had on their constituents. I know they suffer too, but the simple reality is that the people in rural Canada, such as those in Hastings—Lennox and Addington, rely more on fuel than lobbyists in downtown Toronto or bureaucrats here in Ottawa. There is no city bus from Eldorado to Enterprise. There is no LRT from Bancroft to north Thurlow. Many people do not live within walking distance of where they work. The vast majority of voters, constituents and human beings do not: They need to drive cars, and believe me when I say driving around Hastings—Lennox and Addington requires a lot of gasoline. There is a lot of driving.

Farmers, who have often invested millions of dollars in their machinery, do not have the option to use some tax credit to convert their fleets to electric, nor do haulers, foresters or any small business owners reliant on any type of machinery.

Another point that often gets left out is that of home heating. I spoke to a senior late last week who is living on a fixed income. This particular gentleman lives in the rural community of Marmora. People there cannot switch over to a more cost-effective heating option not only because it is cost-prohibitive, but because in many instances, such as his, the infrastructure just does not exist.

These are good people. Many of these people have been raised to work hard and play harder. These people have paid their taxes, volunteered in their communities, coached sports teams and baked for school fun fairs and church bazaars. These are Canadians who rely on their vehicles to get to work and take their children to activities. These are Canadians and non-profit groups that depend on their vehicles to keep serving their communities. They needed a reprieve yesterday.

● (1320)

They do not deserve to suffer under paralyzingly high fuel prices. Something needs to be done, and today something can be done. Today, we can call on the government to pause the GST on fuel and give Canadians a break. This would immediately reduce prices at the pump by about 8¢ a litre. I recognize this does not solve the problem, but it helps. The reality is that 53% of Canadians cannot keep up with rising costs. Higher fuel prices raise the cost of everything. It is not just a ripple effect anymore; it is a tidal wave, and Canadians are feeling it across this country.

I urge the members of this place to consider this. The official opposition has before them a realistic, tangible and direct solution for Canadians suffering from high prices. To date, this legislature's reaction to those gas price increases has been completely inadequate. A vote against this motion is a vote for the status quo. It is a vote against the low-income senior who is forced to choose between heating and meals. It is a vote against the single parent of four kids struggling to make ends meet. It is against the farmer who grows our cities their food. It is a vote against the struggling student working three service jobs through town to get through school.

This is a good motion. It would help all of our constituents. An opposition day motion should not automatically elicit a paroxysm of partisan mania from other parties, yet it happens far too often.

While I am not surprised, I am extremely disappointed that the NDP has now formally signalled to the Liberals that it will support whatever measures are needed to prop up this minority Parliament.

Regardless of one's political leanings, the option was not on the ballot. It is not democracy at its best. Today, I implore the members who vote against the motion to at least consider listening to their constituents crying out for help. If they have not already, they should ask their staff to read the emails sent to them and listen to the messages that are being left on phones. I guarantee they will have many instances to share with them.

Try to understand the sleepless nights that these increases in prices are bringing. If members vote against the motion, at least they could think about how else they could ease the financial burden of the short-sighted economic policies from governments the world over that have been foisted onto the backs of our seniors, our single parents, our indigenous communities, our farmers and our rural Canadians, and they could act.

This is what we were sent to this place to do: to act. If members must vote against the motion, be it because of pressure from their whip or leadership, then I pray they will listen to the words of the members here and their constituents at home, and use these to go back to their caucuses and create something more palatable for Parliament. None of our constituents, especially those in rural communities, can afford the indecisiveness and indifference that plagues politicians in Ottawa. The status quo is not acceptable. We owe them all better, regardless of political affiliation.

● (1325)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find it quite interesting to listen to members from across the way, and this member in particular who is a neighbouring colleague of mine, refer to making sure that we do not talk about this or provide empty rhetoric. I think those were her words specifically as they relate to the challenges that Canadians are going through and the reality of what they are facing. A quick search in Hansard comes up with a question from this member in the House on December 16, when she said:

Mr. Speaker, while working Canadians struggle to make ends meet, the finance minister continues to mislead Canadians by arguing that our economy is strong. That may be the case for some, but the conversations around the kitchen tables in rural Canada tell a very different story. Bills are piling up and credit cards are maxed. "Just inflation" has Canadians at their breaking points financially...

I am curious. When the member speaks of empty rhetoric, is she referring just to empty rhetoric from across the way, or is she referring to the comments that she herself made on December 16 during question period?

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Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for mentioning that. In fact, it was pit bull rhetoric that I made reference to earlier in my speech today, and I am quite proud of the comments that were made.

Canadians need to have representation to speak to the pressures they are facing. The prices on gasoline are intolerable. Inflation is at an all-time high. Canadians are exhausted from the rhetoric and they need action. They are not asking for too much.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, inflation may in part be caused by our reliance on oil. We have to think about reducing that reliance.

That being said, people everywhere, seniors, students and low-income individuals, are facing situations where oil is not the problem. The problem is rising costs. For instance, the cost of housing is skyrocketing. There is far more demand than supply and that leads to rising prices.

To ease the burden, should we not be investing in social and affordable housing instead?

[English]

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Madam Speaker, the issue of the day is how we can help Canadians. The cost of fuel has increased 32.3% in one year alone. That is why we are here today presenting an opposition motion to provide relief for Canadians. I will continue to be the voice of all Canadians looking for relief with regard to the spiralling cost of living.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member made several points in her speech about the cost of home heating. I agree very much that this issue needs to be addressed, but I am confused, for two reasons. The first one is that just a couple of hours ago, the NDP brought forward an amendment to this motion. It dealt specifically with the cost of home heating and was refused by the Conservative Party. The first question is why, since it is obviously an issue that concerns her.

The second issue is that the Conservative motion deals specifically with the cost of gasoline and diesel. The member spoke about seniors being forced to choose between heating and meals. Could my hon. colleague tell us how many seniors in her riding heat their homes with diesel or gasoline?

• (1330)

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Madam Speaker, here is the reality. Inflation is at an all-time high. It is the highest rate in this generation. Everything is going up. What we have to recognize is that the government is spending millions of dollars on things it could have cut. It has misplaced billions it cannot account for, and sadly the government has no financial accountability. People are struggling to make ends meet.

The government has an opportunity right now, today. If it wants, it could do something right for Canadians, and would have, perhaps, had it been their idea.

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing),

Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Halifax.

The government is fully aware that there are currently inflationary pressures all around the world. Every country in the globe is facing the same challenge of reviving the global economy. We all have to deal with the disruptions in the supply chain.

Then we have to add to that the current instability of global markets because of Russia's attack on Ukraine. This invasion has resulted in rising costs for raw materials, which will put upward pressure on prices.

Canadians are worried about the rising cost of living and we understand that. I want to assure the House that the government is taking tangible measures to help Canadians absorb the rising cost of living. The government is there to support Canadians, especially the most vulnerable.

Let us also put things into context. Canada's inflation rate is currently 5.7%. The inflation rate in Canada is lower than it is in the United States and the United Kingdom. It is also lower than the average rate for the G7, G20 and OECD countries.

Canada does, however, have the highest rates when it comes to economic recovery. There are more Canadians working now than there were before the pandemic. There are more businesses open in Canada than there were before the pandemic. Canada's job rate sits at 112% of what it was during the worst of the pandemic, in spite of omicron's impact on Canada's job market. We have vastly outperformed the United States, where just 90% of the jobs lost have been recovered.

Canada's real GDP has now surpassed its prepandemic level. The economic recovery is well under way, even though progress is slower in some sectors. This is why we have maintained targeted measures to provide assistance where required.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine does, indeed, represent a major new source of uncertainty for the global economy, and it has led to a significant increase in the price of oil and agricultural products.

That said, I hope that the member for Abbotsford will agree that the measures taken against Russia were and still are necessary. Quick, decisive action was needed, and that is exactly what the Canadian government did. We worked together with the European Union, the United States and the United Kingdom to implement the harshest sanctions every placed on a major economy. For these sanctions to truly be effective and have a real impact, we have to be prepared for some temporary consequences for our own economy.

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That said, I would remind the member for Abbotsford and everyone in the House that government assistance programs are indexed to inflation. This ensures that the benefits paid to Canadians increase in line with the rising cost of living. This is true of the Canada child benefit, the goods and services tax credit, the Canada pension plan, old age security, and the guaranteed income supplement.

Speaking of old age security, this pension benefit is going up as of July for people aged 75 and over. Roughly 3.3 million Canadians will benefit from this, and they do not have to take any action. These seniors will automatically receive the additional payment if they qualify. This 10% increase will provide an additional \$766 in the first year for seniors receiving the full pension.

The Canada child benefit that I just mentioned is also a key part of our efforts to make life more affordable for Canadian families. This program helps 3.5 million families with children each year. Compared to previous child benefit plans, the program puts more money in the pockets of nine out of 10 Canadian families.

The benefit has already lifted 435,000 children out of poverty and, every year, the payments are indexed to keep up with the increase in the cost of living. We are also working with the provinces and territories so that Canadian parents across the country can access early learning and child care services at an average cost of \$10 a day. We have entered into agreements with nine provinces and three territories, and we are continuing our discussions with Ontario.

I carefully read the motion moved by the member, and I have to say that it would not do much for many Canadians. The motion calls on the federal Parliament to reduce the Quebec sales tax on gasoline and diesel. That is not a federal jurisdiction and we cannot reduce a provincial tax. The Government of Quebec has already indicated that it has no intention of reducing the tax. The member for Abbotsford can challenge that if he wants to.

• (1335)

As I stated earlier, our government realizes that the high inflation rate around the world has a real impact on Canada. We will remain vigilant. We will continue to be there for all Canadians, to make life more affordable for families, to build a resilient economy, to ensure that no one is left behind, and to build a stronger, fairer, more competitive and more prosperous economy. We want to build a Canada, and a Quebec, that is sustainable and united, fairer and more equitable, because no one can be left behind.

[English]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, when the hon. member speaks to her constituents about the cost of living and the rising prices of housing, groceries and gas, does she rhyme off the inflation rates in allied countries like the U.K. and the U.S.? Does she tell them about the employment rate?

Is she going to admit to her constituents that when presented with a motion that could relieve them of the costs of living, she voted against it? Will she be able to look them in the face and say it? Does she have comments on that?

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question.

I am proud to tell my constituents that I voted in favour of the family allowance and measures that helped all families across the country during the pandemic.

I would say to my hon. colleague that the intent of the motion is good, but the idea is bad.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will echo my colleague's last few words: The intent is good, but the approach is bad.

That may also be the case with seniors' income, that of seniors age 75 and older. The intent is good, but the government is over-looking seniors age 65 to 75. That is not fair. Conservative members are talking about how hard it is to access reliable public transit in rural areas. The 2022–23 budget includes \$4 million for active transportation, or cycling, and only \$2.5 million for rural public transit for all of Canada.

Would improving that budget not help ease the burden on those less fortunate?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Back before I became a federal member of Parliament, I helped set up a transportation system for seniors in the riding where I lived at the time. I would like my hon. colleague to know that our government has invested more in public transit than any other government. We will work with all municipalities across the country to make sure we improve transportation services.

I would be very happy to work with her on rural issues, which are very important to me.

• (1340)

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, does the member share the concern we have as New Democrats that if we put in place the measures in the Conservative motion today, oil companies would simply be able to scoop up the reduction in excess profits, as they have done repeatedly? Does she agree with the idea we put forward that applying this to home heating fuels would reach more vulnerable Canadians and would avoid the problem of gas companies simply increasing prices?

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

Indeed, as I said earlier, I think the intention is good, but the idea is bad. This is not the right approach. I think we need to provide direct assistance to Canadians across the country to help them cope with inflation. Our government has worked with all the provinces and territories to provide additional assistance during the pandemic.

I think that, in the future, we will have to work together to provide direct assistance to Canadians rather than doing things in a roundabout way and helping oil companies make more money.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would ask my colleague to provide her thoughts with regard to the global situation. We have seen inflation around the world, and in comparison with other countries, whether it is the United States or other G20 countries, Canada is doing relatively well on fighting inflation. Could she provide her thoughts on that perspective?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I just returned from Chile, where I had the pleasure of representing Canada, our great country, at the swearing-in of the new Chilean president. The people of Chile are facing the same challenges, since this is a global reality.

We are very fortunate to live in a country where the government has introduced measures to help all Canadians. I am very pleased to continue this work with all members of the House.

[*English*]

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on the opposition motion brought forward by my Conservative colleague from Abbotsford.

Members may have noticed that there is an unmistakable air of non-partisanship in the House today and all throughout Ottawa. It is in this positive and productive spirit that I wish to invite my Conservative colleagues to work with us in partnership to serve the best interests of Canadians.

With that in mind, I will start by thanking the member for Abbotsford for raising this very important issue that I know is on the minds of many families across the country, from his side of the country to my own, and that is the rising cost of gasoline. On the surface, it is a bit confounding to see that an issue so very close to home for many Canadians, the price at the pump, is also a story about what is unfolding a world away with Russia's brutal, illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war with Ukraine, an invasion, it is worth noting, that is being funded by the very resource that we are discussing today.

One of the consequences of Putin's illegal invasion has been a sharp increase in oil and gas prices across the globe, including right here in Canada. While Canadians are willing to make sacrifices in order to preserve the freedom of the people of Ukraine and maintain European security, we know that the rise of the price of oil is placing the greatest burden on those who are least able to afford the sharp energy increases. Therein lies the hard truth for us as parliamentarians to consider.

We have a responsibility to seriously examine our reliance on a resource so volatile that a sudden turn of events, such as the heinous actions of a dictator across the globe, can have such a dire

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impact on how our own residents can afford to drive their cars to work or to heat their homes. However, here is where the Conservatives differ from the other parties in this place. Conservatives see this as an opportunity to yet again double down on this volatile resource, but doing so would only further endanger the financial well-being of low- and middle-income Canadians who will bear the brunt of the next sudden surge in gas prices, just like they are today.

There is a different way, a better way. As my father taught me long ago, when one is in a hole, stop digging.

This rise in gas prices only strengthens the case to speed up our transition to a carbon-neutral economy and to energy sources that will not fluctuate at the whim of world events: renewable energy like solar, wind and green hydrogen. A great example is the solar city program in Halifax, which puts solar panels on residential rooftops and is supported by the green municipal fund, a program of FCM funded by the Government of Canada.

We have a chance right now to signal that the federal government will not continue to put low- and middle-income Canadians in this difficult position again, and that comes down to how we allocate taxpayer dollars to support clean growth and the stable energy costs that Canadians deserve. We have done that already in a wide variety of ways, and here are a few local examples from my own riding of Halifax.

This summer, I announced the federal share of \$112 million in joint funding from all orders of government to purchase 60 new battery-operated, zero-emission buses to electrify Halifax Transit, removing 3,800 tonnes of emissions annually by 2030. This funding also includes charging infrastructure for the fleet. In June, I announced a \$5.5-million investment to create a renewable district energy system in the Cogswell Interchange redevelopment area in downtown Halifax, which is a project that will provide residents with a rate-stable, clean energy source for years to come by extracting waste heat from treated effluent in downtown Halifax.

I am proud of my past work as parliament secretary to the minister of infrastructure and communities to lead the development of Canada's first active transportation strategy and its associated \$400-million fund, the first of its kind in Canada. This is in addition to the \$25 million in joint funding from all three levels of government to improve the Halifax "all ages and abilities" bikeway network.

As a final example, I can share that productive discussions are under way between the federal government and the Atlantic provinces toward the development of the Atlantic loop, an interconnected, clean power grid that would serve as the foundation for a competitive, electrified economy across the Atlantic region.

Business of Supply

These are just a few of the many measures we have taken, but we can still do more to cut and stabilize energy costs for Canadians so that we do not find ourselves back in this place again. The upcoming federal budget presents that opportunity. I sent out a pre-budget consultation survey to my residents in Halifax and received an overwhelming amount of feedback in return. Many were concerned about the cost of living and indeed the cost of energy.

• (1345)

In response, I wrote to the Minister of Finance with two ideas I think would be worth considering. One is an acceleration of the implementation of interest-free loans for green retrofits, announced in budget 2021. This would allow Canadians to reduce their energy bills, insulating them from further oil price shocks in the future. The second is an acceleration of our government's efforts to support the adoption of zero-emission vehicles, including adding 50,000 new electric vehicle chargers and hydrogen stations to Canada's growing network and expanding purchase incentives for zero-emission vehicles, which have been massively popular.

Work is already under way in Halifax to prepare for this transportation transition, as last year I announced funding to advance cost-effective energy solutions for an electric vehicle smart grid integrated system in Nova Scotia. I believe these are the more productive kinds of ideas needed to address the root cause of the strain being put on Canadians, which is our reliance on a volatile resource to heat our homes and power our vehicles.

Ultimately, this is about using the power of government to help Canadians who need it. However, the mechanism presented by the Conservatives in today's motion is not one that will achieve its desired effect. Although I do believe the Conservatives have submitted this suggestion because they want to provide relief at the pumps, there is still no guarantee that their proposed measure would do anything of the sort. In fact, it could result in energy companies pocketing even more astronomical profits, as they have over the past few weeks, without any benefit accruing to Canadian consumers whatsoever.

Instead of putting more money into the pockets of oil companies and executives, we should instead focus on putting money into the pockets of Canadians in need. That is what our Liberal government has been doing throughout our time in office with means-tested benefits, indexed to inflation, that are supporting Canadian families with the rising cost of living, measures like the Canada child benefit, cutting taxes on the middle class, increasing the OAS and GIS for seniors, introducing the Canada housing benefit for the housing insecure and slashing child care costs to \$10 a day. These are the measures that have a positive impact on the pocketbooks of everyday Canadians, not the pocketbooks of big oil and gas, yet the Conservatives have routinely voted against these very measures. It certainly shows us where their priorities lie.

As I conclude, we will continue to be there for Canadians by providing them with the financial support they need to get ahead and to stay ahead, by funding the transition to net zero so that they do not have to live in fear of the next big oil shock, and by putting in place programs that rely on stable, reliable, clean energy sources that protect the planet and the pocketbooks of Canadians for years to come.

• (1350)

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member opposite hails from the same province I do. I find it fascinating that we are talking about electric buses, energy from thin air and the like. When I speak to the rural residents of Cumberland—Colchester, they wonder how they are going to get to the doctor's office, the hospital or the grocery store because, surprise, surprise, they all do it by car. How do they heat their homes? Most of them use home heating fuel, which is also known as diesel. This proposal would change things for Canadians overnight and cost the government nothing in a timely and proportioned response. How is the member opposite going to help with that?

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Nova Scotia raises important concerns. It is important that we get off this kind of monoculture of fuel we have been on for a long time. The importance is going to have to be in the diversification of transportation options, be that public transit, electric vehicles or the active transportation we have heard many people discuss. It is going to be very important to support rural transit as well as we go through this. The point is that we would like to create conditions in which Canadian families do not have the decision to own multiple vehicles forced upon them when there are alternative options to that.

Likewise, with respect to home heating, there is the solar city program I mentioned and energy retrofits for which we are providing zero-interest loans. The objective here is to diversify our sources of energy so that we never again have to live through a spike like we are right now.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would ask hon. members to respect the people who are giving answers so that we can actually hear what the answer is.

[*Translation*]

Questions and comments.

The hon. member for Shefford.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech, in which he talked about everything his government is doing with the eco-energy retrofit program.

That is great, but meanwhile, his government gave billions of dollars to the oil companies again recently. This did not go unnoticed, and my colleague from Jonquière mentioned it in his speech this morning.

Would it not be better to invest this money in social programs first—

Business of Supply

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry to interrupt the member, but there is a lot of noise in the House and in the lobbies. Could we have a bit of order so we can hear the member's question?

The hon. member for Shefford.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about what his government has done with respect to green or energy-efficient retrofits. That is good. In the meantime, however, the numbers indicate that his government continues to invest heavily in the oil industry and in pipelines.

Would it not be better to invest that money in programs that help the victims of inflation, people with fixed incomes like seniors, including by increasing old age security starting at age 65, instead of 75 like his government is preparing to do?

Would it not be better to invest that money in the energy transition, in research and development, in much greener programs?

If that money were invested in those two things, it would go a long way to helping people deal with the problem of inflation.

[English]

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Madam Speaker, our government has committed to and in fact ran on the phase-out of fossil fuel subsidies and most recently has accelerated the phase-out, which does create capacity in past and upcoming budgets to support the very kinds of programs that the member raised so diligently today.

This will allow us to allocate more money to seniors and those living in need, more money for other methods of low- and zero-emission transit, as well as other means of heating homes and running industries.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, through the discourse today and even through the first question and answer, I cannot help but be reminded of how, whenever the Conservatives talk about energy, they talk about energy as if there were only ever going to be one source of energy and it comes from fossil fuels.

The reality of the situation, as we know, is that different types of energy, renewable energies, energies that are created in a much more sustainable fashion than extracting fossil fuels from the ground, are just gaining more and more popularity. As a matter of fact, in Alberta itself—

• (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Could we have some order please, so that we could actually hear the questions and then the answers. Thank you.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I was going to say that, in Alberta itself, the renewable energy industry has been employing more people for the last number of years than the fossil fuel industry. It is a signal that we are moving forward, and they are heckling that.

I am wondering if the parliamentary secretary could provide his comments as to where he sees the future as it relates to energy—

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. I would simply encourage you to give the opportunity to the hon. member across the way to retract what was a categorical falsehood that he just referenced within this chamber.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is obviously a matter for debate.

I will let the hon. parliamentary secretary give a very short answer.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Madam Speaker, I wish to thank my colleague for the wonderful question.

Where do I see the future of this? I look no further than my own home province of Nova Scotia and the Atlantic provinces that surround it for the future. The Atlantic loop, which is in discussions now, is going to create an improved electrical grid that would allow us to phase off of coal earlier than we expected and would allow all kinds of renewable inputs, wind, solar and others, as we electrify the lives of Atlantic Canadians.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Thornhill will have about four minutes to begin her speech.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Red Deer—Mountain View.

It is hard to think of a more appropriate debate to expose the consequences of what transpired between the government and the NDP this morning. While today it might seem politically expedient in the moment, Canadians lost out on having a voice in the NDP, who once played a critical role in championing issues like this, issues of affordability. I am actually rather surprised at some of those members, and I will be even more surprised at their silence as time goes on.

With the fallout from the broken trust with their constituents, coupled with a fire sale of their principles in exchange for what amounts to broken promises from the government year after year, it is far more important that Canadians understand the consequences of a bad deal, not only for the two political parties in the House but a bad deal for them.

To simplify this transaction, the NDP members of the House have agreed to never hold the government to account. In turn, the government has agreed to never control spending: higher spending, higher taxes. While I believe this to be a disingenuous attempt by politicians to protect themselves, I am far more concerned with the devastating impact this deal may have: higher spending, higher taxes, higher prices.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will have to interrupt the hon. member. The noise in the antechamber is really bothersome. I can barely hear the hon. member's speech. Can people please quiet down? We are trying to have proceedings in the House.

Statements by Members

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, today we have an opportunity to answer the call of Canadians from coast to coast, one that if we have even spent a moment outside of this place talking to anyone, just about anywhere, we would be hard pressed not to hear. It is the loud and clear call that skyrocketing inflation and the cost-of-living crisis is devastating families across Canada.

The inflation rate is at the highest point in 30 years. That is 5.7%, and it is growing faster than Canadian wages. For the average Canadian, that is equivalent to a pay cut of 5¢ for every loonie earned.

We will hear in the House today the government's greatest hits, featuring a litany of excuses stating that the inflation rate is a result of global supply chains being disrupted by COVID, leading to higher prices. We will hear the one-hit wonders of listing off countries and their corresponding inflation rates. There is also my very favourite, that somehow asking the government to acknowledge a cost-of-living crisis, which members of the House are hearing about from their constituents, is an attack on the Canadian economy and that we should be thankful because everything is absolutely fine.

What we will not hear is that the prices for Canadian products are rising the most and the fastest. That is the inconvenient truth of the matter when we speak to people at the grocery store.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Madam Speaker, last Sunday was International Day of La Francophonie. French is the sixth most spoken language in the world. This day was celebrated in francophone countries, but also in the small but important communities of Baie Sainte-Marie and Par-en-Bas.

As a proud Acadian who lives in the francophone region, I know how important this day is to all francophones in my community. For many generations, we have been working very hard to preserve our beautiful French language and promote the culture that sets us apart and showcases Acadia to the world.

I want to thank and congratulate all those who contribute to growing our francophone communities throughout Nova Scotia. Francophonie Month is not over, and many activities are being held as part of Rendez-vous de la Francophonie to celebrate the francophonie, its diversity and its inclusivity across Canada.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. I do not know what is going on today. There is a lot of noise, especially outside the House. I would ask that everyone respect the work of the hon. members.

The hon. member for Malpeque.

[*English*]

ELIOT RIVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mr. Heath MacDonald (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise to recognize Eliot River Elementary School and its environmental and climate change initiatives. With a student body of 470, Eliot River recently won a national contest put on by Earth Rangers, a conservation organization. Eliot River collected over 3,000 kilograms of used batteries for proper recycling.

Eliot River's environmental spirit also led its students to another challenge of collecting over 300,000 single-use plastic bags through the plastic bag grab challenge. Using contest prize money and returns from a daily recyclable school program, Eliot River reinvested to help finance climate initiatives such as school roof solar panels, EV chargers and garden green spaces.

We could all learn from these elementary-aged students, their teachers and administrators. The staff and teachers, such as Darren Ford, are dedicated to educating children and their families through sustainable initiatives at the school. Our future is important to them, so as policy makers, their futures should be just as important to us.

* * *

UKRAINE

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart, a feeling I am sure all of my fellow parliamentarians share. Twenty-seven days ago the people of Ukraine found themselves under siege from a foreign government, an escalation to a conflict they had already been facing for years due to a ruthless dictator who wishes to own them by any means necessary.

This attack on democracy cannot and will not stand, and the people of Ukraine have shown just that. Citizens who have never been part of the military have fought back with a voracity that has shocked their attackers. Their leaders have shown what it truly means to lead a country, to protect and sacrifice for the good of their people, and to be champions.

To the neighbouring countries of Ukraine that have opened their arms to all those fleeing, we give thanks. To the people of Ukraine who are defending true democracy, I thank them for their courage, their sacrifice and their inspiration. We are all with them, and we send them our love. They will prevail, because darkness is overcome by light, and they, our friends, are the light.

* * *

[*Translation*]

LEV CHAYKA

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was deeply saddened to learn of the death of Lev Chayka, a Ukrainian priest who settled in Abitibi-Témiscamingue in 1952. He was 98 years old and the oldest priest in the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Toronto and Eastern Canada.

He devoted almost 70 years of his life to communities in northern Ontario and Abitibi. He founded Ukrainian parishes in Val-d'Or and Rouyn-Noranda, in addition to having churches built that are still standing today.

His first church was built in Val-d'Or in my riding in 1954. It quickly became the pride of the 375 Ukrainian families living there at the time.

Some years ago, we could also hear him on the radio on Sunday mornings, speaking a language that we did not understand.

May Mr. Chayka rest in peace. After all the outstanding work he did for the Ukrainian communities in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, he is most deserving.

* * *

● (1405)

JEREMY BOUCHARD

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have all dreamt of becoming a superhero, but Jeremy Bouchard was called upon to don a superhero cape and muster all of his courage on the night of March 15, 2022.

That night, this 16-year-old from Edmundston woke up to find his house engulfed in flames. He managed to escape through his bedroom window. Once outside, he saw his stepmother trapped by the flames and calling for help. He kept his cool, punched through the window and went into the burning house. His only thought was that he needed to save this mother of two young kids, and he succeeded.

Jeremy and his stepmother suffered injuries but came out alive. Fortunately, they were the only ones in the house that night.

Way to go, Jeremy.

All of Madawaska—Restigouche is proud of him. We wish him and his stepmother a speedy recovery.

* * *

[English]

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, for Dr. Kosta Bulavintsev, who is from Ukraine, seeing Russia's illegal invasion has hit especially close to his heart. In an incredible community initiative through his dental clinic, he has been accepting donations to support the Ukrainian military. So far, they have raised \$20,000 and counting. Dr. Kosta has personally committed to matching every single dollar that is contributed.

It is simply great to see the generosity in our community and even more so to see the steadfast support for the Ukrainian people and for the country of Ukraine, which we know to be a democratic ally and partner. I am proud to say that the Kenora riding stands with the people of Ukraine and that Canada stands with the people of Ukraine.

Statements by Members

ONTARIO MPP FOR DON VALLEY WEST

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we often do not get to witness politicians who are not afraid to challenge the status quo and who think beyond the four-year election cycle. I had the distinct honour of serving with the 25th premier of Ontario, the Hon. Kathleen Wynne.

The first woman and openly gay premier of Ontario, Kathleen was a trailblazer. Her policies were embraced by governments across this country. She introduced basic income, took serious action against climate change, raised the minimum wage, introduced pharmacare for children and youth, created the anti-racism legislation, ended race-based carding, increased public pension for Ontarians and introduced free post-secondary education for low-income students. Premier Wynne was relentless in her fight for a fairer Ontario.

Now, as the 25th premier of Ontario bids farewell at the Ontario legislature after almost two decades, I want to take this opportunity to thank Kathleen Wynne from the bottom of my heart for her passion, her integrity and her service to Ontario. I know history will look back at her time in office and see someone who was not afraid to stand up and who would not leave anyone behind.

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[Translation]

WORLD WATER DAY

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, World Water Day is a day to promote awareness of the urgent need to protect and sustainably manage this precious resource that is essential to human life, the environment and the economy.

Water security is a more serious issue than ever because of the impact that climate change is having on the quantity and quality of our drinking water.

[English]

A clear policy priority on fresh water can not only help to better protect this resource in Canada, it can also translate into a new kind of Canadian leadership. Promoting international water security can become the new peacekeeping. With expertise in water science and governance, Canada can and should make addressing the global water crisis a pillar of our foreign policy. I look forward to the role that a Canada water agency could play in serving as a centre of expertise in responding to water challenges, both here in Canada and around the world.

Statements by Members

• (1410)

CANADA EMERGENCY RESPONSE BENEFIT

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the second anniversary of the pandemic, workers across Canada are getting a nasty surprise from their government. Eligible workers are finding out that those who went back to work anytime before the end of the CERB program are now expected to pay back the \$2,000 lump sum.

As members know, Conservatives strongly supported the CERB in principle. In practice, however, the CERB disincentivized work. It was also not made clear that this \$2,000 would be clawed back. This latest fiasco is another in a long line of ill-conceived and poorly executed programs that have cost the Canadian treasury billions of dollars and created hardships for the workers they were intended to help.

I cannot help but wonder if this what Canadian workers can expect from an NDP-Liberal coalition government. The past predicts the future. The past two years have shown that the grandiose programs the NDP will demand to continue to prop up the Liberals for the next three years will prove disastrous.

* * *

NOWRUZ

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Nowruz marked the arrival of spring and is a time to reflect on the past year and look ahead to good things to come in the year ahead. This weekend, Persian, Afghan, Kurdish, Zoroastrian, Baha'i and central Asian communities, and my own Ismaili community, celebrated Nowruz, or Navroz. After two long years of battling COVID-19, communities in Vancouver Granville and across Canada finally gathered together safely with family and friends this Nowruz.

However, even as we celebrated Nowruz, many of us had in our thoughts the people of Afghanistan, who continue to face hardship, difficulty and, this year, a government-imposed limit on the celebration of this important festival. The resilience of Afghans in the face of horrific daily circumstances, whether fear of oppression, a food crisis or a true humanitarian catastrophe, is a reminder of the need to continue our work to build a more pluralistic world.

On the occasion of Nowruz, I wish us all and the people of Afghanistan good health, strength, peace and prosperity. *Nowruz Mubarak. Navroz Mubarak.*

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CARBON PRICING

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, next week the Liberal government will yet again increase its carbon tax that disproportionately punishes rural Canadians, like those living in my riding of Fundy Royal. While the price of gas is already breaking records in New Brunswick, the Liberals want to shatter those records by raising their carbon tax to an additional 11¢ per litre on April 1. However, 11¢ per litre is going to look quaint by 2030, when the Liberal carbon tax is fully implemented and charging Canadians an additional 40¢ per litre.

The Liberal carbon tax does not care if people have to drive to work in order to pay the bills and provide for their families. It does not care if someone is a senior on a fixed income. All it does is add pressure on the increasingly strained wallets of everyday Canadians. This is unacceptable. In fact, 53% of Canadians say that they simply cannot keep up with the cost of living right now.

The last thing we need is another tax that makes life less affordable. People are struggling, and the government can no longer pretend that it is helpless to do anything about it. It is time the Liberals did the right thing and suspended their carbon tax increase on April 1.

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NDP-LIBERAL AGREEMENT

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the election, I have been speaking about the NDP-Liberal coalition government. Well, today it is official. My constituents in Saskatoon West know the dangers of the NDP and its love affair with propping up tired Liberal governments. These champagne socialists, who care more about their expensive cars and shutting down economic development on the Prairies, are now officially on the government gravy train.

Last night's pact guarantees a socialist lock on government into 2025, which is well past its due date. The NDP-Liberal government will raise taxes, implement anti-energy policies and push house prices further out of reach. Canadians deserve to know how much this pact will cost them.

The Liberals and the NDP used identity politics to divide Canadians into us against them. As a result, this country is more divided than ever. This place we stand in today should be about democracy, not secret backroom deals. Fortunately for Canadians, we have a strong united Conservative Party ready to form government and restore faith in democracy and our institutions.

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[Translation]

ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATION IN MONTREAL

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to acknowledge the non-profit organization VertCité for all the important work it is doing for the Saint-Laurent community. VertCité carries out initiatives and provides sustainable development services while also acting as a special resource in the field of sustainable development for local residents.

VertCité manages and develops a variety of environmental education initiatives on greening, waste management, urban biodiversity and urban agriculture, as well as food security. In addition, VertCité organizes many annual events, including the urban sugar shack, which will once again be offering educational and tasting experiences this Saturday, March 26, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Beaudet Park, in a festive setting with music, dancing and, of course, maple products.

I urge all Saint-Laurent residents to join us for this wonderful event. There is no better way to celebrate the arrival of spring.

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• (1415)

ST. LAWRENCE RIVER

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recite a few lines from Gatiien Lapointe's poem called *Ode to the St. Lawrence*:

A big river flows through my country
That shapes the mountains' days
...
I say what grows and flourishes in my country
I heard the river's deep song
...
In this, the most beautiful place in the world

From the Great Lakes to the ocean, the river defines Quebec, while its tributaries unite our lands, but who protects the river against pollution, unfavourable projects and those who think only of economic interests?

The United Nations has called for the rights of nature to be recognized. That is why, on this World Water Day, I am announcing plans to introduce a bill to grant the St. Lawrence River legal personhood. In collaboration with first nations, a committee will be struck to defend the river and look after its interests and its health.

Nature also has rights. Let us give the river the means to protect itself. It is in everyone's interest.

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SAINT-EUSTACHE HOSPITAL

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the 60th anniversary of the Saint-Eustache hospital, which is located in the heart of my riding, Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

On March 9, 1962, this institution opened its doors. At the time it was called the Deux-Montagnes General Hospital. Over six decades and through multiple expansions, its dedicated and skilled staff have welcomed more than 300,000 people from the Lower Laurentians. This hospital has not only witnessed the changes in my region since the Quiet Revolution, but also played a key role in its development.

The population of the Lower Laurentians has nearly doubled in 30 years. Today, and for a while now, the hospital's funding needs remain critical. That is why Ottawa must immediately increase health transfers from 22% to 35%, as the Bloc Québécois, the Na-

Statements by Members

tional Assembly of Quebec and all the provinces have been calling for.

Until then, I want to express my gratitude to the hospital's staff and say how much I admire them. Thank you and happy anniversary.

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NDP-LIBERAL AGREEMENT

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe another Liberal scandal is on the horizon. Canadians certainly did not vote for a Liberal-NDP coalition government in the last election.

We all know that the Liberals want to give the NDP some goodies so that they can manipulate Parliament. Now we see the Prime Minister making backroom deals with a third party at the expense of Parliament and Canadians.

There is no denying that the NDP has the upper hand over the Liberal government and will control the government as it pleases. We will definitely not stand idly by and watch in silence as the Liberals and the NDP spend money like there is no tomorrow. That is certainly not what transparency means, and it certainly does not reflect democracy as we know it in Canada. In the face of what appears to be a secret conspiracy, we have reason to be very concerned and to wonder what the Prime Minister and the NDP will try to sneak into the next four budgets.

This is really very worrying. It is a new scandal.

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[English]

WORLD WATER DAY

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is World Water Day. Canada is incredibly blessed with 20% of the world's fresh water, but this precious resource is increasingly under threat from pollution and climate change. Climate change has increased the frequency and severity of droughts, wildfires and floods, as we saw across the country in 2021.

The climate crisis is the water crisis. That is why our government will implement an emissions reduction plan to reduce greenhouse gases by 40% to 45% by 2030, and introduce a national adaptation strategy by the end of 2022. That is why our government is creating a new Canada water agency, implementing a renewed freshwater action plan and modernizing the Canada Water Act, all in order to better protect and manage fresh water in our country.

With these important measures, I am hopeful that we will be able to make every day water day in Canada.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS**

● (1420)

*[English]***GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY**

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians woke up this morning and were shocked to learn they have a new NDP-Liberal government that is planning to spend and tax unlike anything we have seen before. Now things are starting to make sense. Now we understand why the NDP has been so eager to prop up the Liberals and their unethical behaviour. It is because they have been cooking up a secret backroom deal.

My question for the leader of the new NDP-Liberal party is this. When did he start these secret talks with his new deputy prime minister, the member for Burnaby South? Was it before, during or just after the last election?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what this agreement means is that in this time of uncertainty and pressure on Canadians, we will have predictability and an ability to focus on delivering the things that Canadians asked us all for collectively in the last election: more investments in housing, better supports for families, help with the cost of living, growth for Canadians, increases in the fight against climate change and support on reconciliation. The toxicity and polarization that we have seen in Parliament in the past is now an opportunity for us to deliver for Canadians, and that is what we shall do.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are already suffering because of massive inflation that is caused by the out-of-control spending of the old Liberal government. Now Canadian are going to be living with a new NDP-Liberal government and the price tag has just skyrocketed. The NDP-Liberal government's initial platform will cost over \$200 billion and that is just the tip of the iceberg.

Can the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister tell Canadians how much this backroom deal is going to cost them?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made a commitment in the last election to invest in housing, to invest in support for families, to invest in child care, to grow the economy, to fight the pandemic and to move forward on fighting climate change. These are all things that we continue to be focused on. What we are going to see is an ability to work across party lines to reduce the toxic partisanship that we have seen in the past in the House and actually move forward on delivering concretely for Canadians. That is what Canadians want. That is what we are going to deliver.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have seen an attack from the left on Canada's oil and gas sector, our agricultural sector and fisheries, all huge job creators, and now that extreme left-wing agenda has been baked into this secret backroom deal. The NDP-Liberal platform will double down and intensify the attack on Canadian natural resources and jobs.

Canadians deserve to know: How many more jobs are going to be lost specifically in our natural resources because of the NDP-Liberal government and the backroom deal?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians saw what aggressive partisanship and toxicity in this place have led to. It is a slowed down agenda delivery for Canadians. What we have been able to do, in moving forward during this pandemic and seeing Canadians come together, is what we are going to continue to do moving forward: deliver on the things that we stood up for in the last election and deliver for Canadians on the things they need to grow the economy and create good jobs for everyone, while fully continuing to respect Parliament.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: I am going to take a moment here and remind folks that there has been a great listening of the questions, and I am hoping there is going to be a good listening of the answers so we can make sure that we understand where everybody stands on this issue. I am hearing lots of shots coming from over here, so I want to be sure that we actually hear the answers the Prime Minister is trying to give us.

The hon. leader of the official opposition.

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TAXATION

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, make no mistake that this backroom deal disrespects Parliament and disrespects every single Canadian voter. Gas prices right now are shockingly high and are going up, unfairly punishing Canadians and families, but today the Conservatives have proposed a reasonable and positive solution to save Canadians money at the gas pumps. The Conservatives are consistently conservative and we always want to lower taxes for all Canadians.

Will the NDP-Liberal government tell the House if it supports our motion, or will its first act as a coalition government be to continue punishing Canadians with high taxes at the gas pumps?

● (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the official opposition needs to be careful when she is talking about supporting democracy and not spreading misinformation and disinformation at the same time.

Canadians returned this Parliament in a minority situation in the last election because they expected parties to work together collaboratively to deliver for Canadians. That is exactly what we are doing as we reach out across party lines to work together on the things we agree upon. There will be plenty of room for robust, informed debate in the areas in which we disagree. That is how Parliament should work, and we will continue to stand up for democracy.

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[Translation]

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure to whom I should address my question today.

The new NDP-Liberal government has not held a leadership race. Clearly, however, the government's new agenda is largely inspired by the NDP's last election platform, with more spending, more taxes, more intrusions on provincial areas of jurisdiction, and less and less respect for Parliament.

To help us out, will the Prime Minister make room for the leader of the NDP to sit beside him, and will he officially appoint him deputy prime minister, replacing the Minister of Finance?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this agreement is an opportunity to work collaboratively on the things we agree on, while continuing to disagree on the things we disagree on.

This will allow the House to work more constructively. That means taking action on the priorities all members of the House share, whether it is growing the economy, helping the most vulnerable or fighting climate change. These are the priorities Canadians care about, and we will be able to work together constructively.

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INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, now that the NDP and the Liberals have gotten hitched, could the Prime Minister send the Green members over to this side of the House and put all the Liberals on the correct side so they can all sit together?

I gather that the basis for this agreement is interference in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces in the areas of health, dental and drug insurance. Is it not true that the purpose of this agreement is to enable this newly wedded government to tread on Quebec's areas of jurisdiction once and for all?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we had this debate during the last election.

In our government and in the Liberal Party, we have always emphasized that we firmly believe that the federal government has a responsibility to ensure that the quality of the health care and services provided across the country is the best possible for all Canadians.

We will always work with the provinces and respect them, but we will ensure that all Canadians across the country receive quality care. That is what people expect.

Oral Questions

JUSTICE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the NDP is staunchly opposed to Quebec's state secularism law. The Liberal Party is staunchly opposed to Quebec's state secularism law. There is even a Conservative Party leadership candidate who has become staunchly opposed to Quebec's state secularism law.

Will this marriage also involve attacking Quebec's state secularism law once and for all using the money and resources at the Canadian government's disposal?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians across the country, including Quebecers, expect a federal government to always be there to defend the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and to defend the fundamental rights of all Canadians.

That is what we will always do. We will always be there to ensure that everyone's rights are respected.

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[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, oil and gas companies, as well as big box stores, have made record profits while families are struggling to put food on the table and fill up their tanks. We know that these companies have made record profits. We have a chance to do something about that later on today when we can vote to tax their excess profits and reinvest it into people.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1430)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I know the temptation is there, but I would ask that we keep it down so we can actually hear the question the member is asking.

The hon. member for Burnaby South.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, oil and gas companies and big box stores have made record profits while everyday families are struggling to buy their groceries and to fill up their tanks. We have an opportunity to do something about that today when we vote on our opposition day motion: our plan to tax the excess profits of these corporations and reinvest that into helping people. We already know that the Conservatives are going to support the profits of big oil and gas companies.

Where will the Prime Minister stand: with people and families, or with the large corporations that have made excess profits?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning of our time in office in 2015, we have moved forward on lowering taxes for the middle class and raising them—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: This is the last time that I am standing on this one. Quite honestly, I am getting tired of standing on this one.

Let us try to keep a little decorum in the House. I know there is a lot of energy to be let out. I know that we are still happy to be here after a two-week break. It is good to be here to talk to folks to understand what is going on. I believe the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister was trying to answer a question, or where were we? I kind of lost track.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, when we got elected in 2015, it was on a commitment to lower taxes for the middle class and raise them for the wealthiest 1%. We did that. Then we moved forward with more supports for seniors and more supports for families. We have continued to look at ways of enabling economic growth and support for small businesses, while at the same time making sure that the tax system is fair.

These bells ringing are not ideal for me.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I am going to stand here for as long as it takes. Thank you. I appreciate that over there.

We do not need to be ringing bells. We do not need to be yelling and screaming. Let us just make sure we get through question period before five o'clock tonight.

The hon. member for Burnaby South.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, oil and gas companies and big box stores have made record profits while families are struggling to pay for food and gas.

We have a chance to do something about this problem today by taxing big corporations' excess profits and reinvesting that money to help families.

Will the Prime Minister protect the interests of ordinary people or big corporations' profits?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ever since we came to power in 2015, we have focused on helping the middle class.

We raised taxes for the wealthy so we could lower them for the middle class. The Canada child benefit enabled us to raise hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. We will continue to invest in child care. We will continue to invest in seniors.

We will always be there to support people. We will always be there to support Canadians in these uncertain times.

Our agreement will enable Parliament to function better with less toxicity, which, sadly, we are still seeing from the Conservatives.

[*English*]

FINANCE

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the new NDP-Liberal coalition. In its last election platform, the NDP promised over \$214 billion of spending with no plan to ever balance the budget. Now, the NDP and the Liberals have secretly negotiated a deal to circumvent our democracy and go on a massive spending spree that future generations are going to have to pay back.

How many billions has the Prime Minister bargained away in order to hang on to power, and how many of the NDP's spending promises will we see in the coalition's upcoming budget?

• (1435)

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact it was the Conservatives who had more spending in their platform than we did. I think what is difficult, in watching some of the reactions on the other side, is just how irresponsible the positions have been that they are taking. We actually saw the leader of the official opposition say that somehow our working with other parliamentarians constituted supporting Vladimir Putin.

I think the opposition members really should reflect upon the way they are working in this place and focus on collaboration. We are willing to work with anybody to get the agenda of the government done.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we know, the Parliamentary Budget Officer is responsible for assessing the cost of each party's election promises. He did that last fall, and he did it for the NDP.

Do my colleagues know how much new spending NDP committed to? It pledged \$214 billion in new spending.

My question is for the current Minister of Finance, and I say "current" because we never know what could happen. Could the Canadian government's Liberal-NDP finance minister tell us how much more her government will be spending to please her new NDP buddies?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Let us take a moment to remember what our fiscal management means to the Canadian economy. Our GDP has grown by 6.7%, beating market expectations. We have recovered 112% of the three million jobs lost during the pandemic. S&P Global Ratings and Moody's have renewed our AAA credit rating.

We are moving forward for Canadians, we are tackling affordability, and we are here to move the country forward.

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INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we know, the NDP is a centralizing party. That is not a fault per se, but we do not believe it is a good thing to be a centralizer in Canada. However, the NDP is a centralizer, so the new NDP-Liberal government will be one too. That will lead to fights with the provinces. We really do not need that.

My question is for the government member, and I do not mean the “minister member” for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. Can he tell us which Quebec program the new NDP-Liberal government is going to meddle in?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that my colleague spoke about the Parliamentary Budget Officer in his previous question. It is interesting to note that this same Parliamentary Budget Officer established that the Conservative Party, in its last election platform, was going to spend more money than we will invest to support Canadians.

I know that our Conservative friends are frustrated that the parliamentary toxicity is coming to an end, but we are here to deliver results for Canadians. That is what we will be doing over the next few years, and we look forward to working with all parties in the House of Commons.

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[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP has always wavered on its stance with defence treaties such as NATO and NORAD, even going so far as publishing a white paper that made it clear the NDP would pull Canada out of NATO. At a time when Russia has attacked Ukraine, our defence partnerships are now more important than ever.

Does the new NDP-Liberal government intend to uphold its promise to our allies, or will it pull out of NATO as the NDP so clearly wants to do?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. We are increasing our defence spending by 70% over the nine-year period beginning in 2017. We are very committed to our NATO and NORAD alliances, and we will continue to ensure that our Arctic is sovereign, that our continent is secure, and that we are ensuring and upholding the rules-based international order.

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CARBON PRICING

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal government will continue to fail Canadian farmers. They have lost markets and trade agreements, and they will continue to treat producers like a piggy bank with the farm-killing carbon tax that is

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devastating Canadian farmers. According to CFIB, Canadian farmers paid \$14,000 a year in the first year of the carbon tax and \$45,000 last year. It is devastating to Canadian farmers. This is no joke. On April Fool's Day, the carbon tax goes up yet again, and the NDP wants that tax to be even higher.

Here is the question. On April 1, just how much more are Canadian farmers going to have to pay for this new carbon tax coalition?

● (1440)

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to say that our farmers across the country are very aware of the importance of addressing climate change. What is most important to them is their land. They are the first to be affected by extreme weather conditions such as the drought in western Canada last year and flooding.

We have created several programs to help them adopt good practices, plant cover crops and implement rotational grazing as well as precision agriculture. We also have programs to help them purchase new clean technologies.

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[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, energy self-sufficiency is national security, but the Liberals have killed four pipelines, more than 300,000 oil and gas jobs and more than \$150 billion in energy and indigenous projects, and they have lost 18 LNG export proposals. There is now a scheme with the NDP to end oil and gas in Canada and hike the carbon tax. Canada has the most responsible oil and gas and among the largest reserves in the world, but it still has to import.

Does the Liberal-NDP cabal really want to keep Canada having to rely on oil and gas from corrupt regimes and hostile despots?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. We need to lower emissions in Canada's oil and gas sector. We are investing in a range of non-emitting technologies that will get us to net zero.

There is great opportunity right across our country from these investments, including in Alberta and Saskatchewan. We have seen solar farms and a growing industry in renewables. This is a good opportunity going forward for our country.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has just experienced its own orange wave.

Once again, the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces will be undermined. Housing, child care, long-term care, health care, pharmacare—it is pretty obvious that these sound like planks in a provincial party platform.

No matter how carefully we pore over the agreement, we will never find the words “right to opt out with full compensation”.

I wonder. Has the Prime Minister decided, with the NDP's blessing, to consolidate his power by taking power away from Quebec and the provinces?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois lives for bickering, so much so that it cannot understand how parties can agree and how good this is for Quebeckers and Canadians, for the fight against climate change, for reconciliation, for workers and for families.

When something is good, it is bad for the Bloc, so the Bloc does not like it.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is starting in with the same old refrain about bickering. What Quebeckers actually want are health transfers.

There is now an NDP-Liberal alliance that is proposing conditions, as though Ottawa knows how to manage hospitals or how the health care networks in Quebec and the provinces work.

Everyone has seen that the government is struggling to manage its own jurisdictions. Now, it claims to know better than anyone what is needed in health care, housing and child care.

The NDP-Liberal alliance is wasting its time. Why not listen to what the provinces and Quebec have to say about their own jurisdictions and increase health transfers to 35% without conditions?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are listening to the provinces and Quebec. We are not, however, listening to the Bloc, because all it does it bicker.

The Bloc wants to bicker over jurisdictions. Bickering over jurisdictions does not create a single job. Bickering over jurisdictions does not bring in another doctor or nurse. Bickering over jurisdictions is only good for the Bloc. It is not good for Quebeckers or anyone else.

On this side of the House, we will meet the needs of Quebeckers and all Canadians.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, without a sound argument, it just sounds like bickering.

Pharmacare, home care, long-term care, hiring doctors and nurses—none of this is a federal responsibility.

Obviously, the NDP-Liberal deal is about more than just strengthening the minority government. More than that, it aims to weaken the powers and choices of Quebec and the provinces, unless there is an opt-out.

In everything announced today, are the government and its buddies committed to giving Quebec and the provinces the right to opt out with full compensation, with no strings attached?

● (1445)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since our government took office, we have been working with the provinces on important issues like health care, as well as on how to protect Canadians during a pandemic, and how to build and continue to invest in a public health care system that is the envy of the world.

These are exactly the constructive conversations we are having with all the provinces, including the Government of Quebec. We look forward to continuing these conversations.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is set to increase fuel prices on April 1. This will drive inflation on already soaring food prices. It is not only Canadian lives that Liberals are making harder. International students are already suffering due to the racism at IRCC and this Liberal-made immigration backlog.

In the metro Vancouver area almost 70% of food bank users at the Guru Nanak Food Bank are international students. Why is the NDP-Liberal government so good at making so many people miserable?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives would like to have Canadians think that a temporary pause on taxes would actually benefit Canadians at the pumps. We know that is simply not the case. We know that the oil companies would not pass those savings on to Canadians. On this side of the House, we are focused on real, long-term plans to address affordability, not cheap, political gas gimmicks.

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TAXATION

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, clearly the government does not care if it makes lives miserable for Canadians. The pocketbooks of Canadians cannot keep up with skyrocketing costs. Just last week the Bank of Canada revealed that the carbon tax alone increased inflation by 0.4%, confirming that this Liberal policy is hurting Canadians. It is a failed policy that is even more costly for those living in rural communities, and it is set to increase.

*Oral Questions***GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

If the NDP-Liberal government will not abandon the carbon tax, will it at least provide Canadians some immediate relief with a GST holiday on gasoline and diesel?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our plan is designed so that the majority of households receive more in climate action incentive payments than they pay. This has been confirmed by the independent analysis of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. As our carbon tax increases, these payments also increase, leaving the majority of Canadians with more money in their pockets. In Ontario, households will receive \$600 this year, \$720 in Manitoba, \$1,000 in Saskatchewan and \$980 in Alberta.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, who did not know the price of a package of bacon, is probably surprised to hear inflation is at 5.7% and rising. His carbon tax has generated surplus revenue, taking money out of the pockets of average Canadians.

When will the NDP-Liberal government give some of that back to the Canadians who work hard to pay it?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me talk about some facts about affordability that this side of the aisle is putting into place. A single mom with two kids will receive \$13,600 from the Canada child benefit. The average family in Saskatchewan will get almost \$1,000 in their carbon price rebate. Seniors received an extra \$500 this summer. A student will save \$3,000 through our changes to student loans. These are real facts on affordability, not political gimmicks.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Governor of the Bank of Canada revealed that the carbon tax contributed to inflation by nearly half a per cent. While the Liberals claim this is not their fault and that it is a global phenomenon, those who think and understand monetary policy know otherwise. This is costing the Canadians I hear from who are paying more for their home heating and more at the pumps.

Will the NDP-Liberal government commit today to scrapping its carbon tax increase to come into effect on April 1?

• (1450)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that a price on pollution is the best way to fight climate change and that inflation is a global phenomenon. The data the member opposite is citing from the governor does not factor in the rebates that are putting more money in the pockets of Canadians, now with quarterly payments. While it is not surprising to see Conservatives campaigning for less climate action and against the climate action incentive that puts more money in the pockets of eight out of 10 Canadian families, it is still disappointing.

While they decide on climate change, we are going to fight climate change.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government said supporting women fleeing violence is its top priority. Gender-based violence has been rising at an alarming rate. In my city of London it has increased by 53%, but organizations, like Anova in London, that support women are being told they will not get the necessary funding to run their life-saving programs. Without action, women in Canada will continue to experience devastating violence. In the upcoming budget, the government must provide core stable funding.

When will the Liberals keep their promise and stand up for women?

Hon. Marci Ien (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to let the hon. member know that we on this side of the House have been standing up for women. When COVID-19 hit we were there with \$100 million in shelter funding that helped 1,200 organizations. We knew, when the pandemic hit, that home was not safe for everyone, and we made sure that we provided the funding to help women. We will continue to do so.

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HEALTH

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 34% of people who menstruate had to sacrifice other needs to afford menstrual hygiene products. It costs an individual an average of \$6,000 over a lifetime for these products. Menstrual hygiene products are essential health necessities, not luxuries, yet the current government makes us beg for a pad.

When will the Liberal government acknowledge the reality of period poverty in this country and ensure equitable access to free menstrual hygiene products for all?

Hon. Marci Ien (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her advocacy. It is good to work with her.

I will say this. My team and I are working on that. It is part of my mandate letter. We take it very seriously. We are also consulting with organizations on the ground that will inform us on the path ahead.

*Oral Questions***DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This day reminds us that, while progress is being made to fight systemic racism, hate and injustice, there is much more work to do. That work is really important, because uplifting vulnerable communities improves the health and prosperity of all Canadians, including our economy.

Can the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion please tell us what our government is doing to combat racism so that communities like mine, in Mississauga—Erin Mills, can continue to flourish and prosper?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her advocacy on an important matter.

Our government has taken the issue of tackling racism as a top priority. That is why we have invested over \$100 million in the anti-racism strategy, including investing \$70 million in community organizations fighting racism on the ground. However, we know there is more work to be done. That is why we are committed to fighting systemic racism in our institutions. We are committed to renewing our anti-racism strategy and supporting racialized Canadians every step of the way.

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[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs a question, but the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence was the one who answered by reading something that had nothing to do with my question. I will therefore ask the question again today because it is a very important one.

The Liberals finally recognized the importance of sending lethal weapons to Ukraine, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs stated in a televised interview yesterday that all the weapons were already on Ukrainian soil. My question is this. Have all the weapons sent by Canada made their way to the battlefield in Ukraine, yes or no?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am of course working with my colleague, the Minister of National Defence, on this issue. We are coordinating our efforts. It goes without saying that Ukraine must have the means to defend itself against the Russian attackers.

My colleagues know that we are supplying equipment and weapons to Ukraine. That is important in that it will help people defend themselves on the ground, but it is also important from a diplomatic perspective because it will also put them in a position of strength in negotiations.

● (1455)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister. We now see that her answer to Mario Dumont yesterday was wrong, because she did not clearly answer the question: Our weapons have not reached Ukraine.

It is like last week, when the Prime Minister travelled to Europe with his ministers. They went all over the place, but we do not know why, if not for pointless photo ops.

Tonight, the Prime Minister is heading off for a G7 meeting. Will he be bringing the leader of the NDP along to make sure he asks that we scale back our involvement in Ukraine?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to reassure my colleague that Canada is supporting Ukrainians. I know that my colleague and his party asked for that, and that the entire House is united on this issue. That was my first point.

My second point is that, of course, Canadians expect the lethal and non-lethal aid to reach Ukraine. However, Canadians and our allies also know that it is important not to disclose details on this matter for security reasons.

I would be happy to work with my colleague on this issue, but he can rest assured that whenever we make statements as a government, they are truthful.

[English]

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I and many other combat veterans were disappointed to hear the Minister of Foreign Affairs state that Canada “is not a military power.” I have led some of Canada’s finest warriors in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq. I would like to educate the minister that Canada’s success in “making sure that diplomacy is happening” during global conflicts is predicated by our ability to back it up militarily.

I am doubtful the minister will apologize, but will she acknowledge that Canadian Armed Forces personnel are among the best in the world and that Canada is a military power?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously we support our men and women in uniform. That is exactly why I had the chance to go to Ukraine to meet with them through Operation Unifier, as well as in Latvia.

At the same time, I find it a bit rich coming from the Conservatives, as they reduced their military spending below 1%—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, I find it a bit rich on the part of the Conservatives, as they reduced their military spending below 1% when they were in government, which was the lowest in 60 years.

Of course, it will be a pleasure to work with my colleague, because the question of Ukraine is not a partisan question. It is a question that should unite us while people are—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Oral Questions

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Ukrainians are fighting for their freedom, their democracy and even their lives. They have asked for more help from Canada. The Canadian Armed Forces are in the process of divesting many armoured vehicle fleets, such as the Coyote, M113 and Bison armoured vehicles, as they are replaced by the armoured combat support vehicle project.

Could these vehicles be donated to Ukraine? If so, when?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Canadian Armed Forces for its ongoing and historic work to protect our country and contribute to our world. I would like to say in addition that we have contributed lethal and non-lethal aid to Ukraine, including anti-tank missiles, grenades and fragmentation vests, and we will continue to provide millions and millions of dollars' worth of aid to Ukraine.

In terms of the suggestion, I look forward to working with my hon. colleague to get more details on his suggestion so that we can take it forward. We will continue to leave no stone unturned to assist Ukraine.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois supports some of the government's efforts to facilitate the intake of refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine. Now that the minister has invited all these families to come here, he has no right to let them languish in refugee camps for weeks or even months. What these families are going through is profoundly traumatic. They need to be reassured. They need to hear from the Government of Canada that planes are coming to pick them up, and they need to know when.

When will the minister charter flights to airlift them out?

• (1500)

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and particularly for his co-operation on the Ukraine file. It is possible for all parties to work with our government.

We are prioritizing Ukrainian applications. Since January, more than 10,000 Ukrainians have arrived in Canada. Last week, I announced new measures that will make it easier and faster for Ukrainians to come to Canada safely.

I will continue to work with my colleagues to make it easier to welcome as many Ukrainians as possible to Canada.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows he can count on us to co-operate, but we need to see some action. People do not understand why no air operations have begun with chartered flights to bring refugees to Canada. Air Transat has even indicated that it is willing to take part if the government wants to organize such an operation.

If even the airlines are willing, can the minister announce today that this operation will indeed take place?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working with our partners, including the provinces and territories, the business community, the Ukrainian-Canadian community and settlement agencies, on how best to support those arriving from Ukraine. I have had conversations on this issue with the private sector and I spoke with the European Commission just before question period.

I will continue my work to facilitate the arrival of more Ukrainians in Canada through the special program.

[*English*]

It is an emergency. We are treating it as such and we are going to continue to work to welcome as many people here as quickly as possible, as safely as possible.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the health minister told the committee that the government had a plan for every possible policy related to its continued mandates, but he repeatedly refused to share the government's plan to end the mandates. I want to give him another chance right now.

The provinces have shown leadership and are all moving on from COVID mandates. Will the minister tell Canadians on which date the Liberal-NDP government will end the COVID mandates?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his collaboration on the health committee.

Today we know more about COVID-19 than ever before, and we are in a very different place than we were in March 2020. We have safe, effective vaccines and a highly vaccinated population as well as testing and surveillance tools and new ways to identify variants of concern to track the spread of the virus. However, the future remains uncertain, and COVID-19 is not over. There are many factors at play, and our government is committed to following the science going forward to get out of this pandemic for good.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the parliamentary secretary says that the government is going to follow the science, then he should do that, just like the 10 chief medical officers of health have done in every single provinces in this country. They are all ending the mandates, so we want to know what the benchmarks are. What are the data points that this government is going to use to end the mandates?

Oral Questions

The government does not need to end the mandates today if it has a plan, but the problem is that it does not have a plan. The Liberals are putting politics first. They are dividing Canadians and dividing communities. When will they put politics aside, end the division, look to the science, follow the leadership of the provinces and their chief medical officers of health, and end the federal mandates?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague across the way for acknowledging that my answer was both thorough and good. I also want to acknowledge that he asked some pretty good questions yesterday in committee, and I thought the answers that the minister gave him were excellent.

This is a very complex issue, and our government is going to keep making decisions based on the best science. We also understand that there are two jurisdictions; there are provincial jurisdictions and there are federal ones. The provinces will make decisions accordingly with their health officials, and we will make our decisions based on the exact same science with our health officials.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they might be based on political science, but certainly not medical science.

Yesterday, when the health minister was asked to explain when federal mandates would be taken off, he shrugged his shoulders and said, “Well, COVID is still here”. No benchmarks have been set, no plan has been put in place and no assurances have been given as to when we return to normal. This is absolutely irresponsible of the government. Provinces can do it. Other countries can do it. Why can Canada not do it? When will the Prime Minister follow the science—the real science—lift the mandates and give Canadians their freedom back?

• (1505)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to address the question from my colleague and the entire Conservative caucus, which is unmasked today and is pretending that COVID-19 is completely over.

I am sorry, but we cannot “wish” the pandemic to be over. We have to follow the science, and our government is committed to following that science.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

An hon. member: Put your mask on.

The Deputy Speaker: I am waiting for a certain level and then we will keep going.

The parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, I will put my mask on as soon as I sit back down, like the rest of my colleagues who are committed to following the science. This pandemic is not over. Canadians—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Can we just wait until after question period is done? We can then go out and run around or do something.

I am going to give the member an opportunity to respond.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, I want this pandemic to be over as soon as possible, just like every other member of this House. I continue to follow the science and my colleagues have continued to follow the science, and we will ensure that we get through this pandemic. However, the thing I cannot get over is the fact that over 5,000 Canadians are in the hospital right now with COVID-19, and our colleagues across do not seem to care.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Well, we are not done yet. We have about 10 questions left. Are we ready?

The hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the Government of Quebec, the City of Montreal, and the Government of Canada announced the new version and reconfiguration of the Montreal metro blue line extension project. This project has been highly anticipated by the metropolitan community for several decades.

Can the hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage and Quebec lieutenant explain to the House how the federal government is supporting Quebecers in a meaningful way in this initiative?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent question. It was really pertinent.

We have invested \$1.3 billion in the extension of the Montreal metro blue line. This project is important to the member because the line goes through Saint-Léonard. For me, it goes to Anjou. We have been waiting for this for a long time. More than 25,000 Quebecers will now have access to reliable and efficient public transit. We have announced over \$750 million for public transit networks across the country.

Public transit is a priority for our government and we will continue to support it.

Oral Questions

[English]

LABOUR

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a signatory to the conventions of the International Labour Organization. They prohibit international commerce in prison-made goods unless the prisoners are paid market wages. This leaves me wondering how the Correctional Service of Canada justifies its plan to open a factory farm at Joyceville penitentiary, where prisoners would milk 2,200 goats to produce infant formula for export to China while being paid only a fraction of minimum wage.

Does this plan not violate our international commitments?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to visit the prison farm at Collins Bay. I know what a tremendous organization is there. I will check into that matter for the hon. member and I will respond to him.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, farmers are paying record amounts to dry grain. Families are paying record amounts to fill their vehicles to get their kids to school and get groceries. The price of gas in my riding is over \$1.78. On April 1, the coalition is once again raising the carbon price. People in my riding do not find this April Fool's prank funny. Policy should be there to help us, not punish us.

Saskatchewan families need help with the rising cost of living, not another tax hike. When will the NDP-Liberal government cancel this tax grab?

• (1510)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know that a carbon price is one of the most effective measures to reduce emissions, and if the Conservatives will not believe the Parliamentary Budget Officer, if they will not believe the IMF, maybe they will believe the member for New Brunswick Southwest, who said that his province should go back to using the federal carbon pricing system because at least it comes with a rebate.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and industry stakeholders have waited a long time in anxious anticipation for a decision on the Bay du Nord energy project. Now, with the NDP-Liberal marriage, they are more uneasy than ever.

Has the Prime Minister promised concessions, such as cancelling energy projects like Bay du Nord, in return for the NDP's hand in marriage?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the importance of a decision on Equinor's project, the Bay du Nord development. As the member opposite knows, a review of the exten-

sive information is required prior to deciding whether the Bay du Nord project—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. There was a question, and I want to hear the answer. Let us see if the minister can provide us with that answer.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, we need to look at extensive information prior to deciding whether the Bay du Nord project is likely to cause negative environmental effects. This is why we extended the legislated timeline for the project. It is to provide more time to review the considerable amount of complex information and make an informed decision.

* * *

LABOUR

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know how important rail service is to be able to move essential goods across the country, whether or not it is inputs for farmers and ranchers or being able to get the bountiful harvest of those ranchers and producers to export markets. We watched with concern the on-going situation with CP Rail and the union in terms of what a disruption could mean to Canadians. I had the opportunity to speak with the Minister of Labour directly in the last few days. I know he was on the ground in Calgary. We were working with federal mediators to find a solution, and thankfully that came this morning.

Can the minister provide us an update on when services will resume and the work that was undertaken to get to this critical juncture?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always respected the collective bargaining process because the best, most durable deals are made at the table. It is the best path to achieve fairness and stability in the economy.

I want to congratulate and thank CP Rail and Teamsters Canada. They stayed at the table and put in the hard work to come to a resolution. Normal business operations will resume today and will continue during the arbitration period.

I especially want to thank the good people at the federal mediation and conciliation service who worked so closely with the parties and supported them throughout these negotiations.

*Points of Order***CLIMATE CHANGE**

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Arctic poles are experiencing unprecedented heat waves, causing alarm among climate scientists. This is another dire warning that we are in a climate emergency, yet the Liberals keep fuelling the climate crisis, handing out billions to big oil and gas, the same companies that are making record profits as they gouge Canadians at the pump.

How many more dire warnings does the government need before it stops paying big oil to pollute? When will the Prime Minister stop putting corporate profits before people and the planet?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have committed to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies two years earlier than our G20 country partners. We will do this, and I will be happy to work with her to make that happen as soon as possible.

* * *

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is failing to help the tourism businesses hardest hit by the pandemic. The tourism and hospitality recovery program was supposed to help, but due to an inflexible application process, many seasonal businesses cannot access it. The Liberals cut its funding last week and the program will end in May, just when it is needed most.

Will the government commit to continued full funding for the program, change the application requirements so seasonal operators are not excluded and extend the program until September?

• (1515)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. critic knows, we invested \$15 billion in the tourism and hardest-hit sector. In December, we passed Bill C-2, which put \$12 billion of additional money into the tourism and hardest-hit sector. That includes half a billion dollars for the tourism relief fund. Announcements are happening from coast to coast to coast in all kinds of ridings.

My number one message to all of the tourism operators and all of the businesses is thanks. They are there. With the borders open, brighter days are ahead. We supported them during COVID. We will support them now as well.

The Deputy Speaker: That is all the time we have for question period.

Before I get to the point of order, I want to say that, sitting in the chair today, it was difficult to hear a lot of the answers. If I stand and try to get folks to calm down a bit, I just need to get the noise to a point where the table, the interpreters and I can hear what is going on in the chamber. The bell ringing is unacceptable, so please stay away from that.

POINTS OF ORDER

STATUS OF OPPOSITION PARTY

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order concerning the status of the New Democratic Party as an opposition party, following the announcement of a confidence and supply agreement with the Liberal government. To paraphrase Shakespeare, this NDP-Liberal government is a coalition by any other name.

While many of our parliamentary procedures refer to recognized parties, others specifically refer to government and opposition parties. This reflects a key feature of constitutional parliamentary government in Canada as explained at page 4 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition.

Our rules referring to opposition parties must be carefully interpreted in light of this backroom deal, which was not put before voters in last year's election. What does it mean, though, to be in opposition? The Canadian Oxford Dictionary, second edition, defines opposition as:

1. resistance, antagonism.
2. the state of being hostile or in conflict or disagreement.
3. contrast or antithesis.

Respectfully, I would have said those definitions did not really describe the NDP yesterday, but they sure do not describe them today.

Bosc and Gagnon, at page 35, describes how the House is generally organized. It reads, "Functionally, the House is divided into three groups: the Ministry and its Parliamentary Secretaries, Members who support the government, and Members who oppose the government."

The NDP members are in neither the first group nor in the last group. They are instead members who support the government, just like the Liberal backbenchers. Our well-respected, former clerks of the table go on, at page 35, to quote Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who said:

"...it is indeed essential for the country that the shades of opinion which are represented on both sides of this House should be placed as far as possible on a footing of equality and that we should have a strong opposition to voice the views of those who do not think with the majority."

The NDP is now part of a parliamentary majority. I would therefore submit that, by agreeing to participate in the Prime Minister's power grab, the New Democrats have forfeited their rights as an opposition party in this Parliament. There are many procedural implications that arise as a result. Most immediately, it means that we cannot vote this afternoon on the motion moved by the member for Burnaby South that the House debated yesterday.

Standing Order 81(13) is relevant here. It begins, "Opposition motions on allotted days may be moved only by Members in opposition to the government".

Put plainly, the member for Burnaby South is no longer a member of the opposition to the government. Therefore, we cannot vote on this so-called opposition motion. Several other rules referring to opposition parties will also require the Chair's interpretation.

Paragraph 50(2)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act provides seats on the Board of Internal Economy for each party with 12 MPs “in opposition to the government”. Therefore, it would seem that the member for New Westminster—Burnaby would no longer be a member of the board. It also seems that neither the member for Gatineau nor the member for Brampton North, who hold the balancing government seats on the board, would continue to be members.

Standing Order 33, concerning ministerial statements, states, “A member from each of the parties in opposition to the government may comment briefly thereon.”

Standing Order 106(2), concerning committee chairs and vice-chairs, provides that each committee's second vice-chair “shall be a member of an opposition party other than the official opposition”. By definition, that would now only be the members of the Bloc Québécois.

Standing Order 81(4), concerning main estimates referred to committees of the whole, requires that the leader of the official opposition consult “with the leaders of the other opposition parties” on which departments are so referred. Does the government's coalition partner get a say?

The list goes on.

It also follows that we must revisit the uncodified practices of the House in light of these new arrangements. In particular, the allocation of oral questions heavily favours opposition parties. Are the NDP questions now to be treated as lobs, just like those three that Liberals get daily already? Also, should the NDP members be vacating the opposition lobby in the room behind me and joining their coalition partners over in the government lobby?

There are also committee matters to consider, such as the modified quorum rules some committees adopt, sequences for committee witnesses, questioning, and even the seating arrangements at committee tables. These are very important interpretations that are required to allow our parliamentary system to function how it is intended to.

• (1520)

There is very little precedent for the Speaker to rely on, because that is how unprecedented this situation is in federal politics. The closest parallel I could offer the Chair is the situation following the 1921 general election when the upstart Progressive Party captured the second-largest number of seats in the House. Many Progressives wanted to form a coalition government with Mackenzie King's Liberals, who fell short of a majority. Though in the end the Progressives did not join the cabinet, they were largely supportive of the government and, accordingly, declined the opportunity to form the official opposition since they frankly were not in opposition at all.

Just as the 1921 election produced a comfortable arrangement for the Liberal minority government, so too did the election of 2021. We must be guided by the practical and pragmatic conclusion it offered that a party openly supportive of the government is simply not an opposition party.

Points of Order

Therefore, I would ask that the Speaker interpret the rules of the House in a way that recognizes that the New Democratic Party has ceased to be an opposition party and that the House cannot vote today on the motion that was debated yesterday.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. That was such a frivolous and irresponsible statement by the House leader of the official opposition that I do not really need to respond to it.

First, this is a confidence and supply agreement. As he is well aware, this has already happened in numerous legislatures in this country. Second, I would ask that the official opposition House leader actually consult the political science 101 text to understand that a coalition government is quite different from a confidence and supply agreement.

I would like to say that this invented history is simply not helpful to the House. I would also like to say that the conduct of Conservative MPs and Bloc MPs today was reprehensible. It was juvenile, and it was unbecoming of parliamentarians.

Mr. Speaker, we empower you to do numerous things, including keeping order in the House, and I would respectfully ask that, since you have those powers, to take questions away from the Conservatives and the Bloc if they continue this reprehensible conduct. If we have question period tomorrow and they simply do not listen to the very clear directives given on our behalf, you have the ability, and I think the responsibility, to take questions away from them. That was simply reprehensible conduct today that is not acceptable in the House of Commons of Canada.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I also wish to respond to the point of order put forward by the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil, the hon. House leader for the official opposition.

Having some personal experience with two confidence and supply agreements, just to put this into the record, the confidence and supply agreement that existed in the Province of British Columbia between the British Columbia Green Party and the British Columbia New Democrats was far more detailed and, I think, more robust, but in that context, the British Columbia Green MLAs remained as members of opposition parties and had all the privileges that attained to that.

I would also mention the confidence and supply agreement that took place in New Zealand between the Labour Party there, led by Jacinda Ardern, and the Green Party of New Zealand, in which case they actually held cabinet positions within their confidence and supply agreement, but they were still treated as an opposition party within the Parliament of New Zealand, which is also, like us, a Westminster Parliament.

One last point, while I have the floor, I want to extend an official apology to the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil. Yesterday I believed that no one in my office had been contacted about the unanimous consent motion. I wish to formally, fully and with deep contrition apologize to the hon. member for doubting that we had been consulted. We were consulted.

Business of Supply

• (1525)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois would like to have a moment to reply to the comments of the member, the House leader of the official opposition. In response to what my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby mentioned earlier about the Bloc Québécois, I would say that he can see the mote in his colleague's eye, but he cannot see the beam in his own eye.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: We will take it under advisement, but what we will say is this. The decision on the vote was made last night and the vote will happen today. We will take it under advisement to see if the issues are something we can bring back to the House.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé on a point of order.

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions amongst the parties and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That the House consider that gardens and gardening contribute to the development of the country, our cities and people's lives by impacting health, quality of life, reconciliation, inclusion and environmental challenges; that our public, private and community gardens, as testaments to culture and history, are of great importance in our urban landscapes; and that the government designate 2022 as the Year of the Garden on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Nursery Landscape Association and the centennial of the Canadian ornamental horticulture sector.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—COST OF LIVING

The House resumed from March 21 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 3:28 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Burnaby South relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1540)

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

(Division No. 39)

YEAS

Members

Angus	Ashton
Bachrach	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Bergeron	Bérubé
Blaikie	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney
Boulerice	Brunelle-Duceppe
Cannings	Chabot
Champoux	Collins (Victoria)
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Desbiens	Desilets
Desjarlais	Erskine-Smith
Fortin	Garon
Garrison	Gaudreau
Gazan	Gill
Green	Hughes
Idlout	Johns
Julian	Kwan
Larouche	Lemire
MacGregor	Masse
Mathysen	May (Saanieh—Gulf Islands)
McPherson	Michaud
Morrice	Normandin
Paupé	Perron
Plamondon	Savard-Tremblay
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Singh	Ste-Marie
Thériault	Therrien
Trudel	Vignola
Villemure	Zarrillo— 60

NAYS

Members

Aboultouf	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Benzen	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ellis	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Ferreri
Findlay	Gallant
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kitchen	Kmieć
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	MacKenzie
Maguire	Martel
Mazier	McCaughey (Edmonton West)

Business of Supply

Melillo	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	O'Toole
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Perkins	Poilievre
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shipley
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Thomas	Tochor
Tolmie	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vis
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Williamson	Zimmer — 114

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

OPPOSITION MOTION—TAX REDUCTION ON GASOLINE AND DIESEL

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to start where I left off. When I speak to people in line at the grocery store or bump into someone at the gas station, it would be difficult and quite frankly embarrassing to list off the inflation rate in Denmark or to tell them everything is okay and that we should not upset the government or take down the Canadian economy. When we tell people that global supply chains are the reason that home heating is up 26%, they are rightly perplexed. We have 1.3 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in Canada. That domestic energy supply provides heating for Canadian families and has nothing to do with the global supply chains.

When we tell someone that global supply chains are the reason a family pays an extra \$1,000 a year for groceries, their reaction is, rightly, confusion. This country ranks third in the world for the amount of farmland per capita. We have the capacity to produce our own food, and this has nothing to do with the global supply chains.

When we tell someone that global supply chains are the reason that gas prices have gone up in some places 50%, they are, well, stunned. We have that right here in Canada. We have the second-largest oil and gas reserve in the world. In this case, it is a question of why we are relying on the global supply chains.

When we tell someone that everything is okay when four-fifths of Canadian families are already cutting back and scratching their budgets, their reaction is one of fear: fear they will not be able to keep up and fear they will not be able to afford to live in their own communities.

We have an opportunity here to stop saying that everything is okay, because it is not—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I apologize. Could the hon. members who would like to have conversations go out into the lobby, please?

[*Translation*]

We would like to listen to the member's speech.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Thornhill.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, we have an opportunity to actually do something. It is something that goes beyond the blind ideology of demonizing the oil and gas industry. We know how we got here. This is a direct result of printing money we do not have for things that we do not need. The government's unprecedented spending is out of control. Do not take my word for it: Scotiabank agrees that high levels of spending are seen as contributing to the “strain on affordability pressures” for Canadians. These are Scotiabank's words, not mine.

To make matters worse, the government has not stopped spending or even slowed it. I can already hear members of the government saying, “But the debt-to-GDP ratio”. To that, I say let me invite them out for an afternoon in my riding, and they can explain to Mrs. Cooper that the increased cost of buying healthy food for a family of five is fine because our debt-to-GDP ratio is among the best in the G7. Members of the government will say, “Oh, but the AAA credit score”. Let me invite them that same afternoon to explain to Mr. and Mrs. Green, who live on a fixed income and drive to see their grandkids, that they will need an extra 50 bucks a week for gas.

When it comes to filling up these tanks, whether it is for Mr. and Mrs. Green to see their grandkids or those who need to get to work, take their kids to activities or just get around, the price is outrageous. We have witnessed over the last six years that the government's green energy policies contribute to seeing Canada's oil and gas sector destroyed. We do not have the infrastructure. We cannot get pipelines built, and despite the fact that we know that getting resources to tidewater is vital to our economy, to our environmental goals and to our own security, no less, the crusade against our own interests continues, blindly supported by pipe dreams instead of pipelines.

While international conflicts in Ukraine have continued to contribute to those increases, they do not singularly explain the rise in the price of gasoline. They are not even close. It is not the invasion of Ukraine that will add 11¢ on April 1. It is not the invasion of Ukraine that neglected to build pipelines. It is not the invasion of Ukraine that has led to the lack of infrastructure, investment and development in our sector. It is, however, the direct result of the newly minted NDP-Liberal government, whose policies have put Canada in a position where Canadians are Instagram-posting outrage pictures of the price to fill up their tanks.

Business of Supply

Our policies have consequences, and those consequences are hitting Canadian families directly. The good news is we could do something significant today. We could provide immediate relief to families by providing a GST holiday on gasoline and diesel. We could immediately provide relief at the pumps to all Canadians and reduce prices by about 5%. That is 8¢ per litre. That is real savings.

We could be fighting for families across Canada who have been pushed to the brink by the cost of living crisis. We could be fighting to leave money where it belongs: in the pockets of hard-working Canadians. We could do that if members of the House support this measure and support the motion. Record high gas prices do not appear to be going away any time soon. In March 2021, gas was \$1.24 a litre in my riding. Today it is \$1.75. That is just a year later.

I live in a community where, as in so many others, it is nearly impossible to get around without a car. It is impossible to get to work on a bicycle, impossible to take the kids to hockey practice on a skateboard, and impossible to get groceries on roller skates. The government's solution of reducing carbon emissions cannot be one that ignores the realities of life for so many Canadians. More Canadians are struggling to make ends meet. Young people are giving up on home ownership, and nearly half of Canadians are worried about their financial security this year.

A high-tax, high-debt agenda set the stage for inflation. It set the stage for punishing prices at the pumps, and today we have the opportunity to finally give Canadians the relief they need. We are calling on the government to pause the GST on fuel and give Canadians a break. I will ask members of the House to do the right thing by their constituents and support the motion in the House. We simply cannot afford not to.

• (1545)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, earlier in the member's comments, she talked about the price of a litre of gasoline and somewhat implied that because we have things here in Canada, it should be a lot less expensive.

One of the ways in which some countries have been able to accomplish that is through the nationalization of a commodity. Right away, I started thinking that it did not sound like a Conservative Party approach to dealing with issues: to nationalize and purchase Esso and so forth.

I am wondering this. Are we starting to see a shift in some of the mentality coming from the Conservative Party in dealing with price controls, by saying that the Conservatives are interested in nationalizing in order to keep down prices?

• (1550)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, it has been just a few hours and the member opposite is already starting to sound like he is part of the NDP. We print money here instead of actually making things that money buys. Our rate of inflation is at a record high. Canadians cannot afford gas, groceries or their everyday necessities, and instead of doing the right thing and taking the GST off of gas, which is an actual measure that could reduce the price at the pumps and which the member could do immediately, he just is not.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have to wonder whether my colleague's response to rising gas prices is a bit simplistic.

When we look at the price of a barrel of oil or the price of gas, we see that gas is now at almost \$2 a litre. We know that the tax on gas, the GST, is 5%. At \$2 a litre, that would represent around 10¢ in savings.

I would like to know whether my colleague thinks that 10¢ will change the reality of the market in any meaningful way. Should we not be looking at a more long-term solution? Instead of living at the mercy of the ups and downs of oil prices, why do we not focus on the electrification of transportation? This would be a real, long-term solution that would make us less dependent on products whose prices can increase drastically based on whatever is going on in Ukraine, Afghanistan, or Iraq, or based on Christmas, holidays or summer vacation. Gas prices are always bouncing up and down and, unfortunately, consumers are the ones who suffer.

[English]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, we have an opportunity to do something immediate for Canadians to get some relief in a cost of living crisis, and I know the member who asked the question hears that in his constituency. I know that he gets the same kinds of emails and calls that I get, because this is a problem across the country. Instead of doing the right thing today, he is suggesting that we put that aside and focus on bigger issues. He has the opportunity to lower costs for Canadians today. He is not taking that opportunity, and he is going to have to explain that to his constituents.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I very much agree with my hon. colleague that Canadians are experiencing a dramatic hardship due to the high cost of living, whether it is for food, housing, services or, as this motion speaks to, gas at the pumps. As the member said, we are facing record-high gas prices. The problem I see with this motion is that it would do nothing about the excessive profits being made by oil and gas companies. We know that companies such as Suncor just made net profits of \$4.1 billion. Someone is profiting enormously from prices of gas at \$2 per gallon.

Instead of doing this, would the member agree that we should impose a tax of 3% on profits over \$1 billion, as the NDP has suggested, and redirect that revenue to everyday Canadians?

Business of Supply

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member, who actually still sounds as if he comes from the NDP. We have an opportunity right now to do something for Canadians. We have an opportunity to lower the costs. I think the conversation about record profits in oil companies is a frivolous one in the context of this debate. The member used to be part of a party that fought for the affordability of Canadians. Where is that member now?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Madam Speaker, certainly with gas prices at an all-time high across Canada, Canadians are in desperate need of a break. They are facing severe hardships due to the dramatic escalation of gas prices while the federal government enjoys increased revenue collected off the 5% GST, as well as the HST and QST. Today, I join my colleagues in demanding that the House call on the government to immediately provide relief at the pumps to all Canadians. By introducing a temporary 5% reduction on gasoline and diesel we would, at present, reduce the average price by approximately eight cents per litre. Canadians' finances are buckling under the strain of record-breaking gas prices that have no clear end in sight.

There is a looming thought that by increasing the cost of energy, the Liberal agenda to push Canadians to invest in more environmentally friendly methods of transportation will materialize. This short-sighted narrative, which tries to reduce global emissions standards by punishing consumers, is without merit. As has been proven time and time again, provinces can and will address greenhouse gas emissions while respecting the environment and their citizens.

Also, there is a continued misunderstanding that increased oil prices can be dealt with by people taking public transportation, driving less or buying electric vehicles. These are serious misconceptions as they continue to ignore the plight of Canadians who do not have the luxury of transportation infrastructure in their communities or cannot afford the expense associated with the questionable purchase of an electric vehicle.

At this point in time, we are hardly in a place where we should be experimenting with people's lives, which is exactly what ignoring rising fuel costs would be doing. Skyrocketing inflation and the cost of living crisis are devastating families across Canada, and casually suggesting that they turn to public transportation or electric vehicles is reckless. If we factor in the suspect full-life cost cycles of EVs, this is even worse. There are so many Canadians who rely on their vehicles to get to work and drive their kids to school and to sports. There are small businesses and non-profits that depend on their vehicles to keep serving their communities. Giving Canadians a GST break on fuel is a simple, common-sense solution to help those Canadians who are suffering the most from inflation.

Higher fuel prices raise the cost of everything from gasoline to home heating, groceries, education and health care. A staggering 53% of Canadians say that they cannot keep up with the rising prices. It is getting harder and harder to make sense of the environmentalist movement's agenda. Constituents in my riding, and indeed Canadians across the country, are begging for relief.

There is a stark reality that human civilization depends on its access to reliable and affordable energy. Because fossil fuels are

uniquely accessible, energy-dense and transportable, they fit the world's present needs precisely. Let me be clear: There is no nation in the world that produces oil and gas as ethically as Canada does. What a proud legacy we are offering the world.

The tax holiday that we are suggesting today would reduce the cost of everything. It is efficient, immediate and the most effective path to benefit people who rely on vehicles, and to benefit people who are faced with choosing between heat, food and transportation. It is a common-sense solution to help alleviate a manufactured Liberal problem. This tax relief in response to soaring costs at the pump will provide Canadians with a small bit of relief that they are so desperately in need of as the cost of everything is going up.

As a representative of a large agricultural riding, I want to take a moment to address food security. Our rural communities are also agricultural powerhouses that rely on heavy machinery for food production, and that machinery needs fuel. Few farmers in my riding have the ability to pass these costs directly to the consumer. They come off their bottom line. There are those industries that can pass on energy costs to the consumer, and the result is a dramatic increase in costs throughout Canadian homes. This scenario means that everyone continues to pay for bad policy. These added costs will also affect the availability of the products on our store shelves.

In agricultural circles, the increased cost of production will be close to 70% for some inputs this year, and fuel is a major factor in this ongoing cash crisis. Make no mistake: farmers are not the ones profiting from increased food prices. When it comes to passing on the costs, transportation expenses add to the consumer's plight.

● (1555)

I feel that so many of these people pushing the anti-oil and gas narrative have no real idea what it is like to live north of the 49th parallel. They have no real understanding of how severely impacted northern communities are at the hands of these rising fuel costs. If we look at many northern communities, such as Barren Lands First Nation in Brochet, Manitoba, we see families running out of gas and struggling with food prices. It is serious.

Business of Supply

The Liberals' answer to high gas prices is to tell people that they should buy electric cars. Let us be honest here: if one cannot afford \$150 worth of fuel, how can one afford a \$50,000 EV? The world's future may involve a shift to more renewable energy, but such a future is not imminent. Those that insist otherwise are simply ignoring the historical and scientific evidence. Growing worldwide demand for fossil fuel ensures our legacy energy sources will remain steadfast even as other sources become prominent. Canadians are ready to see this country's energy and natural resource sector play a stronger leadership role in edging out less regulated and less principled supplier nations in the global supply pool.

I want to take a moment to address the elephant in the room: the fact that the Liberals voted against our motion calling on Canada to export more natural gas to displace Russian natural gas in Europe. Getting Canadian natural gas to tidewater is vital to Canada's security and it is vital to our economy, and in the face of Putin's illegal war in Ukraine, it is vital to Europe's defence and security. Getting more low-carbon natural gas to market, especially with the cutting-edge technology that Canadian industry is using, is also consistent with our environmental goals as we transition to various energy sources.

It is time for the government to have an honest conversation with Canadians about pipelines. Canada's European allies that are procuring natural gas from Russia are funding Putin's war chest. Canada has an amazing supply of natural gas, but we are lagging behind in the game because those calling the shots have no sense for geopolitics and no vision of what the path forward to more sustainable energy looks like. European leaders have already raised the prospect of replacing Russian-supplied natural gas with Canadian natural gas, yet the government refuses to do its part and, sadly, builds roadblocks.

Those who vehemently oppose pipeline construction and building our capacity to enable liquefied natural gas exports from Canada's east coast to Europe are aiding, abetting and condoning Putin's behaviour. How ironic is it that woke pipeline policy has the U.S.A. considering sourcing Venezuelan heavy oil for its gulf refineries? Meanwhile, our Canadian oil is being stopped by movie stars and anti-Canadian oil activists. Who are these people really working for?

Canadians can expect to pay even more at the pumps as Russia's attack on Ukraine puts even greater pressure on the already surging oil price environment. The trend of increasing gas prices reveals the truth behind who is actually looking out for Canadians. Conservatives will always be the voice of Canadians looking for relief from the rising cost of living. Supporting this tax holiday would help reduce the cost of everything. Transportation and production costs would decrease, giving some relief to consumers for necessities like food.

At a time when the rights of Canadians seem to be continually trampled on by the Liberal government, this tax relief would show that we, as political leaders, care about Canadians, not some ideological fantasy. Canadians deserve to eat. Canadians need their vehicles to go to work. Canadians need to heat their homes. Canadians deserve better.

I hope all members will support the initiative presented today. It is time to follow the lead of the Conservative Party and be the voice of Canadians looking for relief from the accelerating cost of living. It is time for the NDP-Liberal government to join us in supporting all Canadians, not just the ones rich enough to prop up their green agenda at the cost of others' well-being.

• (1600)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the hon. member's speech he talked about ideological positions, but the complete ignorance of global climate change and how that will affect Canadians who will not be able to get insurance when crops will not be able to grow was interesting. It is honestly disgusting to hear members of the Conservative Party suggest that other members in this House do not stand and support Ukraine. It is unfortunate that we have come to the point where this type of rhetoric happens.

The member left out the part about the European Union and European allies wanting to transition to a green economy to eliminate their reliance on Russian oil. Why did he leave that out of his speech? Does it not really go with his ideological narrative?

• (1605)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, having been a member of OSCE and having spent time in Tbilisi and Berlin talking to people from the European Union about this issue, I know they are not as ideological as the member is indicating. They understand the necessities. They know what is happening with the Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 pipelines and they recognize the significance of the damage that is being done.

Believe me, when Putin invaded Crimea, it was not for windmills and solar panels. He went there for its oil and gas reserves. That is exactly what is happening there. They know that it has to be replaced, so it is not as ideological as what we see across the aisle.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I salute my colleague who sits with me on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. Sometimes we are on the same wavelength, and sometimes we are not at all. Today is an example of the latter.

Oil companies benefit when the price of crude oil goes up. Oil companies benefit at every stage of the refining process. Oil companies pocket the price increase at the pump. Ultimately, oil companies are the ones who benefit from inflation.

Some oil companies have Russian oligarchs at the helm. I have a hard time understanding why my colleague has not taken that into consideration.

[*English*]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, I always appreciate having an opportunity to discuss issues with the member from the Bloc on the environment committee. What we are talking about today is significant.

We talk about provincial issues and how provinces can help their communities. One of the aspects that I know Quebec talks about is this one, the question of how it can help to reduce greenhouse gas, and not just in Quebec, where it has done a good job. It has a source of energy that is beneficial to the country.

However, there is another aspect, which is that Alberta and western Canada also have an energy source that is not only beneficial to the country but to the world. I guess there is a bit of a difference, but I respect their energy sources and I ask that they respect ours.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, the residents of my community in Edmonton Griesbach are also suffering from this affordability crisis. It is hurting them not just in everyday rent, gas and groceries; they are also scared for their kids. What I want to hear the member talk about is how this country's economy is truly going to help these folks in a real way.

This proposal in many ways is temporary, but we know that this crisis may be long-lasting. These companies are profiting. Suncor, for example, profited by \$4.1 billion, paying out \$3.9 billion to its shareholders. CN Rail had \$7.7 billion in profit. Would the member agree that we need to tax profiteers who have made unjust amounts of money and reinvest the money in the people who need it most as a real plan for affordability?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, I have spent a lot of time in Edmonton and took public transit there when it was necessary. A lot of times it was to go to watch my Eskimos play football, but that is a different story.

To be serious about the question, it is important that we understand some of the reasons that the prices are so high right now. We have a country that is rich in resources and the Canadian dollar is at 79¢ right now. These are the kinds of reasons that the prices at the pump are so severe. We have to look at the overall economic impact of what is taking place.

● (1610)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would first like to say that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Kingston and the Islands.

Today, we are here to discuss the opposition motion moved by my hon. colleague from Abbotsford, which addresses the price of oil and gas.

The wording of the motion is non-binding on the government, but I am glad we are having this conversation about affordability for Canadians and our constituents. The discussion is important at this time.

Business of Supply

First, the current price of gas and the problems it is causing across the country are linked to the situation and the war in Ukraine. The price of gas and oil is based on an international market. It is not unique to Canada; it is linked in different ways to producers around the world.

[*English*]

When I have conversations with my constituents in Kings—Hants, I am reminded of that.

Part of the challenge that we are all going to have to face is the fact that although we are not directly involved militarily on the ground in Ukraine, the western world is responding by sanctioning the products that are coming from the Russian Federation as part of our plan to help deter future Russia aggression and obviously to respond to the situation right now. I have said in other speeches that the sanctions alone are not going to change the situation overnight in Ukraine. We are there on other fronts with military hardware and with logistics, both lethal and non-lethal, along with our NATO allies, to try to provide support to those who are courageously fighting for democracy, not only in Ukraine but around the world. I think Canadians need to understand that on a temporary basis, in the interim, we are going to be facing higher gas prices as part of the collective cost to fight the war in Ukraine, indirectly at this point, and I think we are all concerned about what this could represent in the days ahead with the changing sands in our foreign policy context.

I also want to take a moment to explain carbon pricing, because my Conservative colleagues in particular are highlighting their idea that the carbon price is unilaterally driving up gas prices and that it is the government's fault that things at the pump can sometimes be challenging. I want to debunk that, at least as it relates to my province of Nova Scotia, and then also speak about what this represents in backstop provinces that do not have an equivalent environmental plan to tackle emissions.

In Nova Scotia, particularly because of the work under the McNeil Liberal government, there has been tremendous effort undertaken to make our electricity grid and our power generation renewable. That has resulted in a higher cost to individuals, but there is no direct price on pollution levied at the pumps on gasoline.

I have had calls over the last couple of weeks about the price of gas and what the Government of Canada can do vis-à-vis the price on pollution. As it relates to Nova Scotia, a lot of that has already been implemented through our electricity rates. Monies that the government is collecting under its cap and trade system at the provincial level are being distributed toward important initiatives to help transition households, particularly vulnerable households, to a lower-carbon future.

Business of Supply

Of course, in backstop provinces such as Ontario, essentially the way I like to describe it is that monies collected by the government on the carbon price are centralized and then distributed back to individuals on a per capita basis, which actually creates an incentive for individuals to change their behaviour. As a rural member in this House, I take notice that sometimes there are challenges if people do not have other options, and I think that this is a legitimate policy conversation that can be had, especially as the price on pollution advances in the days ahead.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

I want to take a moment to discuss some of the initiatives our government has taken since 2015.

First, we introduced a \$10-a-day child care spaces program, like the model in Quebec, to reduce the cost to families. I think this is very important because it helps parents get back to work and reduces costs for middle-class and low-income families. It is a great step by this government to advance the interests of families who need help.

[*English*]

I also want to talk about the Canada housing benefit. This is a program that is a portable benefit that has been delivered to individuals who are in need. We talk about affordable housing. That means different things to different people, but at the end of the day we are trying to put a program in place that allows an individual to move to different locations as their circumstances warrant, with support from the Government of Canada on the basis of their income. The traditional program has been that someone will be set up in a particular location and given their affordable rent. This program has a lot more merit and we need to continue to remind Canadians of the benefits it represents.

The Canada child benefit, again, has brought countless hundreds of thousands of Canadian children out of poverty and supported families. I do not need to go into great detail because one could look at Hansard and the testimony of members of Parliament about what this has meant for their loved ones and their families. It is truly making a difference and supports affordability, which is really what the text of this motion is about.

[*Translation*]

I am the member for Kings—Hants, in Nova Scotia. My riding is mostly rural and is made up of small communities of people who are, on average, older.

The guaranteed income supplement is very important for seniors and vulnerable people, which is why our government introduced measures to strengthen this program in the last Parliament.

[*English*]

Right now, we have commitments of course to extending that by \$500 a month and we have strengthened old age security, which are other important measures relating to affordability.

I want to talk about the importance of intercity busing. I mentioned I am an MP in a rural area. The way the Government of Canada's programs are designed is that we have a lot of support that

is accessible to the provinces to work with municipalities on transit in larger cities. However, if someone is vulnerable right now, does not have access to a vehicle and does not have the ability to afford the cost of a vehicle to get them from place to place, intercity busing is key.

The government has had other initiatives in the past. One point that is extremely important is looking at the investing in Canada infrastructure program and the bilaterals we have with the provinces and territories, and finding ways for flexibility to support intercity busing, particularly given the fact we have gone through COVID and there have been challenges.

The last thing I will say is that the text of this motion talks about eight cents on average that a temporary tax relief would give to the consumer. What I do not think has been discussed is whether we, as members of Parliament, should be also privy to that type of benefit. This comes down to an ideological choice of saying we can either just let an eight-cent reduction in gas prices on a temporary basis be available to everyone, including millionaires and people who really do not need that help, or we can continue to collect revenue as the government normally would and create a specific program that would be targeted to individuals who actually have challenges right now related to affordability.

I dare say there is not one member of Parliament in the House, on a salary of \$180,000 a year, who needs eight cents back per litre at the pump. It is lower income Canadians who do. That is a fundamental flaw with the text of this motion. I look forward to taking questions from my hon. colleagues.

• (1620)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to ask a question. I want to thank the member for his speech. He does a very good job in the House.

I also represent a very rural riding. I know he does as well, but his riding could actually fit inside of my riding 19 times. That is how big my riding is.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: It is not the size of your riding that counts.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, it sure does, because people have to drive and people have to commute. The point I am trying to make is that the cost of fuel right now is exorbitant. It disproportionately impacts people who live in my riding who have to drive great distances to get to work and for their kids to play hockey, to play baseball or to go school. We have seen school closures over a number of years in a lot of these small towns, which have been systematically forgotten about by governments at all levels.

Saskatchewan put forward a climate plan based on the model that New Brunswick has. I would like to hear the member's thoughts on why the government cancelled or denied Saskatchewan's request to use the same plan that New Brunswick has?

Business of Supply

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, at 19 times the size, I can appreciate the challenges of getting to every corner of his riding and what that would represent. Even 5,000 square kilometres in Kings—Hants can sometimes feel daunting.

I do not have specific information to answer his question vis-à-vis the intergovernmental aspect of Saskatchewan versus New Brunswick. I will talk about affordability writ large. I think it is an important conversation to be had. We are seeing challenges, as I mentioned, because of the war in Ukraine, around food supplies and around fertilizer for farmers, which I know that member would know a lot about given the concentration he represents in his riding, so I do think we need to have conversations about affordability.

My issue is that the text of this motion is about eight cents per litre. I take notice that for some people that is a very big deal. However, the text of the motion is not very targeted. I think there are better ways to go about having targeted measures for Canadians who actually need the support, as opposed to having that member benefit from eight cents a litre. I think he would suggest he does not necessarily need it at this point.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Kings—Hants, who regularly comes up with practical solutions to very real problems.

I would like to ask him how he plans to reduce Quebec's sales tax, the QST, which is under provincial jurisdiction. Will there be some kind of compensation?

Is this the NDP's influence we are seeing?

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I had just 10 minutes to talk about the text of the motion and some of the government's priorities, so I did not have an opportunity to discuss another mistake in the motion as written, which has to do with the Quebec tax. This motion would in fact interfere in an area under provincial jurisdiction. That is yet another error in the Conservatives' motion.

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for bringing up child care. I can say that I am standing here today because of the Quebec model for \$5 day care. In 1998, I was happy to take advantage of that. If the federal government had invested in day care many years earlier, there would be more women sitting in this chamber tonight.

I just want to mention to the member that what we are really talking about here is an affordability crisis in the country. With child care, it is a wonderful opportunity for families. Unfortunately, young people are deciding not to have families due to the rising cost of housing, food and living in Canada.

Could the member tell us why the Liberals continue to protect wealth-accumulating corporations and not do enough, very little or almost nothing, to ease the pressures on average Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet with the price of housing, the price of food and the cost of living?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Kings—Hants has 30 seconds.

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, that is a lot to try to answer in 30 seconds.

Let me just say, as one of the younger members in the House at 31 years old, I have friends in that same situation of trying to be able to own a home and start a family. That resonates with me.

I do not have time to properly address the question vis-à-vis the larger policy context of whether or not it is prudent to continue to spend to try to create the affordability and support that Canadian families need or what other measures that are non-spending in a world of 5.7% inflation right now are going to be crucial to be able to make affordability important for Canadian families. I think it is an important conversation to be had, and I do think we will be hearing more about it in the House in the days ahead.

• (1625)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to speak to the opposition day motion that has been introduced by the Conservative Party.

I just want to start by saying that I am glad to see such a motion being put forward today. It is a motion that actually addresses policy. It is a nice departure from what we typically see coming from across the way, which are motions that are geared more toward personal attacks on the Prime Minister or a particular minister. Rather, this is a motion that is actually discussing policy and putting forward a policy idea. Notwithstanding the fact that I disagree with this particular course of action, I am very grateful for the fact that what has been introduced by the Conservatives today through this opposition motion is of substance and can actually allow us to have a very good wholesome debate about a possible policy to implement in Canada.

When reading the text of the motion, the first thing that popped out to me was the issue in the motion with respect to GST, HST and the QST. The reason is that QST is the Quebec sales tax. It is a tax levied by the Quebec government. I am not sure how my Bloc Québécois colleagues feel about this, given that they stand up routinely for Quebec sovereignty in this House in terms of its ability to manage its own finances, but I find it perplexing that the Conservatives would bring forward a motion that would somehow allow the federal government to inject itself into the jurisdiction of Quebec, namely by creating options to rebate some sales taxes that are collected by Quebec. Perhaps that was not the intent of the motion. Perhaps the idea that the drafter of the motion had was something different, but at the end of the day that is certainly how it presents itself, at least in my reading of it.

Business of Supply

I also find it very interesting that, for the six years I have been in the House, I have heard time and time again the Conservative Party criticize the government, quite often blaming the price of oil in Canada squarely on the Prime Minister as if it was his fault that the price of oil was so low that Alberta and other western provinces were not able to extract efficiently more oil out of the ground. Now, suddenly, they seem to be in a position where they are basically advocating that gas, which is made from oil, be now subsidized or the funds that are collected by the government with respect to that increase should now somehow be turned back over, basically criticizing the fact that the price of oil is now so high.

I think the issue I have the biggest concern with, as it relates to this opposition motion, is one that brings me back to my time as a city councillor and mayor of Kingston. One of the things that we relied upon quite seriously when building infrastructure in the city of Kingston was being able to rely on what was at least then called the gas tax, which is now called the Canada community-building fund. This is where a portion of that HST that is collected at the pumps is actually taken by the federal government and distributed right back to municipalities so that those municipalities can spend it on very important infrastructure projects in their communities. There are more than 650 community recipients of various different municipalities and jurisdictions within Ontario alone that receive funding through the former gas tax and now the Canada community-building fund, which totals roughly \$816 million annually in Ontario alone.

It is very concerning that we might reduce, even just for a short term, the amount of money that can be collected and turned back over to municipalities to invest specifically in infrastructure. A lot of the time, at least in Kingston, we spent a lot of that gas tax money on improving the infrastructure within our transit network, everything from road rehabilitation right through to public transit, quite often relying on tourism perspectives to get people in and out of our community. We relied, as a municipality, quite heavily on that funding. I know a lot of municipalities throughout Ontario do that.

The AMO, the Association of Municipalities Ontario, does a very good job for the federal government of tracking exactly where that money is spent. We can go to its website to see where money from the gas tax, now known as the Canada community-building fund, is being distributed throughout the province of Ontario and know exactly how that money is being applied.

• (1630)

I am not surprised that the Conservatives want to perhaps take this position on the issue. If we look back, historically Stephen Harper had an absolutely horrible record at providing infrastructure money to municipalities throughout Canada. This government has taken a much different approach that says municipalities throughout Canada are our partners and that we will partner with them to make sure we are building the infrastructure they need not only for today, but more importantly for tomorrow. That is what this money is all about. That is the importance of collecting and redistributing the gas tax, now known as the Canada community-building fund, back to municipalities throughout Ontario.

I recognize that the Conservatives might have a different approach on this, and I respect that. I respect the fact that when they bring forward a motion like this, they might be signalling back to that style of engagement with municipalities. However, it certainly is not the manner in which this government has acted in looking at that relationship to build infrastructure with municipalities over the last six years, nor is it in any way an indication, if we look at the language coming from the finance minister, of what our plan is moving forward. We genuinely want to be there with municipalities to get them the funding they need to keep building infrastructure, and a huge portion of that comes through the Canada community-building fund and the collection of HST at the pumps. If members think about that, it is the people using the roads who are contributing to this fund. They are the ones who will be putting money into the fund through that tax, which will go back to investing in and building on the infrastructure they are using.

There is no doubt, and I will echo a lot of what has been said in the House today, that what we are seeing here is a rise in the price of gas. Members of the opposition continually try to suggest that this and inflation are somehow the responsibility of the Prime Minister. Somehow they think the Prime Minister of Canada, somebody who they have criticized for years as being unable to do anything, suddenly has the ability to arbitrarily affect the price of oil and gas throughout the world, and inflation for that matter. However, this is a global problem. This is a problem that has come largely from the war that Vladimir Putin began with Ukraine. We have seen why this is happening, and it is a stark reality of the situation throughout the world. This is the reality of what happens when countries become dependent on fossil fuels, and energy in particular, from other jurisdictions around the world. They become dependent and reliant on those other jurisdictions, and that is exactly what we are seeing.

When we look at what the leaders in other parts of the world, in particular in Europe, are saying, they want to move at a faster pace away from fossil fuels and transition to more renewable, sustainable sources. This leads me to my last point. Once again, the Conservatives are bringing forward a motion that is entirely based on fossil fuels. They have this incredible addiction to and obsession with oil in particular. They are unable to realize and recognize that we are moving away from oil. The world is moving away from oil. This is not a Liberal thing. It is not an NDP thing. It is not a Bloc thing. It is not a Green Party thing. The world is moving away from oil, and the Conservatives need to get on board, figure that out and become part of it so that we can capitalize on our opportunities in Canada to ensure that happens.

Even in the province of Alberta, the growth in the renewable energy sector is far outpacing any growth in the fossil fuel industry. Members are laughing at it as though they are concerned about it. We can look at the stats from Statistics Canada that relate to that growth. It is happening, and it is time that we get on board and be part of it.

Business of Supply

• (1635)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member opposite has raised a number of points. First of all, we are not talking about the community development fund and 10% a litre on gasoline. We are talking about the GST. There is crude oil. There are refinery costs. There are taxes: the provincial gas tax and the federal community development fund tax. That is all under the umbrella of the GST.

This is about giving a break to people who are having an incredibly hard time. We are not talking about lowering interest rates or paying for someone's rent. People on the Canada pension plan are going to pay higher amounts on their mortgages. We are talking about giving people a break. The International Energy Agency would disagree with the member when he says that the world is going off different types of oil and gas. As populations go up, they are going to continue to use more of it for the next 10 to 20 years at least.

Will the member say that the very least we can do here is give Canadians a true break and put a little more money in their jeans so they can cope with the cost of living that is increasing in this country?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I have two points on that. The first is that we are talking about taking away the ability of the Government of Canada to continue to invest in municipalities. What does that do? When we take money away from municipalities, we are forcing municipalities to raise their property taxes.

Let me get back to the last point the member made. He made a point about what is happening with the oil and gas increases. I note that he said over the next 10 to 20 years. Guess what? We do not build pipelines to look at the short term, in 10 to 20 years. We build pipelines and set up massive extraction operations of oil to look toward what we are going to be doing 30 or 40 years from now.

The member is absolutely right that we are reliant on oil right now. What I said is that we are moving away from it. Will we entirely get off it? I highly doubt that, but we will significantly move away from it and this will affect our desire to continue to extract oil from the ground.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, this motion is about inflation, and I believe the prices of all goods are going up these days.

As my colleague said, there is no ignoring the housing crisis. A few weeks ago, Scotiabank, which is not exactly an organization that advocates for more social housing in Canada, published a study indicating that Canada is 1.8 million units short of the G7 average.

Five years ago, the federal government launched its big national housing strategy, which included plans to invest \$72 billion. Recently, the National Housing Council, which oversees the implementation of the strategy, revealed that only 35,000 units have been built to date, even though we are halfway through the strategy's timeline. We now know that Canada needs another 1.8 million housing units.

Does my colleague not think that it might be time to launch a major social housing project in Canada?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I reject the premise of the question. The member said that the motion has to do with inflation. Inflation is not mentioned in here once. Housing is not mentioned in here once. What is talked about here is the rise in the price of gas. That is the result of a war that is going on in Europe right now. This is not a result of inflation.

My comment to the member is that I hope the Bloc Québécois is reflecting on the fact that the motion specifically calls on the federal government to jump into Quebec jurisdiction by affecting the Quebec sales tax. Does the member from the Bloc want to stand by that?

• (1640)

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, clearly the rising cost of gas is about inflation. In fact, Marc Lee, a senior economist at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, recently stated, “industry profits rebounded strongly in 2021 after the COVID-induced slowdown of 2020. For example, Canadian Natural Resources booked a record \$7.7 billion profit.... This clearly shows it’s time to bring in a windfall profits tax on the oil and gas sector.” One of the obvious ways to address this cost-of-living crisis would be to tax profiteers like Suncor, which made a net profit of \$4.1 billion and paid out \$3.9 billion to its shareholders.

On the topic of inflation, affordability and taxation, why do the Liberals continue to protect wealth-accumulating corporations and do no nothing to ease the pressure on average Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, again, I reject that. The member is saying that this is entirely based on inflation. The price of gas has gone up considerably higher than inflation. If we were to talk about inflation only, the price of gas would not be where it is today. The price of gas, although inflation has affected it, has substantially increased not because of inflation, but because of a war that is going on in Europe. I know the NDP member knows that.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake.

Canadians are in the middle of an economic crisis that, as many know, is contributing to our mental health crisis. Gas prices and the costs of food and housing are at an all-time high, and this is truly hurting our country, our children, our seniors and our most vulnerable. We can do better. We can take action today. We can instantly give Canadians relief. This should not be about a coalition. I urge all MPs in the House to think about their constituents and vote to help them. This motion can help Canadians.

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The motion being debated states:

- (i) Canadians are facing severe hardship due to the dramatic escalation in gas prices,
- (ii) the 5% collected under the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST), and the Quebec Sales Tax (QST) creates increased revenue for the federal government as fuel prices rise which compounds the pain on Canadian consumers and the economy,

the House call on the government to immediately provide relief at the pumps to all Canadians by introducing a temporary 5% reduction on gasoline and diesel whether collected under the GST, HST, or QST which would reduce the average price by approximately eight cents per litre.

I fully support this motion and call on the government to recognize the devastating impacts of the increased gas prices, to take action and to provide hope and relief for Canadians.

On Saturday, I asked a question on Facebook: “How has the increased cost of living impacted your daily decisions and habits?” The post received hundreds of upsetting comments, and I would like to share some of them with members today.

John wrote, “Being a single father and working fulltime I'm still unable to stay afloat. Between the cost of child care for an hour and a half 5 days a week and price of gas, I'm at a point where I'm deciding what bill/bills am I not going to pay this month in order to pay the insane rent price and to feed my son.”

D'Arcy wrote, “I've owned a Mini Cooper for 12 years. I just traded it in for a Honda Civic as I can't afford premium fuel anymore. Not to mention cut backs on food, and other things. The worse is not being able to see my daughter who lives in Calgary. The cost to drive up and get her is getting to be too much.”

Mike wrote, “Well I can't afford to even rent a room in a place let alone an apartment. So I've been living with different family members for the last 4 years!! So it's affected me pretty [badly] and I make \$25 [an hour].”

Abby wrote, “I am going to purchase a horse and buggy bc I can't afford the gas and taking the bus doesn't work for a hockey mom with a baby on oxygen.”

Natalie wrote, “We are selling off things... next is my husband's vehicle and our atv.... we are running out of things to sell and that has me feeling overwhelmed.”

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, I hope members care about what constituents have to say. It would be nice if they would listen.

Kelly wrote, “I am not travelling to see my parents as often or eating as good as I should be especially with type 1 diabetes! The cost of food is crazy, they always seem to charge way more for healthy foods and the cost of living has sky rocketed but pay cheques or social assistance has not! How is it even possible for people to survive and live a comfortable healthy life?! The stress is overwhelming.”

Shannon wrote, “I'm a registered nurse getting paid the same wage I was paid 13 years ago with no cost of living increase and starting to do the math on whether it makes sense for me to work at all anymore given what it will cost me to get there.”

Darlene wrote, “I am a Canada Post rural route contractor (I drive my own truck). I can't afford to work.”

When did we get to a place where people cannot afford to go to work? These stories are heartbreaking and the true reality of what Canadians are going through. I am of the belief that stories like these are a call to action. They indicate that Canadians are in need of financial relief, and it is our job in the House to listen, to act and to help.

Increased gas prices impact everyone. Small business owners must pay more for shipping and products, which translates into increased prices for customers. We can see how this is impacting our economy. If we cannot support our local businesses, they cannot pay their bills and will shut down.

Let us talk about how gas prices are devastating the people who feed us: our farmers.

• (1645)

Kevin wrote to me saying that he is a farmer and it is definitely not fun. He described that the amount of money going out of all farmers' pockets is constantly increasing. They all do what they can to watch their profit margins, but one thing they need, no matter what, is fuel, and they usually use the same amount year after year. He said that they are the ones feeding the world, but he feels like they have to pay a punishing price to do so.

How are we expected to attract the next generation of farmers when they continue to go further and further into debt? Did members know farmers have one of the highest suicide rates of any career? Let us not forget to take a moment and remember the saying, “If you ate today, thank a farmer.”

Now, let us talk about children. Parents and caregivers are forced to make a decision to pull their kids out of sports and extracurricular activities because there is no extra money or they cannot afford to drive them. This is wrong. Kids have suffered enough these past two years. They need their friends. They need physical fitness.

Parents and caregivers and seniors cannot afford nutritious food. This is wrong. Nutritious food is critical and is directly linked to health and wellness. We cannot afford to further strain our health care system. I have seniors in my riding of Peterborough—Kawartha who are eating cat food. We can do better. We must do better. This motion today can offer relief and hope. I urge the new Liberal-NDP government to consider this motion.

People may not think that prices at the gas pumps are linked to our opioid crisis, but they are. Anxiety, depression and addiction are being exacerbated from the stress of an increased cost of living. As one constituent said to me, “I no longer live. I just try to survive.” This quote made me think about our tourism industry.

As shadow minister for tourism, I can say this industry was the first hit and the hardest-hit, and it will be the last to recover. Some people will tell us that travel is a privilege. What about the people who are employed because of the travel industry? What about the dog kennel owner who may lose his business because people cannot afford to travel so they are not using the kennel? What happens to him?

What about people who cannot afford to visit their friends and family because gas is too expensive? How do they think that impacts their mental health, their productivity at work and their relationships? This has a domino effect. Not being able to afford to feed their family or to put gas in their vehicle is devastating and immeasurable. It affects everyone.

Allison, a constituent, wrote to me about how the gas prices are impacting her family. She wrote that she hardly leaves the house. Her family is eating up the freezer selections instead of buying fresh and deciding if a home purchase in Barbados is a better way to invest instead of here as everything is hundreds of thousands of dollars overpriced.

Canada is supposed to be the best place in the world to live. People are truly thinking of leaving. We can help. We can offer a 5% reduction on gasoline and diesel. I urge everyone in this House to vote in favour of this motion.

We need to get back to a place of being able to use the money in our bank to pay for necessities, not racking up debt on credit cards. We need to give Canadians the ability to afford to go to work, give kids the opportunity to be able to go to their taekwondo class or gymnastics, and allow seniors to have the dignity to buy healthy food. Let us get the number of people using food banks down.

Canadians need a break. They are exhausted. They are drained. They are traumatized. This motion is a break. I will be voting for it.

• (1650)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, this motion would essentially ask that all individuals get the exact same rebate when they are filling up for gas. I am very fortunate that I can afford the extra amount. Given the fact that I have a good job, I am able to do that. I imagine that this member is in the same position as me.

Does she not think that it would be better to take money that has been collected and make sure it is invested in those, like those she mentioned, who are struggling the most? Is that not what social programs are all about, which is the redistribution of wealth as opposed to giving breaks to individuals who might not necessarily need it, like me or, as I would suggest, like her?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate the hon. member does not know my situation as a single mom with six children, but I appreciate it. It is very important that we recognize that

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everybody needs a break right now. Without a healthy economy, we do not have a surplus to put back into social services. That is not how it works. We need a healthy economy.

If people cannot afford to spend money at local businesses and people cannot afford to buy groceries, there is no surplus to put back into social services. The compassionate thing to do here is to help people with their ability to pay their bills so that they do not have that stress at night. This is a mental health crisis.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I feel my Conservative friends' motion is primarily about supporting the oil companies.

There are a whole host of measures that could be taken to combat inflation. The current climate emergency must also be a priority. We therefore need to find ways to move toward energies of the future and fight inflation in all sorts of other ways. I would love to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

I would also like to say that federal government does not have the authority to change the QST in Quebec or the GST in the rest of Canada. That falls under provincial jurisdiction.

[*English*]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, of course, climate change matters. Our future matters, and what we are going to do, and how we are going to fuel our homes, matters.

Right now, the party across the way, the Liberal government, says to go buy an electric vehicle. If someone does not have \$10 to put gas in their car, how are they supposed to afford to buy an electric vehicle? Where is the technology for the batteries? I think we have a big discussion to have, and I am willing to work with all MPs in this House on this, because I think we have to think long term, but right now, today, when people cannot buy food, this is an instant relief that is needed to move forward.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I share her concern about the affordability crisis and the cost of living in our country. I do find, however, that the Conservative policy proposal is rather narrow in its scope. She mentioned that everybody needs a break and I cannot agree more, yet this motion only deals with people who drive.

There are so many people who are struggling with the cost of living who cannot afford to drive. The average cost of car ownership the last time I checked, which was several years ago, was \$9,000 per year. There are seniors who do not drive. There are young people who do not drive. There are people who do not drive gas vehicles. None of those people benefit from this motion.

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Why did my colleague and her party not consider a more broad initiative that would truly help every Canadian with the affordability crisis?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, I completely disagree. If he has listened to what I said in my speech, he would have heard the increased cost of gas impacts everyone. Whether someone drives or not, it is impacting every business, like a business owner who can no longer afford to pay the bills. It does not matter if one has a car. The cost of everything is going to go up.

I have received hundreds of messages since I started talking about this today from people who need to rely on transportation, but the cost of everything and the cost of a bus is going to go up. The cost of food at the store is going to go up. This is impacting every single person, and we have thought of that.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): 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 Flamborough—Glanbrook, Housing; the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Health; the hon. member for Kitchener Centre, Government Programs.

[*English*]

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, we understand that budgets simply do not balance themselves. It does not matter whether it is a government budget or a household budget, it is worth mentioning that we understand that budgets do not balance themselves. It takes work and effort.

Right now Canadian families and individuals across this country are having a hard time making ends meet. I have heard many members in the chamber add their thoughts and arguments to the debate today. Some have been constructive and others not so much, but it is worth clarifying a couple of facts.

GST on fuel is a tax on a tax. The price of gasoline is determined by a competitive market and one of the key components in that price is the price of crude oil and the refinery costs. When crude oil prices go up, the cost of gasoline typically ends up following. Then there are the federal gasoline tax, the provincial sales tax, the provincial gasoline tax and the carbon tax. That price, with all of those taxes, is then taxed by GST on the whole. Effectively, when the cost of gasoline increases, the amount of GST collected continues to increase.

What we are witnessing right now across our country is among the highest inflation rates in a generation. Compared to last year alone, we have seen increases in inflation of 5.7%. That means that the cost to get household goods and services has increased, but wages have stayed stagnant. There are statistics and figures showing that groceries are costing the average family of four an additional \$1,000 a year.

I do not know about anyone else, but I talk to a lot of constituents and families throughout my riding of Fort McMurray—Cold Lake and they let me know that they do not have an extra \$1,000 to put toward groceries, they really do not. They are

struggling, and they need relief. They need relief today. This is part of why this motion was put forward, to put a small, yet meaningful, pause on the GST collected on gasoline to provide families with a little hope and a bit of relief.

It is worth noting that currently 53% of Canadians have said they have a hard time making ends meet already due to the rising prices of everything. Every time gasoline goes up, the cost of everything increases because it has a sort of escalator tax on it. I live very far north in Alberta, the furthest north one can get at least in a car, and people there pay more than what people further south pay.

For instance, when I filled up my gas tank this weekend, it was \$1.659. In Edmonton, a big city that is four and a half hours away, it was \$1.559. That is a difference of 10¢ a litre and is worth noting. Every time someone travels somewhere and gasoline costs more, the fixed costs are more. If we talk about food, the prices increase. If we talk about just about anything, the business owner has a choice of either raising the price of goods or decreasing their profits. That is a real, hard fact.

This very issue was seen in my home province of Alberta. It announced that it was going to stop collecting a fuel tax effective April 1 when West Texas Intermediate exceeds \$80 U.S. a barrel. It will result in a reduction of 13¢ a litre on clear fuel and 4¢ a litre on dyed fuel. While this does not solve the problem of inflation by any means, it is a small, meaningful difference that people will see at the gas pumps that will help them make ends meet today.

That is the real difference here. I have heard many of my colleagues mention longer-term projects, but what they are failing to understand is that many families are failing to make ends meet right now, today, each and every day. This is something that we really have to put into play.

• (1700)

In my riding, I jokingly say that everything starts at three hours. It is three hours from my community of Fort McMurray to get to the next closest community, which is Lac La Biche. It is four and a half hours by vehicle to get from Fort McMurray to Edmonton. Many people all throughout my riding constantly have to go to Edmonton for medical appointments and a variety of different specialized appointments, just because of the locality and the isolation of the region.

I think that this is a piece that perhaps not all members necessarily understand. We do not really have a choice in my riding to take a bus to get to most places. Unfortunately, that transit, similar to what some of the members have shared, in those rural ridings is not necessarily always an option. Families in my riding are being faced with the very real struggle of whether they fill up their gas tank so they can drive to work, drive their kids to school, get groceries and get to appointments, or heat their homes and keep their lights on.

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Effectively, families should not be pushed into this decision where they are having to make those choices. I do not think that families really care whether global supply chains are the reason why the costs have gone up. I do not think they really care that it is due to a war in Ukraine. What they see is a harder time to make the two ends meet, and they are asking for help. I had countless conversations with constituents over the last couple of weeks, where they were just telling me that they really could use just a little bit of a hand-up. That is exactly what this motion puts forward. It offers a hand-up to constituents to give them that little bit of relief.

I was doing some calculations and I have a conservative estimate that an average vehicle that has about 65 litres in its tank will see a savings of about \$5.20 per fill-up. That five dollars might not be a big deal to some, but when I was filling up with gas over the constituency weeks, I could see a constituent and they were only putting \$10 into their tank. That is all they had. They could only put \$10 into their tank. I was not sure where they were even planning to go in Fort McMurray with \$10 in their tank. I think this is part of the concern here. They want to keep their fridges stocked, their lights on and their gas tanks full, and I think this is the very least we can do right now.

The government is actually profiting on increased gas prices in countless ways, so we are offering a simple solution to allow consumers to have just a little bit of relief, so that they too can have some of that back in their pockets so that they can make those choices as to whether they want, perhaps, a little bit of a treat and go out to the movies or something along those lines. It has been a long couple of years where we have not been able to do those things and now that they finally are able to travel and now that they finally are able to go visit, they cannot afford to because gas is so expensive.

This is something that the members opposite might laugh at, but it is four and a half hours to get to Edmonton from Fort McMurray. That is a long distance and there is not a train. There are only a few flights a day that are even an option and flights are exponentially more expensive.

What they are looking for is just a little tiny bit of relief. I would implore all members of the House to keep in mind that family that is struggling and needs that extra five dollars or \$10 in their pocket, and work with us. Let us work to make life a little bit more affordable for Canadians because, quite frankly, they really could use it.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, just a quick note, I have many constituents who have either made their start in life in Fort McMurray or are still residing there, so I think there are a lot of common connections between our two provinces.

In my remarks earlier today, I thanked the member for Abbotsford for bringing forward a conversation about affordability, but I did say that I was concerned about the text of the motion. Eight cents a litre is important, particularly for residents who are very vulnerable. This is something that could provide immediate relief. My worry is that it is not very targeted.

Would my colleague opposite agree that, by going with this approach, it is providing eight cents to everyone across the board? We as members of Parliament make about \$180,000 a year. There are other people who are quite wealthy. I do not think that they need

eight cents a litre or four dollars on a tank of gas. I would rather actually have more support by government collecting the money and redistributing it on the basis of need.

Would she agree with the idea that the way it is currently worded, it is actually going to reward people that really do not need the help at this point?

• (1705)

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, I guess we can really clearly hear the Liberal-NDP coalition well at play in that question.

What is important to note is that the cost of fuel has increased by 32.3% in one year alone. This is a massive increase in the cost of fuel, and it is incumbent on the government to take some actions to make sure it provides relief to families who are struggling to make ends meet today and not in some long-term five years from now that families would get assistance.

[*Translation*]

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

You stated earlier today that this motion was one option, but it certainly is not because we cannot support it. Furthermore, the House cannot cut the GST or the HST in Canada. The House can adopt any motion it wants, but it is unable to take action in that regard.

You spoke about your riding; mine is enormous—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. I would remind the member that she must address the Chair.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke about her riding. My riding of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou is huge. There is a lot of ground to cover. I understand very well what she is saying; however I believe that instead we should be helping seniors or finding ways to help the disadvantaged.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I think she highlighted some important points since she and I both represent large, rural ridings. I believe it is very important to do what we can to ensure that we are working with all the provinces to get help and reduce the cost of gas across Canada.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am trying to understand the Conservatives' position on affordability. I was in the House when the Conservatives voted against raising the minimum wage for Canadians, when the Conservatives voted against raising corporate taxes on the windfall profits of corporations making billions of dollars per year, when Conservatives voted against pharmacare that would save the average family in this country over \$600 a year and businesses about \$700 a year and when Conservatives voted against a dental care plan that would allow Canadians to fix their teeth and not have to pay out of pocket with their hard-earned dollars.

Can the hon. colleague explain to me how any Canadian can take the Conservatives seriously on affordability when their record of voting stands so starkly against positive, constructive measures that would help average Canadians actually save money in their real lives?

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, as the member probably is aware, I was elected in 2021, so many of the measures he discussed are not on my voting record. However, I do support my colleagues in fighting for Canadians. I am proud of the Conservative record in supporting Canadians all across this country and fighting for affordability.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I think this is the first opportunity I have had to put a question to our new colleague, who is doing such a great job, the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake.

Is she aware of the recommendations from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls that every Canadian must have access to affordable ground transportation? The loss of lives along the Highway of Tears has much to do with the fact that indigenous women and girls are forced to hitchhike. The description of her situation in northern Alberta suggests we need bus transportation and trains across this country.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, perhaps I misspoke at some point. There actually is a bus service that goes from Fort McMurray down through Edmonton and all the way to Calgary. It is called the Red Arrow, and it is a spectacular service. In my time as an MLA, I took the Red Arrow on a few occasions because it would cost less money, it was a more humane way to travel and it was better for the environment.

• (1710)

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my speech will be the last one on today's motion. I have a question. Why does the official opposition think that the gas tax is the only way to solve the runaway inflation that is currently happening across the spectrum?

Anyone who must use a gas-powered vehicle is certainly feeling a little pinch when it comes time to pay. I heard people being interviewed on the radio recently who said that they were going to reconsider their daily use and their trips, and perhaps carpool or opt for a monthly public transit pass. Despite the inconvenience of changing one's habits, I am inclined to say that these are, in the end,

good habits to develop. However, some people do not have these options.

Our comments on inflation felt at the pump should normally be followed by a dialogue. We should be seeing acts to justify reaching a consensus on such a motion to reduce taxes. However, there has been nothing of the sort.

The inflationary phenomenon does not affect only people who use gas. It is hurting other sectors of the economy, too. My colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert talked about this in reference to housing and groceries, to name but two essential and unavoidable expenses.

What they are proposing is relief at the pumps. However, in 12 months, the price per barrel of oil went from \$64 to \$128. Who pocketed the increase for crude oil? The oil companies did. Who pocketed the refining fees, which have quadrupled? The oil companies did. The shareholders, which include several Russians by the way, are thrilled and are busy filling up tax havens. Who profits from inflation? Again, the oil companies do.

Who is against having the oil companies do their part to ease the burden on the public? That would be the Conservatives. They could have moved a motion to that effect and we would have been pleased to support it. However, that is not the case. They are proposing the opposite.

If the goal is to protect consumers from the oil companies that are fleecing them or—to put it another way—from inflationary increases in the price of gas, then they should draft a motion that would have the oil companies contribute their share, because they are at the root of the problems we are condemning.

Are we to believe that the average person filling up their tank realizes not only how much profit the oil companies are raking in, but also the obscene amount of money the government gives to the industry? We are talking about hundreds of billions of dollars, year after year, no matter which party is in power. I have a hard time believing that the average person would support this.

Unfortunately, the official opposition would rather make taxpayers, who are already struggling financially, pay so that consumers can get some relief at the pumps. The opposition would rather that everyone other than oil companies pay. When will the Conservatives stop moving motion after motion that benefits this sector while failing to propose fair measures for all sectors in our society?

We are locked into government policies that are all too often designed to make the rich richer. Instead we should be implementing meaningful policies that would focus on real opportunities, the opportunities we need to establish a solid, fair and equitable foundation for society as a whole and that would have a real, meaningful impact for people.

The problem of Inflation, which is going up and shows no sign of slowing down in the near future, will not be solved with measures like the ones the Conservatives are proposing. It will certainly not be solved by increasing oil production, as the Conservatives were calling for two or three weeks ago in response to the conflict in Ukraine.

• (1715)

What inflation shows us is that the poorest, those on fixed incomes, are the most affected. I am thinking of seniors primarily. There are structural economic weaknesses that must be corrected and that require short-term remedies, but, more importantly, they also require long-term measures.

I will try to explain what must be done in the short term. We must stop cutting right now—and not in one or even two months—the guaranteed income supplement cheques of the poorest seniors who received the Canada emergency response benefit or the Canada recovery benefit last year. At the same time, and not six months from now, we must increase old age security to ensure that seniors maintain their purchasing power in light of the increased cost of living. That is something concrete and responsible that can be done immediately. These are the firm positions the Bloc Québécois has called for for some time now, but such measures have so far failed to materialize.

It takes political will to implement long-term measures. There must be follow-through on the fine speeches and the positions we try to present. I will try anyway, as one never knows.

I am thinking of the small percentage point of state revenue that the government should permanently allocate to the construction of social housing and that it should send to Quebec, the only province that provides ongoing funding for the construction of social housing in Canada. These monies would make it possible for Quebec to more quickly implement its own programs. My colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert spoke eloquently about this a few minutes ago.

When the government does not use the tools it has to tackle the labour shortage, which is what we are seeing now, obviously we have reason to worry about the future. Our aging population is real, and we need workers.

I cannot be the only MP who is getting calls about the never-ending application processing times at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada for seasonal or skilled foreign workers, and from businesses that are at the end of their rope. Once again, the Bloc has a real solution that will produce real results. We want to lighten the government's load by taking the temporary foreign worker program off its hands altogether.

This would be a great way for the government to lighten its load. This idea makes a lot of sense for those who like common sense. Quebec is already responsible for its labour policies. We have Emploi-Québec, industry committees and expertise on the ground already. This move would obviate the need for a study for every application, and it would expedite the process overall.

Business of Supply

Solutions and government policies exist to address economic disruptions, some of which were exacerbated by the pandemic. Others have talked about this.

Going back to the motion we are opposing, the economic argument is used extensively to convince people of the need to continue with the fossil fuel approach. In reality, however, we do not decide the price of oil, as it is set on the London and New York stock exchanges. There is little we can do to limit the fluctuations and price increases. However, it is possible to make the economy more resilient to these fluctuations by reducing our reliance on oil and by accelerating the transition to renewable energies. My colleagues saw me coming, I am sure.

The truth needs to be told loud and clear when it comes to the real price of energy and gasoline. The price is much higher than what we pay at the pump. The real price includes social costs, including to our health care systems. Thousands of people die each year from illnesses directly related to air pollution, especially children with lung and respiratory conditions. The real price also includes all the public funds given in subsidies and tax breaks to the oil and gas sector to support an industry that will eventually disappear whether we like it or not. Finally, that price includes the environmental costs occurring upstream during a hyper-polluting extraction that causes environmental damage and downstream when these products are consumed or burned.

• (1720)

Everything this industry produces contributes to the climate crisis and our collective destiny. Today is World Water Day, as declared by the UN. I will remind everyone and the opposition of the devastation that this industry is inflicting on regional waterways with the foulest impunity.

Now we are being asked to continue enriching this sector even more. Is there no limit to the indecency? As they say, to ask the question is to answer it.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one of the issues within the motion that I am sure Bloc members are concerned about is that the Conservatives' proposal could be perceived as something that would take away from provincial jurisdiction regarding the tax on gas in the province of Quebec.

Could the member add some further comment? The member made some reference to it, and I would be very much interested in how she perceives the motion from that perspective.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his question. He is absolutely right.

I did not mention it in my speech, but some of my colleagues did. It is so obvious that the QST belongs to Quebec. No federal legislation will override our QST legislation. It is as clear as that.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

Points of Order

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about the environmental impact that future lithium mines will have. These mines will be found worldwide with the advent of electric vehicles.

Could she also tell me about the environmental impact that waste from these batteries will unfortunately cause and that will linger for the next 500 years?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

My colleague does not have the good fortune to sit on the excellent House Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. Last year, I put forward a motion to develop a federal zero-emissions law. From the testimony we heard, we learned that there is a company in Montreal that recycles batteries from electric cars for the purpose of putting them back into new electric cars.

The electrification of transportation is moving forward at break-neck speed. Week by week, things are changing and discoveries are being made. At the University of Sherbrooke, they are working on electrolyte batteries that would increase the distance travelled and reduce charging time. There is a lot of research and development going on in this area; it is a beautiful thing. We talk about it sometimes in committee.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from the Bloc for what I believe to be a remarkable speech. We have really hit, in many ways, the crux of the issue facing Canadians today, which is the fact that we are not spending enough on those who need that support. We are not even making sure that those who are profiteering are paying their fair share, and the member highlighted that there is a relationship between these two things. Those who profit and those who exceedingly use that profit to do less justice for our tax system are actually depriving those who need it most, including seniors. I was touched by the fact that the member encouraged support in the House for seniors, for example to increase OAS, which is something that constituents in my community have been calling for for decades.

I would ask the member to expand for a few moments on how valuable expanding OAS is for ensuring that seniors have the dignity and security they need while moving into this crisis.

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Yes, we could help seniors directly by increasing the guaranteed income supplement and old age security.

I will make a connection with food, which is a very important issue to talk about. It is often said that seniors living alone do not eat properly and sometimes have to choose between food and medication because inflation is too high. I always put that in the context of the environment. Consider the droughts in western Canada and the wildfires that have caused crop failures and increased the price of food for everyone, including seniors. The consequences of the cli-

mate crisis ultimately are that we are paying more and inflation is rising. Fighting climate change involves dealing with everything that is very human, particularly people's health.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, all afternoon, we have heard the various points of view on the motion, which basically aims to help the most disadvantaged.

However, I would like my colleague to provide more details about means other than oil that could be used to help the most disadvantaged.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke at length just now about social and community housing.

I would like to share a very personal story. My son, who is 30 years old, does not have a car, so he does not have to pay at the pump, but he does live in an apartment. He has a hard time making ends meet, and sometimes mom and dad have to help him little.

If we had more social housing and community housing, we could help young people like him. Lots of people do not have cars. It does not always have to be about oil, oil—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Unfortunately, I have to interrupt the member.

[*English*]

It being 5:27 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion.

[*Translation*]

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

An hon. member: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 23, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

[*English*]

POINTS OF ORDER

ROYAL RECOMMENDATION FOR BILL C-237

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have two points of order that I would like to address.

I am rising on this particular point of order in response to the Speaker's statement on February 28, respecting the need for a royal recommendation for Bill C-237, an act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act and the Canada Health Act, sponsored by the member for Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel.

Without commenting on the merits of Bill C-237, I note that the bill would exempt Quebec from the national criteria and conditions set out for the Canada health transfer. Section 24 of the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act sets out certain conditions and criteria for payments to provinces for health transfers:

a Canada Health Transfer in the amounts referred to in subsection 24.1(1) is to be provided to the provinces for the purposes of

(a) maintaining the national criteria and conditions in the Canada Health Act, including those respecting public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability and accessibility, and the provisions relating to extra-billing and user charges.

Bill C-237 also seeks to amend the Canada Health Act to make a corresponding change to exempt Quebec from abiding by the criteria and conditions for a cash contribution from the government to the provinces for the purposes of providing health care services. The purpose of the Canada Health Act is to set out in section 4 of the act:

The purpose of this Act is to establish criteria and conditions in respect of insured health services and extended health care services provided under provincial law that must be met before a full cash contribution may be made.

Section 5 of the Canada Health Act provides for cash contributions for each province in relation to the Canada health transfer.

Section 7 of the Canada Health Act sets out the criteria that a province must satisfy in order to receive a cash contribution. These criteria are more fully articulated in sections 8 to 12 in the act. Section 7 states:

In order that a province may qualify for a full cash contribution referred to in section 5 for a fiscal year, the health care insurance plan of the province must, throughout the fiscal year, satisfy the criteria described in sections 8 to 12 respecting the following matters:

- (a) public administration;
- (b) comprehensiveness;
- (c) universality;
- (d) portability; and
- (e) accessibility.

As *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states at page 772:

Since an amendment may not infringe upon the financial initiative of the Crown, it is inadmissible if it imposes a charge on the public treasury, or if it extends the objects or purposes or relaxes the conditions and qualifications specified in the royal recommendation.

The provision of full cash contributions from the federal government to the provinces for health care services is tied to the ability of provinces to satisfy the conditions set out in section 7 of the Canada Health Act and section 24 of the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act. The royal recommendation includes the maximum charge on the consolidated revenue fund and is tied to the purposes, terms, conditions and qualifications for the authorization of expenditures.

Since Bill C-237 seeks to remove the terms, conditions and qualifications of the statutory spending authority, I submit that a new royal recommendation would need to be obtained for the purposes set out for health transfers to provinces envisaged in Bill C-237.

Speakers have consistently ruled that bills seeking to impose a new charge on the consolidated revenue fund, change the qualifica-

tions or alter the terms and conditions need to be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

On December 6, 2016, Speaker Regan noted:

On May 8, 2008, Speaker Milliken delivered a ruling on Bill C-490, an act to amend the Old Age Security Act (application for supplement, retroactive payments and other amendments). While the bill clearly provided for increases in supplements, it also made changes in the manner in which people applied for benefits and the extent to which qualified persons could claim benefits retroactively. In Speaker Milliken's view, this:

...would alter the conditions and qualifications that were originally placed on public spending on old age security payments when those benefits were approved by Parliament.

● (1730)

On December 6, 2016, the Speaker ruled on the need for a royal recommendation for Bill C-243, an act respecting the development of a national maternity assistance program strategy and amending the Employment Insurance Act, maternity benefits. The Speaker stated:

In this case, Bill C-243 does not impose any new charge on the public treasury but creates a new set of conditions, relating to the safety of their workplace for their pregnancy, under which pregnant women could have access to benefits related to their pregnancy from as early as 15 weeks before the birth of their child. Though the sponsor of the bill argues otherwise, the Chair is not convinced that the current act allows spending under the circumstances, in the manner, and for the purposes he proposes. This being a circumstance not yet envisioned in the Employment Insurance Act, it infringes on the terms and conditions of the initial royal recommendation that accompanied that act and therefore requires now a new royal recommendation. This remains the case, even if the total amount of benefits stays the same.

Consequently, the Chair will decline to put the question on third reading of the bill in its present form unless a royal recommendation is received.

A royal recommendation may only be obtained by a minister of the Crown on the advice of the Governor General. In the absence of a royal recommendation, Bill C-237 may proceed through the legislative process in the House up until the end of the debate at third reading. In cases in which the Speaker has ruled that a royal recommendation is required and it has not been provided before the third-reading vote, the Speaker refuses to put the question at third reading and orders the bill discharged from the Order Paper.

I submit that this is the case before you, Mr. Speaker, with respect to Bill C-237.

● (1740)

ROYAL RECOMMENDATION FOR BILL C-215

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on this particular point of order in response to your February 28, statement respecting the need for a royal recommendation for Bill C-215, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act, illness, injury or quarantine, sponsored by the member for Lévis—Lotbinière.

Without commenting on the merits of the bill, I suggest that the provision in the bill to extend sickness benefits to 52 weeks would seek to authorize a new and distinct charge on the consolidated revenue fund not authorized in statute. In instances when there is no existing statutory authority or an appropriation to cover the new and distinct charge, a royal recommendation is in fact required.

Private Members' Business

The provisions of the bill amending the Employment Insurance Act would increase the maximum number of weeks for employment insurance sickness benefits. This increase in the number of weeks of benefits is authorized, once passed, by royal recommendation attached to the bill. The royal recommendation not only fixes the maximum charge on the consolidated revenue fund, but also the objects, purposes, conditions and qualifications of provisions subject to the royal recommendation.

Speakers have consistently ruled that bills seeking to increase the length of a benefit, change the qualifications or alter the conditions for employment insurance benefits need to be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

Let me draw to the attention of members a few germane rulings on this matter.

On April 22, 2009, the Speaker ruled on Bill C-241, an Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act, removal of waiting period. The Speaker stated:

[T]he chair is of the opinion that the provisions of Bill C-241 would authorize a new and distinct charge on the public treasury. Since such spending is not covered by the terms of any existing appropriation, I will therefore decline to put the question on third reading of this bill in its present form...

On June 3, 2009, the Speaker ruled on Bill C-280, an Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act, qualification for and entitlement to benefits. In the ruling, the Deputy Speaker stated:

On March 23, 2007, in a ruling on Bill C-265... the Chair had concluded that:

"It is abundantly clear to the Chair that such changes to the employment insurance program... would have the effect of authorizing increased expenditures from the Consolidated Revenue Fund in a manner and for purposes not currently authorized.

Therefore, it appears to the Chair that those provisions of the bill which relate to increasing Employment Insurance benefits and easing the qualifications required to obtain them would require a royal recommendation."

Having heard no new compelling argument to reach a conclusion that is different than the one concerning Bill C-265, I will decline to put the question on third reading of Bill C-280 in its present form unless a royal recommendation is received.

A more recent and directly relevant case is to be found in the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities' consideration of Bill C-24, an Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act, additional regular benefits, the Canada Recovery Benefits Act, restriction on eligibility, and another Act in response to COVID-19 on March 11, 2021. This bill sought, among other things, to increase the number of weeks of EI regular benefits available by up to 24 weeks to a maximum of 50 weeks for claims that were made between September 27, 2020, and September 25, 2021.

During the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, the member for Elmwood—Transcona proposed an amendment that attempted to increase the number of weeks of payments to an employment insurance claimant in the case of prescribed illness, injury, or quarantine from 15 to 50 weeks, therefore allowing people to have access to these payments for longer than they can currently under the Employment Insurance Act.

In proposing the amendment, the chair of the committee ruled the amendment as inadmissible because it required a royal recommendation. The chair ruled:

Bill C-24 seeks to amend the Employment Insurance Act by increasing the number of weeks paid under part 1 of that act under certain circumstances.

This amendment attempts to increase the number of weeks of payments to a claimant, in the case of prescribed illness, injury or quarantine, from 15 to 50 weeks, therefore allowing people to have access to these payments for longer than they can currently under the Employment Insurance Act.

As *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states at page 772:

"Since an amendment may not infringe upon the financial initiative of the Crown, it is inadmissible if it imposes a charge on the public treasury, or if it extends the objects or purposes or relaxes the conditions and qualifications specified in the royal recommendation."

In the opinion of the chair, the amendment as proposed requires a royal recommendation since it imposes a new charge on the public treasury, and I therefore rule the amendment inadmissible.

A royal recommendation may only be obtained by a minister of the Crown on the advice of the Governor General. In the absence of a royal recommendation, Bill C-215 may proceed through the legislative process in the House up until the end of the debate at third reading. In cases in which the Speaker has ruled that the royal recommendation is required, and it has not been provided before the third reading vote, the Speaker refuses to put the question at third reading and orders the bill discharged from the Order Paper.

I submit that this is the case before you with respect to Bill C-215.

Precedents clearly suggest that a bill or motion that seeks to incur new and distinct expenditures from the consolidated revenue fund in a manner and for purposes not currently authorized require a royal recommendation.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for his intervention. I will take that under advisement.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC) moved that Bill C-240, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (donations involving private corporation shares or real estate), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my private member's bill, Bill C-240, the supporting Canadian charities act. The pandemic has inflicted tremendous losses on charities and their ability to provide much-needed services to Canadians. The situation is bleak. Canada's 170,000 registered charities have lost \$10 billion during the pandemic at a time when the help provided by the charitable sector is needed more than ever. More than four in 10 charities are still facing declines in revenue. The average revenue decline is 44%, and more than half are dealing with revenue declines of more than 40%. Some 42% of charities are facing demands for their programs and services that currently exceed their capacity to deliver.

Private Members' Business

Arts and cultural organizations have been particularly hard hit, with an average revenue decline of 59%. Many charity workers are suffering from pandemic-related stress and mental health issues. Sadly, many of these amazing organizations may not survive.

Charities employ more than 2.4 million Canadians and account for 8.4% of this country's GDP. Under normal circumstances, each year charities raise \$18.5 billion in donations and contribute \$169 billion to our GDP. The charitable sector fills the gaps that cannot be fully met by government or by the market and is a key partner in the delivery of services including health care, education and social services. Sadly, nearly 40% of charities have laid off paid staff or reduced staff working hours, seriously impacting the ability of the sector to provide important services.

One study by Imagine Canada forecast a loss of private sector donations of between \$4.2 billion and \$6.3 billion, with estimates of between 117,000 and 195,000 job losses. When charities are unable to deliver services and programs, it means that individuals do not receive the support they need. That is the bottom line. This could be a person looking for a meal at Agape Table in Winnipeg, a child with a disability in need of special equipment or specialized therapy, someone who is homeless and looking for a place to sleep on a cold winter night, a single mother who cannot pay rent or feed her children, a senior not taking life-saving medications, or a person in so many other situations.

Demand for such services is expected to continue to increase in the coming months beyond the ability of charities to service that demand. Arts, cultural and recreational organizations have also reported revenue decreases of as much as 71%. For health organizations, the decline averages 48%.

Bill C-240 would deliver long-term, sustainable funding to the charitable sector. Although the government has played an important role in direct funding of charities, with a simple change to the Income Tax Act, hundreds of millions of dollars in new donations could be raised for charities every year.

Simply put, Bill C-240 would amend the Income Tax Act to waive the capital gains tax on the proceeds from the arm's-length sale of privately owned shares or real estate when those proceeds are donated directly to a charity. The last time the government made such a bold decision was in 2006, with the removal of the capital gains tax on gifts of publicly traded securities. This has resulted in additional charitable donations of over \$1 billion ever since. Tax incentives also already exist to encourage the donation of ecologically sensitive lands. This bill is the next step.

The example I like to use is of a retiring dentist who is selling his or her practice after many years and may now choose to donate all or a portion of the sale proceeds to a charity. That dentist would receive a waiver of the capital gains tax so long as the donation was made within 30 days of the sale. The value of the shares is established by an actual arm's-length sale in the marketplace. By using that practice, we avoid the valuation ambiguity of an independent evaluation or appraisal. For years, charities across Canada have been recommending that the government unlock more private wealth for public good. The bill provides us all with the opportunity to help charities by stimulating increased charitable donations from the private sector.

• (1745)

This bill would highly incentivize charitable giving at a time when it is most needed. It essentially incentivizes the redistribution of wealth to those who need it most. I submit that there is no better time to do this than now. It is estimated that this one change will increase charitable donations by at least \$200 million per year. These additional donations would cost the treasury the capital gains tax revenue of roughly 25¢ on the dollar, which is roughly \$50 million to \$60 million per year.

One-time-funding programs like the community services recovery fund and emergency community support fund are important, but represent only a fraction of the charitable sector's needs at this time. The opportunity is now to deliver immediate relief to help Canadians without significant additional costs to a treasury that is already running historic deficits. Existing jobs would be saved. New, permanent jobs would be created, and urgently needed benefits would be delivered.

This is not a partisan debate. We all want to help charities. Charities from across the country have endorsed this bill. This broad support includes local organizations, such as the Grace Hospital Foundation in my own riding in Winnipeg, and extends to some of the largest national charitable organizations. This includes the Special Olympics, Imagine Canada, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, Diabetes Canada and many others.

All stakeholders in the charitable sector are supportive of this measure, as are the hundreds of thousands of small business owners who would like to give back to their communities. A full list of the supportive groups and why they support this bill is available on my website.

Removing the capital gains tax on gifts of private company shares and real estate is much more tax effective than direct government spending for charities because the cost is not borne by taxpayers alone. Rather, it is shared by the taxpayers and donors. Not one penny of the donated proceeds would benefit the donor, but would provide major benefit to recipient charities and those they serve. This initiative actually removes a barrier to charitable giving while immediately reducing the donor's wealth for the betterment of their communities.

Private Members' Business

The real beneficiaries are the people who are served by not-for-profit organizations, including hospitals, social service agencies, universities, and arts, culture and religious organizations. This measure was also recommendation 34 in the report of the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector issued in June of 2019, which states, "That the Government of Canada...implement and evaluate a pilot project on the impact on the charitable sector of exempting donations of private shares from capital gains tax."

I want to put on record that laws, as they relate to the charitable sector, are in serious need of modernization. The Senate report also made recommendations for the creation of a secretariat on the charitable sector. This home-in-government approach would provide a stronger framework for discussions and solutions between government and the sector on a wide range of issues.

In the 1997 budget, then finance minister Paul Martin cut the capital gains tax on gifts of publicly traded securities by 50% when donated to a charity. In 2006, then finance minister Jim Flaherty followed suit when he removed the remaining capital gains tax on such gifts. The Senate report quotes Ruth MacKenzie of the Canadian Association of Gift Planners noting, "that the elimination of capital gains tax on gifts of listed securities has been 'enormously successful, resulting in billions of dollars in shares being donated to charities every year.'"

It is now time for the government to take the next logical step by exempting private shares and real estate. This idea was, in fact, included in the Conservative budget of 2015 by then finance minister Joe Oliver, but it never made it into law before the change in government.

I would be remiss in not giving a shout-out to a very special person many members are familiar with, Mr. Don Johnson who has advocated for this measure for decades. Mr. Johnson has said implementing this exemption would be the single most important and tax effective measure the government could introduce to significantly increase charitable donations every year going forward. Mr. Johnson was directly involved when Paul Martin reduced the tax and when Jim Flaherty reduced the tax, and now he has been advocating for this change all along as well.

Many members recently received a copy of his book, *Lessons Learned on Bay Street*. He sent a personalized copy to every single one of us. I am about halfway through it, and I can tell members it is an excellent and very interesting read. He is a fellow Manitoban and a recipient of the Order of Canada.

• (1750)

Mr. Johnson made his career on Bay Street and successfully advocated for the current application of this law on publicly traded securities, which resulted in billions of dollars for charities and non-profits. Today, I stand on his shoulders. He has been a tremendous resource for me, and I cannot thank him enough.

The bottom line is that when charities are hurting, real people are hurting. Let us do something about it. I ask every member to support this bill. Working together, we can get the charitable sector back on its feet and Canadians back on theirs.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member on the introduction of his private member's bill. It is always a great opportunity for members to bring forward policy ideas that they are individually extremely passionate about, and I am glad to see that this member has had that opportunity.

I wanted to address one thing that I heard the member say in his speech. If I heard him correctly, and I may have gotten it wrong and he can correct me if I did, he said that the cost of this would be approximately \$50 million. My understanding from the PBO is that it would be over \$750 million with the possibility of getting close to \$1 billion. That is my understanding of what the PBO had reported on it.

Can the member either tell me that I misheard him or tell me what I and the PBO might be missing?

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for the question.

I said the \$50 million to \$60 million was the capital gains tax cost. To the extent that there are incremental donations, let us say it is \$200 million a year, there would also be tax receipts associated with that. That analysis was done by the PBO as well, and I think it is in the range of another \$50 million or \$60 million a year. It is something like that, to the extent that there are incremental donations triggered by the incentivization of giving by the relief of the capital gains tax.

The PBO numbers are over a period of time. The annualized cost is roughly \$120 million or \$130 million, and if we take that over a five-year horizon, that is how we get to the \$700 million to \$800 million cost. I would point out that the tax cost in all cases, on an annualized basis or over five years, is less than the actual contributions that charities would receive.

• (1755)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this bill is about tax rules for charities, specifically certain dispositions of real estate or private corporation shares.

I would like to know if my colleague thinks it would be appropriate at some point to expand the scope of the bill to other types of assets such as those that can be liquidated by estates and that might have appreciated over time.

[English]

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Speaker, I guess I am an incrementalist by nature, and I thought asking for private shares in real estate might be a good first step. However, if this works out, the House could certainly entertain the application of the law to other assets. I would also remind the member that the first tax change related to this was 25 years ago, so these things happen over time. I certainly would be happy to look at the exemption for other assets as well.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the member brought forward this piece of legislation for the simple fact that I would never want to put a pass on being able to share some thoughts on the issue of charities and the important role they play in our society.

My colleague raised a question in terms of the cost. The parliamentary budget office is an apolitical office and the price it came back with was quite significantly more. I think we have an obligation to look at what our PBO says: over \$750 million with the potential of a billion. That could be the actual cost if this legislation were to pass.

In listening to what the member had to say about the legislation and with what research I was able to do on the bill, I am not convinced that this is the best way for us to compliment our charities for the fine work that they have done over the years, continue to do today and, no doubt, will do well into the future.

One of the things that I have recognized as a parliamentarian for many years is the fact that Canada has to have some of the most generous people collectively in the entire world. If there is an immediate need in a community, city, municipality, province or territory, you name it, our constituents respond with open hearts and open wallets and purses. I have seen that on a wide variety of issues. We are very fortunate to have a population base that recognizes the importance of giving.

We see that taking place in many different forms. I would like to give a real tangible example. Let us say the PBO's numbers are accurate, because I believe they would be. When talking about those hundreds of millions of dollars, is that the best way we can invest potential tax dollars in terms of encouraging, promoting and supporting charitable organizations?

Every one of us is very much aware of what is taking place in Ukraine today, so I will use Ukraine as an example. The illegal, inhumane invasion that is taking place in Ukraine by President Putin is horrific. Tune into the news and one can see it first-hand on the TV, let alone imagining what the people are living through every day in Ukraine. I say that because one of the initiatives we took was on the issue of humanitarian aid. Even before Canada, as a government, came up with an approach in support of humanitarian aid, Canadians were already at the table. They were actually donating to charitable organizations that were ensuring there was humanitarian aid going to Ukraine. I remember it quite well when the federal government said that we are going to have, through the Red Cross, matching dollars.

That is why I say that it is a comparison. Take a look at what this legislation is doing and the amount of money that could potentially be redirected to see more benefit. In the Ukraine example, we allocated \$10 million in terms of matching funds. It only took a matter of days before Canadians oversubscribed to that particular program, so the federal government increased it from \$10 million to \$30 million. I have not checked it recently in the last number of days, but I would not be surprised, if it were not there already, if it was very close, in terms of the contributions by Canadians.

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• (1800)

That is what I mean when we take a look at charitable organizations, and there are many charitable organizations in every region of our country. Some of them have been hugely successful. Even during a pandemic, some have been successful. However, I concur that they have been hit hard as an industry during the pandemic, as other industries have also been hit hard.

However, there is no doubt in my mind that they will rebound. The real issue we should be discussing and debating today is how to maximize the benefits with what are the limited number of tax dollars that we have to deploy. When I look at this legislation, what I see is legislation that does not necessarily allow for an enhancement of the average person's ability to participate, or even provide that additional encouragement or be as universally accessible to some of the smaller organizations that are out there. Charities vary dramatically.

When we talk about health care needs in provinces, one can talk about the Grace Hospital Foundation that the member referenced. Check out their website. I did as the member was speaking. They have a wonderful donor's page with a list of different ways in which people can contribute.

We can talk about the Children's Hospital Foundations or we can go into the private area, such as the Ronald McDonald House Charities, which is across the country and which does an absolutely outstanding job as a corporation in providing the opportunity for Canadians, in particular, those from rural communities, to have a place when they are visiting cities because of a sick child. This is a wonderful organization.

Whether it is the larger charities that are there or it is the smaller charities, if we check with the Canada Revenue Agency, we can see a fairly lengthy list of non-profits and charities that are constantly looking for support. Going forward, I would like to think, in terms of dealing with charities, that, as parliamentarians, we would do what we can to support our charities, big or small.

As much as I can appreciate the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, a fellow Manitoban, bringing forward a piece of legislation from his perspective, I am not convinced that he has actually allowed for a wider subscription or if we are maximizing the potential limited dollars that come into the government that could go toward charities.

I am a big fan of charities, because I see the fine work they have done in our communities. I think of where there is potential growth, and I think of individuals like Sharon Redsky, who talks about indigenous charities and how the government could look at ways to support indigenous charities and the private sector, and that there is wonderful potential growth in that area. I am very much interested in ideas in that area.

We have the need for charities to assist people in many different ways, whether it is through food banks or direct funds to individuals. It varies greatly. I believe that, as I said at the very beginning of my comments, Canadians are very generous and we need to support and enhance that in whatever way we can.

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● (1805)

We can do that through accountability and transparency and by working with organizations like the Canada Revenue Agency and the many different organizations that do not have CRA charity status but continue to do a lot of fine work throughout our country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for introducing this very interesting bill. I am perhaps one of the few people in the House who really enjoy studying taxation.

I want to take a moment during my speech to acknowledge the people of the Sainte-Scholastique sector of Mirabel, who continue to fight to have the Minister of Transport approve the Synergie Mirabel project. This project, which the Liberals are blocking, would provide housing for 40 seniors who are losing their independence. Again, the Liberals are blocking the project.

I am talking about this because today we are debating the taxation of charities, the taxation of philanthropy. I want to show how important our organizations are to our families and to our community and social fabric, not only in my riding of Mirabel, but also elsewhere in Quebec.

I was in Blainville last week and I visited Moisson Laurentides, an extraordinary organization that collects food to feed thousands of families and thousands of children, people who do not have an easy life, people who live in extraordinarily difficult situations. This organization helps our food drives, and that shows how important charitable organizations are.

Sometimes, in people's minds, charitable donations are not truly generous because they are simply used for tax credits. However, to a person, a business or an estate and its beneficiaries, that money is a real donation, even if it provides a small tax benefit in return, because those who make the donation are giving up their material goods and financial advantages that could have been used for their own benefit. We must therefore commend people who donate, people who participate. We need these organizations and I say thank you.

There are currently tax measures for charitable organizations. We know the principle of charitable giving. Most people give a cheque or cash to an organization. In return, they receive an official receipt that will give them a small deduction on their tax return.

There are also other ways to make donations, including by donating shares of publicly traded companies. Few people do that, but these are often very valuable donations to endowment funds for our universities, our hospitals or very large organizations. These donations are a huge help.

Donating shares has two tax implications. First, at the time of transfer of the value of the shares, the donor receives an exemption from paying the capital gains tax because they will not personally benefit from the donation. Second, they will receive an official tax receipt.

Not all businesses are incorporated, and neither are all sources of capital. There are different types of businesses. If someone owns their own business, if an individual is a partner in a small business

or if an individual owns a building and decides to donate the value of the building, one of the two tax benefits is lost, the capital gains tax exemption. However, an official tax receipt is issued.

There are other types of donations that provide tax benefits, including donations of ecologically sensitive land, which we discussed.

I will now invite my colleagues opposite to listen. The bill seeks to achieve tax fairness in response to the following question: Why does capital in a given legal form provide a tax benefit when donated that is greater than the benefit that would be provided by the same capital, in the same amount, but in another legal form?

I think that this bill is worthwhile. I think it is worth studying it in committee because this is about revenue neutrality. The same amount of money, donated in two different ways, must be treated exactly the same way by the tax authorities.

I understand that we are talking about significant amounts of money. I think it is still worthy of study, but I remind those who are studying the cost of this new tax measure that the federal government already provides very significant tax exemptions to a great many organizations. I would even tell my colleagues across the way that their political donors received tax credits. We therefore really need to study this matter in committee.

We must consider costs and the issue will be studied in committee. The Parliamentary Budget Officer says that the measure will cost \$777 million over five years. Members on the other side of the House sometimes forget that they need to divide by five, and I know that it is not easy.

● (1810)

These are tax expenditures, revenue the government is foregoing. This \$777 million in tax expenditures will generate \$981 million, which is close to an additional \$1 billion in donations to our charities. At first glance, the cost to the government is lower than what would be donated.

True, that is not a very big gap. True, the Parliamentary Budget Officer told us there was some uncertainty and that the numbers are not 100% clear. However, when it comes to statistics and estimates, nothing is certain. For example, as recently as yesterday, the Bloc Québécois thought there was just one party in government, and now look at what happened.

Things can change very fast, especially seeing as, in this market, most of these donations will be made in the form of property, and capital gains on property change very fast. We have been seeing higher capital gains and higher property values. That gap could widen.

My suggestion would be to have the Parliamentary Budget Officer appear in committee. We have to study the measure, look at the numbers and analyze the impact of this measure. We are all reasonable people who can talk about these things.

It needs to be socially acceptable, because the rationale behind these tax credits for charitable donations is that perhaps governments have less need to collect taxes on the money that organizations give to serve the community, our hospitals and our universities. That can also cause distortions.

This money goes to some good causes, but it also goes to religious organizations and all kinds of other organizations that do not always correspond to the values espoused by our democratically elected governments. Social acceptability criteria are needed, and they do exist. We will examine them, but at first glance, I think that, on the simple principle of tax neutrality and fairness, if anyone in the House thinks that it is normal for existing charities to be entitled to the current tax treatment, it would be entirely reasonable to consider expanding it. We could also consider making amendments.

People from the Department of Finance will have to be invited to appear before the committee, because the bill was introduced under the Harper government. I would remind members that the Liberals decided not to implement it in 2015. The bill was reintroduced in the previous Parliament, so this idea has been around for a while. As we know, Mr. Johnson promoted this idea, so it has been around for a while.

We will have to ensure that the terms and conditions create true revenue neutrality. I cited the example of buildings for the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, who was kind enough to discuss his bill with me beforehand. As we know, when someone owns a building, over time there are profits, revenues and expenditures associated with it. A profit is made. Every year, the owner is entitled to a CCA, or capital cost allowance. Every year, this is artificially applied. When the value of the building increases, that decreases profit and taxes. When the amount associated with the liquidation of the building is donated to a charitable organization, the taxes are paid back. However, in the meantime, the owner will have indirectly benefited from an interest-free loan from the government for 5, 10, 15 or 20 years, which will have yielded income and a return that at certain times may have exceeded the value of the capital gain on the building expressed as a percentage.

Thus, there may be other tax benefits associated with these types of assets. We will have to study this, because when shares in a publicly traded corporation are donated, all the profits associated with said company's entire basket of investments are included in the donation, for example. We will have to look at all these aspects.

Taxation is complex. There are a lot of ins and outs. What is more, there are terms to discuss.

Again, I think this is a good initiative, that it is supported by our organizations, and that it will increase donations. I think it would be premature to turn our backs on Bill C-240 and simply say no to it without studying it in committee.

It was a great pleasure to discuss this with the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley. I know that he is reasonable and open. He knows his bill and taxation. I know that we will be able to discuss various ways of improving the bill. We could talk about other types of assets that may be on the table one

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day. I know that we will be able to do so calmly and intelligently in a spirit of tax fairness and neutrality.

• (1815)

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to contribute some thoughts to this debate on Bill C-240. It is a bill that seeks to give the same treatment to private shares in real estate as is currently enjoyed for public shares when they are donated to a charity, and specifically to give a break on the capital gains tax for those assets when they are donated to a charity.

I want to start by recognizing the tremendous culture of giving we see in Canada, but I want to particularly single out Manitoba, as it is a province where people are known for their charitable giving and for sustaining charities that do all sorts of good work in our communities. This is particularly true when we are talking about the pandemic and the serious problem of homelessness, which existed before the pandemic, to be sure, but has worsened significantly during the pandemic. That is just one example of an area where charities do an incredible amount of work. Whether it is Siloam Mission, Just a Warm Sleep or the Main Street Project, Winnipeg certainly has benefited from the work of those organizations, which receive some government funding, but also depend, really, on charitable giving to sustain themselves and do the good work they do.

I think of L'Arche in Elmwood—Transcona. It operates in many places but traditionally has had a very strong presence in Transcona that goes beyond the support of housing for its clients. It includes social enterprises like the L'Arche Tova Café on Regent Avenue in Transcona, which is not far from where I live. It has been a wonderful gathering place for the community and helps build life skills for the folks who are part of the L'Arche community.

I could go on and talk a lot about all the various organizations that benefit from charitable giving, but I want to spend some time talking about the bill.

With respect to the bill, we on the NDP side of the House are concerned about the fact that there are already many ways for the wealthy to direct their wealth to causes they support. We are in a time when there has been a need for massive public expenditure to meet the needs that are faced by many Canadians. If we are to do that best, it means trying to coordinate behaviour. It means trying to make sure that when we are talking about wealth redistribution, we are doing it in a way that allows us to ensure the services people genuinely need, particularly those offered on a universal basis and on a basis of need, are adequately funded.

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Frankly, this is an issue about which reasonable people can disagree, but we are in a moment when the thrust of our work ought to be on how we manage our resources collectively and well through democratic processes. Our time is not best spent figuring out how to make it possible for the wealthy to direct their personal wealth toward causes they think have value. Often members have heard the New Democrats talk in this place about the need to redistribute wealth, and we should do that by ensuring that the wealthy are paying their fair share.

If it were the case that the things we need in this moment were already adequately funded and that the wealthy were already paying their fair share, then I could see a pathway to a conversation about how we make it easier for them to donate directly to charities of their choosing. However, we are in a moment when, if we take seriously the question of public finance and the role the government needs to play in the pandemic recovery and facing down the challenges of climate change, it is not the best time to be talking about how to promote more complexities within the tax code that give tax breaks to individuals who are fortunate enough to have the kind of wealth in the first place to be able to donate.

• (1820)

It is not the typical donor who is donating in these ways. Often when we think about giving to a charity, we think about supporting different kinds of drives, like food drives for food banks, picking up a bit of food at the local grocery store or buying perogies. There is a church on the corner of Munroe and Watt that is currently doing an excellent fundraiser. It is mobilizing the great expertise in the faith community to make delicious perogies to support the people in Ukraine who are in desperate need of help. That is often what we think about when it comes to charitable giving. This is a select group of donors who may have a lot to give, but our conversation should be centred on how we redistribute wealth and how to do it fairly and democratically without creating more opportunities within the tax code for the very wealthy to direct their wealth to things they choose rather than to things we deliberate about in this place and in other appropriate places.

As I said, there is room for this kind of conversation, but for us it is not a priority of this Parliament to get it to committee to delve further into it. We believe there are other priorities the finance committee should have in this Parliament that very much bear on the kinds of supports and services that Canadians need. We would be better off talking about those directly and ways to finance them than talking about modifications to the tax code to allow the wealthiest among us to make those decisions for themselves.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to be able to contribute to the debate. I want to commend my Manitoban colleague, the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, for taking the initiative to present this private member's bill, Bill C-240.

Also, I would try to convince other Manitoban colleagues who have spoken on this tonight to make it a bit more of a priority than was just indicated by my NDP colleague, because this really does affect every family in Canada and Manitoba. I agree with him about the charitable status of Manitoba being as great as it is.

My colleague was a Winnipeg city councillor and now is a member of Parliament and has always been driven by results. I am extremely proud to call him a friend, not only for that purpose but for others. When he sees a problem, he looks for a solution. As an elected official, that is exactly the right mindset to have. I also want to thank him for his efforts to keep the spotlight on these very important changes to the Income Tax Act and how they will positively impact countless charities.

Charities, both big and small, are woven into our communities. From medical research to the arts to recreation to food banks to museums and heritage to housing to education, these charities are integral to every aspect of society.

We both come from a province that is known for the philanthropic efforts of its residents and businesses. When I look around my constituency, multiple buildings at the university, the Assiniboine Community College, the recreation centres and many others were built with the help of private donors. Entrepreneurs, businesses and individuals rose to the occasion to support their communities. Of their own free will they decided to donate to the causes nearest to their hearts. They decided to give back to the community that helped them prosper.

The essence of this bill is very simple, but its impacts are enormous. It will result in more money ending up in the hands of charities. By eliminating the capital gains tax on charitable donations of private company shares and real estate, it will result in millions more dollars going directly to charities, rather than as taxes to the government. From the donor's perspective nothing will change. The same shares are being sold. The only difference is the level of tax the government would collect. From the charity's perspective, it will now receive the total sum of the private shares being sold.

We are cognizant that the pandemic has been hard on charities. We know donations are down and demand for charities has gone up. According to the latest available data, donations declined by 10% due to the pandemic, and close to half of all charities are struggling. These are troubling statistics.

As members of Parliament, the onus is on us to propose solutions from all sides of the House. I believe Bill C-240 is a responsible and appropriate response to the challenge that charities are currently facing. It is projected to result in roughly \$200 million being directly given to charities from across the country on an annual basis. As a Conservative, I am always keen on advancing ideas that are market-driven and sustainable over the long term.

This legislation does not expand the size of government, nor does it burden charities or individuals with more red tape. It does not reward one charity over another. It does not pick winners or losers. It simply unlocks and leverages the private sector's philanthropic spirit. This legislation will help our charities prepare for the future. As we have seen in the last two years, a little help can go a long way. Of course, we are presently seeing that with the situation in Ukraine.

That is a win-win and that is exactly why I am supporting this legislation. As parliamentarians, we must advocate for policies that harness ingenuity. We can give people the tools and incentives to help bind communities together. We can make our communities and charities stronger and more resilient. We can empower individuals by letting them take the reins of their generosity and philanthropic efforts. It is about celebrating the value of local communities and charities, and it is a recognition that those at the grassroots level have the capacity to respond almost immediately to the needs and causes they feel passionate about.

● (1825)

It is in that spirit that Bill C-240 delivers in spades, and it respects the decisions made by donors themselves to support the charity of their choice. Not only am I confident of the aims of the bill, but we also have ample evidence to suggest it will accomplish its intended goal. It builds on the success of the removal of the capital gains tax on gifts of limited securities, which was introduced in 2006, as my colleague mentioned earlier. Since that common-sense change, charities have received donations of listed securities of over \$1 million every year, and that is for 16 years. It is a tremendous amount of money that is helping do the good work that charities do. It is time to make the Income Tax Act equitable and apply those previous changes to the sale of private shares.

There is no logical argument to oppose the bill, although we have certainly heard from those in government who fear the loss of tax revenue and people using tax loopholes, and have heard that again today from some of my colleagues across the way. These were the same arguments made by the finance officials for my private member's bill last summer, and when presented the evidence at committee, I was pleased to see numerous Liberal MPs vote for the legislation at third reading. I hope they will consider that in this particular bill as well.

I believe if my Liberal colleagues carefully scrutinize the legislation for themselves, they will quickly determine that it was drafted with those concerns in mind. There are safeguards built into this legislation as well, such as the requirement of having to sell the shares to someone at arm's length. Also, the sale of those shares must be at fair market value. These are sensible clauses built into the bill to ensure that the actual disposition of the shares occurs. Moreover, this ensures that shares are not sold at an inflated price to exaggerate the charitable donation tax credit.

My colleague from Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley deserves credit for how well thought out this legislation was designed. As he stated in his speech, though, we all owe Donald Johnson a tremendous round of applause for his passionate advocacy over the years. He has spearheaded these legislative changes for as long as I can remember. Like clockwork, every year

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members of Parliament would get his budget submission on the proposed changes contained in this bill. Mr. Johnson has been tireless in his efforts to get these important changes to the Income Tax Act, and I am thrilled we are speaking about them here today. I want to quote Mr. Johnson, who wrote a column published in the Toronto Star. He said:

Charities across Canada have been recommending that the government unlock more private wealth for public good. The best way to do that is by removing the capital gains tax on gifts of private company shares and real estate which, it has been estimated, will increase charitable donations by \$200 million each year.

That would do a lot of good in Canada, particularly at this moment.

In closing, I want to urge my colleagues and other parties to support this legislation. Let us pass the bill, send it to committee and bring in the charities and tax experts. I also recommend that my colleagues reach out to the charities in their constituencies and ask if they support Bill C-240. Call the volunteers and organizers and ask them if they believe the aims of this legislation will result in further dollars being donated to charities. I know that if my colleagues do, they will find universal support for the bill.

I want to congratulate my colleague from Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley once again for bringing this important bill forward. I am honoured to call him a friend, and he is an integral member of our Manitoba caucus. I am proud to second the bill and speak in favour of it. I pledge to do all that I can to see it pass.

● (1830)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):
Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today.

A lot of representation from Manitoba and from Quebec has spoken to this particular bill, and now I will lend my voice as the first Ontarian to speak to the bill before us.

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I want to go back to the comment I made at the beginning of the question I asked the member who introduced the bill, which was how important it is that private members' bills have an opportunity to come before this House to advance individual ideas that members have that they are passionate about. I know this particular issue is not just important to this member but indeed to a number of members who were around when it was introduced in the 2015 budget of Stephen Harper. As pointed out by the sponsor of the bill, it did not get implemented due to the change in government, so I can recognize that there is a desire for this. Indeed, I can also recognize where the intent of this piece of legislation is coming from and why it can be looked at as very favourable.

I will be completely honest in that I am learning a lot about this initiative from reviewing the bill beforehand, forming some opinions on it and listening to what I heard in the House this evening. I cannot say that I have come to a conclusion as to how I will vote on it, but I am certainly interested in hearing more, and when we get to the second hour of debate, I will continue to listen to inform myself on how to vote.

I will say from the outset that I have a few concerns. Perhaps between now and the second reading I can have a conversation with the sponsor of the bill so that he can try to address some of the concerns, which I will put forward now.

The first concern is with respect to the fact that I see the legislation before us as being disproportionately in favour of those who are high-income earners, or those who are in a position to have shares in companies or real estate and have the ability to dispose of those towards charity. However, any taxing measure that seeks to remove tax from individuals who are high-income earners I generally look at as regressive forms of taxation because they would primarily benefit such a small class of high-income individuals rather than targeting the charitable organizations and the broader public.

This brings me to my next concern, which is that I do not fully understand how the benefit is going to flow from the tax incentive to charity. I have been thinking about this as I have been listening, and I realize that the bill speaks specifically to shares and real estate, so I thought of who would donate real estate. What pops into my head when I think of the times when somebody would donate real estate is that, probably more often than not, it is part of an estate settlement through somebody's will.

If somebody has a piece of property that they want to donate to a charity, that is something that would probably be willed, or the executor of an estate, through consultation with those named in a will, would come to a determination to donate a piece of property. However, the only recipient that I see as being a beneficiary to a tax implication on that is the actual estate in that case. The estate would save on the capital gains tax there, but that would not necessarily be transferred down to the charitable organization because in my example the charitable organization would have received that particular piece of real estate regardless of whether or not the capital gains tax was paid.

In order to properly look at this, I would have to assume that we are not necessarily talking about estate planning, or those who are willing property or shares for that matter, but those who are doing it while they are still alive, outside of their estate. The question then

becomes this: How often does that happen? How often do people gift shares in companies or gift property to charitable organizations while they are still alive? I certainly respect the fact that it indeed does happen, and it happens quite a bit, but I still fail to see how the benefit will be transferred down to the charitable organization.

• (1835)

That is one of the big problems that I had with this. How does that benefit go from the individual who is receiving the capital gains benefit to the charitable organization?

The third and last concern that I would bring to the attention of the House is with respect to the cost of this particular measure. I know that it has been brought up by a few other colleagues. I had the opportunity to ask the sponsor of the bill a question about that and he indeed did provide some clarity to me with regard to the discrepancy between what the PBO was saying and what he said in his speech. It makes sense when he talks about it being over a five-year period. That certainly clears up a lot of that, but there is still a cost to it.

I guess I land on the position of trying to determine, personally, whether I see the benefit of the cost associated with this particular tax measure being of a benefit to society as a whole, and that is where I am a little concerned. As I indicated in my question, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that it would be in the neighbourhood of \$750 million, as much as a billion, and depending on what the uptake on this is, it could even be more. I hope the sponsor realizes that this is a real concern of some of us in the House, particularly me.

I would also perhaps add that I do not think it is the regular practice of any government to allow a private member's bill to change our tax code specifically. The tax code is a very complex document. I know that there have been calls, many times over the last few decades, to relook at our tax code from square one, i.e., put everything aside and start to build a new one because of how complex the tax code is with the various different layers and parts that are inserted into it. I am concerned about what the implications of this might be as it indirectly or directly relates to the tax code. I know it sounds very straightforward, but as we have seen in other times, whether it be through government legislation, in particular, or private member's motions like this, changing the tax code could have other consequences that we are not looking at in advance when we are trying to study this as a whole.

Those are the concerns that I have. I certainly, as I indicated previously, will continue to listen to the debate. I want to hear more as this comes forward in the second hour for the next reading of this and then hopefully inform myself to the point that I can make a good, wise decision and cast my vote in this place.

• (1840)

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the 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. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month I rose in this House and cited the Realtors Association of Hamilton-Burlington, which in January confirmed that the average house price in Hamilton was over \$1 million. Since then, the numbers for February have come out, and the average home price in the Hamilton—Burlington area is now over \$1.1 million. That is a 10% increase in just a month.

Imagine a young person in Hamilton who has been saving up for their first home, and in a single month the price of their starter home has increased by \$100,000. Fifty percent of Canadians under the age of 40 say that they have given up on the dream of home ownership. Who can blame them? Since the government came to office in 2015, the price of the average home in Hamilton has gone up by 200%. That is double the national average. I am very concerned, and what concerns me most is that there is no effective, realistic, comprehensive plan to remedy this situation.

When I spoke earlier this month, the response I received from the minister of housing was to advocate a tax on vacant homes as a solution to the current crisis. At that time, vacancies were on the decline, I might add.

A 1% tax on vacant homes will not provide the relief that the people of Flamborough—Glanbrook so desperately need. Perhaps what is more discouraging is that a two-year ban on foreign money in our real estate market, the one solid proposal that the current government brought forward, was defeated by the Liberals at the finance committee just a few weeks ago.

The national housing summit was yet more talk and no action. The people who elected us sent us here to create solutions to these challenges, but that is not what they are getting. Sadly, not only is the government failing to enact policies that will help Canadians, but it has rewarded CMHC executives with bonuses of \$48 million.

That is a disgrace. That is the very organization tasked with making housing more affordable for Canadians, yet the dream of home ownership has never seemed more distant for so many. That is not worthy of a bonus.

Housing supply is the problem. We have a construction deficit in this country of one million homes to meet current demand. Over half of that is in Ontario, but let me break that down even further. Just to keep pace, we need over 110,000 homes built in Hamilton alone, yet the federal government's accelerator fund proposes to build just 100,000 homes nationwide by the year 2025. As an example, last week it was announced that there would be 72 affordable housing units built at a cost of \$13.2 million. While I applaud the funding of more affordable housing, this does not keep pace and is not quick enough to even make a dent in the supply deficit. More needs to be done. We need a realistic and comprehensive plan. We need to fire on all cylinders to combat the housing crisis and build more supply.

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This issue impacts my constituents very directly. When are we going to see less talk and more action?

• (1845)

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to talk about our government tackling housing affordability. My colleague asked for a plan, and we have one. We launched the national housing strategy in 2017, the first of its kind in Canada's history. It is an ambitious 10-year plan backed by more than \$72 billion in investments.

I was deeply disappointed to hear the Conservative member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry yesterday say in the House that we should pull back on the national housing strategy. I could not disagree more. Unlike the Conservatives, we believe we need to make historic investments in affordable housing, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Through the national housing strategy, we have invested over \$20 billion. That is thanks to a range of programs that address the different housing needs of Canadians, from shelters to community housing, to market rentals and ownership. One of those programs, the rapid housing initiative, exceeded all expectations through two rounds of applications. It has been very popular with our partners and will ultimately result in the quick construction of more than 10,000 new affordable housing units, including more than 200 units in my colleague's city of Hamilton, but we recognize that we still need to do more.

Since the last election, this government has set out an ambitious new agenda with further activities to make housing more affordable for all Canadians. We have planned for new initiatives such as the housing accelerator fund to help cities speed up development processes, and we have expanded access to funding to support green home retrofits. We will be working with the provinces, territories and municipalities to develop a fairness in real estate action plan to ensure there is more protection and transparency for homebuyers and renters.

We will also be collaborating with indigenous partners to develop a new urban, rural and northern indigenous strategy and Canada's first-ever national indigenous housing centre.

For young people working hard to get a foot on the property ladder, we introduced the first-time homebuyer incentive, which helps reduce their monthly mortgage payments without adding to their financial burden.

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I was also disappointed to hear my Conservative colleague, the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, say in the House yesterday that we should not be helping first-time homebuyers. On this side of the House, we believe that first-time homebuyers need more support. That is why we continue to make the first-time homebuyer incentive more accessible, with more adjustments to come.

To help make it easier for renters to get on the path to home ownership, we are also working on creating a fund to test, develop and scale up rent-to-own projects across the country.

We are proud of our success in improving housing affordability, even as we look forward to doing more with the support of this House and, I hope, the support of the member, and with our plan for making housing more affordable and creating more home ownership in this country.

• (1850)

Mr. Dan Muys: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the 200 more affordable housing units in Hamilton, although that is against a supply deficit of 110,000 homes, as I mentioned. The government's responses to any question on housing are formulaic, predictable and insufficient.

I will ask again. What is the government doing for Roseanne, a young woman in her twenties in my constituency in Upper Stoney Creek? She laments the fact that she has witnessed an exodus of her peers leaving the country for better affordability elsewhere. The brain drain is real in this aspect and the initiatives the government is continuing to repeat are like trying to fix a sinking ship by using a bucket. Canadians still find themselves drowning.

When the government's plan is to build fewer units across all of Canada than just the deficit in Hamilton alone, clearly more needs to be done. When is the government going to unveil a real plan to stabilize the housing market so that all Canadians can afford a home, not just the 700 households per week that are fortunate enough to be part of an announcement that is really too little, too late?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to get into the political rhetoric that we should do more. We have to do more. I agree with the member.

I hope the member and the party opposite will support all of the measures that will be put in place in the next months and years to come. We agree with the member that there is an issue in housing and the government has made a plan with the national housing strategy, ownership initiatives and a rent-to-own program coming. I hope the member will support these measures when they are presented in the House.

HEALTH

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, I welcome this opportunity to follow up on my request of the Prime Minister to stop his unacceptable campaign of hate and divisiveness against ordinary Canadians. Now that the provinces are demonstrating the leadership that is so clearly lacking at the federal level regarding the mandates, it is time to start focus-

ing on the deep wounds in Canadian society created by the Prime Minister.

On February 15, 2022, the Liberal-NDP coalition issued a proclamation declaring a public order emergency. The anti-democratic, bouncy castle emergency order has been recognized around the world as a despicable, egregious violation of human rights. Canada's image has been so tarnished internationally that on March 7, the Prime Minister had to be snuck into the residence of the Prime Minister of Great Britain at 10 Downing Street through the servants' entrance. Dozens of protesters were at the front door chanting a slogan that has been banned in Canada from flags and protest signs on Ottawa's Parliament Hill.

The purpose of the adjournment debate is to follow up on an incomplete response to a question posed during question period. I specifically asked why members of the Liberal Party refuse to condemn the racist act of wearing blackface. Canadians see the hypocrisy in the Prime Minister accusing others of being racist when the Prime Minister enjoys dressing up in costumes and in blackface to make fun of other people's cultures and skin colour.

The Prime Minister's racist accusation is interpreted by the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide as the accusation in a mirror. This is the rhetorical practice of falsely accusing others of conducting, plotting or committing precisely the same transgressions as one plans to commit against them. The claim by the Prime Minister and his senior members in the Liberal Party that members of the "freedom convoy" were racists, misogynists and undesirables is a textbook example of demonizing and dehumanizing that comes by labelling certain groups in society as undesirable.

The Prime Minister has a track record of accusing the "freedom convoy" participants of the very violations that he is perpetrating. I know that members of the Liberal-NDP coalition like conspiracy theories, but it was no conspiracy when a Quebec Liberal MP critiqued members of the party about the divisive rhetoric on vaccinations. He urged the government to keep in mind the fact that not everyone could earn a living from a MacBook at the cottage.

Liberals need to accept that many Canadians believe those who disagree with them on policy matters are not wrong. They struggle to understand how those on the big government side of the political fence could possibly hold so many wrong-headed views. The trucker strike was brought about by widespread resentment of hysterical reporting throughout the pandemic by the Liberal-bought-off media. The attempted cancellation of anyone who dissented over lockdowns, whether for scientific grounds or civil liberty grounds, further exacerbated the problem.

The accusation is a mere propaganda technique that has been used in non-genocidal and other forms of persecution committed against Jews, Blacks and first nations, among others. It is time to face some inconvenient truths about the Prime Minister. His behaviour is dividing our country. Being angry all the time is not demonstrating leadership.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we come out of the omicron wave, it is now important to take stock of where we are and to plan a more sustainable approach to our COVID-19 management.

[*English*]

Our goal from the start has been to minimize serious illness and overall deaths, while minimizing societal disruption. That remains unchanged. As the omicron wave continues to recede, we need to recognize that COVID is not just going to disappear. While we have learned a great deal over the course of the pandemic, there still remains much uncertainty.

Our health system has been significantly strained throughout this pandemic. While there is variability in how jurisdictions across the country are assessing risks and adjusting their approaches, we will continue to recommend some individual public health measures in the near term, such as wearing masks in indoor public settings, while continuing to use vaccines and therapeutics as cornerstones of our response.

[*Translation*]

The vaccination rate in Canada is high, but it is still possible to improve our protection. As of March 13, 2022, more than 84% of Canadians had received at least one dose, more than 81% had received two doses and roughly 17 million Canadians had received a booster.

[*English*]

Individuals who have received an additional dose are highly protected against hospitalization. As of February 27, 2022, less than 8% of hospitalizations were among individuals fully vaccinated with an additional dose. Thanks to Canadians' adherence to public health measures and high rates of vaccination, including booster doses, our outlook for the next several months continues to improve.

As Canada emerges from this wave with vaccines widely available and higher levels of immunity because of prior infection, the focus of planning will shift toward recovery. Individual public health measures, along with vaccines and therapeutics, will remain key in protecting individuals should a virulent and highly transmissible variant of concern emerge again.

Studies have also shown that the timely implementation of public health measures will result in fewer hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19, less demand on health care services and a reduced need for other more restrictive population-based measures that may result in significant societal disruption in workplaces, for

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example. Business closures, school closures and other closures will continue to be reduced as a result.

[*Translation*]

The Public Health Agency of Canada is collaborating with its provincial and territorial partners to plan for the adoption of a more sustainable approach to intervening with respect to the continued presence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

[*English*]

Given the uncertainty, nimble approaches will be required as government-imposed restrictive measures are lifted. Nationally, we are seeing reported cases levelling off, while severe outcomes, like hospitalizations, ICU admissions and deaths, are continuing to decline. While this is encouraging, there is still the potential for severity indicators to increase again as the provinces and territories begin relaxing their public health measures.

For these reasons, it is important that all Canadians continue to update their vaccine protection and make choices that reduce the risks of COVID-19 for themselves and their loved ones. A longer-term, more sustainable approach as we manage this virus will leverage all tools to balance the need to manage COVID-19 against minimizing societal disruption and enabling recovery. I would like to finish by reaffirming that this pandemic has demonstrated that we need a range of measures in our public health tool box to continue to fend off highly infectious diseases.

• (1900)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, it is time to put a muzzle on the Gerald Butts of the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party has been sending Canadians down the road of American-style politics for years. His American advisers from the U.S. Democratic Party have seen to that.

For the sake of Canadian unity, the Prime Minister has to put a muzzle on his disgraced former secretary barking attack dog. His attacks on Twitter are hate speech against Christians. The Liberal socialist-funded anti-Canadian hate network labels Catholics as hateful. The campaign of hatred must stop. That the Prime Minister would use his AIM technique to level false claims against other Canadians proves that members of the “freedom convoy” were right to be fearful about the future of democracy in Canada.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, we are cautiously optimistic about the near-term trajectory for our country. We know that multiple layers of protection, including vaccination, protect us against severe health outcomes from COVID-19.

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Getting as many Canadians fully vaccinated and boosted as possible while continuing to adhere to individual public health measures is expected to help us get through this phase of uncertainty. Jurisdictions will continue to adjust public health measures as required to manage a resurgence of COVID-19 cases. While vaccination does not give us full immunity from infection, it does prevent us from getting very sick and prevents the potential need for hospitalization. Across the country, unvaccinated individuals who get COVID are four times more likely to be hospitalized than fully vaccinated individuals, and they are 11 times more likely to be hospitalized than those who have received an additional dose.

The incentive for vaccines is evident. They protect us from severe illness and lessen the burden on our strained health care systems.

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by sharing with you about Hayden and his mom Rebecca from my community. Hayden was born with Cornelia de Lange syndrome with epilepsy and microcephaly. When Hayden was a child, he and Rebecca had access to various supports, including the disability tax credit and assistance for children with severe disabilities. His mom describes him as the most smiley, happiest, chattiest boy.

When he turned 18, though, the supports his mom received dropped off like a cliff. The first three months, while waiting for the Ontario disability support program, they had no support at all. Then when ODSP did kick in, with nothing provided retroactively, it provided not nearly enough and very little supplemental for Hayden's additional needs.

As an example, Hayden required a particularly special diet, for which they put in a request for an additional \$1,000 a month, a request that was never approved. His mom, as a result, had to go about making impossible choices about what had to go and what could stay. For example cans of Ensure, a necessary supplement for Hayden's diet, were ratcheted way back.

Hayden went downhill fast. Within a year, this past December, Hayden passed away. His mom describes her relationship with various government entities as like being in an abusive relationship. She shared with me that all she wanted were basic human rights. There were not enough funds provided even for a funeral, so they had a simple visitation instead. From this, Rebecca still owes \$3,000. She is slowly paying it down.

As a country, we let Hayden down. We let Rebecca down. There are so many others across the country. In fact, Rebecca herself has spoken with four other parents, each with similar devastating stories. We could choose to do so much better for them and for all Canadians across the country with disabilities.

It is why the Canada disability benefit would be so critical, a guaranteed livable income for Canadians with disabilities. It is no wonder it is already supported by 89% of Canadians. Is there much of anything that 89% of us can all agree on? We know Canadians with disabilities are disproportionately living in poverty across the country. Over 40% of those living in poverty would be brought up through this support.

We need to not only fast-track the Canada disability benefit, but also ensure that Canadians with disabilities are involved every step of the way, as we have been hearing, not only from individuals and organizations in my community but also from folks right across the country. There is a recent petition that secured almost 18,000 signatures, each of whom are just looking for a glimmer of hope.

Can the minister share the progress made in working to fast-track the Canada disability benefit? As Rebecca would say, everybody has a Hayden. Every day that we wait for the Canada disability benefit, we risk losing another Hayden. This legislation would save lives, and it is far past time we get it done.

● (1905)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the tragic story of Hayden and Rebecca hurts all of our hearts deeply. This story is the centre of our work. It is what drives our work each and every single day.

My friend and colleague, the member for Kitchener Centre, raises the important issue of how the Government of Canada is supporting our most vulnerable.

[*Translation*]

I want the House to know that we are working on setting up the Canadian disability benefit.

[*English*]

In her mandate letter that was published on December 16, 2021, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion was instructed to move forward with our campaign platform commitment for the design, introduction and implementation of a Canada disability benefit act and a Canada disability benefit for low-income working-age persons with disabilities. The need for this benefit is clear.

Despite the progress that has been made in recent years, Canadians with disabilities continue to face persistent barriers to full economic and social participation. Prior to the pandemic, the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability painted a troubling picture of economic disparity. At the time of the survey, working-age Canadians with disabilities were over two times more likely to be living in poverty than the general population, at 21% to 11%. The situation is even worse for those with more severe disabilities and for women, indigenous peoples, LGBTQ2 and racialized Canadians with disabilities.

Over the past year, the global pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated the entrenched inequities faced by Canadians with disabilities. A recent survey tabled by this very member, the member for Kitchener Centre, showed that two-thirds of respondents with disabilities indicated that they were having difficulties meeting their financial obligations or essential needs as a result of the pandemic. I might add that it was a survey garnering almost 18,000 signatures.

The Canada disability benefit would address these inequities head-on. It would reduce poverty and support the financial security of working-age persons with disabilities, but we cannot say much yet about some of the specific aspects of the benefit, and that is because we want to engage provinces and territories to ensure the benefit supplements, rather than replaces, existing benefits and income, so in the spirit of “nothing without us”, we are engaging persons with disabilities and the disability community directly in the design of the benefits.

[Translation]

That is essential. Canadians with disabilities know better than anyone what economic obstacles they face and what supports they need to achieve financial security.

We know Canadians with disabilities are eager to see these benefits implemented, and we now have a golden opportunity to move forward with a postpandemic recovery that includes people with disabilities.

[English]

I thank the member for his advocacy on behalf of his constituents and on behalf of Hayden and Rebecca and their legacy.

• (1910)

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Speaker, my question in reply is simply, when?

We know that the previous bill, Bill C-35, was introduced in the last parliamentary session two months before the election. In the time since, 43 senators have joined the call and signed on, asking that we fast-track this critical support. Knowing there is so much

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existing support within the governing party, knowing there is support in the other place and, most importantly, knowing that Canadians with disabilities across the country have been calling out for years and that organizations like Disability Without Poverty have been doing such critical convening to bring that voice to government, can the parliamentary secretary share when this legislation will be reintroduced in this place? If not, what more is required to demonstrate how critical it is for exactly that to happen?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Mr. Speaker, the member's question is well timed, and I share his urgency on this issue.

The Government of Canada has been there for persons with disabilities throughout the pandemic, and we are still there for them.

[Translation]

Our response to the pandemic took people with disabilities into consideration. We provided money to support seniors and students with disabilities.

[English]

We funded a one-time tax-free non-reportable payment of up to \$600 to help persons with disabilities weather the crisis, and since the beginning of this benefit in October 2020 and until December 2021, Service Canada issued payments to 1.75 million individuals, for a total value of \$815 million. Now we are in the process of mapping out a disability inclusion action plan, which includes financial relief through a Canada disability benefit.

The benefit has the potential to help hundreds of thousands of working-age Canadians with disabilities and their families.

I thank the member again for his advocacy and his sense of urgency on behalf of his constituents.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:12 p.m.)

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