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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 20, 2023

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[*English*]

PROHIBITION OF THE EXPORT OF HORSES BY AIR FOR SLAUGHTER ACT

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.) moved that Bill C-355, An Act to prohibit the export by air of horses for slaughter and to make related amendments to certain Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am here today to discuss an issue that is important to me and to many Canadians, Bill C-355, a private member's bill that seeks to ban the export of live horses for slaughter. I stand in the House not just as a member of Parliament but also as a Canadian who values the special relationship between humans and horses.

I tabled this private member's bill to ban the export of live horses for slaughter, a practice that must stop. I have spent months hearing from stakeholders on all sides of this issue, and it has been a very thoughtful process. I look forward to discussing and debating this issue in the House of Commons and at committee. I welcome the opportunity to work together across party lines to advance this important legislation. Other countries have banned this practice and I believe it is time for Canada to do the same.

Throughout Canada's history, horses have been our steadfast companions, working alongside us in the fields and forests, in communities that make up this great nation. Our history with horses is a rich and diverse as the land we call home. There is no doubt that Canadians have a special relationship with horses.

In the bucolic landscape of Kitchener—Conestoga, the riding I have the privilege to represent, we can see that relationship everyday. For generations, and to this day, Mennonite families in our region have relied on and still rely on horses for traditional horse-drawn buggies for transportation.

Our local newspaper, the Woolwich Observer, and the Canadian Tire in town both have tie-ups for horses and buggies. We can still see some farmers in Kitchener—Conestoga working side by side

with their horses, plowing fields. These horses are more than just working animals. They are part of the Mennonite identity and a symbol of the commitment to a simple and sustainable way of life.

Symbolic of Canada is the iconic image of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, proudly working in harmony with their horses, representing law and order across our vast nation. The RCMP's history with horses is a testament to the enduring partnership between humans and these majestic animals, a bond forged in the crucible of duty and service.

Every year, in Kitchener—Conestoga, in the township of Wilmot, our New Hamburg Fall Fair remains a beacon of tradition. There are events throughout the weekend in September, but the first event of the fair is always the horse pull event, where the strength and grace of these majestic animals is showcased. These gatherings are not just about competition but serve as a reminder of the shared values that bind our real communities together.

Beyond the roles in agriculture and law enforcement, horses have been integral to our everyday lives as companion animals. Many Canadians have experienced the joy of bonding with horses, forging a connection that transcends words. Their gentle nature and intuitive understanding make them not just pets but true friends, offering solace and companionship in a hectic world.

In recent times, we have also recognized the therapeutic benefit of horses. Equine-assisted therapy has emerged as a powerful tool, providing comfort and healing to those facing physical and emotional challenges. The quiet strength of a horse has the capacity to mend wounds both seen and unseen and restore a sense of balance to those who seek solace in their presence.

In celebrating and appreciating the unique relationship with horses, let us not forget the responsibility that comes with it. We must ensure the welfare of these magnificent creatures, preserving their place in our hearts and in our history.

Today, I want to shed light on the current situation.

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Each year approximately 2,600 live horses are exported by Canada for the sole purpose of slaughter. The conditions under which these horses are exported are distressing to say the least. These young, 18-month-old, intelligent and sensitive animals are packed into cramped and often unsuitable shipping containers. They endure long journeys spanning thousands of kilometres. They are deprived of food and water for extended periods of time during those flights and can arrive injured or deceased.

Horses by their very nature are sensitive beings and companion animals. Subjecting them to such stressful conditions is not only inhumane but it goes against the very values that we hold dear as Canadians. Imagine the stress of being crammed into a confined space with the constant movement and the uncertainty of the journey's end. Horses, unlike traditional livestock, form deep bonds with humans and their capacity for suffering is profound. This is not a fate that should befit animals that have played pivotal roles in our history.

It is heartening to note that several countries, including the United States and the U.K., have already recognized the ethical implications of exporting live horses for slaughter and have banned this practice. It is high time for Canada to follow suit. Our nation has a proud history of leading by example and, on this matter, Canadians know this practice is the right thing to do, regardless of what country is or is not doing. We must ensure that these horses are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve. Therefore, let us join the ranks of countries that have banned this practice and show the world that Canada values compassion and humanity in all its forms.

• (1105)

Before understanding what the bill aims to accomplish, it is important to understand the industry of live-horse export in Canada.

According to Statistics Canada, about 2,600 horses were exported for slaughter in 2022. Compared to other sectors, this is a relatively small industry, with a total value of about \$19 million per year. There are approximately 350 producers in Canada and only a few companies export live horses by plane. Most of these flights leave from Edmonton, Calgary and Winnipeg.

The majority of horses exported for slaughter are raised on feedlots. Feedlots are abandoned plots of land where horses are often denied shelter or protection from the elements. These are not the kinds of horse stables that I see in my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga or in communities across Canada.

These gentle draft horses are raised to the age of 18 months old and then shipped live in crates. Each crate is roughly the size of a single conventional horse stall that would normally be expected to hold one horse. For shipping, three to four horses are crammed into the small space and then they journey thousands of kilometres with no food or water. Canada is one of the only countries in the world that breeds and raises horses and then transports them live overseas for slaughter to fill a demand for fresh horsemeat.

The bill is very specific in its focus. My private member's bill, Bill C-355, would do what the title says: prohibit the export of horses by air for slaughter. The bill takes into consideration numerous factors, including legal obligations, international trade commitments and relations, acts and regulations involving animals more

broadly, and mechanisms for implementation and enforcement. My team and I have worked diligently to ensure that the legislation is comprehensive and considers all perspectives.

People might wonder why existing laws are not sufficient to prohibit this practice. The answer is that our current legal framework does not adequately protect these horses. We need specific legislation that makes it crystal clear that the export of live horses for slaughter is unacceptable in Canada, and Bill C-355 is that legislation.

In having a full understanding of the bill, it is also important to highlight what the bill would not do. I want to ensure for our hard-working farmers and ranchers that Bill C-355 is specifically aimed at banning the export of live horses for slaughter and does not intend to disrupt any other livestock sector. I understand the critical role that our agricultural communities play in our nation's prosperity and the dedication they put into their work every day.

My close relationship with farmers in my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga has deepened my appreciation for the tireless efforts and commitment they and their families put into their livelihoods. As a member of the agriculture committee, it is an honour for me to meet with and hear from agricultural stakeholders on a regular basis. It is because of these connections that I want to emphasize that this legislation is not about targeting or hindering the livelihoods of those who rely on livestock for their well-being and their contributions to our nation's food security.

Bill C-355 is solely focused on banning the export of live horses, recognizing their unique role and the specific challenges they face in the export market for slaughter. I remain committed to working collaboratively with our farming communities to ensure the legislation has no unintended consequences for their operations. Our goal is to protect the welfare of horses, while respecting the value of work that farmers undertake.

By uniting our efforts to pass this bill, it can demonstrate our commitment to both animal welfare and the prosperity of our rural communities. Together, we can ensure that Canada continues to be a beacon of compassion and responsibility toward its animals, while upholding the values that our farmers and their families hold dear.

With regard to the timeline of Bill C-355, it must pass in the House of Commons and the Senate. Once passed, the bill can receive royal assent and come into effect 18 months after it has become law. The 18-month timeline aligns with the natural lifespan of a horse raised for slaughter, which is also 18 months. By design, this time frame reflects an understanding of the industry and the life cycle of these horses.

Moreover, the 18-month grace period is not just a symbolic gesture; it is a practical necessity. We recognize the industry will require time to adapt and implement the necessary changes to comply with new regulations. This grace period would allow stakeholders, from breeders to exporters, to make the essential adjustments without undue burden. The aim is to provide this time frame to ensure a smooth transition toward a more compassionate and responsible approach to the treatment of horses in our society. I believe the time frame built into the legislation strikes this balance, giving enough time for the industry to adjust, while being enacted as soon as practically possible.

I want to emphasize that drafting this legislation has been a thoughtful and inclusive process. I have spent months meeting with many stakeholders and considering the views from all sides. This includes fellow members of Parliament, senators, farmers, animal rights advocates, industry representatives and citizens from my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga and throughout Canada. The bill reflects a balanced approach that aims to protect horses, while considering the economic interests of those involved.

● (1110)

I am pleased to inform members that my private member's bill, Bill C-355, has garnered support from both sides of the House of Parliament. This is a testament to the shared belief in the importance of protecting these animals and the need to end the export of live horses for slaughter.

As we continue to move forward, I welcome the opportunity to continue this debate in committee, working collaboratively with my colleagues to ensure the legislation becomes law and horses in Canada are safeguarded.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the advocates and stakeholders who have contributed to this discussion and the drafting of this legislation. Their passion, dedication and tireless efforts have brought us to this point.

Public opinion on this issue has made it clear that Canadians are simply not supportive of exporting horses for slaughter. There has been strong support from animal welfare advocacy groups like the SPCAs across Canada. Citizens from coast to coast to coast have made their voices heard.

I would like to thank one voice in particular, a voice I think we all know. Canadian icon Jann Arden has been a champion of the issue of banning the export of live horses for slaughter. She helped promote a recent petition that was presented in the House of Commons by my colleague, the member of Parliament for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, which received over 36,000 signatures. I want to personally thank her for her strong advocacy.

I would like to conclude by saying that this has been a thoughtful process that began months ago. I have met with, and continue to meet, with stakeholders to hear from them and to learn from their perspectives. I look forward to working collaboratively with parliamentarians to ensure this bill moves through the House of Commons in a timely manner. I am optimistic the bill will continue to receive support from both sides of the House.

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Finally, let us embrace and celebrate that special bond we share with horses and continue to promote their humane treatment. The deep connection that exists between horses and humans is one that, through the very essence of our national identity, reminds us of the enduring spirit of partnership and harmony that defines us as Canadians. It is a partnership and a relationship built on trust and mutual respect.

The export of live horses for slaughter is a betrayal of that trust and a breach of our moral obligations. Therefore, let us stand together across party lines and put an end to this cruel practice. I thank members for their support. Let us work together to make Bill C-355 a reality and ban the export of live horses for slaughter.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I share a love of horses with the member opposite, but I have heard some concerns from individuals who need to transport their horses for equestrian events. These are show ponies and that sort of thing. They are concerned that if people are critical of how horses are transported today, they may be incorporated eventually into this bill.

Could he provide some comment for them?

● (1115)

Mr. Tim Louis: Mr. Speaker, we needed to consider that. There are horses exported for breeding, for sporting events and for other reasons, not just live export for slaughter. What we have done is a reverse opt-in. In order to export the horses that people have, they will need to sign a form saying why they are doing this. If the ministry says no problem, then away they go. This means that people doing this for sporting reasons, breeding reasons or just personal reasons can fill out the form, send it in and get the permission. This will ensure that this is a narrow scope that only affects horses exported live for slaughter.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Kitchener—Conestoga for introducing this bill. I did introduce petition e-4190, which had over 36,000 signatures.

He is very well aware that this was a key line item in the minister's mandate letter, dating back from 2021. I respect the right of every member to bring in a bill, but I hope he can maybe inform the House why the government has not brought in its own legislation and why it may have relied on this private member's bill. Private members' bills often have a lengthy journey through the House, and I am wondering why the government did not make use of its considerable resources to advance this issue sooner.

Mr. Tim Louis: Mr. Speaker, it was my colleague's petition that sent so many of those letters to all of us as members of Parliament, strongly advocating. Their writing and their letters work. I want to thank my colleague for doing that.

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By thanking him, I am showing that I am willing to work across party lines. I think we agree. I think that there are people in all parties who agree. The government was moving forward and consulting and I had this opportunity, when my private member's bill came up, to grab the reins and move forward on this legislation.

It will be as binding as any law that was passed by the government. I do hope that, with co-operation, we can move things through as fast as possible.

I look forward to getting this to committee as quickly as possible where we can continue studying it.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend and colleague for advancing this legislation. As I have discussed with him, Halton has deep roots in the horse industry.

We have Woodbine Racetrack. The first-ever Liberal MP for Halton, John White, was a horse owner and his horse won the 1860 Queen's Plate.

We have lots of horse advocates and plenty of horses in Milton. I have heard from a lot of my constituents about how important this is. There are so many horse lovers in Milton. I want to send all of my gratitude to them for all of the messages that I have received on this.

I express gratitude to the member for advancing this legislation.

Mr. Tim Louis: Mr. Speaker, yes, we have heard from people. That bond that we have with horses is special. I think that many Canadians do not know about this practice. When they do hear about it, they ask why it cannot stop. That is what this private member's bill is doing. It would specifically stop the export of live horses for slaughter because we do have that relationship with our horses.

There are stables in my community and across all of Canada. People have that symbiotic relationship. I hope we can work together to make this happen.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to understand why this item is resurfacing two years after being included in the former minister of agriculture and agri-food's mandate letter, but it is well-intended.

My question is: Why is it only horses?

I heard my colleague mention their sensitivity, but for crying out loud, so many animals are just as sensitive. Why focus only on horses?

[*English*]

Mr. Tim Louis: Mr. Speaker, people reached out to us. Canadians reached out to me. They wanted to ban this specific practice. I wanted to make sure that this legislation was very narrow in scope, to make sure that we had co-operation from all sides, from stakeholders. It was a very thoughtful and considered process with a narrow focus to specifically ban a process, the banning of the export of live horses.

• (1120)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting to rise today on Bill C-355, an act to prohibit the export by air of horses for slaughter. I think it is important in this House, whenever we debate legislation that is going to impact the livelihoods of thousands of Canadians, that we ensure that legislation is based on sound science and data from experts, and not on a motion. This legislation, I would argue, is based on a motion, and not on science or data.

This bill would not only ban horses, but would impact a number of industries in Canada with maybe unintended consequences. Listening to my colleague, the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga, who tabled this legislation, it is clear to me that he did not listen to the experts, and those who understand this industry intimately and know exactly what is going on with the horses that are transported and exported out of Canada.

In fact, I do not think this member did his due diligence in tabling this legislation. If he listened to experts, he would not have tabled this legislation at all. He used the word “cramped” many times in his speech. In fact, it is in the preamble of his bill. Based on international animal transportation regulations, in Canada the space for those horses is almost twice that of the international regulations. They are not cramped. That is just one aspect of what he is talking about.

The focus of my speech will be the unintended consequences of this legislation and how they would impact a number of other industries. I do not believe the Liberals did their homework before tabling this legislation, which is trying to appease a very niche activist agenda.

First, I want to go with the facts. This is not something, as my colleague said, that we can just sign off on, for one's horse to be transported or exported. This has to be a declaration from the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. It is not something that anyone can sign off on. This would add burdensome red tape and delays that would impact a number of industries across Canada.

In fact, the pilots and customs officers would have the responsibility of having this declaration approved by the minister prior to flights leaving Canada. No other commodity in Canada has to take on that kind of responsibility.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has incredibly strict safety regulations when it comes to transporting livestock. We already had a question from the Bloc member, who asked what is next. We are starting with horses. What is next? Will it be cattle, pork or chickens? My colleague is saying that is not the case, but this is opening the door to exactly that.

The facts are that the regulations we have in Canada are impeccable and among the best in the world. Since 2013, 41,000 horses have been exported for the purpose of slaughter. The mortality rate on those transports is 0.012%. Those are the facts. The member is making it sound like this is a horrific nightmare of an industry. No deaths have occurred for horses since 2014. Those are the facts and that is the data.

The member is right. There are about 350 horse breeders across Canada, mainly in Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario. They are purposely breeding horses for this reason. He is talking about the RCMP horses and the pony horses. These are not the types of horses we are talking about. These are not broken pets that are being sent off for food sources. These are horses that are specifically bred for this industry.

In fact, a quarter of those breeders are indigenous. About 40% of the horses that are exported from Canada are raised by indigenous breeders. I want to talk about a member of the Métis Nation of Alberta who provided a statement to me. They are very upset about not being consulted on this legislation. The statement reads:

We are trying to keep and pass on Metis traditions for our families including working with horses. Just like most Metis, we are not in a position, financially, to keep horses only for recreational use. Our farms are not sustainable without the meat horse industry.... Indian Reserves and Metis settlements were not designated on prime...farmland but raising horses is a way to utilize this land into something profitable.

Many first nations and Métis groups that I have spoken with are extremely upset that they were not consulted on how this bill would affect them.

• (1125)

I have a number of letters from other industry stakeholders who were also not consulted before this bill was tabled. I am not sure who the member spoke to, but I have a pretty good idea.

Equestrian Canada has strong reservations with this bill and how it would impact its events. The regulatory burden by the Minister of Agriculture to approve every horse transported by air would cause unnecessary red tape and time delays for these events. This would jeopardize international competitions in Canada and around the world, like the Olympics, the Pan Am Games and other Equestrian Canada events.

My colleague from Milton talked about Woodbine. If the legislation passes, Woodbine is not going to have international horses coming to compete at that event. For example, competitors would question whether or not to attend events in Canada, like the Masters at Spruce Meadows and the Calgary Stampede, because they would not want to have to deal with these new regulations that are time consuming, and the burdensome red tape, like getting an affidavit or a declaration from the Minister of Agriculture. These events bring billions of dollars of economic opportunities to our rural communities and they would be lost. Again, this would be an unintended consequence, because the Liberals did not do their homework and are trying to appease a very niche group.

Another group, the Air Line Pilots Association of Canada, which represents 77,000 airline pilots, is also opposing this bill, because if pilots did not have that declaration from the Minister of Agriculture, a responsibility they do not want to take on, something they do

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not have to do at this time, they would be facing a \$250,000 fine as a result of this legislation. Airlines pilots around the world do not want to deal with this. They understand that livestock is a cargo they carry, but this is an unrealistic and impractical administrative responsibility they do not want to take on.

Proper animal care and welfare are paramount to livestock producers across Canada and our existing transport laws reflect that with the most up-to-date scientific research and regulations. This is proven in the data, with not a single fatality in almost 20 years and infinitesimal injuries, but this is data the Liberal member is ignoring.

This bill has no basis in fact and is another attack by the Prime Minister and the Liberal government on Canadian agriculture and agri-food industries. What the member refused to mention is that more than a billion people around the world rely on this meat for a major part of the protein in their diet, including in Japan, Mexico, Italy, Russia, China and, yes, Canada. Canadians still eat horse meat for a major part of their protein, which in many cases is healthier than beef, but do not tell my cattle producers in Alberta I said such a thing.

Therefore, I would ask my colleagues in the House of Commons to vote against Bill C-355. It is imperative we have legislation tabled in this House, but this is legislation that would impact not only livestock producers but industries across Canada.

My colleague has said that he has a very narrow focus to this bill to ensure it only includes horses, but he did not do his due diligence. Clearly, this legislation would impact a number of other industries. The Liberals did not consult with first nations and Métis communities across Canada. They did not consult with airlines, airline associations and pilot associations. They did not consult with equestrian groups and major event hosts, like the Calgary Stampede, Spruce Meadows, Woodbine and those events that happen across Canada, nor with the athletes themselves who would travel not only across Canada, but around the world. Canadian equestrian athletes would no longer be competing in Canada because they do not want to take the risk of losing their horse or missing events because of the burdensome red tape and regulations this bill entails.

Most importantly, it is imperative that the legislation that comes to this House is based on science, data and the experts who know exactly what they are talking about. I think the member had the opportunity to speak with Ms. Woods, the premier expert in this industry, who has told him that everything in this bill is based on rhetoric and falsehoods. I hope the members of this House will see through this and make sure that we make decisions based on science and vote against Bill C-355.

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• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am here today to discuss Bill C-355, a bill that prohibits the export by air of live horses for the purpose of being slaughtered or fattened for slaughter. It enacts new legislation prohibiting the export of live horses.

I will start by carefully explaining the four main reasons why the Bloc Qu b cois is opposed to the principle of the bill.

First, the bill enacts new legislation, even though it is possible to change the current laws and regulations, in particular the Health of Animals Act, as well as its regulations. Also, it is inconceivable to us that animal welfare be restricted to just one type of animal, in this case equines. Canada and Quebec also export other types of live animals by various means of transportation. It would be worthwhile to consider the other types of transportation, including transportation by road, which is far more common and can also compromise animal welfare. Finally, amending the bill so as to raise standards for animal transportation would expand the scope of the bill and change the principle.

For these reasons, we will vote against this bill at second reading. That said, we find that the bill is well-intended. Animal welfare is an important concern and principle for us all. Without healthy animals, our agriculture and agri-food industry would collapse. Canada and Quebec have laws in place, but there are gaps in the legislation.

We do not want our position to be interpreted as a desire to minimize or deny the facts that led to the introduction of this bill. On the contrary, we are well aware that Canada exports by air live horses to be slaughtered in conditions that, even if they comply with Canadian laws and regulations, are widely criticized. The Bloc Qu b cois is especially frustrated by the fact that the bill deals solely with horses, when regulations on animal welfare and transportation apply to all animals exported for slaughter. However, should the bill be passed at second reading and amended in committee, the Bloc Qu b cois remains open to working responsibly.

In the former minister of agriculture and agri-food's 2021 mandate letter, the Prime Minister asked her to "Ban the live export of horses for slaughter." It seems like Canada intends to ban this practice itself. Why has this not already been done?

I will now address the fact that the CFIA, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, once had a page on its website dedicated to debunking myths about this industry. First, we have to distinguish between "horse meat" and "live horses". Horse meat refers to animals slaughtered in Canada and meat being exported, not live animals. For many people, the consumption of horse meat is taboo. Having had horses myself when I was young, I am well aware of that. We have to respect that, but not at the expense of other animals. Abuse is abuse, regardless of the animal.

According to a survey conducted by Research Co. and Glacier Media in early 2021, only 27% of Canadians believe it is appropriate to eat horse meat, even though the percentage is much higher when it comes to meat from other animals. Rabbits and geese are regarded as appropriate food sources by nearly 60% of Canadians,

and that number increases to 75% for beef, 79% for pork and 88% for poultry, such as chicken.

One of the arguments presented by the sponsor of Bill S-270, which is similar to Bill C-355, is that horses played a unique role in Canada's history and in the building of the country, which means we could get into the whole issue of the Canadian horse. It is clear that horses are part of our history. Over 36,000 Canadians presented a petition to the House of Commons calling on the government to ban the export of live horses for slaughter. Two-thirds of Canadians are opposed to this practice. According to the same survey, nearly 85% of Canadians were not aware that Canada was engaging in this practice.

In Quebec, the consumption of horse meat is more generally accepted. The government of Quebec has included additional protection in its legal framework for racehorses, horses from riding centres, rodeo horses, horses participating in performances or shows, and so on. During this process, animal welfare groups, in particular the Association qu b coise de protection des chevaux, cited the Bloc Qu b cois's comment on the special treatment of horses, affirming that "it is self-evident that horses should be treated the same as cats and dogs", that the "government should not stop there" and that "all farm animals deserved the same consideration".

• (1135)

The Bloc Qu b cois believes that banning export by air of just one species is illogical and inconsistent, and that the best way to move forward on animal welfare is to review handling and transportation standards.

Quebec is the second-largest exporter of horse meat in the world, and 85% of our exports are sent to Japan. The United States claims to no longer slaughter horses for human consumption, but it exports its horses to Canada for that purpose. According to a CTV News report, we are talking about 120,000 animals between 2013 and 2018.

Canada is a major exporter of livestock. It exports pigs, sheep, lambs, cattle and horses to various countries. However, the conditions can be inhumane for all animals that are exported. We should therefore ensure better conditions.

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According to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, or CFIA, roughly 45,000 horses have been exported by air to Japan since 2013. That amounts to about 4,500 horses a year, maybe a few more, since animals are exported to countries besides Japan, even if Japan is by far the largest importer. However, every year, Canada also exports hundreds of thousands of other kinds of live animals to all corners of the world.

We think it would be more appropriate to take action on export conditions to make them safer for animals. Specifically, this could mean reducing the number of hours animals must travel without water, food or rest; regulating the size and material of cages used for transportation, or even creating areas especially designed for these animals; and controlling the temperature and ambient noise, considering that horses have much more sensitive hearing than humans. Lastly, we could examine the effects of a general ban on exporting live animals for slaughter abroad. Some countries have already taken this step. These are just ways of broadening the debate. What we have here are other issues that could be raised.

The Canadian Horse Defence Coalition even sued the Government of Canada for failing to abide by animal welfare legislation when shipping horses via cargo plane.

The Farm Animal Welfare Education Center, which is associated with the Autonomous University of Barcelona's veterinary school, stated the following, and I quote:

Despite being a relatively short phase in the process of meat production, the transport of animals to slaughter can cause major economic losses. This is because during transport the animals are exposed to a variety of stressors in a short period of time...[which] in extreme cases can result in the death of the animals.

Stress during transport increases the susceptibility of animals to infections. What is more, "Truck design and the handling of animals have an important effect on the welfare of animals during transport."

Many animals are similar to humans when it comes to stress. This is particularly true of swine, an oft-cited example. The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture published information on the precautions that should be taken when transporting swine.

That might be worth looking at. It is difficult to believe that all of the guidelines for the export of live swine for slaughter that should be followed are being followed, so we still have a way to go.

Finally, here is some information taken directly from the CFIA website. I thought it would be interesting to read a few excerpts.

Canadian provinces have the primary responsibility for protecting the welfare of animals, including farm animals and pets. All provinces and territories have laws in respect to animal welfare. Provincial and territorial legislation tend to be general in scope, covering a wide range of animal welfare interests. Some provinces and territories have regulations that govern specific aspects of animal welfare, or are related to certain species.

The CFIA's animal welfare mandate is limited to regulating humane transport of animals and the humane treatment of food animals in federal abattoirs.

Moreover, the CFIA works "closely with the provinces, territories and all stakeholders in the animal care community when animal welfare issues are identified".

The CFIA is also working with the industry to "establish standards of care and biosecurity", to establish "the requirements to protect all animals during transport", and to verify that "humane

transport and humane slaughter requirements are respected in all federal slaughter plants".

The Criminal Code also stipulates the following:

[The Criminal Code of Canada] prohibits anyone from willfully causing animals to suffer from neglect, pain or injury. The *Criminal Code* is enforced by police services, provincial and territorial Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and/or provincial and territorial ministries of agriculture.

Quebec has five laws and regulations in place that already protect farm animals.

In conclusion, even though I grew up with horses, I care about the welfare of all animals.

• (1140)

We will see what happens with this bill. If it does go to committee, the Bloc Québécois will obviously be there to work responsibly. However, at this point, we think this bill needs far too much work.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House and give my remarks, as the NDP's agriculture and agri-food critic, about Bill C-355, An Act to prohibit the export by air of horses for slaughter and to make related amendments to certain Acts. The bill was introduced by the member for Kitchener—Conestoga, with whom I have served on the agriculture committee for several years.

For my constituents who are listening to today's debate, I will give a brief summary of what the bill would do. The bill essentially seeks to prohibit the export by air from Canada of live horses for the purpose of being slaughtered or fattened for slaughter. It would do this by enacting a requirement for a written declaration before a live horse is allowed on a plane, attesting that the horse is not being exported for slaughter. Aircraft operators would not be allowed to take off until they have the declaration made available. There would be some hefty fines for non-compliance with any provisions of the proposed act.

Today's debate on Bill C-355 has to be placed in a wider context, which is the mandate letter that the Prime Minister provided to the previous minister of agriculture, who now serves as the Minister of National Revenue. The mandate letter was issued on December 16, 2021, and the Prime Minister directed the minister to deliver on a commitment to "ban the live export of horses for slaughter". However, Statistics Canada data shows that since the Liberals made that campaign promise in 2021, there have been more than 2,000 horses shipped from Canada to Japan for slaughter purposes. If we go back even farther, to 2013, we can see that more than 40,000 horses have been exported from Canada for that purpose.

Private Members' Business

I will never question the right of any member to bring in a piece of legislation as they see fit, and I certainly do not want this to be a remark that sheds any bad light on the member for Kitchener—Conestoga. However, I do have serious questions about a private member's bill coming in on the same subject matter as what was a fairly clear commitment in the minister's mandate letter. In my mind, it is the government, when it is making such a promise, that has the power, resources and personnel across several departments to do the consultation necessary. In fact, we know that private members' bills get a couple of hours of debate, but they are spread quite far apart; there can sometimes be up to 30 sitting days between them. Time is a valuable currency in this place, which I think we can all agree, and I believe that government legislation, given the fact that it has priority over most of our orders of the day, does have the ability to advance far more quickly. This is an open question that we, as members of the opposition, rightly have for the government: Why has it been two years and we still have not seen any sign of government legislation on this topic, and why, after two years, are we now looking at Bill C-355?

That point being made, I want to give an honourable mention to someone who used to sit in the House, a former colleague of some of my NDP colleagues, Mr. Alex Atamanenko. He represented the British Columbia Southern Interior riding, which no longer exists. Alex Atamanenko introduced three separate private member's bills on the subject: Bill C-544 in the 40th Parliament, Bill C-571 in the 41st Parliament and Bill C-322 in the 41st Parliament. He was a member of the NDP who had long experience on the subject. It is subject matter, of course, that New Democrats are intimately familiar with. One of the main purposes of his bill was to look at horse meat for human consumption, because we have found in our data collection that some horses, whether they were race horses or were bred for farm work, were making their way into the human consumption chain. Of course, some horses, especially race horses, are treated with a variety of antibiotics, performance-enhancing drugs, etc., and it is very clear on the labels of those drugs that whenever they are injected into a horse, the meat is not to be used for human consumption.

● (1145)

However, I digress. As I often find myself doing as a New Democrat, I am going to try to find a way to land in the middle, between the positions of my Liberal and Conservative colleagues. We know that live horses are primarily shipped by air from Calgary, Edmonton and Winnipeg and that the main market is Japan and other parts of Asia. The horses are usually fattened up there. It is for human consumption as a raw delicacy. The journey can be long. Anyone who has ever flown across the Pacific knows that very well.

I am trying to look at it from another point of view. Our agriculture committee has looked at the total lack of processing capacity in many parts of Canada. Federally, our meat processing is dominated by just two companies, Cargill and JBS. It is important to remember in today's debate that this is not looking at the idea of whether it is okay to consume horseflesh. That is not the purpose of today's debate. This bill has a very narrow focus, which is on the question of whether live horses should be exported by air for eventual slaughter for human consumption.

One point of view that we could look at is why we are doing this in the first place, why we are allowing another country to reap all the economic benefits of us exporting live horses, and if this is a way for us to look at the issue, as members of Parliament, of increasing the resiliency of our own processing capacity here in Canada. We know it is a very weak link in the supply chain.

We only need to look back at COVID-19 and what that did to our few processing centres. It caused huge rolling backlogs, especially for the cattle industry. Our feedlots were jam-packed full. Many cow-calf operators had to keep their livestock on their ranch lands, because there simply was no room in the feedlots.

I also want to focus on the fact that I was the sponsor of e-petition 4190. It was signed by more than 36,000 Canadians from right across the country. Clearly, this is an issue that many people are quite concerned about. However, I think it is important to highlight a few notable points in the government's response to my petition.

In the response, the government stated that it was “actively working to ensure due diligence is conducted. The Government of Canada must consider the perspectives of all stakeholders”. Further, the government went on to say that the engagement is going to be with:

...animal rights advocacy groups, provincial governments, industry representatives, and Indigenous business owners and organizations to obtain information and their point of view regarding this issue. Engagements are ongoing and continue to be actively pursued to broaden the scope of the consultation process and strengthen the Government's understanding of the issue.

As a member of Parliament, I have this question: How are the government's engagements on this issue coinciding with the work that the member for Kitchener—Conestoga has done? Has he been apprised of the government's efforts? Is he privy to the information that the government currently has on this issue? I do not know. I have to take his word for it.

I am going to lend my support to this bill in principle at second reading, because I believe that, as legislators, we can do our own consultation at the agriculture committee. Maybe this is an opportunity for us, as members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, to call in those witnesses from all sections of the industry to give their perspectives. We can then make an informed decision.

In conclusion, the NDP will be supporting this bill at second reading, because I do have a very real interest in hearing those perspectives and getting them on the record at committee. Hopefully, that would help us determine a way forward and whether possible amendments to the bill are needed.

With that, I will conclude, and I will again thank the member for Kitchener—Conestoga for giving us this opportunity to debate his bill.

Private Members' Business

• (1150)

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to lend my unwavering support to Bill C-355, an act to prohibit the export by air of horses for slaughter and to make related amendments to certain acts. This would be an impactful piece of legislation.

The bill is of great significance for Canadians; it addresses a pressing issue that is top of mind for many, including in my riding of Winnipeg South Centre. I had the privilege to witness the compassion for animal rights and overwhelming support for this bill from constituents during my recent by-election campaign in June. As I went door to door, the issues of horse welfare emerged repeatedly, underscoring the deep concern many Canadians hold regarding the treatment of these animals. This concern knows no party boundaries, and it strikes a chord with all who hold compassion for animals.

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to my esteemed colleague, the member for Kitchener—Conestoga, for introducing this bill. His dedication to the cause, as well as his commitment to the humane treatment of animals, is truly commendable. Bill C-355 seeks to ensure the humane treatment and handling of livestock, with a special focus on the welfare of horses destined for slaughter or fattening. The manner in which live horses are transported by air, where they are often subjected to cramped conditions during extended flights, raises profound concerns about their well-being and the necessity for stricter regulations.

It is important to recognize that, unfortunately, Canada has one of the weakest records internationally when it comes to humane or even minimally adequate animal welfare legislation. Horses, by their very nature, are predisposed to stress; the conditions they endure during these flights only exacerbate their distress, leading to injuries and immense suffering. The pressing issue at hand is evident in the multitude of articles and reports that have shone light on the hardships faced by these horses before their deaths. The current law allows trips to extend for up to 28 hours, with no provisions for food, water or rest, resulting in a distressing situation for these animals.

The lack of transparency regarding the treatment of these horses once they reach their destination is a deep concern that cannot be ignored. When the horses arrive overseas, they fall outside the purview of Canadian jurisdiction, leaving their well-being in question. It remains unclear when they receive the fundamental necessities of water and food, an omission that likely further extends the already gruelling 28-hour fasting period during transportation. The lack of transparency regarding their treatment and slaughter abroad is particularly troubling given the sensitive nature, physiology and strong flight response of these animals. It is essential that we address this critical gap in our regulations and ensure that the welfare of these horses is protected throughout their entire journey, from start to finish.

While we recognize the importance of trade and international relations, we must not forget our responsibility to protect the welfare of the animals that we export. Our national values and commitment to animal welfare require that we act on this issue. Moreover, Bill C-355 has garnered support from many organizations, including the

BC SPCA, the British Columbia Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which have encouraged citizens to engage by signing petitions and writing letters to their representatives. In fact, a federal e-petition has been tabled with over 36,000 signatures, making it one of the largest petitions of this Parliament. The voices of Canadians on this issue are clear.

The live export of horses for human consumption stands as an outdated and cruel practice, with mounting evidence highlighting the immense suffering and injuries inflicted on these animals. The Canadian Horse Defence Coalition has brought attention to this issue, leaving us to ponder why this practice continues. Recent data revealing frequent live horse shipments from my hometown of Winnipeg, in addition to Calgary and Edmonton, along with a staggering 67% increase in live horse exports in the past year, paints a distressing situation.

In contrast, international developments suggest a growing global realization of the need to acknowledge animals as sentient beings deserving protection. The United States, for instance, took a significant step in 2006 by ending the horsemeat industry through the discontinuation of funding for mandatory USDA horsemeat inspections. This action aims to ensure that no American horses face the grim fate of slaughter for meat, whether within or beyond U.S. borders.

Meanwhile, the United Kingdom has embarked on making positive legislative changes to address this with its “Action Plan for Animal Welfare”. It has introduced an animal welfare bill, established an animal sentience committee, ended live animal export for slaughter and fattening, and committed to considering animal welfare in all legislation.

• (1155)

A related Senate bill, Bill S-270, is also at the second reading stage in the Senate, reflecting the widespread concern for the humane treatment of horses in Canada. The BC SPCA, a strong advocate for animal welfare, emphasizes that no animal should be transported without feed, water or rest for more than eight hours, and horses should not endure such cramped and stressful conditions during air transport. It is vital that we take action to end this practice and to protect the welfare of these animals, ensuring that they are not subjected to prolonged suffering in the name of profit. The BC SPCA supports the Canadian Horse Defence Coalition's efforts to end the live export of horses for slaughter, underscoring the urgency of this matter and the need for immediate action to bring an end to this inhumane practice. Canada has the opportunity to rectify the situation and enforce laws that align with our commitment to animal welfare by passing Bill C-355.

Government Orders

As we advocate for the swift passage of these bills, let us remember that horses cannot afford to wait longer. Their suffering must come to an end. The fate of these horses is in our hands, and we must take decisive action to protect them from further harm. I want to share the following comments made by Mr. Jonas Watson, a highly respected vet in Winnipeg, who happens to be my vet. He said:

“Our 5,000-year relationship with the horse has shaped civilization and constitutes our most meaningful alliance with another species. Without question, the horse represents the most important domestic animal in human history. Their impact on society is almost immeasurable.

“In addition to playing a critical role in both agriculture and warfare, horses provided our first means of travel, trade and communication. Working horses enabled the exchange of ideas, language and culture around the world, leading to widespread social transformation.

“Today, these gentle creatures offer companionship, pleasure and therapy as loyal and devoted pets. Humankind would simply not be where it is today without our reliance on this species.

“It is essential to acknowledge how deeply indebted we are to the horse and, as such, they deserve to be treated with dignity, compassion and respect. The ugly live horse export industry is a black eye for our country and for my city of Winnipeg, and I look forward to its inevitable end. We owe Canadian horses far better than this.”

Those were the remarks of Dr. Jonas Watson in Winnipeg, who is a lead veterinarian.

I want to take this moment before I close to sincerely thank the Winnipeg Humane Society for its ongoing advocacy to help end this practice. Without it, I do not believe it would be possible for us to be here in this moment. I would also like to thank my good friend Jane Fudge. With her strong voice and advocacy, alongside other grassroots members of my constituency in Winnipeg South Centre, she has helped contribute to the progress we are making on this file.

In conclusion, Bill C-355 is an essential piece of legislation that embodies our shared values as Canadians. It reflects the commitment we have to safeguarding the welfare of animals and ensuring that our actions align with our national principles. I encourage each member of the House to support this bill, recognizing that this issue transcends political boundaries and is of the utmost importance to our constituents and the animals who depend on us for their protection and care. Together, we can make a difference and stand up for the humane treatment of horses in Canada.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I get into the legislation, I want to share my thoughts. I first want to express my concern over the misguided priorities of the current Liberal government. Instead of focusing on addressing the worst cost of living crisis in a generation, the Liberals are more focused on targeting Canadian livestock producers in an attempt to score cheap political points. In typical Liberal fashion, they have chosen to divide, distract and stigmatize once again. It would be much more beneficial to our country if the Liberals were focused on addressing the 1.9 million visits to Canadian food

banks in a single month, instead of fulfilling the demands of activists, and addressing the housing crisis that has made home ownership unaffordable, instead of punishing Canada's agriculture industry again.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I look forward to the second hour of debate.

• (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is 12:01 p.m. now, and I just want to remind members that if they want to continue their debate the next time a matter is before the House, they must wait until the Speaker interrupts them, because if they end their speech before then, it is the end of their speech.

Now that I have clarified that, the hon. member will have nine minutes the next time this matter is before the House.

[*Translation*]

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.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 30—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-56

Hon. Mary Ng (for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-56, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Competition Act, shall be disposed of as follows:

- (a) the bill be ordered for consideration at the second reading stage immediately after the adoption of this order;
- (b) when the House resumes debate at the second reading stage of the bill,
 - (i) not more than one additional member of each recognized party and a member of the Green Party may each speak at the said stage for not more than 20 minutes, followed by 10 minutes for questions and comments, provided that members may be permitted to split their time with another member,
 - (ii) at the conclusion of the time provided for the debate at the second reading stage or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, all questions necessary to dispose of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment, provided that, if a recorded division is requested, the vote shall not be deferred, and once proceedings at the said stage have concluded the House shall thereafter adjourn to the next sitting day;
- (c) if the bill has been read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance,
 - (i) it be an instruction to the committee, that during its consideration of the bill, it be granted the power to expand its scope to,
 - (A) increase the maximum fixed penalty amounts for abuse of dominance to \$25 million in the first instance, and \$35 million for subsequent orders, for situations where this amount is higher than three times the value of the benefit derived (or the alternative variable maximum),
 - (B) allow the Competition Bureau to conduct market study inquiries if it is either directed by the Minister responsible for the Act or recommended by the Commissioner of Competition, and require consultation between the two officials prior to the study being commenced,

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(C) revise the legal test for abuse of a dominant position prohibition order to be sufficiently met if the Tribunal finds that a dominant player has engaged in either a practice of anti-competitive acts or conduct other than superior competitive performance that had, is having or is likely to have the effect of preventing or lessening competition substantially in a relevant market,

(ii) during consideration of the bill by the committee,

(A) the committee shall have the first priority for the use of House resources for committee meetings,

(B) the committee shall meet between 3:30 p.m. up until 11:59 p.m. on the second sitting day following the adoption of the bill at second reading to gather evidence from witnesses,

(C) all amendments be submitted to the clerk of the committee by noon on the sitting day following the first meeting of the committee,

(D) amendments filed by independent members shall be deemed to have been proposed during the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill,

(E) the committee shall meet at 3:30 p.m., on the second sitting day following the first meeting to consider the bill at clause-by-clause, and if the committee has not completed the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill by 11:59 p.m., all remaining amendments submitted to the committee shall be deemed moved, the Chair shall put the question, forthwith and successively without further debate on all remaining clauses and amendments submitted to the committee as well as each and every question necessary to dispose of the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, and the committee shall not adjourn the meeting until it has disposed of the bill,

(F) a member of the committee may report the bill to the House by depositing it with the Clerk of the House, who shall notify the House leaders of the recognized parties and independent members, and if the House stands adjourned, the report shall be deemed to have been duly presented to the House during the previous sitting for the purpose of Standing Order 76.1(1);

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

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

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I will be seeking unanimous consent. I want to remind members on the other side that if they deny it, the other member will get a full 20-minute slot. I seek unanimous consent to split my time, for a 10-minute speech each, with the member for Winnipeg North.

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I am glad I could help bring the House together on that potentially controversial point about the member for Winnipeg North.

The Conservative member who just spoke was concerned that we are not addressing the housing crisis. I have great news for the

member and for the House. We are debating this motion on Bill C-56, the affordable housing and groceries act. I am sure he will be thrilled to vote in favour of it.

After months of Conservative filibuster and delay and over 20 hours of debate over five days, it is clear that the Conservatives have no intention of allowing Bill C-56 to get to a vote. During question period, for 45 minutes of the day, the Conservatives pretend to care about affordability issues for Canadians, but when the rubber meets the road, they are nowhere to be found. They delay, delay, delay.

It was surprising to hear the member who spoke just before me say the Liberals are not prioritizing this. He does not look back to this own members and his own leader to ask why they are not getting Bill C-56 through fast enough to help provide relief to Canadians. This is despite the fact that many of his own members support Bill C-56, such as the Conservative member for Mission—Mat-squi—Fraser Canyon, who more than a month ago committed in this House to voting in favour of the bill. Here is what he said on October 5: “I will be joining my Conservatives colleagues in voting to move this bill forward to committee”. That was 46 days ago.

Given all this, I look forward to hearing what is going to be said today. Before my Conservative colleagues rise, I would like to remind them of what this bill does, because I think some of them may have forgotten.

We know that the rising cost of groceries and lack of affordable housing are affecting families across the country. I am pleased to discuss some of the ways we are addressing these important issues through the measures outlined in Bill C-56.

We know that for too many Canadians, including young people and new Canadians, the dream of owning a home is increasingly out of reach and paying rent has become more expensive across the country. The housing crisis has an impact on our economy. Without more homes in our communities, it is difficult for businesses to attract the workers they need to grow and succeed. When people spend more of their income on housing, it means less money is being spent in our communities for necessities like groceries.

Bill C-56 would enhance the goods and services tax rental rebate on new purpose-built rental housing to encourage the construction of more rental homes, including apartment buildings, student housing and senior residences across Canada. The enhanced rebate would apply to projects that began construction on or after September 14, 2023, and on or before December 31, 2030, and that complete construction before 2036. For a two-bedroom rental unit that is valued at \$500,000, the enhanced GST rental rebate would deliver \$25,000 in tax relief. This is another tool to help create the necessary conditions to build the types of housing we need for families to live in.

Government Orders

The measure would also remove restrictions in existing GST rules to ensure that public service bodies, such as universities, public colleges, hospitals, charities and qualifying non-profits, that build or purchase purpose-built rental housing are permitted to claim the 100% enhanced GST rental rebate. The government is also calling on provinces that currently apply the provincial sales tax or the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax to rental housing to join us by matching the rebate for new rental housing.

We are also requesting that local governments put an end to exclusionary zoning and encourage building apartments near public transit in order to have their housing accelerator fund applications approved. Launched in March 2023, the housing accelerator fund is a \$4-billion initiative designed to help cities, towns and indigenous governments unlock new housing supply, with about 100,000 units total, by speeding up development and approvals through fixing out of date permitting systems, introducing zoning reforms to build more density and incentivizing development close to public transit. Every community across Canada needs to build more homes faster so we can reduce the cost of housing for everyone.

• (1205)

We also need to stabilize the cost of groceries in Canada. With the one-time grocery rebate in July, we delivered targeted inflation relief for 11 million low- and modest-income Canadians and families who needed it the most, with up to an extra \$467 for eligible couples with two children and up to an extra \$234 for single Canadians without children, including single seniors. This support was welcomed by Canadians, but we knew more needed to be done to address the cost of groceries.

This is why we are taking immediate steps to enhance competition across the Canadian economy, with a focus on the grocery sector, to help stabilize costs for middle-class Canadians. Through Bill C-56, the government is introducing a first set of legislative amendments to the Competition Act to provide the Competition Bureau with the powers to compel the production of information to conduct effective and complete market studies; remove the efficiencies defence, which currently allows anti-competitive mergers to survive challenges if corporate efficiencies offset the harm to competition, even when Canadian consumers would pay a higher price and have fewer choices; and empower the bureau to take action against collaborations that stifle competition and consumer choice, in particular in situations where large grocers prevent smaller competitors from establishing operations nearby.

Bill C-56 builds on other measures that have been introduced to make life more affordable for Canadians, including delivering automatic advance payments of the Canada workers benefit, starting in July 2023, to provide up to \$1,518 for eligible single workers and \$2,616 for an eligible family, split between three advance payments and a final payment after filing their 2023 tax return; supporting about 3.5 million families annually through the tax-free Canada child benefit, with families this year receiving up to \$7,437 per child up to the age of six and up to \$6,275 per child aged six through 17; and reducing fees for regulated child care by 50% on average, delivering regulated child care that costs an average of just \$10 a day by 2026, with six provinces and territories reducing child care fees to \$10 a day or less by April 2, and strengthening the child care system in Quebec with more child care spaces.

This government is taking action, and again, more often than not it is the Conservatives voting against, holding things up and delaying committees with filibuster after filibuster. It is shocking to see, especially because it is blatant hypocrisy. I am sure we will hear speeches about how important it is to provide relief to Canadians, but when will members opposite speak to the Leader of the Opposition and their House leader to say that we need to get this legislation through?

I will not hold my breath that they are going to do that. We have been seeing for a lengthy period of time delay after delay. When will the actions of the Conservative Party match the rhetoric that occurs during question period? Granted, its members love a good slogan, but let us take a look at their voting record. All of the things I mentioned, they have either held up or voted against. They do not care. They only care about chaos in this place. It is unfortunate, because I believe some of them truly do care about their constituents and want to see these benefits flow to them.

Some have said they are going to vote in favour of this legislation, but they remain silent when their leader holds it up in this place. This legislation has been debated quite a bit. The filibuster needs to end. It is time to move forward.

The new proposed housing and grocery support I outlined today would make it easier for Canadians to build more homes and would help them thrive. It would help families with the growing cost of putting food on their table. The passage of Bill C-56 would help us provide a brighter future for Canadians.

• (1210)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, New Democrats will be supporting this bill to get work done in the chamber, because we are late on getting to some of the things that are important to Canadians. Some of the amendments to the Competition Bureau are very important. My leader has put forth some of those elements, and they will get a quicker result for Canadians.

Government Orders

The member talked about the importance of this for constituents. Today, my constituents are learning in horror that the government is allowing foreign workers to come in for the NextStar battery assembly plant. I would like to know what the member thinks about that, because he comes from the auto sector, and whether he feels there are not enough Ontarians to fill these jobs, especially given that we are paying \$15 billion. The provincial Conservatives and the federal Liberals are turning their backs on Ontario workers and allowing foreign temporary workers to come in.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am not sure that the question has anything to do with the bill, but I will see if the hon. parliamentary secretary wants to respond to it.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I am happy to learn more information, but I was prepared to debate this legislation. The member always passionately brings up issues related to him. I am happy to look into it when I have more time. I wish it were a question on the piece of legislation before us, but I look forward to getting back to him later on that.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I found it interesting that the member seems to do backflips to somehow blame Conservatives for the fact that the government, even though it has a coalition and a confidence and supply agreement with the NDP, is unable to get legislation passed through this place.

I am not sure if the member has forgotten, but he is actually part of the governing party. He is a parliamentary secretary in the governing party, and the Liberals cannot even pass their own legislation. The level of incompetence in their ability to pass their own legislation is astounding, and it speaks to why our country feels like everything is broken.

I have a specific question for the member that relates directly to competition. We are hearing that, since the year 1995 I believe, there are the fewest number of start-ups in Canada. There is a lack of confidence for entrepreneurs and business owners to start, to invest capital and to bring forward those ideas that eventually become the successful companies we have today.

How can the member reconcile the rhetoric we heard for the last 10 minutes with the fact that there are fewer start-ups in Canada willing to take the risk today than there were when the government took office?

• (1215)

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, that was a very lengthy question. I would like to thank the hon. member for suggesting that I would be able to do a backflip.

On the figurative backflips the hon. member was doing, I guess he is defending his party's filibuster of this legislation. It is dripping in hypocrisy to say that he stands up for Canadians, but will speak to delay everything about this legislation. It is nice for him to suggest that he would vote in favour of ending this filibuster. I hope to see that when this motion comes to pass.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we believe in free market and free trade, but the concept of free market

and competition goes hand in hand. Monopolies and oligopolies create a burden for consumers through their dominance.

What is the hon. member's view on how the Competition Bureau would be strengthened so that it could go after the monopolies and take out the big corporate players that try to squeeze out the small players? How would competition actually help Canadians?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, there is not enough competition in this country, especially when it comes to groceries. Canadians can see that. Everyone here goes to the grocery store. Canadians go to the grocery store. We hear it from our constituents.

This bill is about strengthening powers I outlined in detail in my speech. It is important to get this passed, which is why we need to stop this filibuster to get it to committee, despite what the Conservatives will say and despite their delays. We are going to get it done, and we are going to provide help to Canadians, despite what the Conservatives are doing.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise to speak to the types of things the government can do to support Canadians in all regions of the country. We are witnessing that Bill C-56 is a substantial piece of legislation with an intent to support Canadians.

Unfortunately, as my colleague has pointed out, the Conservative Party has chosen, once again, to use this legislation as a way to slow down the process of proceeding and prevent the government, wherever it can, to allow legislation from ultimately passing. I will hold my breath in the hope that the Conservatives will wake up and understand the reality Canadians are facing.

We often talk about the issue of inflation. There is no doubt that inflation is hurting people. Yes, it has improved. If we look at the bigger picture and compare Canada to the United States, France, the G7 or even the G20 countries, we are doing relatively well regarding our inflation rate on a worldwide basis. Since June of 2022, we have had an inflation rate of just over 8%. If we look at the last number of months, we have made significant gains in bringing down that inflation rate. We are focused on doing that because we recognize the harm it causes to our economy and, most importantly, to Canadians. That is one of the reasons we have been very targeted, whether with legislation or budgetary measures, to give those breaks to Canadians. We want a government and an economy that works for all people.

Unlike the Conservative Party, we believe in Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it. We understand and appreciate the importance of lifting people out of poverty. We have demonstrated that with hundreds of thousands of children and seniors. We recognize the harm it does. That is why I look forward to the fall economic statement that will be coming out tomorrow from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, who has been out in the communities to get a better understanding and a better sense of the types of actions we can take as a national government to provide relief wherever we can to support Canadians.

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The fall economic statement we will see tomorrow will be a reflection of what we have been hearing, whether from individual members of Parliament bringing back their concerns to Ottawa or the consultation work that the different ministers, in particular the Minister of Finance, have been doing. We are doing this because we understand the pressures that are on Canadian families. It is the reason why we have developed programs of a national nature, such as the affordable \$10-a-day child care. It is the reason why we have brought in programs such as the grocery rebate program.

When we think of Bill C-56, we should think of two aspects: housing and groceries. Fighting to stabilize the price of groceries is important to the government. We often hear about how we need to improve the Competition Act. Bill C-56 is an attempt to not only improve it today, but also to continue to look at ways we could modernize it.

One of the significant improvements we are seeing today in this legislation is the use of the efficiency argument so that the Competition Bureau does not have to listen to companies saying that, for efficiency purposes, they need to buy up a company. If members think about it, at one time we had six major grocery suppliers, and we are now down to five. Why are we down to five? It is because, when Stephen Harper was prime minister and the leader of the Conservative Party sat around that cabinet, Shoppers was bought out for billions of dollars, so we went from six to five.

● (1220)

Even today, we hear Conservatives say that the way to ensure lower prices is to ensure that there is more competition. This legislation would go a long way in getting rid of the efficiency argument, so we would be better able to ensure there would be more competition.

I would like to think that most people in the chamber would recognize that as a positive thing. It is one of the reasons we should not have to wait endlessly and accept the ongoing filibustering of the Conservative Party. If they are serious about the cost of groceries, and if they are serious about wanting to stabilize grocery prices, Conservatives should be supporting the amendments to the Competition Act that are being brought forward, amendments that would enhance the Competition Bureau's ability to protect the interests of Canadians and of consumers. Actions speak louder than words. We look to the Conservative Party to start taking action.

On the other part of the legislation, we often hear Conservatives talk about the issue of housing. We often hear them raise the issue. However, when it comes to taking action, again, they sit on their backside and do nothing but filibuster. This legislation is good, sound, solid legislation. The proof is in the pudding. Let us think about it. The federal government, through this legislation, is saying that for purpose-built rentals, there would be no GST.

It is a sound idea. I can say that because we have provincial entities in Canada today that are copying what Ottawa is doing, but with the PST. In part, we need to recognize that, when it comes to the issue of housing, it is not just the federal Government of Canada that has to deal with the issue. The federal Government of Canada has a role to play. No government in the last 30, 40 or 50 years has played a stronger role in housing than the Prime Minister and this Liberal government. No government has.

If we are talking about a disaster, we could look at the previous Harper government and the lack of attention the Harper government gave to housing. We could contrast that to today's government, which has brought in a national housing strategy, the first of its kind, with billions of dollars of investments.

We could talk about what the government has done to support housing co-ops and other non-profit organizations in building non-profit housing, as well as our investment in tens of thousands of housing units. When I say "tens of thousands", it is well over 150,000, so it is a bit of a guesstimate. I would say it is probably closer to 250,000 units the federal government continues to support, based on income, at least in good part, by working with provinces.

We talk about the housing crisis, and the Liberal government's approach is to work with the stakeholders and with provinces and municipalities. The Conservative approach is to hit them with a stick. The Liberal government plays an important role, which I believe we have been fulfilling, not only with legislation but also from a budgetary perspective. We are actually materializing and demonstrating that leadership.

However, cities also need to play a role with things such as zoning. Provinces also have to play a role. We are working with other jurisdictions. We have brought in programs through the housing accelerator program that ensure there is a higher sense of co-operation on the housing file.

I can assure the House that our government, whether it is the Prime Minister, cabinet ministers or the Liberal caucus as a whole, will continue to deal with the issues of inflation, the price of groceries and affordable homes the best way we can. As a government, we are concerned and care about Canadians and their well-being. That is why we work every day to try to make a difference, working with different levels of government at the same time.

● (1225)

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I heard the hon. member talk about how Liberals believe in the middle class. I would like to believe in Santa Claus too, but at the end of the day, it is the workers who make the presents for the kids. If Liberals believed in the middle class like he says they did, why is it that, as members will recall, they abolished the ministry of the middle class and those working hard to join it? How insulting is it to the working class to suggest that its members are not working hard enough to make ends meet?

My question to the hon. member is this: Is it his assertion that working-class people are just not working hard enough to make it to the middle class?

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, if the member were to go over Hansard, he would find that the terminology of Canada's middle class was brought to a new level when the current Prime Minister was elected leader of the Liberal Party. No government has been more focused on dealing with Canada's middle class than the current Prime Minister and government. We have seen that from the very first action we took in terms of reducing the taxes for Canada's middle class, which, I will remind the member opposite, the NDP voted against. At the same time as we brought in that measure, we helped finance it by putting a special tax on Canada's wealthiest 1%, and I will remind my colleague across the way that the NDP voted against that too.

From the first few months of government in 2015-16 to today, we have continued to support Canada's middle class by bringing in social programs such as the universal child care program, \$10-a-day day care and the dental program. There is so much we have done and so much more we can do, and that is why we continue to work every day of the week.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. Even during the speech, I could hear individuals either thinking out loud or having conversations with each other. Then, when the hon. parliamentary secretary was answering, there were other members who did not get up to ask questions initially but who tried to join the discussion. I ask members to please wait until the appropriate time to ask questions and make comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

• (1230)

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

I listened to my colleague's speech, and I am absolutely puzzled as to what he said. I am puzzled not only as to what he said but also by the audacity to imply that Canadians have never had it so good, because of the Liberal government. I will remind the member and the Liberal government that he is so loyal to that interest rates have risen 2% as a result of the government's inflationary spending. That means that on a \$500,000 mortgage, the average family will be paying \$10,000 more per year in interest alone.

How can the member stand there and defend the government's record and put us Conservatives down, when we have been calling for an end to the inflationary spending and when it is that side of the House that is the problem?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I look across the way and I see a cloud of darkness and depression—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo just asked a question, and there is no opportunity for a rebuttal unless I go to questions and comments. I would ask the hon. member to please respect the rules of the House and give the hon. parliamentary secretary an

opportunity to answer the question, to which I am sure he wants to hear the answer.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, what I am talking about is that the Conservative members of Canada today tour the country to spread misinformation. They try to give the impression to all Canadians that Canada is broken. I would welcome the member or any member of the Conservative caucus at any point in time to come to Winnipeg North and have that debate in my constituency. I would welcome that opportunity.

There are many things we can continue to work on to improve the conditions of Canadians, but to try to give a false impression that Canada is broken or that Canada is far worse than other countries in the world is misleading at best.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member just invited me to his riding. I would like to invite him to Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is a point of debate. I would remind members to use points of order appropriately to ensure that time in the House is very well respected.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Nepean.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, globalization collapsing and constraints in the supply chains have raised the prices of many goods in Canada. Also in Canada, several sectors are being controlled by a few corporate players, curbing competition. Competition is required so Canadians can get goods at very affordable prices.

I would ask the hon. member for his opinion on how we would strengthen the Competition Bureau through the bill before us.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the most significant thing within the legislation is that it would get rid of the efficiency argument. For example, a company that wants to acquire another company is not going to be able to say that, for efficiency purposes, it is in its best interest to acquire that company and that it will deliver goods to Canadians.

It is a different way in which the Competition Bureau would be able to assess and, I would argue, get a better overall review of the marketplace and make better decisions that are in the best interests of consumers in Canada. That is a good thing. The more competition there is, the better.

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is great to see that marriage counselling is working, as we have a motion being debated today that brings one bill from the Liberals and another bill from the NDP. They are literally coming together on paper, but I hate to break it to them that the motion, the bill, is weak.

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In short, of course, we have agreed to some of the changes being brought through: the market powers, that the maximum of fixed penalty amounts for abuse of dominance be increased, and that we ensure that the legal test for abuse of dominant prohibition orders be significantly met. We have agreed to those, but none of this is going to lower grocery prices today.

Government members sitting across us argue, for some reason, that we are holding this up, when we have been emphatic in trying to push it forward. The main part of this that a member brought up, the efficiencies defence, was actually my idea that I brought to the House at first reading in June. Conservatives have been trying to change competition and the Competition Act. We are here today debating the merits of competition as a whole, but certainly the bill is weak; it would not change competition. We want to see courage. Canadians are paying the highest fees in the world right now for groceries, airlines, cellphones and bank fees. It is only courage to change the entire Competition Act that would actually change the way the country views and approaches competition.

For the benefit of Canadians listening at home, when we look at the Competition Bureau, we must think of it as the police force, as a law enforcement agency. It is tasked under the laws given by this place to go out and enforce the rules in order to do two things only: to stop the abusive nature of big, bossy, dominant companies and to ensure that small, competitive players that want to enter the market can do so in a fair and equitable way. The price that Canadians pay for goods and services is through a strong, competitive market. Canadians are paying the highest prices in the world for some of the most dominant markets in the world. If we look at the main difference between American and Canadian competition laws, the competition laws in the U.S. ask whether the consumer is better off. In Canada, they ask only one thing: Is the company better off?

After eight years, Canadians are paying some of the highest fees in the world for airlines, credit card fees, bank fees and groceries. It is only now, after eight years and after we have seen some of the highest inflation rates in the last 40 years, that Canadians are seeing that all of these prices are too much and that competition is, of course, laying down its head in front of Canadians and in front of this place. If Canadian companies were part of a board game, that game would be the Canadian game of Monopoly. Kids hate this game. They take their dice, roll them and land on RBC, Scotiabank, Rogers, Telus, Air Canada and WestJet. They roll it and land on Ambev or Molson Coors brewery. Every time they pass "GO", they lose \$200. When it comes to kids playing this game, they go bankrupt very easily. It is because the game of Monopoly is flawed, and the game of Monopoly results in Canadians' losing every single time.

After eight years of the government, the competition laws it is trying to make are not going to be the ones we need. They are not brave enough and they are not strong enough. Canadians would be still paying the highest fees for almost everything in their lives.

Before I finish, I want to move an amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended by inserting after (c)(ii)(B) the following:

"and that the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, and the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities be ordered to appear as witnesses for no less than two hours each."

• (1235)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The amendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I must admit I am a little surprised that the Conservatives are, again, bringing in a motion in an attempt to cause an additional delay in passing the bill. However, when we look at the fundamentals of the bill, the member has said that he kind of agrees with one part. We have provinces that are agreeing with the other part because they are invoking an exemption for the PST.

Why are the Conservatives so reckless when coming up with smart things to say and taking good action in the best interest of Canadians? Why are they found to be so lacking in good intent?

• (1240)

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, it is nice to hear the member talking about competition again. At the end of the day, there are a lot of different problems with our Competition Act. Number one is abuse of dominance by large, bossy monopolies and corporations. Number two is that we just cannot get companies to start up. The changes that the government has proposed will not do the things that need to be done to change the Competition Act for good, which is to stop the dominance and to ensure that start-ups can start up. We need to start starting instead of start stopping.

At the end of the day, we need to ensure that there is a brave new face and that there are changes to the Competition Act. Of course, we want the ministers at committee. We want to look at a lot of good amendments from our side of the House to make the Competition Act stronger. The act will not be stronger after this bill goes through.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have to hand it to the hon. member. I rather enjoy his analysis on monopoly capitalism. He has spoken at length about the ways in which the dominance of corporations have concentrated their power in this stage of capitalism.

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I wonder if the hon. member would find common ground with me and agree that the battle of competition is fought by cheapening of commodities. “The cheapness of commodities depends, *ceteris paribus*, on the productiveness of labor, and this again on the scale of production. Therefore, the larger capitals [defeat] smaller.” Further, “the credit system, which begins as a [modest helper] of accumulation,” soon “becomes a new and [formidable] weapon in the [competitive struggle], and is finally transformed into an enormous social mechanism for the centralization of capitals.”

Would the hon. member agree with that economic theory? It could have been Adam Smith.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, even Adam Smith believed in regulations.

I want to talk about one thing to respond to that, and that will be the banking sector. We have a bill coming forward to open up banking as a whole for competition, and I hope the member across can support it. It is open banking, which would allow a provision that allows any major small competitor to enter the market, which is right now dominated by six oligopolies in the banking sector, controlling 93% of the banking aspects and 87% of mortgages. Open banking just changes the rules to allow that capital to be spread around. The capital is, of course, people's data and ensuring that other people can get their financial data and then bank them.

I am hoping the member can support that. We have a bill going forward to push through open banking and that would open up this monopolistic system in the banking sector.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad that the member agrees that competition is a good thing. In several sectors, from banking to telecom to consumer staples, we have a few companies dominating the market, curbing competition and thus driving up the prices.

The member mentioned efficiency, which is a factor that has been used in the past to join companies together and bring down competition. Could he elaborate on that, please?

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, the efficiencies defence, which currently sits in the Competition Act, allows one company to merge with another, not because of dominance in market power. They look at it specifically, if one company is able to save money by merging with the other. Most times, that is job losses. The number one case that examined this was Superior Propane. It was the number one market share for propane and it merged with the number two market share. In the efficiencies defence, this anomaly that we had in the Canadian competition law, allowed those two companies to merge, even though they held over 85% of the market share. Of course, this was something that, when I introduced it in June, was low-hanging fruit. This needs to go and I think all parties in the House agree on that.

We can look at how we heat homes across the country right now. Of course, heating oil has had the carbon tax shaved off of it. Propane is what a lot of communities use to heat. That is something we should also see as not only the abuse of dominance of one company for the efficiencies defence, but we should also ensure that the carbon tax comes off propane as well.

• (1245)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the work my colleague has done on this matter, specifically on one of the bills that was co-opted by the Liberals to ensure there would be increased competition in Canada. Certainly, this could cover a whole range of subjects.

I have two comments for my colleague from Bay of Quinte. The first is about the process we are debating here today. To me, this appears like an attack on our democratic institutions. The Liberals are incapable and incompetent when it comes to pursuing their agenda or programming the work that this place and its committee do. It is certainly troubling.

Ironically, when we are talking about something like competition, it seems antithetical that we would have the Liberals shutting down the ability for discourse to take place, highlighting that they are incapable at accomplishing their legislative agenda. The first point is about the process and what I would suggest is an attack on our democratic institutions.

The second is about one of the increasing concerns that we hear from across Canada, which is the fact that we have fewer start ups than ever before. In the last three or so decades, fewer companies are starting up.

My first point is on the attack on our democratic institutions through a programming motion. Second is the fact that people are simply not able to or willing to take risks to create businesses and be those entrepreneurs that Canadians are known to be.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, when it comes to promoting our democracy, the competition law has been around since the sixties, maybe even since 1911. We have not changed the Competition Act much since 1986. When it comes to looking at and debating competition, which is probably one of the top concerns, affordability for Canadians, we should be taking all the time we can in the House and in committee to ensure it is done right.

Paragraph (b) in the programming motion gives more power to the minister, which is not right. When we look at an arm's length institution, the Competition Bureau, which is supposed to act impartial from the government or free of political interference, the bill right now gives more power to the minister to have the power to interfere, and that is not right.

When it comes to start ups, Canada has 100,000 fewer entrepreneurs compared to 20 years ago. When we look at trying to ensure there is more competition in Canada and more entrance, we need more start-ups. We need to start starting.

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Mr. Matthew Green: Madam Speaker, when I asked the hon. member about the commodification of the production of labour, we were clearly talking about the commodification of wages. I would love for him to answer that question. It was a good, fair question, one that underscores much of his argument. I would like him to determine whether he agrees with that statement.

Second, does he agree with the analysis that “the long cherished freedom of competition has reached the end of its tether and is compelled to announce its own palpable bankruptcy.”

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, to answer the member's first question, when we are looking at the success of Canadians and the success of Canadian families, we are looking at the GDP per capita. I think we can all agree on that. That means, what are we bringing home to create powerful paycheques for workers and Canadian families to ensure that, when we look at the highest inflation after eight years, Canadians are bringing more wealth home? I think we can agree that when we have competitors, small start ups or companies that are creating a value or a system of wealth for Canadians to buy and be competitive about, we are creating powerful paycheques. That is good for all those people.

When we look at competition as a whole, we need to ensure that we change the laws to ensure that big bossy conglomerates are not stopping the small competitors or small entrepreneurs from being able to start up in Canada and create those powerful paycheques. Of course, when they get bigger, a lot of times there are unions involved and great things for workers. We want to do all those things, but we have to change the Competition Act. We have to be brave in doing that. I hope the member can join me in ensuring we make real changes that change competition in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin my speech by saying that I will be sharing my time with the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou. That is a rather long riding name. Many riding names are quite long. Mine certainly is, and so is hers.

Today we are debating Government Business No. 30. It is a government motion to shorten the debates on Bill C-56, which seeks to implement a rebate of the GST on the construction of residential rental properties. The bill also seeks to give the Competition Bureau more power to conduct an inquiry. Notably, it could force the procurement of documents, which was not previously the case.

Unfortunately, we are debating government business instead of the bill because the government decided to impose closure yet again. We are faced with another gag order. Sadly, the current government seems to want to govern by gag order. It is one gag order after another. Obviously, the government will argue that it was meant to stop the Conservatives' filibustering. I am not saying that the Conservatives never filibuster, but we get a sense that this procedural device is being abused.

In the current case, we in the Bloc Québécois were open to speeding up debate. The government said that doing so might help build housing faster. It said that the measures in Bill C-56 to strengthen the Competition Bureau's powers could make a differ-

ence. We were sensitive to all these things. We are very open to studying Bill C-56, but we had other concerns too.

One of our concerns, and we have been repeating this for weeks, has to do with the emergency business account that was launched during the pandemic. It was meant to support small businesses by offering them a \$40,000 loan. Twenty-five percent of that amount, or \$10,000, was forgiven if the loans were paid back within three years. The problem was that, following the pandemic, there was a supply crisis and an inflation crisis, not to mention the fact that interest rates have gone up considerably. The economy is struggling even more now. Those businesses were already struggling during the pandemic, because many of them could no longer operate for health reasons. We must stand together as a society, which is why that program was put in place at the time, and we agreed on it.

However, the government did say that these businesses would have to pay back their loans. We agree that businesses should pay them back. A loan is meant to be repaid at some point, but it is important not to put Quebec businesses at risk. We have to use our brains a little and be somewhat flexible in how we do things.

I mention this while we are debating Government Business No. 30 regarding Bill C-56, because we told the government that it should be giving Quebec businesses more flexibility. In return, we would have been prepared to fast-track the passage of Bill C-56. Unfortunately, the government did not listen to the Bloc Québécois. It decided to let Quebec businesses fail. It will continue to leave them in jeopardy, even though people from my riding talk to me about this every week. When I am out and about in my riding, people tell me that things are not going well, that their sales are lower than expected, that things did not return to normal like they thought they would and that money does not grow on trees.

Unfortunately, the government has not been sensitive to that. We have been asking questions in the House about this for weeks. Members on the other side have responded by saying that they extended the deadline, but they extended the deadline by only 18 days.

● (1250)

I doubt that 18 days is enough time for a small or medium-sized business to rake in \$40,000 in profit. There is no way. Unfortunately, that is what we are looking at with the Liberals.

Instead, the government decided to turn to the NDP. As we all know, the NDP can be bought quite easily. They give the government everything it wants. Unfortunately, we are stuck with the reality that Quebec businesses are going to pay because of the Liberals and the NDP.

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The Bloc Québécois will continue to push for our companies to have more flexibility in repaying the Canada emergency business account so that, come January 18, the banks are not waiting for them. I can just picture them, big smiles on their faces, telling companies that they can get their \$10,000 back by simply taking out a high-interest loan. Considering the significant jump in interest rates, we know full well that there are plenty of companies that will not make it through.

To come back more specifically to Bill C-56, earlier I talked about getting rid of the tax on new rental housing construction. The government claims this is going to fix the housing crisis. Maybe not exactly, but it claims that it will make a big difference.

The Bloc Québécois has a few concerns. Will this make a difference? It may make a difference in making some projects more profitable than they were as a result of interest rate increases. It may help, but we would have liked to see a study done on this. Did the government do a study on the impact that this bill might have on the price of housing and on its availability? No, it pulled this bill out of its hat. Since we are in a housing crisis, it decided to make a quick announcement and that is what it did.

This will likely have a positive impact on housing construction, but we do not really know because we have no baseline data to confirm the result.

I have another point. In a supply and demand market, there is typically a going price for housing. Right now, that price is very high. Homes are being sold at a high price, but unfortunately, some people would benefit from lower prices. I say unfortunately, but that might be an exaggeration. What I mean is that this could have an unfortunate impact. There is absolutely no guarantee that this much-touted 5% cut to the GST on new housing construction will impact social or affordable housing. In fact, there is zero chance that it would be used for social housing because that type of housing does not qualify.

For example, if a city decides to build social housing, it is already exempt. The proposed measure will not work. The same thing applies to co-ops or non-profit organizations. There is already a type of exemption in place. This will not benefit them. Therefore, it will not result in social housing or low-cost housing. On the other hand, it will certainly help the construction of expensive housing.

The government says that it may take care of the specifics through regulations. We look forward to seeing those, but there is no guarantee. We have no guarantee that the exemptions that will be granted will be used to build reasonably priced new housing. They could be used to build units that rent for \$3,000, \$4,000 or \$5,000 a month. I cannot even say \$2,000 a month anymore because that is practically considered affordable housing nowadays. Unfortunately, the government thinks that it is going to fix the housing crisis, but this bill is no silver bullet. I find that unfortunate.

I also want to talk about the Competition Bureau. Not so long ago, the minister said in the House that he would fix the problem. He said that he had spoken with the grocers and that there would not be an issue anymore, that grocery prices would drop. The week after, he said that he had checked the flyers and seen some great

discounts. He claimed to have fixed the inflation crisis by checking the flyers one week and speaking with grocery CEOs. He should have spoken with families instead. The inflation crisis is not over.

Some elements of this bill will give the Competition Bureau more oversight over large companies. This change will not necessarily happen overnight, however.

• (1255)

The same goes for this much-vaunted 5% rebate. It is not going to solve the problem in the short term. The effects of this measure will be felt more in the very long term. We therefore expect—

• (1300)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member's time has expired.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Nepean.

[*English*]

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member his views on the competition levels that are in existence in several sectors of the Canadian economy, from the banking sector to the telecom sector and to consumer staples and so many other sectors. Competition actually brings down prices and helps consumers. When just a few corporate players dominate any market, through their profiteering objectives, it creates an undue burden on consumers, so I would like to ask the hon. member about his views on competition.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, my colleague is asking me whether I think there are any good measures in this bill that concern competition. The answer is yes, and I think I already said that.

Companies used to be barred from making arrangements with one of their competitors to eliminate another competitor. Now, the notion of a competitor is being eliminated. Companies will now be barred from making arrangements with a supplier, a tenant or anyone else to eliminate another competitor. This might help a little in terms of competition.

Still, will that fundamentally change the dynamic in the short term? Inflation and grocery affordability are short-term crises. Unfortunately, this bill will not make any difference to people's pocketbooks in the short term. It will take a long time to see any impact from measures like these.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague touched on the issue of housing prices in his speech.

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Quebec does not define affordable housing the same way Canada does. Canada does not seem to realize what a difference affordable housing could make for families. What is considered affordable in Canada is not necessarily affordable in Quebec.

I would like to hear again from my colleague about the model that Quebec has developed in partnership with its community groups and the exciting initiatives it has implemented in community and social housing.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, my colleague asked a great question. A budget of \$900 million was supposed to be available for housing in Quebec. Unfortunately, it took a very long time before the cities and Quebec could use these funds to build new affordable housing.

One sticking point in the negotiations was the federal government's belief that affordable housing costs around \$2,000 or \$2,500 a month, if I am not mistaken. That amount would ruin most people, but people in Ottawa consider that affordable housing.

Quebec disagreed, so I can understand why the Government of Quebec did not want to sign that kind of agreement. Then we had to defend Quebec's point of view and explain that affordable housing in Quebec costs a lot less than \$2,000 a month.

If we ask the average working person in Quebec, they would say that the idea of working a minimum-wage job and spending \$2,000 a month on rent is unthinkable. It would simply be impossible to make ends meet.

[*English*]

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member whether he agrees that, as legislators, at every given opportunity we need to consider a legislation's immediate impact, its medium-term impact and long-term impacts. Is that not part of this particular legislation?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, I am sorry, but I did not understand my colleague's question. I was not listening to the interpretation and it was hard to hear him. I will just mention something that I meant to address in my speech on Government Business No. 30 concerning Bill C-56.

We spoke about supply and demand, but the problem is that when it comes to the housing crisis, the government never talks about demand. It always talks about increasing the supply. Increasing the housing supply will take a long time, but the demand may increase rapidly as a result of the actions the government is taking.

The government is talking out of both sides of its mouth. It wants to increase the demand by significantly increasing the number of people coming to Canada from abroad, but it cannot claim that adding more people will cost less money. If more people are added to a saturated market, then that is going to create more pressure. The government needs to take that into account.

• (1305)

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, let me begin by saying hello to the people of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou and paying my respects to the Cree nation following the death of Charly Washipabano, who

was a member of Hockey Abitibi-Témiscamingue's board of directors and a program coordinator with the Eeyou Istchee Sports and Recreation Association.

I am rising in connection with the debate on Government Business No. 30, which seeks to impose a gag order and make amendments to Bill C-56. This bill, which aims to eliminate the GST on the construction of rental housing and amend the Competition Act, was introduced in the House in September by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

The government's motion authorizes the Standing Committee on Finance to expand the scope of the bill in order to amend it in three ways.

The first amendment would increase the penalty amounts. This increase is right out of Bill C-352, which amends the Competition Act and contains several elements that would become obsolete with the passing of Bill C-56. The motion proposes to “increase the maximum fixed penalty amounts for abuse of dominance to \$25 million in the first instance, and \$35 million for subsequent orders, for situations where this amount is higher than three times the value of the benefit derived (or the alternative variable maximum)”. In the case of a large company, the maximum penalty could be even higher, up to three times the value of the benefit derived from the practice.

The second and third amendments deal with abuse of a dominant position and the Competition Bureau's powers of inquiry when conducting market studies. As currently worded, the amendments being submitted to the committee have no real effect. The goal is to “allow the Competition Bureau to conduct market study inquiries if it is either directed by the Minister responsible for the Act or recommended by the Commissioner of Competition, and require consultation between the two officials prior to the study being commenced”.

The Competition Bureau has significant powers. It can compel witnesses to appear, demand documents and request searches if necessary. However, these powers are available to the bureau only when it is investigating a clear infringement following a formal disclosure. The investigation then becomes quasi-criminal. However, when the bureau is conducting a study to determine whether competition is working properly in a given field or market, it has no such powers. For example, in its report on the state of competition in the grocery sector, published in June 2023, the bureau noted that the grocery chains did not really co-operate with its study. They refused to hand over the documents it had requested and refused to answer some of its questions.

Government Business No. 30 includes a proposed technical amendment to the way the Competition Bureau can conduct a market study, although it does not change much from current practice.

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The third amendment will “revise the legal test for abuse of a dominant position prohibition order to be sufficiently met if the Tribunal finds that a dominant player has engaged in either a practice of anti-competitive acts or conduct other than superior competitive performance that had, is having or is likely to have the effect of preventing or lessening competition substantially in a relevant market”.

Everyone knows that there is a serious housing crisis in Quebec and across Canada. We often hear about rising prices and housing shortages in major urban centres, in big cities, but it is also an issue in rural regions and smaller towns. The housing crisis is in its 18th straight year, and its impact is being felt more and more in the towns, villages and communities of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou. In Val-d'Or, for example, the vacancy rate is now around 1.4%, adding pressure to the average cost of rent, which has jumped by 5.4%.

The housing shortage, combined with higher rent, is directly impacting the most vulnerable, by which I mean people living alone, single-parent families, women, young people, seniors, first nations and Inuit people, immigrant families, and persons with disabilities. Unfortunately, some of these people often end up having to stay in shelters longer or live in apartments that do not meet their needs, and that is unacceptable. We also need to consider the growing number of people left homeless by this crisis. It is important to find real solutions to this problem. The ongoing housing crisis is adding to the already pressing needs, and the homelessness problem is only getting worse.

The social housing stock is also aging. The government needs to upgrade and renovate it as quickly as possible, while ensuring that rent remains completely affordable for the low-income families living there now or in the future.

• (1310)

The government's national housing strategy, which was launched in 2017, falls far short. The funding allocated for social housing, both to maintain existing units and to build new ones, is not enough to meet the needs of all the nations.

When it comes to housing, there is nothing to indicate that Government Business No. 30 will add any value to Bill C-56 in terms of lowering rents.

It would be surprising if a property owner decided to lower rents just because they did not have to pay GST on the new building they bought. What is more, it is important to remember that the cost of higher mortgage payments will likely be passed on to renters.

I understand the minister's intention in moving this motion, but the measure to provide a GST rebate on the cost of labour and materials will apply to future rental properties, regardless of the market value and rental prices.

I represent Nunavik, where residents experience the impact of the housing shortage in many persistent ways. In Nunavik, 47% of Inuit live in overcrowded housing, compared to 7% for Quebec as a whole. This means their situation is seven times worse. The housing problem in the Far North is nothing new. Nunavik has been short on housing since the 1990s, when Ottawa stopped funding

housing construction for five years. We have never caught up since, and now that has to change.

We have a moral responsibility, from one nation to another, to ensure that Inuit communities have decent housing. Housing is definitely one of the most important social issues in Nunavik. It is not uncommon for five, six, seven, eight or even more people to live together in a two-bedroom dwelling. If one of these people has social problems, the entire family is affected. The situation is far from ideal for raising children and supporting their education.

There can be up to three generations living in one house without much privacy. This has numerous consequences for their quality of life. Some 98% of Nunavik's Inuit residents live in social housing provided by the Kativik Municipal Housing Bureau. Approximately 1,000 families are hoping for housing, yet only about 100 units are built each year. Construction costs are astronomical, at least three times higher than in southern Quebec. Materials arrive by boat, and it is difficult to build more than 100 homes a year. Even at that rate, we cannot keep up with population growth.

It is important to note that, in my community, the housing shortage is also affecting the economy. Large mining and forestry companies would like to bring workers to the region. However, they hit a brick wall when it comes to housing. Companies have no choice but to reserve homes and rent housing for fly-in, fly-out workers, which reduces housing availability for the rest of the population.

As the families, children and social development critic, I feel it is important to address the impact that the housing shortage is having on families and children.

In its eighth report on housing and poverty in Quebec, the social housing group Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain states that three out of five renter families have had to cut back on activities, clothing and even groceries in order to pay their rent. According to the same report, no less than 30% of parents with children aged five and under live in a home that does not meet their needs, often in terms of space, because of the lack of housing in their price range.

What is the government waiting for? Why does it not take action now? The situation is urgent.

[English]

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad the hon. member agrees that competition is good for Canadian consumers. A previous speaker in the House mentioned the sort of monopolistic tendencies that some big corporate players are displaying in several sectors in the economy are hurting consumers.

The hon. member mentioned the penalties that are proposed in the legislation. I would ask the member to clarify whether she is happy with the penalties that are being proposed or if she would propose any changes to them.

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[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, the national housing strategy is not working, and we are headed for a real national tragedy. We know that there is a housing shortage and a labour shortage. It is a vicious cycle. This is an economic disaster.

We are therefore asking the government to take action as quickly as possible to support the people of Quebec and Canada.

- (1315)

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member would know quite well, perhaps better than most in this House, that people living in northern, rural and remote communities, for decades have seen the high prices of groceries rise due to the lack of competition and the high costs associated with bringing goods to their communities.

Does the hon. member agree that programs like Nutrition North must be made into social programs, so people could afford food, not subsidy programs for companies to continue to make massive profits?

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, as I explained earlier, the Crees of Eeyou Istchee and the Inuit in northern Quebec need federal support.

We do not have enough food banks. All of the food that arrives in northern Quebec is already going bad. It sits for days on a boat or a plane. We need to help these people, especially in the winter. Right now, this is even resulting in more suicides in northern Quebec, where I live.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, today we are seeing another phenomenon that keeps happening fairly regularly. We can no longer call it a phenomenon really. I would say it has become routine: another Liberal time allocation motion supported by the New Democratic Party. As we know, imposing time allocation is very democratic. I invite them to consider changing the name of their party.

Bill C-56 was supposed to be the magic solution to the cost of living crisis we are dealing with. That is what the government said. The government introduced this bill two months ago and failed to convince the opposition parties to adopt it quickly. That must be because the bill is not that good.

I would like my colleague's opinion on the fact that the government, who claims to have a miracle bill to address the housing crisis and the cost of living crisis, is telling us that it needs time allocation and two months to be able to take action.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, what is the point of Government Business No. 30 when Bill C-56 could partly address public support and economic and social assistance? We have some serious concerns.

Once again, this government is dragging its feet. Nothing is happening. We are calling on the government to take action as soon as possible. The public needs this support.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, could the member provide her thoughts in regard to the importance of the legislation having a positive impact on Canadian consumers and future purpose-built housing?

Does the member believe that it would really contribute in a positive fashion?

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, I do not think that this fully addresses the current need for rental housing. I think that amendments will be made in committee. That is when we will get more details. Right now, things are not entirely clear.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise and speak to today's motion. As will come as a surprise to nobody in this place, Canada is facing a housing crisis. It is not a recent housing crisis but, as time passes, it gets worse and worse.

My father used to offer an anecdote regularly, particularly when talking about the environmental crisis we are facing. He would talk about lily ponds. One of the features of the growth of lily pads is that they grow exponentially.

It starts with one and then, the next day, there are two and, the next day, there are four. The lesson, both for the environmental crisis, and I do not want to diminish that in any way, and also for the housing crisis and where we find ourselves in the housing crisis, is that the day before the entire pond is full of lily pads, it is only half full.

To a spectator who does not know anything about exponential rates of growth for lily pads on the lake, they might come by the lake and say, "There is a lot of lake there. There is lots of time. Certainly, the lily pads are coming in but it is not that bad. We still have half the lake."

As I say, there is an important lesson when it comes to the environment and the climate crisis we are facing and the accelerating rate of change. It is also important to understand the housing crisis. We are now at the point where the lake is full. We do not have any more time to act. We have to start repairing the situation right away.

There is the sense of urgency. It is why, when we came back to the House after summer, we were pleased to see the government had an idea that it wanted to move forward with respect to housing, something new and tangible that New Democrats and many stakeholders have been calling for for a long time, which was to eliminate the GST on purpose-built rentals.

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For our side, we wanted to see that done as part of a comprehensive housing strategy. We certainly do not agree that what the Liberals have called a national housing strategy since 2015 is that. It is clear that it is missing many components and that even the components that are there have not been effective in meeting the challenge that we face in Canada.

We were glad to see the government taking some good ideas from stakeholders and, indeed, from the NDP, saying that it is something that it wants to move forward on.

Our problem was that we knew, with respect to the changes to the Competition Act, that they were inadequate. We know this because our own leader, the member for Burnaby South, has done a lot of work on the Competition Act and proposed a suite of changes to the Competition Act right around the same time.

We wanted to see the changes proposed to the Competition Act and Bill C-56 take the stronger tone that our leader has taken. Our leader does not shy away from taking that tone when it comes to talking back to corporate Canada and letting it know that we see the role of government as requiring it to do right by Canadians, not exploiting its market position to gouge Canadians.

That is something we are not shy about and we believe the government should not be shy about it. It is why we run to form a government that is not shy about taking corporate greed to task.

In the meantime, we want to get as much done in that regard as we can, working with the Parliament that Canadians elected.

There was work to do on strengthening the Competition Act provision. When it came to housing, we wanted to see a more comprehensive strategy and more initiatives, particularly to focus on building more non-market units in Canada.

No matter how many market units are created, there are going to be a lot of people who cannot afford or cannot access those market units. When we build non-market units, whether that is in co-op housing or whether that is social housing, where rent is geared to income, or whether it is investing in projects alongside the private market, to ensure that there are at least some suites that have a below-market value, whatever the combination of those things is, we know that this also helps relieve pressure on the housing market.

There are people who are sacrificing their prescription drugs and food in order to pay market rent. When they get an option to be able to rent a home that meets the needs of their family and allows them to have money left over for essentials like food and medicine, that frees up market units for those who can afford them but may, nevertheless, be struggling to access them.

• (1320)

One glaring oversight in Bill C-56 was that it excluded, without any good reason, co-operative housing from getting a break on the GST for purpose-built rentals. That was something we definitely needed to fix, and we have received a commitment from the government to fix it at committee, along with some changes to strengthen the Competition Act.

All we have to do is look at the latest case of the Rogers-Shaw merger to know how frustrating it is for our Competition Bureau to

do its job. It could not compel evidence from Rogers or Shaw, which would change here, as the Competition Bureau would be empowered to require certain kinds of evidence from the folks they are investigating. This would also mean that when the commissioner of competition believes a market study is required, the bureau would be able to embark upon it on its own initiative, something we think is very important. We also argued for tougher fines for companies that break the rules, and tougher fines not just generally but also for activist corporations that do not learn the lesson the first time. Those penalties would increase to deter companies from continuing to do things they know full well they should not be doing. The government has agreed to this suite of changes, and we will continue to press.

Another thing we think ought to have been included here in respect of the GST exemption were projects that had already received a commitment of some kind of funding through the various programs of the national housing strategy. We know that not enough projects are getting funded under that strategy as it is, but some of the ones that have been funded have been put on hold. Why? It is because of rising interest rates. That means for a project to proceed, people have to find more money. They either have to do that through private fundraising, which is very challenging to do at the best of times, or have to increase the amount from government grants in a project. They could benefit from the GST exemption as well, and we do not think they should be excluded just because a project started before September 14 of this year.

We think extending the GST rebate to non-profit housing projects that the government has already agreed to fund to make projects work, after a year of punishing interest rate increases, is a small thing the government can do to ensure that people out there in our communities, who are already doing great work to build housing that Canadians can afford, do not have work stymied by rising interest rates and can see something in their budget that makes it work. Removing the GST is the simplest way to do that.

The government will collect no GST from these projects if they do not move forward, because the business case is being ruined by rising interest rates. We think waiving the GST for projects that are otherwise not going ahead is a very low-cost way to ensure that the government delivers on promises it has already made by allocating funding to the projects that have stopped because of circumstances beyond their control. That is not a fight we are prepared to give up on. It is something we think should be happening, and we are going to continue to argue for it.

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However, we are not insensitive to the fact that a lot of folks have announced that they want to move forward with new purpose-built rentals as a result of the GST rebate the government is offering in Bill C-56. We know that we are already well past the time to contemplate how to act. We know this is a demand that stakeholders in the housing industry, whether they advocate for market-based housing or non-market-based housing, have talked about as a way to pencil out projects, so it is something we need to move forward with.

There was an opportunity to move forward quicker if debate on the bill had collapsed, but of course it is not collapsing because no debate on bills is collapsing in this place. The official opposition sees to that daily, whether it is by moving motions to take time away from dealing with government business or by putting up speakers ad infinitum. It ensures that we need some kind of time allocation or closure just to get to the point of having a vote on a bill.

When we are talking about a crisis that is in full swing and the need to build more market housing and non-market housing, New Democrats are prepared to work with the government to move the bill through far more quickly than it has been. We will use the opportunity here to improve the bill, as we believe it is our duty to do.

• (1325)

We would go further if we could, but there is only so far we can go with the Liberal government, apparently. However, we are willing to test how far we can go every day of the week and are going to keep fighting for the things we think are very important, including fighting for new announcements in the fall economic statement around housing that make more funding available for organizations that want to pursue non-market housing, and offering financing on better terms for those who want to build more rental housing in the market but are struggling to make projects work from a financial point of view because of rising interest rates.

That is a bit about why we think Bill C-56 is important, how New Democrats have worked hard in this place over the last couple of months to improve the bill, what we are going to continue to fight for and why we think, now that we have reached some agreement on improving the bill, it is important to move it forward. The contractors out there waiting to pick up the shovel and put it in the ground need the deal done on the GST and want to see it move ahead. We think it is important that it move ahead. We think it is important those units come to market and Canadians have the opportunity to rent them. We want to see them come to market in sufficient volume so there is a lowering of their price.

We know that is going to take time, but delay will not help. We have been delaying already for too long, certainly for eight years under the current government, which is after 10 years of delay and no meaningful action in the housing market from the previous government, and even longer before then, going back to the mid-nineties, when the national housing strategy was cancelled and we saw the federal government completely walk away from building social housing units in Canada. That is when the first lily pad started hitting the pond, so to speak, and it has taken us 30 years to see the pond fill, with really no more time to wait to enact important solutions.

Is there more the government can do? Absolutely. We want to see it get rid of the special tax treatment that real estate investment trusts enjoy. We want to see it take action to make sure that non-profits with experience and a great track record of delivering non-market housing in our communities have access to capital so that when buildings with low rents come on the market, they have an opportunity to bid on those buildings and have the money to close a deal successfully to make that happen. The term of art for that is a non-profit acquisition fund. It is a fancy term, but all it means is making sure the non-profit housing providers in our communities, which are already doing a great job, have the opportunity to run low-rent apartment blocks when the current owners do not want to do it anymore, instead of having a corporate landlord come in, superficially renovate the building, kick everyone else out and invite tenants with higher incomes to rent suites that were formerly homes for Canadians who cannot afford luxury rent prices.

Those are some of the things we think the government ought to be doing. We are not going to get them all done in one bill, but we managed to improve what is in this bill, and we think it should hurry along so we can bring more units to market.

• (1330)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on the member's thoughts when he commented with regard to the passing of legislation. He gave a very clear indication that the Conservative Party does not appear to want to see this legislation ultimately pass without some form of closure or time allocation. I believe that takes away from the process of enabling other legislation to be debated, because there is a finite amount of time to debate government legislation.

Could the member expand on how dysfunctional the chamber can be when we have an opposition party that persists in wanting to prevent legislation from passing?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, we get elected to this place to deliberate, but we also get elected to make decisions. The process does not work if we can never get to the moment of decision. That is what we call a vote around this place.

It is appropriate for us to have a discussion and debate, but it is also appropriate and necessary for us to come to a decision point. It is fair for opposition parties to stand up against particular initiatives of the government and to use procedure to delay votes, but when it is happening on everything all the time, the whole place starts to break down. It does not make any sense to come to a place of infinite debate without any possibility of making a decision.

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We know Canadians are relying on this place to make decisions to help with the problems in the housing market, as just one example, and there are many others. That is why it is important that we get the opportunity to vote in this place. If members of this place will not let that occur naturally, then sometimes this type of motion will be required.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member spoke quite a bit about housing, and it is definitely clear that we are in a housing crisis right across the country. When I think about how it is playing out in northern Ontario, I know we need to see affordable housing. We also need to see market housing addressed across the Kenora district and northern Ontario. We are not able to fill labour needs as a result of people being unable to find adequate housing to live in so they can either stay in our communities or move to our communities.

The Leader of the Opposition, the leader of Canada's Conservatives, brought forward an important bill that would tie infrastructure dollars to the number of homes that are allowed to be built, as well as a GST rebate specifically where rental prices are below market value. That is part of our plan to address this housing crisis. Will the member support moving that legislation forward?

• (1335)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I will take the opportunity to highlight two problems I see with the member for Carleton's bill. One is that when we talk about using public lands to create housing, there are no conditions on what kind of housing would be built. There are no conditions asserting a return on investment for the taxpayer, whose land is going to be used to develop housing. We do not need to look very far out of this place to see what happens when Conservative governments that are cozy with developers decide they are going to start auctioning off land or opening up land for private development without a very clear set of rules at the forefront. That is a major failing of the bill.

I would gladly speak to the other failing, but I see I am out of time. Perhaps I will get a question about the other failings of that bill. I would be happy to answer it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I find it hard to understand. I hear my NDP colleague boasting about the amendments obtained in Government Business No. 30 pertaining to Bill C-56. These are amendments that are going to be made to the bill and are elements that are important to the NDP. However, the points contained in this motion could very well have been brought as amendments at committee stage.

The Bloc Québécois was calling for something important, namely financial flexibility, particularly for small businesses, with respect to the Canada emergency business account that was provided during the pandemic. A lot of businesses are asking us for this, and a lot of SMEs are telling us they need it to survive.

Why did the NDP not want to defend that?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, it goes without saying that we are defending small businesses. We wrote the minister. We

raised the issue. There are many things that we would like the government to do but that it will not do.

When we negotiate, we are not sitting in front of a mirror. We negotiate with a government that has its own priorities. Naturally, we propose things that it is opposed to.

I do not understand why the government wants to go after the small businesses that needed a loan during the pandemic. I do not understand why the government believes that it will get more money by causing bankruptcies. The government is clearly headed down that road even if it makes no sense.

We negotiated with the government to obtain what could be obtained. Regarding the loans, we do not think that it is something the government is prepared to do. I believe that the government is on the wrong side of this issue. I do not think we could have come to an agreement about this in Bill C-56.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member's speech was very relevant to the issues. I thought I would give him this opportunity to outline some of the concerns he has about the opposition leader's bill on housing, what the other challenges might be and how it would not meet the needs of many Canadians.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I certainly very much appreciate that unprompted question. I spoke a bit already about the lack of criteria around the use of public lands in the opposition leader's bill. However, I wanted to come back to this notion he has that he is going to punish municipalities.

We have had the opportunity to hear from a lot of representatives of municipalities presenting at the finance committee. They talk about the challenges that they are trying to overcome in order to facilitate building more housing in their own communities. I do not believe that they need to be browbeaten or punished financially in order to get that done. I would remind the Conservative leader that, when he talks about financially punishing municipalities that are not meeting his Ottawa-set target for housing starts, what he is really talking about doing is punishing the people in those municipalities. In a municipality where the leadership is acting in good faith to try to get more housing built, it has no interest in not getting that housing built in the community. There can be problems, and a lot of municipalities are trying to work through them.

The Conservative leader is saying that, if they are already under-resourced and do not meet his benchmark, he is going to deprive them of even more resources, expecting them to meet the target with fewer resources when they are already clearly under-resourced to meet that challenge. That is not a strategy that would set municipalities up for success. All it would do is punish the people who live in the municipality when their government is struggling to figure out a convoluted permitting process and a bunch of other stuff.

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In some cases we have heard at the finance committee, it is about the underlying infrastructure, such as sewer pipes and other things like that, which have to be in place in order to increase density. For a municipality that already does not have the resources to do that, getting dinged because it did not meet the Conservative leader's Ottawa-set housing target is not something that is going to help it to do that into the future.

Therefore, yes, we need to put an emphasis on outcomes; yes, there should be consequences for outcomes. However, just depriving municipalities of resources when they are already cash-strapped is not going to get the job done for Canadians.

• (1340)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for all the information, and specifically, for talking about the importance of housing. In my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, so many people are struggling to make ends meet, and housing is largely unaffordable. I am hearing from many residents that they want to see an increase of co-op housing, which, I know, is something that was brought up. Could the member expand a bit on the importance of a strategy that takes into account the non-market housing that he is speaking about and of our being able to have this legislation move forward and not see the Conservatives continue to block at committee?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, the Conservative leader has called housing co-ops a Soviet-style takeover of housing. Actually, it is quite the opposite; co-op housing is a great way to build non-market housing that is not government-owned and controlled but is actually owned and controlled by the people who live there in a way that makes access to that housing more affordable now and into the future. That is why we fought hard to ensure that the GST exemption applies to co-op housing, so that co-ops can get those benefits as well.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is the second opportunity I have been afforded to address this very important legislation. I want to start by commenting on when the legislation was introduced for debate earlier this morning, at which time the member for St. Catharines stood in his place and indicated that he would be happy to share his time with me.

I expected and hoped that, at least in part, there would be a general feeling that this is a substantive piece of legislation, which will have a very positive impact for Canadians. One would think that there would be support on all sides in favour of the legislation.

The member for St. Catharines, who is a little wiser than I am, pointed out in his comments that the Conservatives are filibustering, preventing legislation from passing. It was interesting that, when he pointed that out, he also referred to the fact that there are Conservative members who support the legislation and will be voting in favour of it. He then cited a specific member who indicated he would be voting in favour of the legislation.

After the member for St. Catharines spoke, I had the opportunity to speak. Based on previous experience, I also referred to the fact that the Conservatives have this natural inclination to prevent legislation from passing, even when they support it. A Conservative member across the way, speaking during Private Members' Busi-

ness, made his perspective very clear in his opening comments. At the time, we were debating a private member's bill on a different issue, which is not government legislation, but he was critical of the government for not debating important issues.

I agree in the sense that the issues he referred to at the time, during Private Members' Business, were housing affordability and inflation. He may even have mentioned groceries. Within five minutes after the Conservative member sat down, we brought forward this piece of legislation, Bill C-56. If we read the title, it is about affordable housing and groceries. If we listen to what members opposite are saying, we would think they would be a little more sympathetic in terms of seeing the legislation passed.

Here is the catch: What did the very first speaker on Bill C-56, the member for Bay of Quinte, choose to do? He stood in his place, said a few words and referred to my speech, in which I referred to the efficiency argument in the legislation, which I will get back to. He referred to my saying that and said that is a very good part of the legislation. He acknowledged that. Then, toward the end of his speech, what did he do? He moved an amendment, with the real purpose of ensuring that there would be additional debate on this legislation.

Someone might ask what is wrong with a little more debate. On the surface, there is nothing wrong with it. However, people who follow not only this legislation but also many pieces of legislation that the government brings forward will know that the Conservative agenda has nothing at all to do with what is in the best interests of Canadians. For the Conservative Party of Canada today, it is all about putting roadblocks in place and the members doing whatever they can to assassinate the characters of government members and prevent legislation from passing. It is as simple as that.

• (1345)

That is why the Conservatives brought forward an amendment. What does the amendment actually say? It says:

...and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, and the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities be ordered to appear as witnesses for no less than two hours each....

Every member of this House is very much aware of their opinions and thoughts on the economy, inflation and housing, as the ministers themselves have commented on the issue in different forms. The purpose of the amendment is, again, just to prevent or slow down the legislation's passing.

The Conservatives have no reservations in doing this. I appreciate that it gives me another opportunity to address the legislation. I look to the member for Bay of Quinte and thank him for allowing me to express myself a little more on the legislation.

At the end of the day, some members have said they support the legislation and other members have said there is good stuff in it. There is no reason why the Conservative Party should be attempting to prevent this legislation from passing.

Let us look at what is happening around us. If we want to support Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it, and if we want to look at how we could support low-income Canadians, in terms of getting into non-profit housing or even, in this situation, purpose-built homes, there is good stuff in here. Increasing competition is a good thing. Conservatives talk about that, but their actions are very different.

We introduced the legislation this morning, with the idea of having three hours of debate; maybe the Conservatives would see the light and the advantage of helping Canadians and would allow the legislation to pass. However, that is not the case.

It is just like one of the other pieces of legislation that really surprises me: the Canada-Ukraine agreement. We are going to be debating that legislation. It is scheduled for this afternoon. What is the Conservative Party of Canada going to do to prevent that legislation from passing? Will it bring in another concurrence report?

We have even had members in the chamber accuse the Canada-Ukraine agreement of being woke legislation. They have portrayed Canada as taking advantage of Ukraine, even though the President of Ukraine came to Canada and had a ceremony with the Prime Minister to sign this agreement.

There is no one steering the Conservative Party today on policy, ideas or things that would help Canadians in a very real and tangible way. Conservatives are more concerned about bumper stickers than they are about good, sound policy. A good example of that would be in trying to figure out what the Conservative Party of Canada stands for on the issue of the environment. I said, "What is the policy on the environment?" Members across the way just heckled, "Axe the tax." That is what I mean about bumper stickers.

● (1350)

The reality is that the leader of the Conservative Party and his entire group are more concerned with social media posts, which are often very misleading, if I am being kind, and the bumper stickers they could use in the next election, as opposed to being concerned with what is in the best interest of Canadians.

This legislation, Bill C-56, is good legislation. We finally have a government that is trying to address the issue of affordability and stability of grocery prices, and the Conservatives do not want the legislation to pass.

Earlier, I brought up the issue of competition and how Canadians benefit through competition, and this legislation would provide the opportunity to take away efficiency as an argument that could be made by companies to acquire other companies. The example I used earlier was grocery stores. In Canada, as I am sure members know, we have five major grocery stores: Metro, Loblaws, Sobeys, Walmart and Costco. Those are the big five. We used to have Shoppers as a separate entity until Stephen Harper and the current leader of the Conservative Party thought there was nothing wrong with Shoppers being acquired by another company. That reduced competition.

On the one hand, we hear the Conservatives talk about the benefits of competition, but on the other hand, when it comes to voting for legislation that would help with competition pass, what do they

Government Orders

choose to do? They choose to filibuster the legislation. They do not want to pass the legislation. That is why the member for Bay of Quinte moved an amendment. It is to prevent the legislation from passing. It is so they can continue to debate endlessly. As a government, we will have to go to the New Democrats or the Bloc to negotiate bringing in time allocation to pass this legislation, or it is not going to pass.

On the one hand, the Conservative Party will be critical of the government because it wants to see more competition, yet when it was in government, it allowed Shoppers to be acquired, with no questions asked. It was an acquisition worth billions of dollars, and its members allowed it. Then, when it has come time for us to be able to deal with those kinds of acquisitions, they are now preventing the legislation from passing. Many would suggest that is somewhat hypocritical, myself included, but it does not meet their agenda.

I ask members to take a look at what the legislation actually does. It would provide a GST exemption for purpose-built homes over the next number of years. That initiative is expected to see tens of thousands of homes being built, and that would be a direct result of this legislation. As I indicated earlier, the idea is sound and it is good. The Conservative Party of Canada should support it.

We are seeing provincial governments recognizing that this initiative is good, and they are applying it to the PST too, the provincial sales tax. We have provinces of different political stripes, and we have the Liberal government, the NDP and the Bloc all supporting that initiative. On the other hand, we have the reckless Conservatives, who feel that their job is to prevent legislation of all forms from passing in the House. I would argue that it is at a great expense to Canadians.

● (1355)

When we think of the housing issue, it is of critical importance. I have heard about it being of critical importance from all sides of the House, but when there are initiatives, whether legislation like this, budgetary measures that support housing co-ops and organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, the transfer of billions of dollars to provinces and non-profit groups to assist in subsidizing units, or the housing accelerator fund and the monies allocated for that, the consistent thing we get from the Conservative Party is that they vote against them, or they filibuster. In the meantime, Conservatives have the tenacity to suggest we are not doing enough on the housing file.

The reality is that no government in the last 60-plus years has been more proactive on the housing file than this government has been. No government has, and the numbers will clearly show—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Statements by Members

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Members will have an opportunity to speak during the 10 minutes of questions and comments, but now is not the time. I would ask members to please be respectful. This is something that we continue to have to rise in the House to do. This is showing disrespect at a time when we have people in the galleries and people watching at home.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the Conservative Party of Canada could do a huge favour for Canadians today. Conservatives could recognize that there are two very important pieces of legislation that we are debating and allow both pieces of legislation to ultimately pass.

Bill C-56 is there to deal, in good part, with the housing crisis and price stabilization. These are things that are in the best interests of Canadians. Later this afternoon, we will be debating the Canada-Ukraine agreement. It is the same thing. These are—

• (1400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member will have to continue the next time this matter is before the House because we are now going to Statements by Members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

RECOGNITION OF SERVICE

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, later today, the Speaker will be recognizing some employees for years of service to members and to the House of Commons.

Glenn Bradbury first made his way here in 1987, and it is hard to do justice to just how monumental his service has been. Five MPs, a former minister of foreign affairs and one current cabinet minister have worked with him. There have been Criminal Code and Competition Act amendments that brought justice and fairness. Several innocent Canadians can also thank him for helping to secure their freedom from some of the world's worst prisons.

For 18 years, Glenn was EA to the Hon. Dan McTeague. He described Glenn as the first among equals and said that he was an MP who never was, but who impacted Parliament in a way few staff ever have. Together, they passed seven private members' bills, which is the most in Parliament's history.

Today, I deeply appreciate having Glenn on my team. I thank him for his years of dedication and service, and for his work to help strengthen democracy and governance not only in Canada but also in Kosovo, Guyana, Pakistan, Bhutan, Tunisia and Nepal.

NATIONAL SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAM

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, National Child Day is a time to recommit to improve the collective well-being of children and ensure their human rights are upheld.

I was proud to co-host a breakfast on the Hill this morning in partnership with Breakfast Club of Canada, and I want to acknowledge Cloe Steffen, who is in the gallery on behalf of Breakfast Club of Canada today.

This year's focus is to call on the federal government to implement a national school meal program. The Liberal government promised to implement one in 2019. Four years later, Canada remains the only G7 country without a national school food program.

In a country as wealthy as Canada, this is unacceptable. No child should ever be forced to attend class on an empty stomach. Today, on National Child Day, I urge the government to keep its promise and fund a national school meal program so children can have the healthy food they need to thrive.

DIWALI AND BANDI CHHOR DIVAS

Mr. Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC): Madam Speaker, this past week, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains from across Canada and around the world celebrated Diwali, the festival of lights.

Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas symbolize the spiritual victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance. The stories and traditions may vary, but its message of hope continues to unite people from all walks of life. This universal message is more important today than ever. As we continue to see many struggling in our communities and so much darkness and pain around the world, Diwali inspires us with hope that one day all will be all right.

Diwali was particularly special for me and my family this year because it was the first time we celebrated with my son, Arvin. It was also great to see our Conservative leader attending several community events, businesses, mandirs and gurdwaras to celebrate with families across Canada and to share his positive message of hope for our country.

To all who celebrated, I hope they had a happy and bright Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas.

RECOGNITION OF SERVICE

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Corinne Reid, who has been the first point of contact in the Charlottetown MP's constituency office for 23 years. Upon my election in 2011, Corinne, as the senior person in the office, trained me, and continues to supervise me to this day.

Amid the daily chaos, Corinne always holds her cool and manages every situation with compassion. I liken her to a swan. The public sees what is above the water, which is graceful, poised and serene, while below the water, her feet are moving madly in multiple directions at any time. Over the last 12 years, every single day I have spent door knocking, I met at least one constituent who complimented me on how their case was handled in the constituency office. I have no doubt I am still in this place because of her work, her patience, her empathy and her professionalism, all of which reflect positively on me.

Tonight, the Speaker will get to meet Corinne as he honours her more than 20 years of service to the people of Charlottetown. I thank Corinne.

* * *

● (1405)

[Translation]

KARL TREMBLAY

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec has been in deep collective mourning since Wednesday. It is only natural because Karl Tremblay brought us together his entire life. Karl Tremblay, the great captain of our iconic Cowboys Fringants, the gentle giant, the proud Quebecker, left us too soon.

Since Wednesday, Quebec has been mourning in sadness, sure, but also in recognition and admiration. Karl Tremblay sang about our love, our raging benders, our collective dreams as individuals, our joy, our pain. He made us feel as though he were singing to each one of us, personally, and to all of us at the same time, generously, so generously.

Everyone in Quebec is still singing with Karl today and will continue to sing as long as they have a voice because, as Karl says, at the end of the day that is what is left of our short time in this frantic world. It is a beautiful eternal star in the sky of our beloved Quebec.

To Marie-Annick, Simone and Pauline, the family, the Cowboys and all those who loved him, the Bloc Québécois offers its sympathy and condolences.

The Speaker: He was truly one of the greats.

The hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

* * *

NATIONAL CHILD DAY

Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we are celebrating National Child Day following the adoption in 1991 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I would like to raise an important issue that residents of Ottawa—Vanier consider a priority. I am referring to the fundamental right of every child in Canada to a healthy diet. On this day dedicated to the well-being of our youngest constituents, let us reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that no child in Canada goes to school hungry. I invite and encourage my colleagues to work together on

Statements by Members

developing a national school nutrition program in co-operation with our provincial, territorial, municipal, indigenous and private sector partners to come up with a practical solution to the pressing food security problem confronting Canadian families.

I am very grateful to the Breakfast Club for organizing this morning's breakfast on the Hill and for defending every child's right to food.

* * *

[English]

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this evening, the long service awards ceremony will be held in Ottawa, a very important recognition for what people do to help make our jobs as MPs successful.

Today, I would like to recognize Karen Kallen for over 30 years of service. Karen started in an MP office in 1993 in the Medicine Hat riding with MPs Monte Solberg and LaVar Payne, for a combined 22 years.

In 2015, I was elected in Bow River and I was very lucky that Karen agreed to work with me.

Her years of commitment to the region made her an invaluable member of our team. Her volunteerism with many community organizations made her household name in Brooks and the County of Newell. Karen's soulmate Huby has been by her side every step of the way.

After 30 years, Karen will be starting a new path. I, along with many constituents, will miss her. I thank Karen for 30 years of service to three MPs and thousands of constituents and congratulate her.

* * *

NATIONAL CHILD DAY

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is a special day for multiple reasons. First and foremost, it is a special person's birthday. I want to wish my true companion in life, my wife Suze, a happy birthday, and my beautiful daughter Alexis a belated happy birthday. She just turned 12 last week.

In just a few weeks, our family will welcome our second child, a little girl, into the world.

I am feeling a little sentimental today because it is National Child Day, a day for us all to reflect on the well-being of children in Canada and around the world.

Since 2015, our government has been steadfast in our efforts to improve the lives of children through measures like the Canada child benefit, \$10-a-day child care, dental care and more.

Today, I would like to emphasize the importance of a national student nutrition program, to ensure that kids across Canada have access to healthy meals in schools.

I think we can all agree that nothing could be more important than investing in our children's future.

*Statements by Members***NATIONAL CHILD DAY**

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is National Child Day. The theme for 2023 is “#EveryChildEveryRight.”

I am proud to be co-hosting a reception today with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, or UNICEF, to bring more attention to children's rights, particularly those impacted by war, poverty and disease.

Last week, I hosted 23 high school students from Milton in my office to voice their concerns. They do not have a vote yet but they do have a voice. It is critical that we elected people listen to youth and take action on their priorities. Every single adult has a moral and ethical obligation to protect every single child.

On this World Children's Day and over the past 44 days, the world has been confronted by the images of murdered and injured Palestinian children in Gaza, and the knowledge that Israeli children were murdered and taken hostage by Hamas. By absolutely no fault of their own, these kids are caught in the crossfire of this decades-long conflict, victims of their surroundings and circumstances.

Children are innocent. They should never be targets of violence or warfare. I continue to call for the immediate release of all hostages and the protection of civilians, especially children and young people.

I continue to amplify the UN resolution for a ceasefire and an end to the violence.

* * *

• (1410)

[Translation]

KARL TREMBLAY

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we lost a great Quebecker on November 15. Karl Tremblay, the lead singer of Les Cowboys Fringants, left a lasting impression on us.

Not only did he create captivating musical compositions, but he also played a critical role in strengthening Quebec's linguistic and cultural identity. The evocative lyrics in his songs, often infused with poetry, convey the nuances and beauty of our language.

He strengthened our heritage, inspiring current and future generations to celebrate the diversity that characterizes the Francophonie. I would like to inform the House that I intend to posthumously nominate this giant of a man as Grand Officer of the Ordre de la Pléiade. This international recognition from the APF, the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, is reserved for those who promote the French language.

To his partner, Marie-Annick, as well as their two daughters, to his family, friends and all his fans, we offer our deepest condolences. He is a brilliant shooting star who must continue to shine on us. I want to thank Karl and wish him a safe journey.

PAUL-ANDRÉ THIBERT

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I want to pay tribute to Paul-André Thibert, to whom the Châteauguay community bid farewell last Saturday.

As an artist and a businessman, Mr. Thibert always devoted himself strongly and passionately to what he believed in. He first made a name for himself on Quebec's music scene before starting his own business, Compographe. He had a deep affection for heritage, and the patriots held a special place in his heart. I remember a very interesting and animated discussion we had last May on National Patriots Day.

I offer my deepest condolences to his wife Josiane, his daughters Anabel and Janik and his grandchildren, and to his many, many friends and family members.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Cumberland—Colchester, the roster for visits to the local food bank is 1,800 people. Across the country, two million Canadians visit a food bank every month. After eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

Under the NDP-Liberal coalition government, Canadians have seen housing costs double and mortgage payments have increased by 150%. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

Canadians are reaching out to all our offices in record numbers whether to bemoan the fact that they have been priced out of their lives by the punishing carbon tax or to convey that they are afraid to walk their local streets at night due to violent crime being increased by 39% under the NDP-Liberal government.

The \$600 billion in inflationary spending and countless tax hikes by the NDP-Liberals has led to Canadians being unable to feed themselves, house themselves and to keep the heat on.

Therefore, common-sense Conservatives will demand three things in the government's mini budget: cancel the plan to quadruple the carbon tax; bring down inflation and interest rates by balancing the budget; and, finally, build homes not bureaucracy.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the results of the Liberal-NDP government are in. Under the Prime Minister, there has been a record two million food bank visits in a single month. Housing costs have doubled. Mortgage payments are 150% higher than they were eight years ago. Violent crime is up 39%. Tent cities exist in almost every major city. Over 50% of Canadians are \$200 away from going broke. The International Monetary Fund warns Canada is most at risk in the G7 of a mortgage default crisis. Business insolvencies have increased by 37% this year alone and \$600 billion of inflationary spending has created inflation and higher interest rates.

After eight long years, the results are in and the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost.

There is good news. A Conservative government will axe the carbon tax; balance the budget to bring down inflation and interest rates; and will build homes, not bureaucracy. The Prime Minister is just not worth the cost.

* * *

• (1415)

[Translation]

GREY CUP

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night, Canadians were glued to their TVs to watch the Canadian Football League's 110th Grey Cup championship game between the Winnipeg Blue Bombers and the Montreal Alouettes.

[English]

The Als were trailing the Blue Bombers by 10 points at half time and an action-packed, nail-biting second half had fans on the edge of their seat until the bitter end. With less than 30 seconds left in the game and trailing by three points, the Als scored the winning touchdown with 13 seconds remaining, stunning fans with a 28 to 24 victory over the favoured Winnipeg team.

[Translation]

I send my heartfelt congratulations to the new Grey Cup champions, the Montreal Alouettes. The last time our team won the prestigious trophy was in 2010. Montrealers and Quebecers are very proud to see the cup coming home.

[English]

Canadians came together as a nation to watch the best of the CFL play, and last night was no exception. What we got to see was football at its finest. Go Als go.

* * *

TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as parents and caregivers, we want to know that our children will be safe, cared for, respected and celebrated for who they are. These are values on which I believe we can all agree.

Statements by Members

A 12-year-old trans child in my riding has shared with me that they are seeing increases of homophobia and transphobia all around them, and they feel scared. Trans people of all ages from across Canada are experiencing increased incidences of hate and violence. This cannot continue.

Today is Transgender Day of Remembrance. It is a day to remember those lost from anti-trans hate and violence. It is a day to remember those lost to suicide.

With government action, we can save lives and build an equitable future for all. Action needs to be taken today to ensure that no more trans lives are lost. Let us put love and kindness for one another ahead of hate and remember that trans rights are human rights.

* * *

[Translation]

MONTREAL ALOUETTES

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Montreal Alouettes' incredible Grey Cup victory yesterday is a sporting moment that will forever be etched in the fans' memories. This is a story about a team that came back from the brink.

After last season, it was doubtful whether the team would survive. However, team manager Danny Maciocia, an unassuming guy from Saint-Léonard, never gave up. He knew it was best to surround himself with great football minds, starting with former Alouette Jason Maas as coach. A local owner, one Pierre-Karl Péladeau, came on board to secure the franchise's future in Montreal.

This year, no one believed they could do it, no one except them. They were vindicated, in the end. The Alouettes qualified for the playoffs. They beat Toronto, the defending champions, and played the mighty Winnipeg Blue Bombers in yesterday's final. Congratulations to the quarterback, Cody Fajardo, who played the game of his life, and to all his teammates.

The Alouettes are bringing the Grey Cup back to Montreal, to Quebec, back home. It is something to be proud of. Back stronger than before, the Alouettes have flown higher. Congratulations.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canada we have after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government is tent cities across the country, violent crime up 39%, more than two million people visiting a food bank in one month, over 50% of Canadians saying they are \$200 away from being broke, middle-class working people living in their cars and nine in 10 young Canadians feeling they will never own a home. People are losing hope and the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost.

The Liberal \$600 billion of inflationary debt and countless tax hikes are increasing the cost of all we buy. We need to reverse this course of misery.

Oral Questions

In order to consider supporting this mini-budget, the common-sense Conservatives demand that the fall economic statement cancel Liberal plans to quadruple the carbon tax; announce a plan and date to balance the budget to bring down inflation and interest rates; and build homes, not bureaucracy. Only our common-sense Conservative plan will bring home lower prices for Canadians.

* * *

• (1420)

SEVEN GENERATIONS EDUCATION INSTITUTE

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Seven Generations Education Institute is an Anishinabe-led organization that provides secondary and post-secondary training to indigenous and non-indigenous people in the Treaty 3 region of northwestern Ontario.

It all started in 1985 in the backs of pickup trucks going from community to community. Now it has campuses in Fort Frances, Kenora and Sioux Lookout. The institute teaches people the technical skills needed to find employment, but also teaches Anishinabe language, culture and tradition.

Let me acknowledge two young people whose lives have been changed thanks to Seven Generations: Kari Yerxa and Jeremy Andy, both from Couchiching First Nation. Kari completed the women's empowerment program and is now teaching full-time in the community. Andy completed the Anishinaabemowin adult learner program and is now employed by Seven Generations, teaching the Anishinaabemowin language.

I invite members to please join Seven Generations' staff and former students, along with the living legend Donald Rusnak and me, in the Sir John A. Macdonald building, room 200, beginning at 5:45 p.m.

Meegwetch.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

HOUSING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, this Prime Minister is not worth the cost of mortgages. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the Governor of the Bank of Canada, I am right to say that this Prime Minister's deficits are contributing to inflation and interest rates. According to Scotia Bank, these deficits are increasing interest rates by 2%. That means a \$700-increase to monthly mortgage payments.

Before Canadians lose their homes, will the Prime Minister finally accept my common sense plan and announce a date and plan for balancing the budget, reducing inflation and mortgage rates?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservatives, our government has a plan to help Canadians get through this. For example, we are helping four million Canadians by providing the Canada workers benefit and more than six million Canadians by indexing old age security.

What is the Conservatives' plan? That is right, they do not have one.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost of mortgage payments, which are already up 150%. The Bank of Canada and the Parliamentary Budget Officer now agree with me that his deficits are driving up interest rates. Scotiabank says that deficits are driving mortgage rates up 2%. That works out to \$700 per month. Carpenters and nurses are already living in their cars, and the IMF says that Canada's mortgage holders are the most at risk of crisis.

Will the Prime Minister finally accept my common-sense plan and announce the date and the plan to balance the budget and bring down interest rates on Canadian mortgages so people do not lose their homes?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear and accurate. Much of the spending referred to by the Leader of the Opposition was provincial in nature, not federal. In addition, unlike the Conservatives, we actually have a plan to help Canadians, especially vulnerable Canadians. The Deputy Prime Minister will table additional aspects of that plan tomorrow in the fall economic statement.

Let us be clear. We are here for Canadians every single step of the way, unlike the party opposite that votes against every single time.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's plan is to increase mortgage payments by 150%, which he has already done. Now, Scotiabank says that government deficits have added two percentage points to interest rates. That works out to \$700 a month, or \$8,400 a year, in higher mortgage payments linked directly to deficits, including the massive deficits by the government.

A year ago, the government promised a balanced budget. It broke the promise six months later. Will it come back tomorrow with a plan to balance the budget so we can bring down interest rates and inflation so Canadians can keep their homes?

• (1425)

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect, we have a plan that is going to build more homes. It is going to restore a level of affordability in the market. Where we are cutting taxes on home builders, he wants to raise them. Where we are funding cities to increase their ambition on home building, he wants to cut.

It is hard to accept criticism from a member of the House of Commons who, when he had the opportunity to be the minister responsible for housing, had access to \$300 million and got only 99 homes built.

Oral Questions

We are going to build homes, and we are going to build them by the millions. [Translation]

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I was housing minister, mortgage payments were less than half of what they are now, and rent was less than half of what it is now. Those are the hard realities, and now the Prime Minister's plan is to quadruple the carbon tax. That would increase the cost of gas, heat, groceries and, yes, even housing, because it takes trucks to ship building materials.

We know that we will have a carbon tax election to decide whether we axe the tax, as I choose, or whether we hike it, as he promises. Can we accept a Canadian compromise and at least freeze the tax in the meantime, yes or no?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to listen to this version of revisionist history of the hon. member's time as the minister responsible for housing. If we actually go back and look at the numbers, we would see that he actually had housing starts of fewer than 200,000 a year.

This morning, we are seeing data that shows we are on pace to build more than 256,000 homes this year. If we want to compare apples to apples, we are going to make a difference. Does the hon. member like apples? We are going to beat his numbers. How does he like those apples?

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister should stick to photo ops, because comedy is surely not his thing, and neither are numbers. Everything the Prime Minister has said about the Stellantis subsidy has proven false. It is billions of dollars over budget before shovels are in the ground, and years behind payback, even before the project begins. He claimed that it was going to create jobs for Canadians, but we have now learned that at least 1,500, a majority, of the jobs are going to go to temporary foreign workers.

Will the Prime Minister release the contract now so we can find out how much Canadian taxpayers are going to have to spend to give paycheques to South Korean workers?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Leader of the Opposition opposed spending that was supporting families. Now, during a national housing crisis, he opposes government investments that would actually get more homes built. When we have the opportunity to make generational investments that would gain a toehold in a new industry, he opposes it without vision for what the future economy could be when we create many thousands of jobs.

We are going to continue to invest in the Canadian economy and make sure workers bring home paycheques that would put food on the table for their families.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is the economic update. The finance minister has to understand that fiscal restraint does not mean austerity at the expense of small businesses. More than 220,000 SMEs face bankruptcy if the minister refuses to extend by one year the deadline for the CEBA loan repayment with no loss of the grant portion. The Quebec National Assembly demanded this extension. The Premier of Quebec and the other premiers demanded this extension. Everyone is demanding more flexibility for SMEs from the federal government. It is unanimous.

Will the minister finally give businesses the extension they so desperately need tomorrow?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, small businesses asked for our help. That is why our government extended the deadline for forgiveness to January 18, 2024. We also announced the extension of the deadline for term loan repayment by one year, to the end of 2026. Our government will always be there for small businesses.

* * *

● (1430)

FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, business owners are sick and tired of hearing those lines.

In the economic update, the minister will also have to keep her promise to families who can no longer afford groceries. During the election campaign, the Liberals promised \$1 billion over five years to fund school meal programs. Tomorrow, the minister must fulfill this election promise. Fiscal restraint does not mean austerity, and certainly not on the backs of people who are having a hard time feeding their families.

Will the minister keep her promise tomorrow and announce the payment of funds for food aid in schools in Quebec?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[English]

We know that many Canadians are having a hard time putting food on the table. We are working with provinces, territories, municipalities and key stakeholders to develop a national school food policy. We are doing the hard work now, together with our partners, understanding the importance of moving forward together. We will continue this progress.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people are struggling to pay their rent and buy groceries. In Montreal, people are coming together to help food banks, which are overwhelmed by the demand. Meanwhile, the CEOs of large corporations are lining their pockets. Loblaw alone made \$18 billion in profits in one quarter. That is unprecedented. Their greed knows no bounds, and the Liberals are doing nothing to discourage them.

Tomorrow presents a real opportunity to help people. Will the Liberals have the courage to lower the price of food and tackle the greed of CEOs?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are currently studying the affordable housing and groceries act. We must continue to support everyone in our country when it comes to groceries—

The Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. minister, but apparently there is no interpretation.

Now everything seems to be working again.

I would ask the hon. President of the Treasury Board to begin her answer over again.

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Speaker, the affordable housing and groceries act is very important for our country. We continue to support the bill being examined. It is crucial in these economic times in our country.

I thank all of my colleagues in the House for supporting this bill. We will continue to be there for Canadians.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-56 certainly, I think, after some improvement by New Democrats, would help a bit with the housing crisis but would not solve the housing crisis.

The fall economic statement is an important opportunity to make further progress on both the housing crisis and the affordability crisis. Funds have been depleted for social housing that need to be replenished, and there is further work to do on strengthening competition laws in Canada. Are these initiatives that we are going to see in the fall economic statement, or are Canadians going to be left waiting again?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that he and I will both wait for tomorrow to see the details of the fall economic statement.

However, I want to signal my intent to continue to the pattern of investment in affordable housing in particular that is going to make sure that everyone in this country has a safe and affordable place to call home. Over the 30 years that preceded our time in government, governments of different stripes chose not to make the necessary

investments to ensure that we had sufficient, affordable housing stock. We are going to continue to make the investments that are necessary in affordable housing to restore something to the ecosystem, and that is a level of affordability that we desperately need.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight long years, the Governor of the Bank of Canada confirmed that the Prime Minister and his scam of the century, the carbon tax, are not worth the cost. Scrapping this scam would put a massive dent in inflation and help lower interest rates faster, all at a time when Canadians are choosing between eating and heating their homes, because of Liberal inflation and the carbon tax.

Will the finance minister accept our Conservative leader's common-sense ask to axe the government's plans to quadruple its carbon tax in tomorrow's false-promise update, yes or no?

● (1435)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am truly glad to hear the Conservative member opposite be so excited for tomorrow's fall economic update.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance will be in the House at 4 p.m. tomorrow to reveal our books and to show the plan we have prepared for Canadians. This is an important moment of transparency for Canadians to see where we are at and where we are going. It is an important moment as well for Conservatives to actually see the numbers and use the facts in order to have intelligent debate in the House.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, more photo ops are not going to help anyone here in Canada. What we will not do, as a Conservative government, is create two classes of Canadians like the Liberal-NDP government did by giving 3% of Canadians in Atlantic Canada, where the Prime Minister's poll numbers were tanking, a break while the rest of Canadians get absolutely nothing and have to freeze and starve in the dark. Two million Canadians are visiting a food bank in a single month. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost after eight years.

Will the Liberals cancel their plan to quadruple their carbon tax in tomorrow's false-hopes update, yes or no?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member says is both factually incorrect and grossly misleading. We have put a price on pollution in this country, one that actually helps us to address the existential threat that is climate change, but have done so in a manner that is affordable. Eight out of 10 Canadian families get more money back than they pay in the carbon price. It is a manner that is affordable for Canadians while at the same time taking on and addressing what is a clear threat to the future of our children. It is such a shame that in this country, we still have a political party that does not believe that climate change is real.

*Oral Questions***FINANCE**

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of out-of-control spending by the Liberal government, experts at Scotiabank now say that two percentage points of interest rate increases are due to government spending. An extra 2% on mortgage costs means over \$8,000 a year for Canadian borrowers. Canadians are realizing the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. When Scotiabank says, “You're richer than you think”, it did not mean spend like drunken sailors.

On what date will the government balance the budget?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us speak about balance, because our government believes that we can balance compassion with fiscal responsibility, and that is what we have shown to date.

Canada continues to have the lowest deficit among all G7 countries. Canada continues to have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio among all G7 countries. The very report that the member is citing states that the major drivers of interest rate increases were COVID supports and provincial spending. It was not federal spending, but provincial spending.

We will not apologize for having Canadians' backs while being responsible.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my message for any provincial premier is the same as the message for the Prime Minister: Take responsibility for government spending because it is driving inflation and making interest rates unaffordable for Canadians.

The Bank of Canada says that all governments need to spend less than 2% growth in order to keep inflation under control. The government's own projections in the budget in the spring says that the government will spend over 3.5% growth next year versus this year.

When are Liberals going to get that they are part of the problem and they have to balance the budget so Canadians can keep their homes?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talks about responsibility. It is this government that took its responsibility seriously. When times were tough, when COVID hit and even today we continue to have Canadians' backs. We do not just talk about compassion, we act in that manner by being there for vulnerable Canadians, by being there in order to lift over 2.3 million Canadians out of poverty, by ensuring over one million more Canadians have a job today than before COVID.

We are there for Canadians while being fiscally responsible, and I am certainly looking forward to tomorrow's fiscal update.

• (1440)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all we have been seeing for the past eight years is out-of-control spending by the NDP-Liberal government, with the help of its Bloc Québécois friends. That has created the follow-

ing problem: Experts at Scotiabank have calculated that the government's excessive spending has added two percentage points to Canada's interest rate. That represents more than \$8,400 a year in interest on the average mortgage. The government can help Quebecers deal with the cost of living by getting its spending under control.

Will the government listen to the experts? Will it stop spending? Will it announce a plan to balance the budget in tomorrow's budget?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to see how enthusiastic members are about tomorrow's economic statement.

However, I would like my colleague from Quebec to tell us what his austerity plan looks like. Will the Conservatives make cuts to the child care spaces we just created or do they want to cut support for seniors? I think the time has come to be specific, and we are listening with great interest.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the first thing we are going to cut is wasteful spending, like the \$54 million for ArriveCAN, the \$200 billion in COVID-19 spending, since the Parliamentary Budget Officer cannot even tell what that money was used for, and the \$135 million that Frank Baylis got for nothing.

The government has done a lot of spending over the past eight years. There is a long list of things it has spent money on. If we start by cutting that, we will get back to a balanced budget and Canadians will be much better off.

Does the minister plan to return to a balanced budget in tomorrow's economic update, yes or no?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our colleague here has just told us that he intends to cut COVID spending. I think it is important to inform him that COVID spending is over.

He also wants to make cuts in other areas because that is the Conservative policy. Where are they going to cut? Day care? Seniors? The fight against climate change?

Some things are clear. They want to set us back on everything: firearms, women's rights, fundamental rights. They want to send us back to the Stone Age.

*Oral Questions***BORDER SECURITY**

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again, we need to talk about the federal government's management of the borders. Radio-Canada has reported that Mexican cartels are taking advantage of the government's lax border control to make a fortune. They are forging Mexican passports and using them to smuggle people into Canada and the United States.

Both the RCMP and CSIS alerted the Minister of Public Safety in the spring. What has the government done since then to get its borders back under control?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we obviously share the concerns of all Canadians when it comes to the integrity of our borders.

That is precisely why we have invested additional funds in strengthening our border security posture. This is why I visited Washington a month and a half ago. I spoke with the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security about specific ways that we could collaborate more. I also had an important discussion with my colleague, Quebec's public safety minister. We are going to keep increasing personnel as required to ensure that the border remains secure.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let me say it again. There is a human trafficking network being run by Mexican cartels at the Canadian border, all in full view of the federal government, which was told about it by intelligence services.

The Government of Quebec is worried. It says that Ottawa needs to wake up. It also says that the federal government is unfortunately not doing its job, and Quebec is being left to shoulder the burden.

When will this government regain control of its borders?

• (1445)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to disagree with my colleague, but we have not lost control of our borders.

On the contrary, we are working with Canada's intelligence and security services. We share as much intelligence as possible under Canadian law so that our partners, whether American, Mexican or Canadian, including those in Quebec, can explore what more we can do to secure the border. I look forward to continuing my very positive discussions with Minister Bonnardel on this matter.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have to put ourselves in the shoes of the people who want to leave Mexico.

They are prepared to go to great lengths to get out of their country, not least because of the cartels. These cartels have tentacles all over the place and no respect for human life. Now imagine how these people must feel when they realize that even in Canada, those same cartels are controlling the border. Even in Canada, those same cartels are still getting rich at their expense.

When will this government show some humanity and take back control of its borders?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said a few moments ago, as a government, we have been taking action since the first months of our term to ensure the integrity of our borders. We have spoken with our partners in the U.S. and Mexico about the importance of controlling irregular migration.

We have invested more in border security and in our intelligence services so we could do whatever it takes to keep our borders secure. Obviously, we are always open to good ideas for further enhancing this important responsibility.

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[English]

HOUSING

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government and two years of its housing accelerator, photo ops are up exponentially, but investment in housing construction is down 14%.

The Prime Minister promised to make housing more affordable. What has he delivered? Nothing but photos of suits in boots. Canada has the lowest number of housing units per capita in the G7. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

When will he put aside his photo-op obsession, and focus on roofs over heads and keys in doors?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an excellent question, if only it were based in fact.

The member has claimed that in fact investment in housing has gone down. I read from the Stats Canada report issued just this morning that multi-unit construction rose 8.2% to \$6.6 billion in September with all provinces reporting gains. Residential builds are up 7.3% to \$12.9 billion. With respect to the housing accelerator fund, we have deals with Kitchener, Calgary, Kelowna and cities across the country totalling, over the next 10 years, more than 175,000 more homes. The Conservatives promised to cut it.

Oral Questions

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, photo ops do not build homes. We need more homes in Canada, a lot more, not less. Fourteen per cent less year over year is what failure looks like. We need homes, not bureaucracy.

Since this housing minister took over, investment in housing construction is still plummeting, down 14% year over year. After eight years, rents and down payments have doubled and mortgages are up 150%. When will this Prime Minister stop the photo ops and let builders build so Canadians can move into homes they can afford?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hate to delight in such a moment where the hon. member, in good faith, tries to pose a question but just does not have the facts. She has claimed that investment has plummeted literally on the day that Stats Canada has indicated that it has increased by 7.3%.

When it comes to the strategy we are going to use to build more homes, we are going to change the math to make it work for builders by reducing taxes. Conservatives plan to raise them. We want to change the way that cities build homes by putting money on the table. Conservatives plan to cut it.

We will make the investments necessary. We will engage with the sector and other levels of government to get more homes built, whatever it takes.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this NDP-Liberal government, millions of Canadians can never afford to buy a home, and millions of Canadians cannot afford to keep their home. According to a recent Scotiabank report, the cost of the average mortgage is going to go up by more than \$700 because of the Liberal's profligate spending. When will these Liberals stop blaming everyone else and finally take responsibility for the housing crisis they caused?

• (1450)

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wants to do something to help with the housing crisis right now, he can talk to his leader and tell him to stop blocking the cut to the GST that is going to unlock hundreds of thousands of homes across this country.

We are cutting taxes for home building. The Conservatives plan to raise them. We are putting money on the table to get more cities to change the way they build homes. The Conservatives want to cut it.

If the member's concern is around spending driving inflation, I would ask him to imagine a world where we decided not to support households and not to support businesses through the pandemic. We would be dealing with millions of Canadians who would have lost their homes years ago. We are going to make the investments to build millions in the years ahead.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, if the Liberals say that they will do whatever it takes for housing, Nunavut needs \$250 million.

One-third of Nunavutians live in homes needing major repairs and over 50% in my riding are in overcrowded homes. The situation is so bad that TB outbreaks in two more communities were announced earlier this year. Last year, the Government of Nunavut asked the Liberals for \$200 million to build urgently needed housing. So far, they got zero.

Will the Minister of Finance announce tomorrow the housing funding that Nunavut desperately needs?

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are fully engaged with the Government of Nunavut and with Inuit rights holders on this important issue.

In 2022, we announced \$4 billion for indigenous rights holders, including \$800 million for Inuit rights holders. We have \$4 billion as well for the rural, northern and urban strategy, which is something we are going to roll out in the months to come.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Winnipeg is in a dire housing crisis. As of last year, 6,000 people were on a wait-list for public housing. People are freezing to death in bus shelters. The Winnipeg City Council is voting to change zoning laws in hopes that this government will grant the required funding to deal with the housing crisis. People are dying in the streets. Will the Liberals commit to the \$192 million of requested funding to build new housing stock and treat Winnipeg's housing crisis with the urgency it deserves?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the urgency with which she intends to address the housing crisis in Winnipeg. I am pleased to share that I most recently met with the mayor of Winnipeg just this morning. I have been engaging with the City of Winnipeg over the course of the last number of weeks and months in order to help facilitate the very reforms the council will be debating.

We have put federal money on the table to incentivize cities such as Winnipeg, right across the country, to change the way they allow homes to get built. We are going to continue to work with the most ambitious cities in Canada and use that federal funding to get more homes built for Canadians.

*Oral Questions***LABOUR**

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a week ago, the Minister of Labour tabled legislation to ban replacement workers, which is a commitment we made to Canadians in 2021. Since tabling the bill, workers and unions have applauded this historic move, yet 11 days later, the Leader of the Opposition still has not taken a position on the legislation. He has had enough time to study it, so why is he hesitating to support workers?

Can the Minister of Labour advise as to why the Leader of the Opposition should stand on the side of working families instead of corporate lobbyists?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Hon. members, many issues have been brought up regarding how questions should be relevant to the administration of the government or committee chairs. I will be issuing a ruling after the votes that are going to be happening after question period.

I see the minister is on his feet and intends to answer. I will allow the minister to take this, if he so desires, but members should be aware of the ruling that will be coming from the Speaker shortly.

• (1455)

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are proud to have tabled legislation to ban the use of replacement workers. Workers have been asking for this legislation longer than this country has existed. This legislation will keep unions and employers at the bargaining table, because that is where the powerful paycheques are created: at the bargaining table.

Members of other parties understand the importance of this bill, and I hope members opposite will as well. Then again, this is a leader who championed two of the most anti-worker, anti-union bills the House has ever seen. Will he support the bill? We will see.

* * *

HOUSING

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised to make life more affordable for Canadians when he took office, but after eight years of the Liberal government, rent has doubled, mortgage payments have skyrocketed and housing prices have doubled as well. Just today, we found out that housing construction rates are actually down by 14% concerning investment. Only the current Liberal government would use a housing accelerator fund to decelerate housing.

Contrary to Liberal belief, photo ops do not build houses. I know; this is news. When will the housing minister stop the photo ops and actually get some work done?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member has concerns about the use of photo ops, I would suggest she discuss with her leader why he shows up at projects he had nothing to do with to take a photo and then uses homelessness as a political prop for his social media.

The reality is that the member knows we have a plan to build more homes. It is to cut taxes and to put money on the table for

homebuilding. Those members want to raise taxes and cut money for homebuilding.

I was in the hon. member's province just last week, announcing a \$228-million agreement that is going to see the city of Calgary add more than 35,000 homes over the next 10 years. We are going to continue to do the work that is necessary to get—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lethbridge.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member knows is this: Rent prices have doubled, house prices have doubled, mortgage rates have skyrocketed and investment in housing construction is down 14%.

The minister is just not getting the job done, despite his promises to Canadians. When will he stop the photo ops and actually get to work so Canadians can have a roof over their heads?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the hon. member, she is saying that investments are down. In her province, Stats Canada indicated this morning that they are up 10.6%. The reality is that the numbers are continuing to increase because of the measures we are putting on the table. When we decided to eliminate GST, we saw announcements that are going to lead to 300,000 homes over the next decade. With respect to the housing accelerator fund, the changes cities are making so far have unlocked 175,000 homes. We are going to continue to make the investments necessary to get more homes built over and above the hundreds of thousands the national housing strategy has already delivered.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have in my hands a copy of the front page of the Thetford Mines local newspaper.

After eight years of the Liberal government's inflationary policies, here is the sad reality in our regions: a headline that reads "Soaring demand for food assistance in Thetford Mines". Scotiabank has confirmed that Liberal spending has increased the interest rates that families are paying by two percentage points, forcing more and more of them to turn to food banks to feed themselves.

Will this Prime Minister, who is not worth the cost, stop his gargantuan spending and give us the date when we can finally expect a balanced budget?

Oral Questions

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have asked several questions in a row about housing. That surprises me because we have a bill before the House right now that will let us build more housing across the country. It will also help stabilize grocery prices across Canada.

On October 5, about 46 days ago, the Conservative member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon did the right thing and announced in the House that he would be voting in support of this bill. Can he convince the Conservative leader, who does not seem too sure about it?

● (1500)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a post on social media, the leader of the Bloc Québécois said he wants to hold the balance of power, but he has yet to say how he will balance the Liberal budget.

As we know, the Bloc Québécois supports the Liberal government's inflationary spending, and now it wants to keep the Liberals in power for the next two years. The Bloc Québécois is okay with drastically increasing the carbon tax and maintaining inflationary deficits in order to keep the Liberals in power. Voting for the Bloc Québécois is costly.

Will the Prime Minister continue to send more and more Quebecers to food banks just to ensure he receives support from the Bloc Québécois, which is constantly looking to drastically increase taxes on the backs of Canadians?

The Speaker: Once again, as I indicated to the member for Sudbury, it is important to ask questions that deal with the administration of the government. The Chair will be issuing a ruling on that.

I do not see a minister or parliamentary secretary rising to answer the question.

The hon. member for Saint-Jean.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we already knew that the Liberals were considering excluding Bombardier and Quebec's expertise and awarding Boeing an \$8-billion sole-source contract to build military aircraft, but now the Americans are putting the pressure on. The U.S. ambassador has written to a number of Liberal ministers to ask them to oppose a competition.

I would like to remind the Liberals that they work for their constituents, not for Washington. They owe it to Quebecers and Canadians to make sure they are buying the best aircraft by letting Bombardier compete. Will they finally launch a competition?

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Aurora maritime patrol aircraft is a vital capability of the Canadian Armed Forces, and it is used for a wide variety of operations. Aircraft must be replaced to ensure that we continue to have this vital capability.

We know that defence procurement is a key driver of economic activity. The Government of Canada has made it very clear that the benefit to the Canadian economy and to our defence and aerospace sectors is a key consideration in the decision that we will be making.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec's aerospace industry is not asking for handouts. It is just asking to be able to compete. It is asking the federal government to give Quebec workers a chance to show their expertise before gifting \$8 billion of taxpayer money to the Americans.

It is only natural that the U.S. ambassador is standing up for Boeing, an American company. That is his job. However, it is not right that the federal government is not even giving Quebec businesses a chance to compete. When will the government do its job and launch a competition?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that important question.

She said that we should do our job. That is exactly what we are doing by combining the requirements and demands of national defence and the interest of supporting our aerospace industry in Canada and Quebec. We know that 20,000 jobs in Canada support our aerospace industry. That amounts to nearly \$200 billion in investments and economic activity every year. We will continue to be there for them.

* * *

[*English*]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years under the Prime Minister, it is easy to see that he is not worth the cost his billion-dollar green slush fund comes apart at the seams. The NDP-Liberal government's hand-picked chair funnelled more than \$200,000 to her own company and then put \$120,000 of that into her own pocket. Now she is being investigated by the Ethics Commissioner. She resigned days after the chief executive officer did.

We are just scratching the surface on the latest of the Prime Minister's many scandals. Canadians want to know this: Who got rich?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when an organization distributes taxpayer dollars, however independent of the federal government ministry, we all should expect it to do so responsibly. That is why the Minister of Innovation acted immediately when allegations of mismanagement surfaced. We have frozen funds and ordered an independent review; we are collaborating with the Auditor General, and both the CEO and the board chair have stepped down.

Oral Questions

We are holding SDTC accountable, and we are committed to getting to the bottom of this issue. [Translation]

• (1505)

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they are not holding anyone accountable. Let us just get a couple of facts on the record. The board chair, hand-picked by the Prime Minister, funnelled more than \$200,000 to her own company. The Ethics Commissioner launched an investigation, and the board chair quit. They found more than \$40 million in ineligible payments. Therefore, the Auditor General launched an investigation, and the CEO quit. The government is doing absolutely nothing.

Before the paper shredders get fired up over at the green slush fund headquarters, will the minister agree that a parliamentary inquiry needs to be expanded so that we can get all the information in the latest scandal involving the Prime Minister and the corrupt government?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is not entitled to his own facts. We know that the board chair of SDTC was appointed by multiple governments, including a Conservative government in the past.

The Minister of Innovation has accepted the resignation of the chair of the board of SDTC. A process will begin soon to find a new leadership team. Our government is committed to ensuring that organizations receiving federal funding adhere to the highest standards of governance, and we are committed to getting to the bottom of the allegations.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years under this Liberal government, there is still a familiar stench here in the House: the stench of Liberal scandals.

The president and CEO of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, a Liberal appointee and friend of the Prime Minister, confirmed that she used the green fund to award \$217,000 to her own company.

When and how does the government plan to recoup the taxpayers' money from the green fund, which is making the Prime Minister's Liberal cronies richer?

[English]

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me say again that the Conservatives are not entitled to their facts in this matter. We are committed to getting to the bottom of the allegations, and that is why we have acted responsibly and responded to hold SDTC accountable. We know that the chair of the board was appointed by multiple governments, including the former Conservative government. The Minister of Innovation has accepted the resignation of the chair of the board, and a process will begin very shortly to ensure that a new leadership team is appointed.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today's artists and creators work in a cultural reality that is very different from the past in terms of how films, TV shows and music are consumed. A major transformation has occurred. Households are cutting the cord on their cable subscriptions and watching shows online. One thing that has not changed, however, is the importance of telling our own stories.

Can the minister tell us about her plans to protect and promote Canadian content and creators on online platforms?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. The audiovisual world has changed completely since the Broadcasting Act was introduced. We have modernized the act in order to adapt it to today's digital world.

Last week, I was with people working in the cultural sector to announce the new final policy direction, which aims both to protect users and to support jobs here in Canada. Canadians want journalists, artists and the creative industry to be given equal opportunities to have a strong online presence.

The only ones who do not understand that are the Conservatives, who opposed the modernization of that act at every opportunity. It is truly shameful.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, it is time for the NDP-Liberal government to end the cover-ups and come clean with Canadians about the ArriveCAN scandal. Two senior bureaucrats were caught lying to committee about their role in hiring a two-person basement company for the \$54-million arrive scam. With cozy relationships with the government, GC Strategies was hired over Deloitte, Microsoft and Apple. It is outrageous.

Which Liberal minister hired the company and paid it 11 million taxpayer dollars for doing absolutely nothing?

*Oral Questions***TOURISM INDUSTRY**

● (1510)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have said repeatedly that we expect all public officials responsible for contracting to follow the appropriate rules. In this case, the Canada Border Services Agency identified irregularities during a routine audit and referred the matter to the appropriate authorities, who are investigating. People who did not follow the appropriate contracting rules will face consequences according to law.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, one thing is clear: It has no respect for the Canadian taxpayer. GC Strategies, a two-person company working out of a basement, was paid \$11 million to send messages on LinkedIn to other companies to build the ArriveCAN app. The Prime Minister is simply not worth the cost.

Bureaucrats refused to say who signed the paper to hire GC Strategies for \$11 million, so I am going to ask this of the Liberal caucus: Which Liberal minister paid \$11 million to GC Strategies?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just because our colleague repeats the same silly premise to the question does not make it accurate. She knows very well that the authorities in these contracting matters are in the hands of public servants, and we have said very clearly that the committee can investigate and should investigate these matters.

The Canada Border Services Agency uncovered the contracting challenge in an internal audit and did what is appropriate. It referred this to the appropriate authorities, and those who did not follow the rules will be held accountable under law.

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal government is subsidizing \$15 billion to the giant auto company Stellantis for its Windsor plant to employ up to 1,600 foreign workers. Every mom on minimum wage, every couple struggling with their monthly mortgage payment and every union assembly line worker across this country will pay \$1,000 to employ these foreign workers.

After eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Will the Prime Minister reverse his decision and commit that all jobs at the Stellantis plant will go to Canadian paycheques and not foreign workers?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a Windsorite, I am proud that it was this Liberal government that delivered the battery plant for Windsor, including 2,500 jobs. We will continue to work with unions and will continue to work with Stellantis to make sure that local Canadian workers are prioritized. It is 2,500 good jobs that will be created at this plant. Those are the facts.

We believe in Canadian workers. We believe in electric vehicles. We believe in climate change. Why is the Conservative leader so against the battery plant, so against Canadian workers and completely empty on climate change?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in Canada, we take pride in our tourism industry and showing our country's beauty. Tourism is essential to Canada's economy, being one of the country's top sectors and supporting more than two million jobs. We know this sector has an economic impact that reaches from coast to coast to coast. This was highlighted in the federal tourism growth strategy this summer, and it is why we will continue to support our tourism strategy.

Can the Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario tell us how our government is supporting local tourism?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to talk about the great announcement made today by my colleague, the Minister of Tourism, that will grow the tourism sector. The newly launched tourism growth program will support expanding and developing local tourism businesses from coast to coast to coast. Our government knows that local tourism grows our economy, creates good Canadian jobs and will continue to position Canada as a destination choice for domestic and international travellers. I thank all those who work in the tourism sector and ask them to please take a look at the tourism growth program and apply today.

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was revealed that 1,500 temporary foreign workers could be coming to Windsor to work on building the new Stellantis-LG EV battery plant, which is receiving \$15 billion in taxpayer money from the federal and provincial governments. Both the federal Liberals and Ford's Conservatives committed to jobs and training guarantees for local workers, and they had 18 months to get this right.

Communities in Windsor and Ontario expect what was promised. Will the Liberals guarantee that these jobs are unionized and go to the people in Windsor, Tecumseh and Essex County, and that not a single cent goes to foreign workers?

Points of Order

● (1515)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the record, one application for one temporary foreign worker has been approved for this project. My colleague knows that the TFW program is allowed only when Canadians or permanent residents are unable or unavailable to do a job.

Our government is focused on creating partnerships and driving investments to create good, sustainable jobs for Canadians. Thanks to our government's support for this project, 2,500 full-time positions will be created at the Windsor battery plant and an additional 2,500 local tradespeople will be engaged.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, it has been eight years since the Phoenix pay system was implemented, and instead of getting better, things are getting worse. As of today, 242,000 transactions are still pending, which is double what it was two years ago.

I understand that, in the beginning, the government was playing partisan games and trying to put the blame on the former Conservative government, but that was eight years ago. Today, there is no excuse for the fact that this problem has not been solved.

Is someone at Public Services and Procurement Canada responsible for this fiasco, which is costing taxpayers a fortune and affecting thousands of federal employees?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that question.

I know he agrees that it is completely unacceptable for public servants to not be paid accurately and on time. That is why we are continuing to ensure that any delays and problematic procedures associated with the pay process are reduced and eliminated to reduce the backlog.

That is why we are currently employing about 600 additional employees to deal with the problems we have been seeing in recent months.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw to the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Mitzi Dean, Minister of Children and Family Development for the Province of British Columbia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: It is also my pleasure to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of the recipients of the 2023 Governor General's History Award.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[Translation]

KARL TREMBLAY

The Speaker: Following discussions among representatives of all parties of the House, I understand there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence in honour of Karl Tremblay, the lead singer of Les Cowboys Fringants.

I invite hon. members to rise.

[A moment of silence observed]

● (1520)

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I seek unanimous consent to table an announcement from the Government of Canada from July 25, 2019, when former minister Bains named Annette Verschuren chair of SDTC, contrary to the parliamentary secretary's—

The Speaker: I regret that before the hon. member even had a chance to finish, I heard a number of noes in the crowd.

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, considering what happened during question period, I wanted to take a moment to make a very important point. I do not think it is up to the Speaker to indicate in any way whether a cabinet minister should or should not answer a question, as you suggested by quoting, before the minister could answer, the member for Sudbury—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Colleagues, the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable has the floor. I recognized him. I would invite you to exercise some self-discipline so that we can hear what the hon. member has to say.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will continue. You quoted a ruling that you said you would be giving later. I therefore honestly believe that you interfered in the debate and, as a result, no minister rose to speak. However, the question that I raised today in question period was directly related to government affairs, since the Minister of Finance will be making an economic statement tomorrow.

Recently, over the weekend, the leader of the Bloc Québécois clearly stated his intention to support the government. Over the past few weeks, he also clearly stated his intention to help keep the government in power for the next two years. As a result, the question that I had for the government and for the Prime Minister today was directly related to keeping the government in place.

I recognize that the government can choose to answer questions. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017, at page 515, states, “It is the prerogative of the government to designate the Minister who will respond to a given question, and the Speaker has no authority to compel a particular Minister to respond.” However, the Speaker cannot say anything that will cause a minister to hesitate in answering a question. Today, no minister wanted to answer a question that clearly had to do with government affairs.

I hope you will take that into consideration, and I dare hope you will now allow a government minister to answer the question I had today: Will the Prime Minister continue to send more and more Quebecers to food banks just to ensure he receives support from the Bloc Québécois, which is constantly looking to drastically increase carbon taxes on the backs of Canadians?

The Speaker: Before acknowledging the member for Simcoe North, I want to respond to the member for Mégantic—L'Érable. I thank him for his intervention. I will review the unedited transcript of what was said in the House.

I want to reiterate that, immediately after the vote, the Chair will have a ruling to share with all members, following interventions from all political parties in the House.

The hon. member for Simcoe North has the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During question period, I compared the government to drunken sailors. I regret that comparison because drunken sailors spend their own money. I would like to apologize to drunken sailors everywhere.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL SECURITY REVIEW OF INVESTMENTS MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed from November 9 consideration of the motion that Bill C-34, An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: It being 3:25 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-34.

Call in the members.

• (1535)

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

(*Division No. 449*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Alghabra
Allison

Aitchison
Aldag
Ali
Anand

Anandasangaree
Arnold
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Barlow
Barron
Battiste
Beech
Bennett
Berthold
Bezan
Bittle
Blair
Blaney
Blois
Boulerice
Bragdon
Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe
Cannings
Carr
Casey
Chagger
Chambers
Champoux
Chen
Chong
Cooper
Coteau
Dalton
Davidson
Deltell
Desbiens
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Doherty
Dreeshen
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gainey
Garon
Gaudreau
Généreux
Gerretsen
Gladu
Goodridge
Gourde
Green
Hajdu
Hanley
Hepfner
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Johns
Julian
Kelloway
Khanna
Kitchen
Koutrakis

Government Orders

Angus
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Baldinelli
Barrett
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bendayan
Bergeron
Bérubé
Bibea
Blaikie
Blanchette-Joncas
Block
Boissonnault
Bradford
Brassard
Brock
Calkins
Caputo
Carrie
Chabot
Chahal
Champagne
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Damoff
DeBellefeuille
d'Entremont
Desilets
Dhaliwal
Diab
Dowdall
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ehsassi
Ellis
Erskine-Smith
Falk (Provencher)
Ferreri
Findlay
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser
Gaheer
Gallant
Garrison
Gazan
Genuis
Gill
Godin
Gould
Gray
Guilbeault
Hallan
Hardie
Hoback
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Kelly
Khera
Kmic
Kramp-Neuman

Speaker's Ruling

Kurek	Kusie
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lake	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larouche	Lattanzio
Lauzon	Lawrence
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lehoux	Lemire
Leslie	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lightbound	Lloyd
Lobb	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maguire	Majumdar
Maloney	Martel
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McLean	McLeod
McPherson	Melillo
Mendès	Miao
Miller	Moore
Morrice	Morrissey
Motz	Murray
Muys	Naqvi
Nater	Ng
Noormohamed	Normandin
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Petitpas Taylor
Plamondon	Poilievre
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Redekopp	Reid
Richards	Roberts
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rood	Rota
Ruff	Sahota
Sajjan	Samson
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schieffe
Schmale	Seeback
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Shields
Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Small
Sorbara	Soroka
Sousa	Steinley
Ste-Marie	St-Onge
Strahl	Stubbs
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thériault
Therrien	Thomas
Thompson	Tochor
Tolmie	Trudeau
Trudel	Turnbull
Uppal	Valdez
Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Van Popta	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vignola
Villemure	Virani
Vis	Vuong
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber

Weiler	Wilkinson
Williams	Williamson
Yip	Zahid
Zarrillo	Zimmer
Zuberi— 309	

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Fry	Housefather
Khalid	Lantsman
Mendicino	Michaud
Morantz	Morrison
Perron	Rempel Garner
Sarai	Sheehan— 12

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on November 2, 2023, by the member for New Westminster—Burnaby concerning the admissibility of questions asked during Oral Questions.

In his intervention, the member asserted that, in recent weeks, oral questions have deviated from their primary purpose, which is to hold the government accountable for its actions. He said that a number of questions have been asked of government backbenchers and opposition members, and he argued that this should not be allowed. The member noted that multiple Speakers' decisions support that interpretation, including a ruling delivered by one of my predecessors, the current member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, on January 28, 2014.

● (1540)

[English]

After the member for New Westminster—Burnaby raised his point of order, other members offered their perspectives. Some also asked the Chair to examine oral questions that referred to a so-called coalition government. I would like to thank all members who made arguments on these important issues.

One of the main goals of question period is to enable all members to ask the government questions in order to obtain information about matters under its jurisdiction. In this way, it can be held to account, within the bounds of its responsibilities. This is a fundamental principle of our parliamentary system.

As the third edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states on page 497:

The importance of questions within the parliamentary system cannot be overemphasized and the search for or clarification of information through questioning is a vital aspect of the duties undertaken by individual Members.

*Speaker's Ruling**[Translation]*

It is true that we have recently heard many questions that seem to include preambles with little or no connection to the government's administrative responsibility. For instance, questions have referred to the opposition parties, backbenchers and even provincial governments. Most of these preambles were followed by a question addressed to the government or a minister. The question often related to an area of government responsibility, but not always.

[English]

The Chair would like to thank members for quoting the ruling of January 28, 2014, from the current member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, which touched on similar issues. That ruling can be found on pages 2202 to 2205 of the Debates. Allow me to read a few excerpts:

...lately we have witnessed a growing trend: we hear preambles to questions that go on at some length to criticize the position, statements, or actions of other parties, members from other parties, and in some cases even private citizens before concluding with a brief question about the government's policies.

What we have, therefore, is an example of a hybrid question, one in which the preamble is on a subject that has nothing to do with the administrative responsibility of the government but which concludes in the final five or ten seconds with a query that in a technical sense manages to relate to the government's administrative responsibilities.

The House needs to ask itself if, taken as a whole, such a question—a lengthy preamble and a desultory query—can reasonably be assumed by a listener to respect the principles that govern question period.

[Translation]

Further on, it also states, and I quote:

...since members have very little time to pose their questions and the Chair has even less time to make decisions about their admissibility, it would be helpful if the link to the administrative responsibility of the government were made as quickly as possible.

Accordingly, these kinds of questions will continue to risk being ruled out of order and members should take care to establish the link to government responsibility as quickly as possible.

[English]

This direct link is essential. It must be established in order for members to obtain an answer from the government. In fact, members have a vested interest in favouring direct questions if they wish to receive direct answers.

The Chair is empowered to rule any question out of order. If it becomes clear that no link can be made, the Chair may rule the question out of order while it is being asked or afterward. Depending on the circumstances, the Chair may ask a member to rephrase the question, interrupt the member or recognize another member, yet judging the admissibility of an oral question in a matter of seconds is no easy task.

Cutting off a question a little too soon could cause the member significant prejudice. While wrongly depriving a member of the opportunity to ask a legitimate question could ultimately damage this essential mechanism of accountability, members must keep in mind that they are primarily responsible for quickly establishing this direct link with government affairs in their questions. Members, therefore, should get straight to the point or they risk bearing sole responsibility should the Chair interrupt their question.

[Translation]

Likewise, in asking the government a question, members would benefit not only from drawing a link to its administrative responsibilities, but also from expressing themselves clearly. I would certainly hope that a clear question would merit an equally clear and specific answer that would also pertain to the government's administrative responsibilities.

Furthermore, while the government may be asked whether it supports a particular measure or proposal, a minister cannot answer for the positions taken by another political party or a provincial government. Consequently, like my predecessor, I encourage members to pose their questions in a way that clearly connects them to the federal government's administrative responsibilities.

However, the Chair will continue the practice of recognizing any minister who wishes to answer the question nonetheless, again in the interest of preserving the accountability mechanism.

● (1545)

[English]

In addition, ministers and parliamentary secretaries are clearly the only individuals who can answer questions, except in those limited exceptions for questions addressed to committee chairs or a representative of the Board of Internal Economy. Since both opposition members and government backbenchers cannot answer questions, they cannot be called to account for the actions of the executive. Oral Questions must not be used to ask questions that attack a colleague who is unable to respond.

[Translation]

More generally, the Chair will continue to be guided by the statement of October 18, 2023, on order and decorum. Excessive heckling, provocations and unnecessarily personal criticisms intended to denigrate a member will not be tolerated.

[English]

Before concluding this ruling on the content of questions, the Chair would like to address the point raised by several members regarding whether or not a coalition government exists in the House.

Members may recall that the Deputy Speaker dealt with this issue last year. I would, therefore, refer members to the decision of March 29, 2022, which can be found on pages 3689 and 3690 of the Debates. In short, it states, "Fundamentally, the agreement in question is a political one. It is not the Chair's role to interpret or give meaning to such agreements between parties." Accordingly, a question will not be ruled out of order based on this criterion alone.

[Translation]

In conclusion, I would invite members to reflect on the statement made by Speaker Jerome on April 14, 1975, which appears on pages 4762 to 4764 of the Debates, and I quote:

Routine Proceedings

The question period is a unique feature of the Canadian House of Commons where the ministry is required to be accountable to the House on a daily basis without advance notice. It is an excellent feature of our parliament, and while we have much to learn from other governmental systems, the question period is one area in which we are in the forefront of responsible government, and every effort must be made to preserve the excellence of this practice.

I thank all members for their attention and their patience.

[*English*]

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 12 minutes.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 48 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following two reports of the Standing Committee on International Trade: the 11th report, entitled “The Underused Housing Tax: Potential impacts and proposed actions”; and the 12th report, entitled “Anti-dumping and countervailing duties being applied on certain Canadian softwood lumber products”.

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

• (1550)

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand in this place today to talk about the dissenting report that we have submitted on the underused housing tax on Canadian border communities. While Conservatives were generally pleased with the evidence contained within this report, they firmly believe its recommendations fall way short of what was being asked by concerned stakeholders. The Conservative members also acknowledge that the existing recommendations in the report fail to recognize the federal government's unpreparedness when it comes to implementing the underutilized housing tax. The existing recommendations also fail to prescribe specific changes and tangible solutions that were directly provided to the committee by concerned stakeholders. That is why we have prepared the dissenting report with five additional recommendations.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114 I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 52nd report of the Standing Commit-

tee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House.

[*Translation*]

If the House gives its consent, I move that the 52nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be concurred in.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay. It is agreed.

[*English*]

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to present a petition on behalf of constituents.

I rise for the 25th time on behalf of the people of Swan River, Manitoba, to present a petition with respect to the rising rate of crime. The NDP-Liberal government is failing to get results for the people of Swan River amidst a crime wave that has swept this rural town of 4,000. A recent report from the Manitoba West district RCMP revealed that within 18 months the region experienced 1,184 service calls and 703 offences committed by just 15 individuals. Four individuals in Swan River were responsible for 53 violent offences and 507 calls for service. This is why this rural community is calling for action. The people demand jail, not bail, for violent repeat offenders.

The people of Swan River demand that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on-crime policies that directly threaten their livelihoods and their community. I support the good people of Swan River.

FOOD SECURITY

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to table a petition on behalf of the residents of the Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington region, and specifically the community of Clarendon Central Public School in Kingston, regarding the school food program.

The petitioners call to the attention of the government new Statistics Canada data that indicates one in four children in Canada lives in a food-insecure household, that Canada is the only G7 country without a national school food program and that budget 2022 reaffirmed the December 2021 mandate letter commitments to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development with respect to developing a program of this nature.

They, therefore, call on the government and ministers responsible to prioritize funding for a national food program through budget 2024, with implementation in schools by the fall of 2024.

• (1555)

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I will be presenting four petitions on behalf of residents of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

The first petition relates to B.C. passenger rail service. Constituents in my riding are calling upon the federal Minister of Transport to work accordingly with his B.C. counterparts to address the passenger rail shortage in British Columbia.

We want more passenger rail, which I think is a good thing that all Canadians can agree upon.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition I would like to bring forward today is a unique one regarding section 43 of the Criminal Code.

The petitioners are calling on this outdated Criminal Code provision to align with modern standards, specifically as it relates to the ability of teachers to use corrective force against children in their care.

Section 43 of the Criminal Code exempts every schoolteacher, parent or person standing in place of a parent from criminal liability for using force by way of correction toward a pupil or child in their care. The petitioners are calling for this section of the Criminal Code to be modernized in conjunction with existing and modern practices.

LETS'EMOT REGIONAL AQUATIC CENTRE

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, the third petition I would like to present today is regarding the Lets'emot Regional Aquatic Centre.

Petitioners in Agassiz, British Columbia and surrounding first nations of the Stó:lō people are calling upon the government to do away with outdated funding models that pit first nations against non-indigenous Canadians when seeking to provide infrastructure that relates to both communities. We want the federal government to work with indigenous communities and the District of Kent to see Lets'emot Regional Aquatic Centre funded.

BUSINESSES IN LYTTON

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, the fourth petition is raising the plight of Lytton, British Columbia. The CEBA deadline is fast approaching. As we know, businesses in Lytton have not been able to rebuild. Therefore, it would be wrong for the Government of Canada to subject those businesses to the same conditions that apply to other businesses that are also struggling to pay their CEBA loans. The Government of Canada issued \$5 million specifically for business redevelopment. The petitioners are calling for that \$5 million to be used to refund portions of their CEBA loans.

Routine Proceedings

FREEDOM OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a small number of petitions to table before the House today.

The first petition is in support of a private member's bill tabled by me, so I want to commend the initiative of the petitioners in getting this petition to the House today. It is an excellent bill they are seeking to support.

Bill C-257 seeks to end political discrimination in Canada, especially in areas of federal jurisdiction. The petitioners say that Canadians have a right to be protected against discrimination on the basis of their political views, that being politically active is a fundamental right and that it strengthens their democracy when people are able to freely express their views without fear of employment or other such consequences.

The bill would add political belief and activity as prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act. The petitioners ask the House to support Bill C-257.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition highlights and raises grave concern about the ongoing persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in the PRC. Petitioners highlight various aspects of that ongoing persecution, including but not limited to forced organ harvesting. They call on the House and the government to do more to combat the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners and other faith or spiritual groups targeted for persecution by the Chinese Communist Party.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the third petition I am tabling is also dealing with a human rights issue involving the CCP. This petition is regarding the people of Hong Kong. Petitioners note how people in Hong Kong who have been involved in pro-democracy protests have been targeted for politicized prosecution. This includes those who are accused of national security law related offences, but it is not only the national security law that has been used to target people for politicized prosecutions in Hong Kong.

Petitioners note that Hong Kong people who have faced these charges have sometimes had difficulty gaining admissibility to Canada, and there is no reason people who have been involved in pro-democracy, pro-freedom human rights advocacy should be barred from entering Canada on the basis of trumped-up charges that have no relationship to real criminality or anything that would be criminal in Canada.

Routine Proceedings

Petitioners therefore call on the Government of Canada to do the following: To recognize the politicization of the judiciary in Hong Kong and its impact on the legitimacy and validity of criminal convictions, to affirm its commitment to render all national security law charges and convictions irrelevant and invalid in relation to admissibility to Canada, also to create a mechanism by which Hong Kong people with pro-democracy movement related convictions might provide explanation for such convictions on the basis of which the government could grant exemptions to Hong Kong people who would otherwise be deemed inadmissible on the basis of criminality, and to work with like-minded allies and other democracies to waive criminal inadmissibility of Hong Kong people who are convicted for political purposes who otherwise do not have a criminal record.

• (1600)

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the final petition is from people who are concerned about aspects of the government's so-called feminist international assistance policy. They note the Liberals' approach in this regard has been criticized by the Auditor General for failing to measure results, that the Muskoka initiative by the previous Conservative government involved historic investments in the well-being of women and girls and that those previous investments were made in a way that was respectful of locally identified priorities and values.

Petitioners further raise concern about how aspects of the government's policy have shown a lack of respect for cultural values and autonomy of women in developing countries by supporting organizations that violate local laws and push policy changes at the expense of priorities local women care about, such as access to clean water, access to nutrition and economic development.

Petitioners therefore call on the Government of Canada to align international development spending with the approach taken by the Muskoka initiative, focusing international development dollars on meeting the basic needs of vulnerable women around the world rather than pushing ideological agendas that may conflict with local values in developing countries. Also, petitioners want to see the government actually measure outcomes related to international development spending.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to present a petition on the foreign influence transparency registry. The petitioners fear a broad definition of foreign influence could infringe on Canadians' charter rights while stifling international business and civil society links that are beneficial for Canada. It could also create a chill within vulnerable communities, leading them to withdraw from civic engagement and public service, which would result in their further marginalization.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos.

1746, 1747, 1753, 1757, 1758, 1762, 1766, 1768 to 1771, 1777 to 1781, 1784 to 1786, 1789 to 1792, 1798 and 1801.

[Text]

Question No. 1746—**Mr. Pat Kelly:**

With regard to military aid that Canada has provided to Ukraine following Russia's invasion thereof: (a) how many 105mm artillery shells were produced in Canada each year between 2016 and 2023 inclusively; (b) how many 105mm artillery shells has Canada provided to Ukraine; (c) how many 105mm artillery shells does Canada plan to maintain in stock following cessation of deliveries to Ukraine; (d) how many years will it take, at current production levels, to reach the target number in (c); (e) how many facilities in Canada currently manufacture 105mm artillery shells for purchase by Canada; (f) how many facilities in Canada manufactured 105mm artillery shells between 2016 and 2023 inclusively; (g) of the facilities in (f), how many do not currently manufacture 105mm artillery shells but can resume doing so if reopened, refurbished, or retooled; (h) how many 105mm artillery shells has Canada ordered from facilities in Canada that are intended for delivery to Ukraine; and (i) how many 105mm shells has Canada ordered from facilities in Canada to meet the target number in (c)?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), (e), (f) and (g), when it comes to 105mm artillery shells, the Canadian Armed Forces, or CAF, currently have sufficient levels of supply. The Munitions Supply Program, or MSP, established in the 1970s, provides a framework under which the Government of Canada sources ammunition and small arms for National Defence from unique domestic industrial facilities that have been designated as strategic sources of supply and centres of excellence. Such suppliers include General Dynamics Ordnance and Tactical Systems Canada located in Repentigny, Quebec.

While National Defence is the program's biggest client, the MSP is available to other government agencies such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Correctional Services Canada. Details on all current and historical rates of production and status of suppliers under the MSP are not held by National Defence.

Under the Defence Production Act, Public Services and Procurement Canada, or PSPC, is responsible for the management of the MSP. PSPC, on behalf of National Defence, purchases 105mm artillery shells from General Dynamics Ordnance and Tactical Systems Canada for the CAF.

With regard to (b) and (h), since February 2022, Canada has donated approximately 10,000 rounds of 105mm artillery shells to Ukraine, sourced from existing CAF inventory.

In accordance with a request from the Government of Ukraine, and in order to maintain operational security for Canadian personnel and Ukrainian forces, Canada does not publicize the details of contracts related to military assistance to Ukraine. NATO has also asked Allies for discretion in this regard.

More information about Canada's military support to Ukraine can be found at <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/campaigns/canadian-military-support-to-ukraine.html>

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (c), (d) and (i), in terms of stocks and current and future planning for them, details on the classification of information on CAF ammunition holdings and replenishment is vital for national security and exact details cannot be further disclosed for operational security reasons.

The recent conflict and crisis in Ukraine have affected supply chains globally. However, replenishment activities are ongoing and National Defence will continue to acquire 105mm artillery shells through the MSP. The CAF continue to have sufficient levels for training and operational readiness.

Ultimately, the Government of Canada, in its Defence Policy – Strong, Secure, Engaged – recognizes the importance of industry in support of the CAF. It is important that we continue to work with the defence industry to ensure that our partners have the support they need to manufacture the military equipment required to protect the rules-based international order.

Question No. 1747—**Mr. Pat Kelly:**

With regard to military aid that Canada has provided to Ukraine following Russia's invasion thereof: (a) how many 155mm artillery shells were produced in Canada each year between 2016 and 2023 inclusively; (b) how many 155mm artillery shells has Canada provided to Ukraine; (c) how many 155mm artillery shells does Canada plan to maintain in stock following the cessation of deliveries to Ukraine; (d) how many years will it take, at current production levels, to reach the target number in (c); (e) how many facilities in Canada currently manufacture 155mm artillery shells for purchase by Canada; (f) how many facilities in Canada manufactured 155mm artillery shells between 2016 and 2023 inclusively; (g) of the facilities in (f), how many do not currently manufacture 155mm artillery shells but can resume doing so if reopened, refurbished, or retooled; (h) how many 155mm artillery shells has Canada ordered from facilities in Canada that are intended for delivery to Ukraine; (i) how many 155mm shells has Canada ordered from facilities in Canada to meet the target number in (c); (j) how many offers has Canada received for assistance to bring facilities in Canada up to capacity to manufacture 155mm artillery shells; (k) what is the dollar value of each offer in (j); and (l) of the offers in (j), which ones has Canada accepted, if any?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the recent conflict and crisis in Ukraine has exacerbated global tensions and threats to the rules-based international order. This has resulted in competition for limited supply, increases to lead time, costs, and challenges for governments all over the world to resupply their inventories. Particularly, the 155mm artillery shell is globally in demand, with Partners and Allies looking to invest in 155mm production capabilities.

With regard to (a), (e), (f), and (g), the Munitions Supply Program, or MSP, established in the 1970s, provides a framework under which the Government of Canada sources ammunition and small arms for National Defence from unique domestic industrial facilities that have been designated as strategic sources of supply and centres of excellence. Such suppliers include General Dynamics Ordnance and Tactical Systems Canada located in Repentigny, Quebec.

While National Defence is the program's biggest client, the MSP is available to other government agencies such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Correctional Services Canada. Details on all current and historical rates of production and status of suppliers under the MSP are not held by National Defence.

Under the Defence Production Act, Public Services and Procurement Canada, or PSPC, is responsible for the management of the

MSP. PSPC, on behalf of National Defence, purchases 155mm artillery shells from General Dynamics Ordnance and Tactical Systems Canada for the Canadian Armed Forces, or CAF. Replenishment occurs on a multi-year basis. For example, in 2021, General Dynamics Ordnance and Tactical Systems Canada did not deliver any 155mm rounds to the Canadian Armed Forces. In 2022, General Dynamics Ordnance and Tactical Systems Canada produced just under 20,000 155mm projectiles. Already in 2023, General Dynamics Ordnance and Tactical Systems Canada is producing approximately 3,000 rounds of the M107 variant 155mm ammunition per month.

With regard to (b) and (h), since February 2022, Canada has donated approximately 40,000 rounds of 155mm artillery ammunition to Ukraine. Approximately 20,000 rounds were sourced from existing CAF inventory, and the remaining 20,000 from the United States Government.

In accordance with a request from the Government of Ukraine, and in order to maintain operational security for Canadian personnel and Ukrainian forces, Canada does not publicize the details of contracts related to military assistance to Ukraine. NATO has also asked Allies for discretion in this regard.

More information about Canada's military support to Ukraine can be found at the following link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/campaigns/canadian-military-support-to-ukraine.html>

With regard to (c), (d), (i), (j), (k) and (l), in terms of stocks and current and future planning for them, the classification of information on CAF ammunition holdings and replenishment is vital for national security and exact details cannot be further disclosed for operational security reasons.

National Defence has identified a need to update the production capability for 155mm ammunition and is working with Canadian suppliers under the MSP and Allies to improve overall munitions availability.

Earlier this year, National Defence provided \$4.3 million for IMT Defence to ramp up their ability to produce M107 155mm projectile bodies from 3,000 to 5,000 a month by the end of this calendar year. We are also assessing other potential investments to support the production of M795 ammunition.

Ultimately, the Government of Canada, in its Defence Policy – Strong, Secure, Engaged – recognizes the importance of industry in support of the CAF. It is important that we continue to work with the defence industry to ensure that our partners have the support they need to manufacture the military equipment required to protect the rules-based international order.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1753—Mr. Gérard Deltell:**

With regard to the government's commitment to plant 2 billion trees by 2031: (a) what are the total expenditures to date in relation to the commitment; (b) how many trees have been planted to date; and (c) what is the projected number of trees to be planted under the commitment in (i) 2024, (ii) 2025, (iii) 2026, (iv) 2027, (v) 2028, (vi) 2029, (vii) 2030, (viii) 2031?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources and Energy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to part (a) of the question, from February 2021 to March 2023, the total expenditure for the 2 billion trees program was \$150.2 million, namely \$67.9 million in 2021-22 and \$82.3 million in 2022-23. The majority of this was related to expenditures for signed grants and contributions agreements, which total \$131.3 million, namely \$60.3 million in 2021-22 and \$71 million in 2022-23. As of October 3, 2023, Natural Resources Canada has committed \$88 million in signed grants and contributions agreements for fiscal year 2023-24.

With respect to part (b) of the question, in the first two years of the program, 2021-22 and 2022-23, over 110 million trees have been planted towards the federal government's commitment to plant 2 billion incremental trees over 10 years. This includes over 56 million trees planted by the 2 billion trees program as well as 54 million trees planted by provinces and territories via Environment and Climate Change Canada's low carbon economy fund.

With respect to part (c) of the question, as of June 30, 2023, the 2 billion trees program has agreements signed and under negotiation to plant over 374 million trees by 2031.

Question No. 1757—Mr. Don Davies:

With regard to Transport Canada's National Airports System: (a) what per-trip fees are charged to authorized providers of Ride App services, including (i) Lyft, (ii) Uber, (iii) KABU, by the Vancouver International Airport (YVR) and the Ottawa International Airport (YOW); (b) what is the total amount of fees collected by YVR and YOW from authorized providers of Ride App services, broken down by (i) airport, (ii) month, (iii) type, (iv) authorized provider; (c) what per-trip fees are charged to authorized taxi operators by YVR and YOW; and (d) what is the total amount of fees collected by YVR and YOW from authorized taxi operators, broken down by (i) airport, (ii) month, (iii) type, (iv) authorized operator?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Transport Canada does not collect or have access to this information.

National Airport System airport authorities are private, not-for-profit corporations that lease airport lands from the federal government. During the term of the lease, each airport authority is solely responsible for the day-to-day operation, management, and development of the airport. The airport authority itself is also responsible for the setting of fees for commercial access to the airport, and those fees are not monitored or collected by Transport Canada. As such, any request for this type of information should be addressed to the airport authorities directly.

Question No. 1758—Mr. Gord Johns:

With regard to the administration of claim expenses, financial losses and damages caused by the Phoenix pay system, broken down by month since its implementation: (a) what directives, policies, or other forms of instruction have been made by the Treasury Board regarding the prioritization of cases; (b) how many employees at the Treasury Board are working to (i) respond to claims created by government employees, (ii) investigate and attempt to resolve overpayments caused by the Phoenix pay system; (c) how many requests for repayment or attempts to recover overpayment were made that exceeded the six-year limitation period; (d) how many cases, as of September 25, 2023, have a compensation advisor assigned to them; and (e) how many overtime hours were logged to address claims in (b)(i) and (b)(ii)?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two settlement agreements and one catch-up agreement are in place between the Treasury Board and the bargaining agents for employees of the core public administration. Many of the separate agencies have similar agreements in place. While none of the agreements speak to the prioritization of cases, the parties continue to work together on the implementation of the agreement through an oversight committee and subcommittees. In those forums, the parties may discuss the prioritization of cases, as appropriate.

At the time of this response, the TBS claims office had 22 full-time employees and six part-time employees on strength to respond to claims filed by current and former government employees who have suffered damages as a result of the implementation of the Phoenix pay system.

Addressing issues of overpayment is not within the authorities and scope of the TBS claims office, as the Government of Canada pay centre is responsible for administering the recovery of overpayments. The TBS claims office does not have compensation advisers. Rather, it has analysts who assess and determine eligibility for damages compensation as a result of harm that may have been caused to current and former employees as a result of the implementation of the Phoenix pay system.

The current human resources management and financial systems do not have the functionality to provide the number of hours of overtime worked, as the systems can only provide the total cost associated with overtime paid.

Question No. 1762—Mr. Bob Zimmer:

With regard to government subsidies for diesel-based electricity generation in the North: how much does the government pay annually to (i) Nunavut, (ii) the Northwest Territories, (iii) Yukon, to subsidize the cost of diesel and the purchase or rental and maintenance of diesel generators?

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, energy sectors are largely the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories. Those levels of government would be responsible for providing subsidies for diesel-based electricity. As a result, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, or CIRNAC, does not subsidize diesel-based electricity generation in northern communities, nor does the Government of Canada provide direct subsidies to diesel-based electricity generation.

Routine Proceedings

Canada's major transfer payment programs to the territories, including the territorial formula financing program, may indirectly subsidize diesel-based electricity. The territorial formula financing provides territorial governments with funding to support public services, in recognition of the higher cost of providing programs and services in the north. How the funding is used is largely at the discretion of the territories.

While the Government of Canada does not provide direct on-going subsidies for diesel-based electricity, the \$400-million Arctic energy fund, announced in budget 2017 and delivered by Infrastructure Canada, provided funding for communities to upgrade existing fossil fuel based energy systems or to supplement or replace these systems with renewable energy options, thus contributing to improved reliability, efficiency as well as pollution reduction.

The Government of Canada also supports northern and remote Indigenous communities with the transition from diesel onto cleaner, renewable and reliable energy. The \$300 million Indigenous and Remote Communities Clean Energy Hub helps communities access federal funding and expertise to support their clean energy priorities.

Question No. 1766—**Mr. Eric Melillo:**

With regard to government measures taken related to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's visit to Parliament Hill on September 22, 2023: (a) which individuals or entities were provided with lists of individuals who (i) may come into contact with the Ukrainian President or the Prime Minister of Canada, (ii) would be allowed into West Block, the Sir John A. MacDonald Building or any other areas of the Parliamentary Precinct where the Ukrainian President was present on that date; and (b) did the government receive any such lists as in (a)(i) and (a)(ii), and, if so, for each one, which individuals or entities within government received the lists, and from whom?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Special Advisor for Water, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the responsibility for the overall direction and management of the House rests with its Speaker. The list of guests invited to an address to Parliament is managed by Parliamentary Exchanges and Protocol. Security within the parliamentary precinct is the responsibility of the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Question No. 1768—**Mr. Stephen Ellis:**

With regard to the Vaccine Injury Support Program, to date: (a) how many applications for financial compensation were (i) received, (ii) approved, (iii) rejected; (b) how much has been paid out through the program; (c) what is the average payout for approved applicants; and (d) what types of injuries were approved for compensation, and how many claims were related to each?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Pan-Canadian Vaccine Injury Support Program, or VISP, provides financial support to people in Canada in the rare event that they experience a serious and permanent injury as a result of receiving a Health Canada authorized vaccine, administered in Canada, on or after December 8, 2020. The program also provides death benefits and support for funeral expenses in the rare case of a death as a result of receiving a Health Canada authorized vaccine.

The VISP was launched on June 1, 2021, and is being administered independently by OXARO, formerly known as Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton Consulting Inc., with funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada, or PHAC. PHAC is not involved in individual cases, including in the determination of decisions regarding causality or compensation.

As the independent third-party administrator, OXARO oversees all aspects of claims intake and assessment and is responsible for providing periodic public reporting on program statistics. Public reporting began on December 1, 2021, and data on the pan-Canadian VISP is updated twice a year. Latest public reporting can be found at <https://vaccineinjurysupport.ca/en/program-statistics>. The next public reporting will reflect statistics up to December 1, 2023, and will be publicly available in mid-December 2023.

The province of Quebec continues to administer its longstanding Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, or VICP. Information on Québec's VICP, including program statistics, can be found at <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/advice-and-prevention/vaccination/vaccine-injury-compensation-program#c3895>.

With regard to (a), as of the last public reporting update on June 1, 2023, OXARO reported that 1859 claims were received; 467 claims were assessed by a medical review board; 103 were deemed eligible for compensation; 364 of the claims assessed by a medical board were deemed ineligible for compensation; and 240 claims did not meet the eligibility criteria. Further information with regard to program statistics can be found at <https://vaccineinjurysupport.ca/en/program-statistics>.

The province of Quebec updates their program statistics annually. As of March 31, 2023, the Québec's VICP reported that 410 claims were received; 206 claims were assessed by a medical committee and 56 were deemed eligible for compensation; and 150 of the claims assessed by a medical committee were not deemed eligible for compensation. A complete breakdown of the program statistics can be found at <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/advice-and-prevention/vaccination/vaccine-injury-compensation-program>.

With regard to (b), from June 1, 2021 until June 1, 2023, a total of \$6,695,716 in compensation has been paid by OXARO.

From the inception of the program in 1988 until March 31, 2023, Québec's VICP has incurred a total cost of \$9,397,000.

With regard to (c), for the VISP and VICP, the amount of compensation an eligible individual will receive is determined on a case-by-case basis depending on the nature of the injury. Eligible individuals may receive income replacement indemnities, injury indemnities, death benefits, including coverage for funeral expenses, and reimbursement of eligible costs such as otherwise uncovered medical expenses. Given the different types of supports available, the average dollar value of successful claims would not represent the amount an eligible claimant may receive through the VISP or VICP.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (d), for the VISP and VICP, a serious and permanent injury is defined as a severe, life-threatening or life-altering injury that may require in-person hospitalization, or a prolongation of existing hospitalization, and results in persistent or significant disability or incapacity, or where the outcome is a congenital malformation or death. In compliance with privacy laws and policies, PHAC only collects information relevant to program administration. As per the terms and conditions of the funding agreements with OXARO and the province of Québec, PHAC will never receive disaggregated data on details on the nature of injuries for which claims are being submitted or approved from OXARO and Québec.

Question No. 1769—Mr. Corey Tochor:

With regard to government support for Romanian nuclear development: (a) what have been the historical costs for the government related to export development support for Romanian nuclear development, including, for each cost, the (i) year, (ii) type of support, (iii) financial cost; (b) has the government received all or a portion of the money that was invested into Romanian nuclear development back, and, if not, how much is still outstanding; and (c) were the terms of the 1977 agreement between Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd and the Socialist Republic of Romania adhered to by all parties, and, if not, what are the details of any violations of the agreement, including, for each, the date and a description of the violation?

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following reflects a consolidated response approved on behalf of Global Affairs Canada ministers.

With regard to part (a), the Atomic Energy Agency of Canada, AECL, constructed two Canada deuterium uranium, CANDU, reactors at the Cernavoda Nuclear Power Plant in Romania. Reactor one was completed in 1996. Export Development Canada, EDC, provided a direct loan of \$370.4 million Canadian from the Canada Account, and EDC charged interest and an exposure fee on the loan. Reactor two was completed in 2007. EDC provided a guarantee covering 100% of \$328.1 million Canadian in loans to the borrower from the Canada Account, and EDC received a guarantee fee but no interest payments.

With regard to part (b), loans for reactors one and two were repaid in full.

With regard to part (c), the terms have been adhered to by both parties to the “Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Romania for Co-Operation in the Development and Application of Atomic Energy for Peaceful Purposes”, which was signed in 1977.

Question No. 1770—Mr. Dean Allison:

With regard to requests made by CBC/Radio-Canada to social media companies to take down, edit, ban, or change in any other way social media content, posts, or accounts, since January 1, 2020: what are the details of all such requests, including (i) who made the request, (ii) the date, (iii) the social media platform, (iv) the description of the original content, including the name or the handle associated with the post, (v) the description of the change requested, (vi) whether the social media company abided by the request?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from January 1, 2020, to September 27, 2023, CBC/Radio-Canada asked various social media companies to act on content posted on their platforms that violate copyright of their platform community standards. CBC/

Radio-Canada records do not contain the complete information required to provide a comprehensive response to this question.

An extensive manual search would be required to gather the information requested and remove any personal information, and the results could only partially answer this request. This could not be accomplished in the time allotted for this request.

Question No. 1771—Mr. Dean Allison:

With regard to requests made by the National Arts Centre to social media companies to take down, edit, ban, or change in any other way social media content, posts, or accounts, since January 1, 2020: what are the details of all such requests, including (i) who made the request, (ii) the date, (iii) the social media platform, (iv) the description of the original content, including the name or the handle associated with the post, (v) the description of the change requested, (vi) whether the social media company abided by the request?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since January 1, 2020, the National Arts Centre did not make any requests to social media companies to take down, edit, ban, or change in any other way social media content, posts, or accounts.

Question No. 1777—Mr. Jeremy Patzer:

With regard to the Canada Revenue Agency: (a) how many taxpayers are required to remit quarterly installments for projected taxes owed for (i) corporate taxes, (ii) HST payments, (iii) personal income taxes, broken down by type of taxpayer (e.g. business, personal, etc.); and (b) of the taxpayers in (a), how many owe annual total installments (i) of less than \$5,000, (ii) between \$5,001 and \$10,000, (iii) between \$10,001 and \$15,000, (iv) between \$15,001 and \$20,000, (v) greater than \$20,001?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what follows is the response from the Canadian Revenue Agency, or CRA, as of September 29, 2023, the date of the question.

The CRA’s collections reporting systems receive the amount of the remaining debt after instalment payments are applied during the assessment process. The collections reporting systems do not track instalment payments in the manner requested in the above-noted question.

Therefore, as the CRA does not capture data in the manner requested, it is unable to respond.

Question No. 1778—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to the events attended in Toronto on September 24, 2023, by the Prime Minister with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, broken down by event: (a) how were the attendees chosen; (b) who vetted the attendees; (c) what process was used to vet the attendees; (d) how many people were in attendance; and (e) what were the costs associated for each event, broken down by item?

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following reflects a consolidated response approved on behalf of Global Affairs Canada ministers.

With regard to parts (a) to (e), Global Affairs Canada has no records of any events attended in Toronto on September 24, 2023, by the Prime Minister with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1779—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:**

With regard to the Third-Location Decompression Program for Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members, broken down annually for each of the last five years: (a) how many times have CAF members had their decompression program cancelled, broken down by branch of the CAF; (b) what is the breakdown of the reasons for the cancellation (e.g. flight delays, recalled to service, lack of funds, etc.); and (c) what was the procedure and what happened to the funds which were set aside for a CAF member's Third-Location Decompression each time a cancellation occurred?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a third location decompression, TLD, is a period intended to provide Canadian Armed Forces, CAF, personnel who have undergone periods of prolonged and/or intense stress during an operational deployment with a period of rest and relaxation at a location away from the operational theatre before they return home to reintegrate with their families and communities. Members are also provided mental and physical health support by CAF and civilian care providers during the TLD in order to facilitate their reintegration. In some exceptional circumstances, decompression for deployed members may also be conducted in theatre. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, due to additional restrictions on travel, decompression was held in theatre, with support provided virtually by care providers through video conferencing.

Only in extenuating circumstances would a member not be able to complete a TLD. In these kinds of circumstances, details would be held at the base and wing level. A further manual search at the unit level would be required to provide the information requested above and cannot be completed in the allotted time.

Extenuating circumstances that may affect a TLD include family issues, emerging operational requirements that require a member to remain in their posting and other operational demands, such as a new posting. When a decompression program is not practical or possible, members may instead be afforded a partial workday program, PWP, in order to reintegrate to their home units and personal home lives in a gradual way. PWP consists of between one and three partial-day workdays at the home unit, in which members accomplish administrative tasks and acclimatize themselves to the home unit setting.

Ultimately, National Defence prioritizes the morale, safety and well-being of all those who serve and is committed to ensuring that personnel and their families are well supported and resilient. Post-deployment activities are critical to the successful return of deployed members to their unit and their reintegration into family and community life.

Question No. 1780—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

With regard to the Hardship and Risk Allowance (HA) and the Hardship bonus for Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members: (a) what specific criteria is used to determine what amount of the HA and Hardship bonus a CAF member is eligible for; (b) what specific criteria is used to determine what amount of the HA and Hardship bonus which Joint Task Force 2 (JTF2) members are eligible for; (c) what specific criteria is used to determine what amount of the HA and Hardship bonus which Canadian Special Operations Regiment (CSOR) members are eligible for; (d) what specific criteria is used to determine what amount of the HA and Hardship bonus which 427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron (427 SOAS) are eligible for; (e) what recourse, if any, is available to (i) CAF, (ii) JTF2, (iii) CSOR, (iv) 427 SOAS, members who contest that they were unfairly denied the HA or Hardship bonus payments; (f) broken down annually for each of the last five years, what percentage of (i) CAF, (ii) JTF2, (iii) CSOR, (iv) 427 SOAD, members received the HA; and (g) broken down annually for each of the last five years, what percentage

of (i) CAF, (ii) JTF2, (iii) CSOR, (iv) 427 SOAD, members received the Hardship bonus?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a) to (d), Canadian Armed Forces, or CAF, personnel often face dangers and discomfort while deployed on operations around the globe. Their extraordinary dedication does not go unrecognized.

Allowances accorded to deployed members serving in theatres of operation are reviewed regularly. A wide range of factors including conditions faced by members while deployed are considered during this review along with supporting information provided by deployed Task Force Commanders as well as subject matter experts, operations, intelligence, and medical staff.

The criteria used to determine the level of the allowance is the same across all operations regardless of the unit generating the force for that operation, such as Joint Task Force 2, Canadian Special Operations Regiment, 427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron, etc.

The Hardship Allowance is based on an assessment of the living conditions in theatre versus the home base routine in Canada. The type of inconvenience, discomfort, or stress is considered and rated on a scale. This includes hardship factors such as, conditions on duty (e.g., force protection levels and alert state), as well as the operating environment. The amount paid for each level of hardship is identified in Military Foreign Service Instruction 10.3.05(3).

CAF members may also receive a Hardship Allowance Bonus, which compensates a member for repeated deployments. This is payable to the member as a percentage of the authorized Hardship Allowance. It is based on a system of accumulated service on operations. The level a member is entitled to is identified in Military Foreign Service Instruction 10.3.06(3).

The Risk Allowance is intended to compensate for the risks associated with a specific post and is based on the probability of a hazard occurring, as well as the severity of its impact. Factors assessed when considering Risk Allowance include, kinetic activities (e.g., threat posed by hostile forces) and the operational environment. The amount paid for Risk Allowance is identified in Military Foreign Service Instruction 10.3.07(3).

With regard to (e), a human resource administrator is available to CAF members who may have questions or concerns regarding allowances. The administrator can also directly rectify issues.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (f) and (g), all members who deploy on operations with a Hazard Allowance level receive the authorized Hazard Allowance. These members additionally become eligible for the Hazard Allowance Bonus once they begin their seventh month of deployment. Further details are held at the unit level and could not be complied within the allotted time.

Question No. 1781—**Mr. Branden Leslie:**

With regard to communications received by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission from Canadian Heritage, including the minister and the minister's office, the Privy Council Office, and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, since May 1, 2023: what are the details of all communications received, including, for each, the (i) sender, (ii) recipient, (iii) date, (iv) type of communication, (v) title or subject matter, (vi) summary of the contents?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, CRTC, undertook an extensive preliminary search in order to determine the amount of information that would fall within the scope of the question and the amount of time that would be required to prepare a comprehensive response. The CRTC concluded that producing and validating a comprehensive response to this question would require a manual collection of information that is not possible in the time allotted and could lead to the disclosure of incomplete and misleading information.

Question No. 1784—**Mr. Eric Melillo:**

With regard to the government's plan to deal with the current shortage of commercial pilots in Canada: (a) what is the current plan; (b) what is the estimated economic impact of the current shortage, broken down by sector; (c) what are the projections on the number of new commercial pilots to be certified in the next five years, broken down by year; and (d) on what date does the government expect an end to the shortage of pilots?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), for pilot licensing, Transport Canada initiated a pilot project for recurrent pilot proficiency checks, conducted on airline pilots, to allow approved check pilots to enter their results into a digital form system to eliminate paper-based requirements and associated delays. The department has initiated a series of experiments with the Treasury Board Secretariat's regulatory experimentation expense fund to digitize aviation licence certificates. These initiatives will expedite licensing timelines and issuance. Transport Canada has delegated the writing of commercial exams to nine flight schools with the required quality systems and is intending to expand this successful program. Canada also permits pilots from International Civil Aviation Organization, ICAO, member states to easily convert their pilot licences and rating to work in Canada. Approximately 300 pilots per year take advantage of this opportunity.

As to pilot training, Transport Canada published a notice of proposed amendments on approved training organization regulations to ensure that Canada is compliant with ICAO standards. This will allow Canada to bring in qualified trained pilots from abroad in a shorter period. The approved training organization regulations will also set the conditions for further follow-on amendments to increase simulation training credits and implement competency-based training and assessment rather than relying solely on prescribed hours in aircraft, a measure that will help train more pilots faster.

Transport Canada has been collaborating with Employment and Social Development Canada, ESDC, and the provinces and territories on exploring solutions to address Canada's pilot shortage. Transport Canada has briefed officials across ESDC programs on the economic impacts of transportation sector labour shortages as well as gaps in training and skills funding for key transportation occupations.

Transportation occupations, including aviation pilots, are now considered one of six key sectors eligible to request project funding in the sectoral workforce solutions program, which provides targeted, sector-focused investments to support skills and training. The sectoral workforce solutions program supported two large projects in the transportation sector in 2023, including the close to \$50 million project by the Canadian Council for Aviation and Aerospace, CCAA, to support aviation maintenance engineers.

Transport Canada recently developed a program gap analysis with ESDC with a focus on supports available for pilot training. It illustrated that most of the high costs associated with becoming a pilot are not eligible for funding under existing programming. For example, the Canada student financial assistance, CSFA, program is only available to students attending a flight school that is registered as a designated educational institution under the CSFA. Although opportunities may exist to recognize more flight schools' eligibility under the CSFA and registered education savings plan, only the small in-class portions could be included. Other potentially relevant ESDC programs were assessed, but either pilot training is ineligible or funding is well below the required costs of training new pilots. The youth employment and skills strategy could support youth entering the industry. However, Transport Canada would need new authorities to develop its own youth employment and skills program with a separate funding stream.

Transport Canada is working with provincial and territorial transportation ministries through a dedicated working group on labour and skills shortages under the Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety. Transport Canada is also exploring how to address pilot shortages through a new working group on regional air access under the Atlantic growth strategy, in collaboration with the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, ACOA.

With regard to part (b), based on the Conference Board of Canada, the direct cost of excess vacancies in the Canadian air transportation sector in 2022 was \$58.3 million Canadian. Please note that this is for all excess vacancies in the air transportation sector, including air pilots, and that the total cost for the Canadian economy is likely higher, as the air pilot shortage is hindering the capacity of some sectors to import and/or export high-value goods by air.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to part (c), Canada currently faces a shortage of 3,000 pilots, while projections indicate that this could grow to 19,711 vacancies by 2032. Presently, fewer than 1,500 new commercially licensed pilots, including both Canadian and foreign students, graduate annually in Canada. Only 70% of graduates work in the Canadian industry, partly because some foreign pilot students return to their source countries to pursue their aviation careers. To offset these losses, between 1,900 and 2,500 additional pilots are required each year. This requires attracting Canadians to become pilots and using targeted immigration pathways to bring trained pilots or student pilots into Canada.

With regard to part (d), there is no projected end to the pilot shortage. The projected increase of pilot shortages in Canada could rise to up to 19,711 vacancies by 2032, as mentioned in the above text.

Question No. 1785—**Mr. Eric Melillo:**

With regard to the plan by the Canada Border Services Agency to convert part of its new immigration detention centre in Laval, Quebec, into a “high-risk” wing with 48 beds: (a) what is the timeline and total projected cost of the conversion; (b) which other immigration detention centres will also be converted to have a “high-risk” wing; and (c) of the centres in (b), what are the details of each, including the (i) number of “high-risk” beds, (ii) expected completion date, (iii) total projected costs?

Ms. Jennifer O’Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), the retrofit of the Laval, Quebec, immigration holding centre, IHC, to create a wing comprising 48 beds for detainees assessed to pose a higher risk will begin in winter 2023-24 and is expected to be completed by spring 2024, subject to contractor and supply availability. Additionally, improvements to the current infrastructure and supplementary personnel are expected throughout 2024. An amount of \$800,000, paid for within existing budgets, is currently estimated for the completion of the retrofit to the Laval IHC.

With regard to parts (b) and (c), the British Columbia IHC is being retrofitted to create capacity for two beds for detainees assessed to be higher risk by the end of fiscal year 2023-24, at a projected cost of \$250,000, paid for within existing budgets.

The Canada Border Services Agency, CBSA, is considering additional options to expand its higher-risk detention capacity across the country. As planning for these options is still under way, no timeline or projected costs can be provided at this time.

Question No. 1786—**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:**

With regard to the impact of the changes to the alternative minimum tax on charitable donations, announced in budget 2023: what are the details of any analysis conducted by the government related to the impact the changes will have on charitable donations, including, for each, (i) who conducted the analysis, (ii) what methodology was used, (iii) what were the findings?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the alternative minimum tax, AMT, introduced in 1986, is a parallel tax calculation that allows fewer deductions, exemptions and tax credits than under the ordinary income tax rules, to help ensure high-income Canadians who excessively use tax preferences are contributing a minimum amount of tax to support the vital public services on which Canadians rely. The taxpayer owes either AMT or regular tax, whichever is largest,

and can carry forward the additional AMT paid over the next seven years to reduce tax payable, to the extent that regular tax exceeds AMT in those years. The AMT does not apply in the year of death.

Budget 2023 proposed changes to the AMT so that it would more precisely target the very wealthy. Under these reforms, more than 99% of the AMT paid by individuals would be paid by those with over \$300,000 in income and around 80% by those with over \$1 million in income.

The government is not proposing to change the general tax treatment of donations to registered charities in Canada. The new rules are limited to circumstances in which the AMT applies. Taxpayers impacted by the AMT would still be able to claim half of the charitable donation tax credit. This is the same treatment that would be accorded to the large majority of deductions and credits under the proposed AMT reform. Seventy per cent of capital gains on donations of publicly listed securities would remain exempt from tax, which is the same treatment that capital gains eligible for the lifetime capital gains exemption receive. It is also proposed that graduated rate estates, which are often used to make large charitable gifts, be exempt from the AMT.

Question No. 1789—**Mr. Philip Lawrence:**

With regard to the corrective action announced by the government against Sustainable Development Technology Canada (SDTC) on October 3, 2023: (a) how was SDTC not in full compliance of its contribution agreement made with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada; (b) how many businesses received funding from SDTC in a manner or through a process that was not in full compliance; (c) what is the total value of the funding that was received in (b); (d) what are the details of each transaction involving non-compliant funding, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) recipient, (iv) purpose of the funding, (v) reason the transaction was not in compliance; and (e) how much of the non-compliant funding does the government anticipate recovering?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to part (a) of the question, the fact-finding exercise completed by the consulting firm Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton, or RCGT, was not a full audit of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC. The fact-finding exercise was specific to the allegations put forward to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, or ISED. The report on the exercise did not reveal any clear evidence of wrongdoing or misconduct at SDTC. The firm noted potential inconsistencies and opportunities for improvement. At this time, it cannot be said that these inconsistencies are representative of how the contribution agreement was managed in all cases at SDTC. To establish a more comprehensive and complete view of SDTC operations with respect to alignment with the contribution agreement, ISED had been preparing to conduct a full compliance audit of the agreement. In consultation with the Office of the Auditor General of Canada, however, it was decided that the Auditor General would conduct its own audit and the department would therefore not proceed with its planned compliance audit. The Auditor General’s audit of SDTC will be able to provide a more comprehensive and complete view of the operations and management at SDTC. The Auditor General plans to report on its findings by the summer of 2024.

Routine Proceedings

With respect to part (b) of the question, the fact-finding exercise was specific to the allegations received by ISED. As a result, it is not yet known with certainty whether the inconsistencies are representative of the broader management of the contribution agreement at SDTC. The final report on the Auditor General's audit of SDTC will provide a more complete picture.

Regarding parts (c) to (e) of the question, as I explained in the response to part (b), ISED cannot provide details given the specific scope of the fact-finding exercise.

Question No. 1790—Mr. Matt Jeneroux:

With regard to usage of the government's CC-130H Hercules aircraft by the Prime Minister or any other minister since January 1, 2016: what are the details of the legs of each flight, including the (i) date, (ii) point of departure, (iii) destination, (iv) number of passengers, (v) names and titles of the passengers, excluding security or Canadian Armed Forces members, (vi) total catering bill related to the flight, (vii) volume of fuel used, or an estimate, (viii) amount spent on fuel?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in relation to the question above, the CC-130H Hercules is predominantly used for search and rescue and air-to-air refuelling operations.

As this aircraft is not typically used for transporting the Prime Minister or any other ministers, the information being sought is not centrally tracked. Based on an initial manual search, within the time allotted, National Defence did not find instances where the CC-130H aircraft was used to transport the Prime Minister or any other government minister within the time frame requested.

More broadly, the Royal Canadian Air Force has a number of aircraft in its fleet that are used to transport the Prime Minister, including the CC-144 Challenger and the CC-150 Polaris. In addition, the CC-130J Hercules is a tactical airlifter, which has been used in the past to transport the Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence in operational contexts.

Question No. 1791—Mr. Matt Jeneroux:

With regard to government measures taken in relation to United States President Joe Biden's visit to Parliament Hill on March 24, 2023: (a) which individuals or entities were provided with lists of individuals who (i) may come into contact with the United States President or the Prime Minister of Canada, (ii) would be allowed into West Block or otherwise in the vicinity of the United States President on that date; and (b) which departments, agencies, or other government entities received any such lists as in (a)(i) and (a)(ii), and, for each one, which individuals or entities within the government received the lists, and from whom?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Special Advisor for Water, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the responsibility for the overall direction and management of the House rests with its Speaker. The list of guests invited to an address to Parliament is managed by Parliamentary Exchanges and Protocol. Security within the parliamentary precinct is the responsibility of the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Question No. 1792—Mr. Fraser Tolmie:

With regard to the government's intention to cut \$1 billion from the defence appropriation: (a) what is the itemized breakdown of each item that the government will cut from the Department of National Defense in order to reach \$1 billion in cuts; and (b) how much is expected to be saved from each cut in (a)?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budget 2023 committed to reducing government spending by more than \$15 billion, while ensuring that we continue to deliver the services and direct supports that Canadians rely on. This is an important and nec-

essary initiative to ensure that Canadians' tax dollars are being used effectively.

Expenditure reviews are an essential part of responsible management, and as one of the largest federal departments, National Defence has an important role to play in ensuring that we run government operations effectively and efficiently to deliver the best results for Canadians. Through this process, National Defence will continue to ensure that the defence budget is directed toward top defence and government priorities, which includes increasing military capabilities and supporting our people and their families.

We are closely looking at expenditures related to consulting, other professional services, and executive travel. This will entail hard decisions. Any potential reductions in spending are being considered carefully, and minimizing the impact on military readiness has to be the driving force behind the decision.

Budget reductions related to operating expenditures will commence this year and be phased in over the following three years. They are not expected to result in job losses outside of normal attrition, or reallocation, ensuring that our people's work is focused on high-priority initiatives.

Given that Government decisions are still pending regarding any potential spending reductions, a breakdown cannot be provided at this time. Once the options have been reviewed and decisions taken, spending reductions in effect for fiscal years 2024-25 will be published in our next Departmental Plan.

Canada's defence policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged", or SSE, committed to ensuring that National Defence has stable, predictable funding. As a result of SSE and subsequent funding increases, including funding for North American Aerospace Defense Command modernization and continental defence announced in June 2022, National Defence's annual budget is expected to more than double over ten years, from \$18.6 billion in 2016-17 to \$39.7 billion in 2026-27 on a cash basis.

Question No. 1798—Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:

With regard to the Phoenix pay system, broken down by month since its implementation: (a) how many claims have been submitted for (i) out-of-pocket expenses, (ii) impacts on income taxes and government benefits, (iii) advances for government benefits, (iv) reimbursements for tax advice, (v) compensation for severe impacts, (vi) general compensation for damages; (b) how many claims remain unresolved as of September 25, 2023; and (c) what is the average time taken by the government to (i) acknowledge the receipt of, (ii) investigate and validate, (iii) resolve, a claim?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, TBS, claims office runs its monthly statistical report on the first working day of the month. The most recent report was run on October 3, 2023.

Routine Proceedings

The TBS claims office uses a specially designed client relationship management, CRM, system that is internal to TBS and has as its primary function the capability to manage and track the submission and processing of claims. As the CRM system has limited capability to gather and produce detailed statistical reports on a historical basis, the information provided is cumulative from the date of inception to the date of the report.

With regard to part (a), as of October 3, 2023, the TBS claims office has received a total of 8,587 claims for out-of-pocket expenses, reimbursements for tax advice, impacts on income taxes and government benefits, and advances for government benefits for existing claims; 772 claims for financial and investment losses; 1,209 claims for severe impacts; and 28,513 claims for general damages.

With regard to part (b), as of October 3, 2023, the following are the number of claims that remain in progress or are unresolved. There are 89 claims for out-of-pocket expenses, reimbursements for tax advice, losses impacts on income taxes and government benefits, and advances for government benefits for existing claims; 46 claims for financial and investment losses; 107 claims for severe impacts; and 71 claims for general damages.

With regard to part (c)(i), claims are submitted electronically via the specific online portal and are acknowledged immediately upon submission with a system-generated acknowledgement message. Claims submitted by regular mail and/or courier are acknowledged in writing once received by the TBS claims office.

With regard to parts (c)(ii) and (iii), investigation, validation and resolution of a claim vary depending on the claim type. Each claim is assessed on a case-by-case basis, and due to the nature and complexity of each claim and volume of the information provided, processing times will vary.

Question No. 1801—Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:

With regard to Employment and Social Development Canada and snow crab fisheries in Newfoundland and Labrador, since January 1, 2023: (a) what are the details of all meetings held by the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages and department staff concerning emergency supports for harvesters, including the (i) date of the meeting, (ii) individuals or organizations in attendance, (iii) government officials in attendance; (b) how many harvesters does the government estimate will lose Employment Insurance (EI) benefits due to the August 6 adjustment to the regional unemployment rate; (c) does the government intend to provide any financial relief to workers affected by the changes to EI qualification criteria; and (d) what investments has the department made to protect existing investments and infrastructure of the inshore, owner-operator fishery and rural communities that rely on the industry?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to part (a) of the question, the minister has a standing weekly meeting with the deputy minister and this issue was frequently discussed.

With respect to part (b) of the question, the employment insurance, or EI, program is designed to respond automatically to changes in economic conditions that affect local labour markets. The EI program divides the country into 62 economic regions. When a region's unemployment rate changes, the entrance requirements for EI regular benefits adjusts automatically in response. In general, when a region's unemployment rate rises, these entrance requirements are reduced, and the maximum entitlement for regular benefits increases. When the unemployment rate decreases, entrance requirements increase and the maximum number of weeks that an eligible claimant can receive decreases.

There are two EI economic regions in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador: St. John's and Newfoundland and Labrador (excluding the capital). On August 6, 2023, the unemployment rate in the EI economic region of Newfoundland and Labrador decreased from 13.7% to 12.9%. This means that the minimum amount of insurable earnings from fishing required to access EI fishing benefits for self-employed fishers residing in this region increased from \$2,500 to \$2,700 for the period between August 6 and September 9, 2023. For the EI economic region of St. John's, the unemployment rate increased from 5.1% to 6.0% during this same period. Under the rules of the EI program, this increase has not had any impact on the minimum insurable earnings from fishing required to access EI fishing benefits – threshold remained unchanged at \$4,200 for self-employed fishers residing in this region.

Most self-employed fishers in the EI economic region of Newfoundland and Labrador qualify for EI fishing benefits with considerably higher earnings than the minimum entrance requirement. For example, in 2022, the average insurable earnings of self-employed fishers used to qualify for EI fishing benefits in the EI region of Newfoundland and Labrador were \$15,388. In past years, a very small number of self-employed fishers, namely fewer than 25, from the EI region of Newfoundland and Labrador have qualified for EI fishing benefits with less than \$2,700 in insurable earnings. Given that the snow crab fishing season was extended this summer, it is expected that very few self-employed fishers would no longer be able to access EI fishing benefits due to the increase from \$2,500 to \$2,700 in insurable earnings required to qualify in the EI economic region of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Routine Proceedings

The decline in regional unemployment rates can also impact an EI fishing benefit claimant's benefit rate. With the decrease in the unemployment rate from 13.7% to 12.9% in the EI economic region of Newfoundland and Labrador on August 6, 2023, the divisor used to determine a fisher's weekly benefit rate increased from 14 to 15. This means that a fisher's total earnings from fishing will be divided by 15 instead of 14 for the purposes of determining their weekly benefit amount which can result in lower weekly EI benefits. The exact impact that the decline in the unemployment rate will have on fishers' weekly EI benefit rate is difficult to estimate, as it depends on a number of factors.

Under the rules of the EI program, to receive EI fishing benefits, a self-employed fisher must be unable to qualify for EI regular benefits. They must also have earned a minimum amount in insurable earnings from fishing during their qualifying period. The qualifying period for EI fishing benefits is the 31-week period preceding their claim, or since their last claim, whichever is shorter. The minimum amount of insurable earnings required to access EI fishing benefits varies between \$2,500 and \$4,200, depending on the unemployment rate in a claimant's economic region.

Also, to be eligible to receive EI regular benefits, a worker must accumulate a minimum number of hours of insurable employment in their qualifying period. The qualifying period is the 52-week period preceding the start of their claim, or the period since the start their previous claim, whichever is shorter. The minimum number of hours varies between 420 and 700 hours, depending on the unemployment rate in a claimant's economic region.

The weekly EI benefit rate is calculated using a claimant's highest weeks of earnings, or best weeks, over the qualifying period. The number of best weeks used ranges from 14 to 22, depending on the unemployment rate in a claimant's economic region.

With respect to part (c) of the question, at the time of writing, the government has not announced any measures to provide financial relief to impacted workers.

With regard to part (d) of the question, it is not applicable.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, furthermore, if the government's response to Questions Nos. 1748 to 1752, 1754 to 1756, 1759 to 1761, 1763 to 1765, 1767, 1772 to 1776, 1782, 1783, 1787, 1788, 1795 to 1797, 1799, 1800 and 1802 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled in an electronic format immediately.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1748—**Ms. Heather McPherson:**

With regard to the government's participation in negotiations for a pandemic instrument or treaty: (a) what is Canada's current position on the pandemic treaty, specifically with regard to equitable access to medical countermeasures such as

drugs and vaccines, in particular (i) why Canada has proposed that technology transfers to enable other countries to manufacture their own drugs and vaccines only occur on "voluntary and mutually agreed terms" with pharmaceutical companies, even when those drugs and vaccines were developed with public funding from the government, (ii) what Canada proposes to do in situations where pharmaceutical companies do not enter into voluntary agreements, as it frequently did not happen during the COVID-19 pandemic and previous global public health crises such as HIV, (iii) how will Canada ensure that investments of public funds, including those by Canadian taxpayers, in pharmaceutical research, development, and manufacturing, delivers affordable and globally-accessible drugs, vaccines, and other health technologies to Canadians and people worldwide; (b) how is the government implementing the recommendations from the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development vaccine equity report entitled "Overcoming the Barriers to Global Vaccine Equity and Ending the Pandemic" during its participation in negotiations for the pandemic instrument, and will the government follow the report's recommendation 8 that it "ensure that its agreements to provide research and development funding include clauses that allow intellectual property resulting from that funding – including vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics – to be easily licensed to manufacturers serving low- and middle income countries";

(c) how are the positions articulated by civil society during the Pandemic Instrument Partner and Stakeholder Engagement Forum reflected in Canada's own positions in negotiation of the pandemic instrument; (d) which of the strategies and actions recommended by participants and contained in the government's report on the Pandemic Instrument Partner and Stakeholder Engagement Forum does the government agree with; (e) which of the strategies and actions recommended by participants and contained in the government's report on the Pandemic Instrument Partner and Stakeholder Engagement Forum does the government disagree with and why; and (f) how many meetings, emails and phone calls, and on what dates, have officials from (i) Global Affairs Canada, (ii) the Public Health Agency of Canada, (iii) Health Canada, (iv) the Privy Council Office, (v) Public Services and Procurement Canada, (vi) Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, (vii) the Office of the Prime Minister, had with (A) Innovative Medicines Canada, (B) pharmaceutical company representatives, (C) Canadian and international not-for-profit or charitable organizations, on the subject of pandemic instrument and the revision of the International Health Regulations?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1749—**Ms. Heather McPherson:**

With regard to the government's procurement of vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic: (a) what price did Canada negotiate per vaccine from each manufacturer, and what was the final price paid per vaccine for each manufacturer; (b) what were the amounts, in Canadian dollars, broken down by vaccine product and company, of advance payments made by the government to pharmaceutical companies to guarantee vaccine shipments; (c) what confidentiality and indemnification clauses did Canada agree to in order to exempt companies from legal liability; (d) were pharmaceutical companies exempted from the obligation to give full refunds if deliveries were delayed or cancelled; (e) what clauses, if any, did the vaccine purchase contracts signed by Canada include relating to the ability of Canada to donate vaccine doses from those contracts to low- and middle-income countries, humanitarian organizations, Gavi, the World Health Organization, or any other organization for use outside of Canada;

Routine Proceedings

(f) when Canada's Chief Public Health Officer indicated, in October 2021, that initial agreements between Canada and the manufacturers of mRNA vaccines (e.g. Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech) did not allow for doses to be donated but that new arrangements had been made to permit donations, what were the original conditions and the subsequently agreed conditions, respectively; (g) what is the total value, in Canadian dollars, of funding provided by the government, broken down by department or agency, to support the research, development, or manufacture of vaccines, drugs, or diagnostic tests for COVID-19 between 2020 and 2023; (h) for any of the funding provided during this time to companies, universities, not-for-profits, or other research, development, or manufacturing entities, did any of the funding agreements or contracts contain clauses or stipulations that would secure a pricing structure for the final product for Canadians or for people living in low- and middle-income countries; (i) did Canada attempt to use its leverage as an investor in these technologies to secure fair or affordable pricing of the final products for Canadians or for people living in low and middle income countries; and (j) did Canada attempt to use its leverage as an investor in these technologies to ensure access to the final products for Canadians or for people living in low and middle income countries, for example by requiring the products to be registered for use in Canada or in low and middle income countries?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1750—Mr. Ed Fast:

With regard to Correctional Service Canada: what is the breakdown by security classification of the facility of how many dangerous offenders are currently in each type of facility, including those on parole or conditional release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1751—Mr. Ed Fast:

With regard to Correctional Service Canada: what is the breakdown by security classification of the facility of how many offenders serving life sentences for multiple murders are currently in each type of facility, including those on parole or conditional release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1752—Mr. Ed Fast:

With regard to the government's response to drones being used in the proximity of penitentiaries or other correctional facilities, within the past five years: (a) has the government tested or used technology to jam or nullify mobile phone or drone use in relation to any penitentiary or correctional facility, and, if so, what are the details of what was done, including, for each action, the (i) date, (ii) summary of what was done; and (b) has the government consulted or sought external advice related to the drones being used to smuggle items into penitentiaries or correctional facilities, and, if so, what are the details, including the (i) name of the individual or firm, (ii) date, (iii) value of the contract, if applicable, (iv) description of the parameters for the advice or consultation sought, (v) description of the advice or information received?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1754—Mr. Dane Lloyd:

With regard to the upcoming tenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP10) to the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, from November 10 to 25, 2023, and the third session of the Meeting of Parties (MOP3) to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products, from November 27 to 30, 2023: (a) how many individuals will be part of the government's delegation and what are their names and titles; (b) what is the overall budget for the government's COP10 and MOP3 participation, broken down by (i) accommodations, (ii) meals or per diems, (iii) hospitality; (c) what are the government's key priorities or action items for both the COP10 and MOP3; and (d) has the government been assigned any specific agenda items or resolutions for both the COP10 and MOP3, and, if so, what are they?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1755—Mr. Warren Steinley:

With regard to the Canada Child Benefit, during the most recent round of payments: (a) how many and what percentage of families who received payments got (i) the maximum payment amount for each child, (ii) a decreased payment amount due to the adjusted family net income level; and (b) of the families in (a) who received a decreased amount, what was the number and percentage of recipients that had their payments reduced by (i) less than 25 percent, (ii) 25 to 50 percent, (iii) more than 50 percent to 75 percent, (iv) more than 75 percent?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1756—Mr. Gord Johns:

With regard to workplace and work-related injuries in the public sector, broken down by department and fiscal year since 2015-16: (a) what is the total number of public sector workers who experienced (i) physical injuries in the workplace, (ii) injuries to their mental health or mental well-being in the workplace; (b) how many of the workers in (a) experienced injuries that resulted in the worker being unable to work either (i) temporarily, (ii) permanently, (iii) to the full extent of their job duties prior to their injury; (c) how many of the workers in (a) experienced injuries that resulted in a leave of work of (i) less than one month, (ii) one to three months, (iii) three to six months, (iv) six to 12 months, (v) 12 months or more; (d) of the workers who experienced injuries in (a), how many saw reduced or modified job duties for (i) less than one month, (ii) one to three months, (iii) three to six months, (iv) six to 12 months, (v) more than 12 months; and (e) how many workers in (a) were (i) permanently unable to work, (ii) unable to work in the same role, (iii) required to change work place or job title?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1759—Mr. Frank Caputo:

With regard to contraband items seized in federal penitentiaries, broken down by year for each of the last five years: what is the breakdown of the items seized, including the volume of each type of item seized, in total and broken down by correctional institution?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1760—Mr. Arpan Khanna:

With regard to the government's response to drug addiction: (a) what are the government's estimates on the number of Canadians who are addicted to illicit drugs, broken down by substance; (b) for each substance in (a), what is the government's strategy to get those addicted into treatment and recovery, or to otherwise stop the addiction; (c) how much funding is being provided for the treatment and recovery strategy, broken down by year for the next five years; and (d) what are the government's targets on how many fewer people will be addicted to each substance in (a), broken down by substance and year for the next five years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1761—Mr. Colin Carrie:

With regard to Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada: (a) was each COVID-19 vaccine approved for use in Canada tested for safety against placebo prior to licensing, and, if not, which ones were exempted from the testing and why; (b) what specific ongoing studies and clinical trials is the government monitoring to compare the COVID vaccines against placebo, and what are the citations for each clinical trial; (c) which studies is the government monitoring to determine all-cause mortality after vaccination for COVID-19 and if there are any findings of correlation or causation as it relates to the COVID-19 vaccination campaign; and (d) what are the citations for each study in (c)?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1763—Mr. Adam Chambers:**

With regard to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and CRA call centre operations, broken down by fiscal year from 2015-16 to 2023-24: (a) what was, or is, the total budget for all CRA call centre operations; (b) what was, or is, the total employee count for all CRA call centre operations; (c) for each 1-800 number which Canadians can use to call the CRA, broken down by number, (i) how many calls were received, (ii) what was the average wait time or time on hold for callers to speak to a CRA call centre agent, (iii) what was the wait time service standard, (iv) what is the number of calls that were still being blocked or receiving busy signals in the manner noted in the 2017 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada, entitled “Report 2—Call Centres—Canada Revenue Agency”; (d) for which 1-800 numbers is the call centre system able to record calls; (e) what studies have been conducted, using a random sample of CRA call centre agents from across the country, to effectively and independently measure the percentage of accurate responses provided by CRA call centre agents; and (f) for each study in (e), (i) who conducted the study, (ii) what questions were asked, (iii) what were the results, including the numbers and percentage of inaccurate responses by CRA call centre agents to each question and 1-800 number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1764—Mrs. Tracy Gray:

With regard to expenditures related to the Cabinet retreat which took place in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, from August 21 to 23, 2023: (a) what are the total expenditures related to the retreat; (b) what is the breakdown of the expenditures by type of expense (accommodation, hospitality, audio-visual, etc.); and (c) what are the details of all expenditures in excess of \$1,000, including, for each, the (i) amount, (ii) vendor, (iii) description of the goods or services provided?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1765—Mr. Marty Morantz:

With regard to all memorandums, briefing notes, and other documents sent from or received by the Privy Council Office related to, or which mention in any way, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to Parliament on September 22, 2023: what are the details of each, including the (i) date, (ii) sender, (iii) recipient, (iv) type of document, (v) title, (vi) summary of the contents, (vii) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1767—Mr. Chris Lewis:

With regard to all memorandums, briefing notes, and other documents sent from or received by Global Affairs Canada related to, or which mention in any way, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to Parliament on September 22, 2023: what are the details of each, including the (i) date, (ii) sender, (iii) recipient, (iv) type of document, (v) title, (vi) summary of the contents, (vii) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1772—Mr. Matthew Green:

With regard to the government's Directive on Automated Decision-Making, since March 4, 2019, broken down by department or agency: (a) did the department conduct any algorithmic impact assessments; (b) what was the conclusion of each assessment in (a), including the (i) information technology or automated decision system assessed, (ii) date the assessment was completed, (iii) impact assessment level results; (c) does the department currently license, subscribe to, or otherwise procure services from an entity that provides artificial intelligence or automated decision-making services; (d) what are the details of all procurement contracts in (c), including the (i) name of the company contracted, (ii) name of the product provided, (iii) amount paid by the department or agency; (e) was the department or any individuals within the department found in non-compliance with the directive; and (f) what consequences were applied for each instance in (e)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1773—Ms. Michelle Rempel Garner:

With regard to the government's consultations on a generative artificial intelligence code of conduct since August 1, 2023: (a) how many consultations has the government held on this proposal; (b) how many stakeholders has the government consulted with on this proposal; (c) what are the details of the consultations, including, for each, the (i) names of the organizations consulted, (ii) date, (iii) outcome, recommendation or feedback; (d) what is the total cost of all consultations which have occurred to date; (e) what is the breakdown of (d) by date and line item; (f) have any outside consultants or service providers been involved in the development of this policy and any related consultations, and, if so, what are the details of each

consultant or service provider's involvement, including the (i) name of the individual or firm, (ii) contract value, (iii) date of the contract, (iv) description of the goods or services provided; (g) what are all specific concerns that have been raised to date in the consultations; (h) how many government employees or full-time equivalents have worked on the consultations; (i) what are the travel costs associated with the consultations incurred to date (i) in total, (ii) broken down by year and type of expense; and (j) what is the current status of this policy proposal?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1774—Ms. Michelle Rempel Garner:

With regard to the use of facial recognition software by the government since November 4, 2015: (a) which departments, agencies, Crown corporations, or other government entities use facial recognition software, and, for each one that uses the software, what is the (i) stated purpose, (ii) scope of use; (b) what ethical implications and concerns has the government sought to mitigate in its use of facial recognition within any government department or agency; (c) how has the government sought to mitigate each of the implications and concerns in (b); and (d) what measures has the government put in place to address algorithmic issues and racial profiling in its use of facial recognition software?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1775—Ms. Michelle Rempel Garner:

With regard to any spending by any department, agency, or other government entity for receptions, trade shows, fairs or festivals held outside of Canada since January 1, 2016, broken down by year: (a) how many receptions, trade shows, fairs or festivals held overseas has the government funded; (b) what are the names and dates of all international festivals, international fairs or trade shows held overseas that the government has spent money on; (c) what are the details of each event in (b), including, for each, the (i) total spendings by the federal government on the event, (ii) rationale for the funding, (iii) breakdown of what the funds were spent on; and (d) what was the total funding for festivals, international fairs or trade shows held overseas by the government since 2016, broken down by year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1776—Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay:

With regard to the government's safe supply initiative: (a) how much (i) heroin, (ii) crack cocaine, (iii) cocaine, (iv) fentanyl, (v) methamphetamine or crystal methamphetamine, (vi) other substance, broken down by type, does the government estimate was distributed as part of safe supply, in total and broken down by year since 2018; and (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by province or territory?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1782—Mr. Branden Leslie:

With regard to the seizure of drugs by the Canada Border Services Agency since January 1, 2022, broken down by month and by type of drug: (a) what is the quantity of drugs that was seized; (b) how many shipments were seized; and (c) what is the breakdown of (a) and (b) by country of origin, or suspected country of origin?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1783—Mr. Earl Dreeshen:

With regard to media reports that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and his exempt staff incurred more than \$700,000 in travel expenses last year: what are the estimated carbon emissions from this travel?

(Return tabled)

*Government Orders***Question No. 1787—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:**

With regard to the Protecting Canadians from Unsafe Drugs Act (Vanessa's Law): (a) has Health Canada published the reports of serious adverse drug reactions from each Canadian hospital, either monthly or annually, to alert doctors and patients of which hospital is in breach of the act, and, if not, why not; (b) how many meetings have Health Canada officials had with drug makers or their representatives since Vanessa's Law received royal assent in November 2014, related to the implementation of measures in the act; (c) what are the details of each meeting in (b), including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) attendees, (iii) topics discussed, (iv) type and purpose of the meeting; (d) what is the position of Health Canada regarding hospitals which have either not been reporting or underreporting serious adverse drug reactions since the regulations were enacted in 2019; (e) what specific actions, if any, did Health Canada take or is taking to ensure that hospitals comply with Vanessa's Law; (f) what is the date of each action in (e); (g) how did Health Canada use the information on adverse drug reactions collected from hospitals to take the regulatory actions prescribed in Vanessa's Law, broken down by drug; and (h) what are the details of all regulatory actions taken in (g), including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) drug, (iii) summary of the actions taken?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1788—Mr. Philip Lawrence:

With regard to Sustainable Development Technology Canada (SDTC): (a) what are the details of all funding which SDTC provided to businesses since January 1, 2020, including, for each, the (i) recipient, (ii) date, (iii) amount, (iv) type of funding (loan, grant, etc.), (v) purpose of the funding; and (b) for each loan in (a), how much has been repaid?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1795—Mr. Gary Vidal:

With regard to items and services funded by Indigenous Services Canada under Jordan's Principle since 2016, broken down by funding stream: (a) what are the details of all funding provided, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) recipient, (iv) description of the items or services; and (b) what was the total amount spent per year under Jordan's Principle?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1796—Ms. Louise Chabot:

With regard to Employment and Social Development Canada's Skills for Success Program and the Training and Tools Stream: (a) what is the total amount granted under this program for the year 2023, and, of this amount, how much has been granted to Quebec-based organizations; (b) of all the projects selected, how many are designed to serve a francophone population or clientele; and (c) what are all the projects selected and the amounts granted for each of them?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1797—Mr. Gary Vidal:

With regard to at-risk pay and performance bonuses for those classified as executive and above at Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, and Indigenous Services Canada, since 2018, broken down by year and by type of job: (a) what specific criteria was used to determine if executives received (i) at-risk pay, (ii) performance bonuses, (iii) neither at-risk pay nor performance bonuses; and (b) what number and percentage of executives received (i) both at-risk pay and performance bonuses, (ii) at-risk pay only, (iii) neither at-risk pay nor performance bonuses?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1799—Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:

With regard to Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) officers serving the United States—Canada land border: (a) does the government consider the CBSA officers protecting the land border to be public safety officers; (b) what is the number of CBSA officers who have worked at CBSA for (i) under five years, (ii) five to 10 years, (iii) 10 to 15 years, (iv) 15 to 20 years, (v) 20 to 25 years, (vi) more than 25 years; and (c) how many CBSA officers are currently on (i) long-term leave, (ii) administrative leave, (iii) short-term leave, for health and safety reasons?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1800—Ms. Louise Chabot:

With regard to the Canada Summer Jobs program: (a) for each of the 338 federal ridings, (i) how much money, (ii) how many positions, (iii) how many hours of

work, were allocated for fiscal year 2023-24; (b) for each of the 338 federal ridings, (i) how much money, (ii) how many positions, (iii) how many hours, were requested for fiscal year 2023-24; (c) for each of the 338 federal ridings, what is the numerical difference between the amount of money requested and the amount of money received; (d) for each of the 338 federal ridings, what is the numerical difference between the number of positions requested and the number of positions granted; (e) for each of the 338 federal ridings, what is the numerical difference between the number of hours requested and the number of hours granted; (f) what is, in mathematical terms, and defining all variables, the formula that was used in fiscal year 2023-24 to determine the funding allocated to each riding; and (g) what is the share of overall funding, expressed both as a percentage and in dollars, that has been allocated to federal ridings in Quebec, broken down by fiscal year, since 2006-07?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1802—Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and snow crab fisheries in Newfoundland and Labrador, since January 1, 2023: (a) what are the details of all meetings held by the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard and departmental staff concerning emergency supports for harvesters, including the (i) date of the meeting, (ii) individuals or organizations in attendance, (iii) government officials in attendance; and (b) what investments has the government made to protect existing investments and infrastructure of the inshore, owner-operator fishery and rural communities that rely on the industry?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA-UKRAINE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023

The House resumed from November 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-57, An Act to implement the 2023 Free Trade Agreement between Canada and Ukraine, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this piece of legislation today.

Government Orders

I am from a Mennonite background, and the majority of my constituents are of Mennonite origin. Canadian Mennonites, by and large, come from Ukraine. The first group migrated to Canada in the 1870s, and another large group followed in the 1920s, fleeing socialism and communism. After the war, many fled, escaping from the socialist dictatorships in eastern Europe and fleeing to Canada via Paraguay and other South American countries. The stories these folks tell are truly mind-blowing, stories of how families walked out of Ukraine on foot with just the clothes on their backs, at times having to resort to eating grass and travelling by night trying to avoid the communists so they could come to Canada, a land of freedom and opportunity. My grandparents were among those who fled the Russians and came to Canada in the 1920s, so Ukraine and the Ukrainian people have a special place in my heart and in the hearts of my constituents.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Canada has sought to help Ukraine. In fact, it was 35 years ago this month, in November 1988, that the dissolution of the Soviet Union began. The communist experiment had failed. The Marxist socialist fantasy had collapsed under the weight of its own tyranny, moral bankruptcy and economic weakness. It was shortly thereafter, in December 1991, under Prime Minister Mulroney, that Canada proudly became the first western nation to officially recognize Ukraine. Fast-forward two decades to 2015. It was the Conservatives whose successfully negotiated the first and current Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement and voted unanimously to ratify it. In fact, it was my good friend and fellow Mennonite, the member for Abbotsford, who was the lead negotiator on that deal, and I commend him for his great work, which today stands the test of time. Conservatives are strong supporters of free trade, and we are supporters of Ukraine.

I say all this to dispel the ridiculous notion the government tries to propagate that somehow Conservatives do not support Ukraine. We do. To equate or try to correlate a lack of support for this government's failed policies with a lack of support for Ukraine is simply dishonest and in very poor taste. Again, for anyone not paying attention thus far, let me say it one more time: Conservatives are strong supporters of free trade and we are strong supporters of Ukraine.

No one is debating whether or not we should have free trade with Ukraine; that is not the question. The question is this: What are the changes being proposed, and, as with any trade agreement, will those changes be of long-term benefit to Canada? However, there is a second question, and I do think it is a fair question, which is whether now is really the right time to be doing this. I guess if I were to sum up my feelings on the bill before us, my response would be "No, now is not the right time." Ukraine is in the middle of a war for its very survival. I am not a Ukrainian government official, but if the situation were reversed and Canada were in a war for its survival, and suddenly Ukraine came knocking from halfway around the world and said, "Hey, we realize you're kind of busy surviving, but we thought now would be a great time to revisit our trade relationship", my response would be "Seriously, you're bringing this up now?" Free trade is great. Free trade is important. Conservatives are the party of free trade, but, frankly, we do have a free trade deal in place. It has not expired and will not expire, so why now?

The government has added 11 new chapters to the agreement. It is pushing to rush this legislation through the House. The questions is why. What kind of woke clauses is it trying to slip in here, a carbon tax perhaps?

• (1605)

The government has bragged, "For the first time in a Canadian free trade agreement, the environment chapter includes provisions recognizing the importance of...climate change policies, including through market-based approaches and trade-related climate measures to achieve green growth objectives." That sounds like Liberal for carbon tax to me. I know that is a big concern we are hearing from business leaders. Carbon taxes hurt trade the same way they hurt families. They increase the cost of everything while doing nothing to demonstrably help the environment.

Europe has been begging us to support LNG, and where the Americans have done so, Canada has once again fallen behind. It has fallen behind because the government continues to put its ideological vendetta against our energy sector and its carbon tax scam ahead of Canadian competitiveness and affordability for families.

Failing to develop and export clean and ethically sourced Canadian energy to Europe only serves to strengthen Russia. By failing to develop our vast energy resources, we are actually helping Russia and keeping Europe reliant on Russian oil and gas. In fact, as my colleague from Calgary Heritage noted in his speech a while back, "Canada is the sole NATO ally with the potential to backfill European energy demand with \$3-trillion worth of natural resources, the world's fourth-largest oil reserves, NATO's third-largest reserves of natural gas and the capacity to scale agricultural products and technologies for the world." That is Canada.

Canada could be an international leader, helping to strengthen developing democracies while at the same time growing our own economy and national security through reasonable and responsible resource development, rather than the international pariah we have become after eight years of the failed Prime Minister. He is not worth the cost to Canadians and he is not worth the cost to the free world.

As I wrap up my remarks this afternoon, I would like to stay on this subject for a moment: the cost of the Prime Minister to Canadians and how this relates to the current conversation and current conflict in Europe.

Government Orders

• (1610)

We are united in this House in saying that Russia's invasion of Ukraine was wrong. We are horrified by the violence. With one voice, we condemn the violence. We have stood with the people of Ukraine in their hour of need. Canada has provided some 10 billion dollars' worth of humanitarian, military and direct financial support. That said, the Prime Minister and the government have been consistent and unequivocal in saying, "We will...support Ukraine with whatever it takes, for as long as it takes." That concerns me a bit, and I have heard that concern from a growing number of my constituents. I think when a leader makes statements like this, Canadians deserve to know what that looks like. When the Prime Minister says, "whatever it takes, for as long as it takes", what exactly does he mean?

Ukraine is our friend. Russia's invasion was wrong. Still, Canadians should have reasonable expectations and know what and who their government is committing them to. I fear the government's woke excitement and alarmism blinds it not only to what is really important in a trade deal, but also when it comes to the basic democratic values that we expect of our friends and international partners.

As my colleague from Yellowhead noted in his speech, "Canada stands as a beacon of democracy and human rights on the world stage. When people buy Canadian, they are not just buying a product. They are buying into a set of values, values that respect human dignity, prioritize environmental sustainability and advocate for peace." Freedom of speech, freedom of religion and freedom of the press are things that matter. They are under assault in Canada under the Prime Minister and are under assault in Ukraine. Truth is the first casualty of war, and freedom quickly follows. Friends should always have each other's backs, but sometimes we also need to sit down and have tough conversations. I recognize that is part of a larger conversation than the one we are having here today.

To wrap up, Conservatives believe in supporting our Ukrainian friends, including through trade, but those costs need to be clearly defined for Canadians. We believe Canada should continue looking for ways to use our economic strengths to support the Ukrainian people, including by exporting Canadian LNG to break European dependence on natural gas from Russia.

Conservatives are looking very carefully at this legislation. We are talking to those in affected sectors. We will work to ensure our trade and other international agreements are always in the interests of Canada and all Canadians.

• (1615)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the problem with that last speech is that none of the facts back up what the member said.

He said that Conservatives stand with Ukraine. He will have to explain to me why, when President Zelenskyy came to the House, the Leader of the Opposition never once mentioned it on social media. As a matter of fact, in an act of subtle defiance, the member for Calgary Nose Hill had to go back a year ago, to the last time Zelenskyy addressed this Parliament, to quote a tweet of what he had said that time, as though that was somehow justifying the fact that he had visited this time.

More importantly, to the red herring that he just pulled up about why we need this now, it is because Ukraine came to the table, sat down with Canada and made the deal. Now the Ukrainian Canadian Congress says that it "strongly supports the strengthening of trade and economic ties between Canada and Ukraine. Canada and Ukraine have negotiated this treaty, and we call on all parties to support the swift adoption and implementation."

Does the member know better about this issue than the Ukrainian Canadian Congress?

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, of course, Canadians know that Conservatives support Ukraine. We have demonstrated that through our support of the help and the aid that we have provided to Ukraine in the last year and a half.

Our support is unequivocal for Ukraine.

Conservatives are prudent, and we like to know what the cost is before we make big commitments. Really, all we are asking of the government is to, for once in its history, provide Conservatives, the House and Canadians with the cost of what it is saying it is going to be. There needs to be transparency, and that is something that is sorely lacking from the Liberal-NDP government.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, of course, I am very much a supporter of free trade with Ukraine and anything else we can do to help a democracy stand up against an invasion of its territory.

I am a little concerned by the Conservatives saying that their support for Ukraine is unequivocal and then saying that it has limits, and that they seem concerned about the cost. There seems to be a bit of a contradiction in the speech, saying there is unequivocal support and then saying that we have to know how much it costs before that support is unequivocal.

I know that the government and New Democrats certainly stand with Ukraine. We do not want to offer any hope to Russia that we are somehow going to abandon Ukraine, which I am afraid the member's speech did toward the end.

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, it is a good question because it would appear as though perhaps there is an inconsistency in our position. There is not.

Conservatives support Ukraine. We negotiated the first free trade agreement. We support free trade. There is currently a free trade agreement in place. It works. There is nothing wrong with it. In fact, if anything, it is in favour of Ukraine. That was negotiated intentionally to help a fledgeling company in its pursuit of democracy and freedom and the rights of humans and the furtherance of democracy.

Government Orders

Do we want to know what the cost is? Absolutely, we do not just blindly rush into things such as national pharmacare and free dental for everybody without wanting to know the cost.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, at the international trade committee, we had the Ukrainian ambassador, and we had a very good interaction with her. She emphasized Ukraine's desire to see this legislation go through. She emphasized the importance of this legislation, specifically touching upon the huge infrastructure that has been damaged, the cost of which is about \$400 billion.

She also emphasized that we need to get ready now so that Canada can be a partner in the rebuilding of Ukraine. She explained that last year, at the Ukraine rebuilding conference, which was held in Canada, was overcrowded with Canadian companies and Ukrainian companies getting ready for the war to be over and to rebuild Ukraine.

I would like to have the hon. member's comments on that.

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, I am not sure what the question was in that comment. Canada and Conservatives, from a Conservative position, stand eager to help Ukraine in its rebuilding. We know that a free trade agreement is going to be part of that, so that it will enable us to supply them with what it needs to regain its position as the breadbasket of Europe.

Ukraine has tremendous agricultural assets that we can leverage here from Canada. We have got the expertise. We have got equipment manufacturing. We are going to be very willing and eager to stand with it in its rebuilding process.

• (1620)

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-57, an act to build onto the existing Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement. I want to thank my colleague from Dufferin—Caledon for his work in examining this bill and working to strengthen the economic bond between Canada and Ukraine.

As many of my fellow members already know, I proudly represent the constituency of Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, a region that is home to many Ukrainians. The community of Dauphin, Manitoba, is proudly home to Canada's National Ukrainian Festival. The Parkland region has a rich history in celebrating Ukrainian culture and heritage, and the region shares a strong bond with the people of Ukraine. Much of my constituency was built by the people who immigrated to Canada from Ukraine generations ago. It does not take much to notice the incredible contribution that Ukrainians have made to the social, cultural and economic fabric of Canada.

I, along with my Conservative colleagues, unequivocally support Ukraine, especially over the last 20 months during Russia's illegal war, which was launched on the Ukrainian people. I will remind members that it is our responsibility as members of the House, alongside our allies, to ensure that Vladimir Putin and those aligned with him are held accountable for their war crimes in Ukraine. These individuals must face prosecution at both the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice.

Since Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine in February of 2022, Canadians have been united in supporting the people of Ukraine in their fight for freedom and defending their sovereignty. I was proud to see so many communities throughout my constituency open their doors to support Ukrainians fleeing the unjustified war on their homeland. I think of the community members in Dauphin who launched the Parkland Ukrainian Family Fund to support parents and children fleeing to Canada. Since they launched this initiative, the community of Dauphin has provided homes for over 40 families. It is efforts and contributions like these that showcase how strong the relationship between Canada and Ukraine is.

As Ukraine continues to fight for its freedom, Conservatives will always stand with the people of Ukraine. We also understand the importance of trade and supply agreements with our friends in Ukraine. It was the Conservatives who negotiated the trade agreement with Ukraine, something we are very proud of. This agreement eliminated tariffs on 86% of Canada's merchandise exports to Ukraine. The proposed modernization of the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement is an important subject in the House. As one of our strong allies, Ukraine represents hundreds of millions of dollars in trade every year.

Before I dig into Bill C-57, it is important to look at the history of this legislation and Canada's relationship with Ukraine. In December 1991, almost 32 years ago to the day, a Conservative-led government became the very first western country to recognize Ukraine's independence from the Soviet Union. It was the previous Conservative government that championed Operation Unifier, in which the Canadian Armed Forces led a mission to fortify Ukraine's armed forces through military training. This operation was very successful in preparing Ukrainian forces for their fight against Russia in this war and, as I said earlier, it was a Conservative government that successfully negotiated the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement.

I am proud to stand today as a Conservative to speak up once again for the long-standing friendship between Canada and Ukraine. It should go without saying that nobody in the House is arguing that Canada and Ukraine move forward without free trade. In 2022, Canada's total merchandise trade with Ukraine was \$420 million, with \$150 million in exports and \$270 million in imports.

Canadians may be unaware, but motor vehicles and parts, fish and seafood, and pharmaceutical products were the top three exports to Ukraine, while Canada's top imports from Ukraine were animal and vegetable fats and oils, iron and steel, and electrical machinery and equipment. It is important to note that, if Bill C-57 is implemented, the current free trade agreement from 2017 will remain in effect. This would provide time for Canada and Ukraine to get this legislation right, in ways that best serve Canadian and Ukrainian needs alike.

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• (1625)

It is vital that, as legislators, we exercise due diligence and ensure that any trade agreement is one which serves the interests of all Canadians. This is why Conservatives are working and engaging with Canadians and stakeholders to ensure that their feedback is heard and taken into consideration before Bill C-57 is rushed through Parliament. It is no secret that the current Liberal government has a failed record of engaging with stakeholders and listening to Canadians. Listening to the concerns of Canadians is not one of the government's strong suits. That is why Conservatives are determined to ensure that good legislation passes through Parliament.

Upon reviewing Bill C-57, it becomes quite apparent that there is room for improvement and that there are many missed opportunities to strengthen support for Ukraine. Constant attacks from Russia have damaged and destroyed much of Ukraine, but in Bill C-57, there is a lack of focus on rebuilding. One subject that is missing from the legislation is support for rebuilding energy infrastructure. In a time of energy insecurity, one would think that rebuilding energy infrastructure would be top of mind. How are the people of Ukraine supposed to rebuild their economy when their energy infrastructure is not functional?

Another area that the Liberals seem to have ignored is Canada's inability to provide liquid natural gas to its allies. Had it not been for the Prime Minister's anti-energy policies, Canada would have been better suited to supporting Ukraine and our allies by supplying LNG to the world. By doing so, we could help cut off Putin from supplying energy to Europe. Instead, after eight years, the government has not built a single LNG terminal. The government has no regard for the importance of exporting Canadian energy to our allies around the world. Canada stands as the only NATO ally equipped to meet the energy needs of Europe, possessing a blessing of natural resources. This includes being the world's fourth-largest holder of oil reserves, boasting NATO's third-largest reserve of natural gas, and possessing the capability to expand the production of agricultural products and technologies on a global scale. Instead, Ukraine and Europe are forced to fund their enemy in war.

Canada should continue looking for ways to use our economic strengths to support the Ukrainian people, including by exporting Canadian LNG to break European dependence on natural gas from Russia. As I said earlier, Conservatives will always work to ensure that trade agreements are in the interests of Canada and of all Canadians. I mentioned how Conservatives were the ones who successfully negotiated the first Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement. It is important that we debate the legislation thoroughly and continue to support the Ukrainian people, especially in this time of war. I, along with Canada's Conservatives, will continue to stand with Ukraine.

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 Calgary Shepard, Carbon Pricing; the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Carbon Pricing.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a

very simple question for the member opposite: Will the member be supporting Bill C-57, yes or no?

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, that is a very good question, and that is why we are debating it today. They will find out at the appropriate time, and I think we are going to vote on this in the next couple of days. Maybe they will find out the answer then.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, that is a bit of a peculiar answer to a very straightforward question. In fact, if we all do support Ukraine and free trade for Ukraine, then it is a bit hard to understand why the Conservatives are putting up speaker after speaker who will not say clearly that they are going to support the free trade agreement. In fact, a recent speaker said there were limits to the Conservatives' support for Ukraine.

Either we do support Ukraine, support this agreement and get on with it, or we do not.

• (1630)

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, that was more of a statement than a question. We are supposed to be debating the legislation in front of us here today. That is what I am looking forward to: some serious questions about the legislation.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this agreement, this legislation is fundamental to the security, stability and economic development of Ukraine. It would allow Canadian businesses to be part of Ukraine's rebuilding, which will be the biggest rebuilding in Europe since World War II.

I would like to hear the hon. member's comments and reaction to the Ukraine ambassador's statement at the international trade committee, which I am going to quote. She said, "We believe that the modernized CUFTA will pave the way for Ukrainian companies and Canadian companies to work together."

Does the member agree with this statement by the Ukrainian ambassador?

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, it is really important to remember that we have had an existing agreement in place since 2017, I believe. It was a Conservative government that actually negotiated and put that in place. We really have to remember that going forward.

Today, we have a war going on, and nothing has been discussed about trying to create the energy infrastructure for Ukraine so they could get off Putin's gas.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, energy is fundamental to all people in all countries around the world, especially in expansive and northern countries such as ours and in the region that we are talking about.

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As my colleague mentioned during his speech, after eight years of the Liberals, there were 18 proposals for LNG terminals from Canada. However, because of the Liberals' red tape, gatekeeping, anti-energy agenda and policies, not a single one has been built.

Conservatives are supportive about actual outcomes rather than words. We know it is so important for Ukrainians and citizens of allied countries to have energy security and affordable fuel.

Could the member comment on the ways in which the NDP-Liberals are holding Canada back from being able to truly support the resilient, tenacious people of Ukraine, who are fighting for their territorial integrity and sovereignty, as well as for sources of responsible oil and gas—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to give the member time to answer. This is not the time for another speech.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, Bill C-69 is basically what the member was referring to. That is the “no more pipelines” bill that was imposed here in Canada on Canadian citizens.

As we look forward and work with Ukraine in developing their energy infrastructure, we need to take a very long look at what the Liberals have done for legislation on developing energy in our own country. We should be helping them instead of hindering Ukraine in moving forward with energy development.

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and speak to Bill C-57, the free trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine. The bill would modernize CUFTA and build on the original 2017 agreement with the inclusion of 11 new chapters and provisions.

I believe that Canada should continue looking for ways to use our economic strength to support the Ukrainian people, including the exportation of Canadian liquefied natural gas to break European dependence on natural gas supplied to those countries by Russia. I also believe that members of this House should always work to ensure that trade agreements entered into by Canada remain in the best interest of Canada and of all Canadians. This is why Bill C-57 should be closely examined and why engagement should occur with Canadians and stakeholders to get that very important feedback. We must also be aware that, through this Canada-Ukraine FTA, Canada is continuing its support for our Ukrainian allies, including through trade.

I commend the Conservatives for having successfully negotiated the current Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement and for unanimously voting for it. I am also a strong supporter of free trade and of Ukraine. On the latter point, this is why I personally believe that Canada should indeed have a free trade agreement with Ukraine.

The current CUFTA was negotiated in 2017, and it will also remain in effect if, for some reason, the new agreement is not ratified. Regardless, Canada's commitment to a strong and independent Ukraine is a constant. Ukrainian people have suffered greatly through Russia's unwarranted aggression, and the people of Ukraine need all the assistance Canada can offer.

Canada's history with Ukraine displays a close relationship. On December 2, 1991, Canada became the first western country to rec-

ognize Ukraine's independence from the Soviet Union. Recently, Canada also undertook Operation Unifier, the Canadian Armed Forces mission to bolster the capabilities of the armed forces of Ukraine through the provision of critical military training.

As I said at the outset, the new CUFTA reflects the 2017 agreement, with 11 new chapters and provisions that focus on trade in services, including financial investment, cross-border trade in services, temporary entry for business persons, financial services, telecommunications, SMEs, digital trade and labour. Bill C-57 also includes elements of the government's new progressive trade and the first-ever sections on indigenous peoples. There is also a substantial new chapter on the environment.

The original 2017 agreement eliminated tariffs on 86% of Canada's merchandise exports to Ukraine. CUFTA has a built-in review clause, article 19.2, that commits to review the agreement within two years of its entry into force. The intention is to expand the agreement to new areas, such as investment in trade in services.

In July 2019, the Government of Canada and the Government of Ukraine agreed to modernize the CUFTA. Subsequently, in January of last year, Canada and Ukraine announced the launch of modernization negotiations, which were suspended as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Those negotiations resumed in June 2022. On October 17, the modernized CUFTA was introduced for ratification by the government.

Let us take a step back and really look at the magnitude. In 2022, Canada's total merchandise trade with Ukraine was \$420 million, with \$150 million in exports and \$270 million in imports. When the original CUFTA was ratified, non-coal exports to Ukraine actually grew by 28.5%, when looking at the period between 2016 and 2019. The top three exports to Ukraine were motor vehicles and parts, fish and seafood, and pharmaceutical products. Canada's top imports from Ukraine were animal and vegetable fats and oils, iron and steel, electrical machinery and equipment. For reference, Canada's 10th merchandise export market was Belgium, at \$4.9 billion, and Canada's 10th merchandise importer was Brazil, at \$7.5 billion. Therefore, this trade deal is very small relative to Canada's total trade, but that does not diminish its importance, particularly given the ongoing conflict.

There are two parts to adopting a trade agreement: a text of the agreement and the enabling legislation. Bill C-57 would implement the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement as agreed to between the two parties on September 22.

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• (1635)

Among other things, the bill sets out rules of interpretation and further “specifies that no recourse is to be taken on the basis of sections 9 to 15 or any order made under those sections, or on the basis of the provisions of that Agreement, without the consent of the Attorney General of Canada”. Bill C-57 would approve the agreement and provide for the payment by Canada of its share of the expenditures associated with the operation of the agreement's institutional and administrative aspects. The bill would also provide the Governor in Council with the power to make orders in accordance with that agreement. It would amend certain acts to give effect to Canada's obligations under that agreement and would repeal the 2017 agreement.

The new CUFTA would update the following chapters: rules of origin, government procurement, competition policy, monopolies and state enterprises, digital trade, labour, environment, transparency and anti-corruption. These are all things that are very important to Canadians. However, for the first time in a Canadian FTA, the environment chapter would include provisions recognizing the importance of mutually supportive trade and climate change policies. Also, for the first time ever, a Canadian FTA would include a chapter on trade and indigenous peoples. It would also replace the 1994 FIPA in the investment chapter.

What are the financial implications for Canada of this renegotiated CUFTA? We know that Canada currently has a \$150-million trade deficit with Ukraine. However, when the Harper Conservative government originally negotiated this FTA, it was designed to be an asymmetrical agreement whereby Ukraine would initially gain the most benefit. The inclusion of more services trade in the updated CUFTA and other changes should balance our bilateral trade, which would be a good thing for Canadians. The enabling legislation would include some costs in implementing the agreement and the cost of dispute panels; however, those costs are standard and do not amount to large sums.

In conclusion, I am pleased to provide my support for Bill C-57. I believe that the new agreement would preserve Canada's interests in such agreements, and I believe that the renegotiated CUFTA would continue the objective of helping Ukraine, its people, its struggle to repel Russian aggression and its efforts to defend democracy.

• (1640)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I note that the hon. member mentioned his support for the free trade agreement. He rightly pointed out that the fundamental focus of any free trade agreement with Canada are the interests of Canada, Canadians and Canadian businesses.

Rebuilding Ukraine will be the single biggest investment project in Europe since World War II. It will require around \$411 billion, and that is where Canadian companies can come in with their expertise and knowledge to help Ukraine. This bill would provide both an opportunity while doing a good deed. Does the member agree with the approach that the government has taken in bringing the legislation forward so Canadian businesses would continue to benefit with their association in the rebuilding process of Ukraine when Ukraine needs it the most?

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, I agree that Canada has a lot to offer the world and to offer Ukraine, and not only what we saw in terms of the training capacity and capabilities from the Canadian Armed Forces as part of Operation Unifier.

I want to use this opportunity to give a shout-out to a dear friend of mine, retired Canadian army sergeant Kevin Leach, who now leads the largest foreign training organization in Ukraine, Sabre Training and Advisory Group. It is actually training, with other NATO veterans, the equivalent of half of all NATO countries in terms of output, to ensure that Ukraine has the skills and the capabilities it needs to win the war against autocracy and Russian aggression.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, I wonder whether our colleague, also in recognition of his service in the Canadian Armed Forces and the comments he just made, has any reflections on how it can be, after eight years, that Canada is now being excluded from major security deals with our international allies, major security agreements among free democracies—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The question's direct relevance to the speech the hon. member made is not apparent, so I would ask the hon. member to provide the relevance to Ukraine.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, the relevance of course is that Ukraine also needs munitions in support of its fight against the illegal and imperialist attacks and invasions by Putin's Russia. Could the member make more extended comments on its requirements when combatting what must seem to be an unconquerable enemy that is attacking it, the training and skills required to do that, and why Canada is being excluded from multiple security deals these days.

• (1645)

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, I am proud to have served almost nine years now in His Majesty's Royal Canadian Navy. My personal opinion, as it relates to my colleague's question, is this: She brings up a very important point.

At a time when Ukraine is being illegally invaded by Russia, its neighbour, and when Canada shares a northern Arctic border with Russia, it behooves anyone with common sense to ask why the federal government believes that now is the time to cut \$1 billion from the Canadian Armed Forces. These are the same Canadian Armed Forces that train Ukrainian forces to ensure they are able to not just repel but also win this war.

A concerning trend we have seen is the ostracization of our government and our Prime Minister from important security pacts at a time of increasing instability. I agree with my Conservative colleague wholeheartedly.

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Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I must admit that it is refreshing to hear a speaker this afternoon who has actually stated his position on the bill that is before the House.

Does the member have any observations on why the Conservatives seem to want to talk about anything this afternoon other than the bill that is before the House and declaring our support for Ukraine by supporting the improved free trade agreement?

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, I have had the opportunity to discuss the bill with a number of my Conservative colleagues in a number of different arenas. One thing we agree on, beyond just the need to invest in Canada's capabilities to defend ourselves and our allies, is the fact that Canada's continued negligence with respect to our ability to export liquefied natural gas is indirectly hurting Ukraine. I think the official opposition agrees with me that it is negligent not to reduce European dependency on Russian LNG. I hope the government hoists this in and really seriously considers how it can comprehensively help our Ukrainian allies, including by removing the revenues that Russia uses to fund—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate. The hon. member for Niagara West.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I always want to make sure when I get up that I thank the residents of Niagara West for sending me here.

There are some service awards tonight on the Hill for a number of my staff: Gord, who did not come up, has been in my office over 15 years; Phil, who is here in Ottawa; and Irene, who is here in Ottawa with her better half, or other half, Dan, joining us today. It would not be possible to serve the people without the great support that we all have in our offices, so I wanted to recognize them before I start.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-57, the free trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine. For the folks in Niagara West and across the country who are watching this debate today, it is important to note that the Conservative Party of Canada was the party in government when the first Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement was successfully negotiated. This agreement represents a critical milestone in the Canada-Ukraine relationship. It generated commercial benefits for many Canadian businesses. It also supported the economic reform in the development efforts of the Government of Ukraine. Most of all, it made the Canada-Ukraine partnership for peace and prosperity even stronger.

The agreement was ratified unanimously in the House, eliminating tariffs on 86% of Canada's merchandise exports to Ukraine. It is important to highlight that this agreement has a built-in review clause, article 19.2, committing to the review of the agreement within two years of its entry into force. The intention of this clause is to expand the agreement to new areas, such as investment and trade in services. That is where we are today: trying to improve upon that initial agreement.

In my view, Canada should continue to look for ways to use our economic strength to support the Ukrainian people. One key opportunity is exporting Canadian LNG to break the European dependence on natural gas from Russia. As we know, the Russian government is using its natural gas exports as leverage over European

markets. Canada can help Europe break that cycle with our world-class LNG.

I believe that all parties in this place would agree that the Conservative Party has had a long and proud tradition of supporting free trade by negotiating and signing agreements, as it has done many times in the past. It was also a Conservative government that negotiated the first Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement and that negotiated the bulk of CETA with the European Union.

A ton of credit should go to the Conservative member representing the riding of Abbotsford, who is in the House right now, for doing an incredible job as the minister of international trade when we were in government.

• (1650)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member knows that we cannot refer to who is present or absent in the House. I would ask him to limit it by referring to the member's constituency.

Mr. Dean Allison: Madam Speaker, I hope he is paying attention then. The member for Abbotsford also deserves credit for negotiating the first Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement, perhaps one of the best trade ministers this country has ever had.

In terms of Ukraine, as we know, the country is a very close partner of Canada. In fact, for folks who are not aware of our close ties, Canada was the first western nation to recognize Ukraine's independence from the Soviet Union on December 2, 1991. It was a historic and proud moment for Canada, and it continues to do so today.

In 1991, after decades of Soviet socialism, oppression, mistreatment and subjugation, Ukrainians shrugged off their chains and voted to take control of their destiny. In this context, we must also recognize Ukraine's historic struggle against an aggressor who, for centuries, has attempted to deny Ukrainian nationhood and let them deal with their own culture.

Thankfully, through all of it, the Ukrainian people have remained resolute in the defence of their country. I am proud to say that since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, all parties in this House have stood steadfast in leading the international support for the people of Ukraine. We have all stood shoulder to shoulder as we continue to support Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of Russia's unacceptable aggression.

I would also like to highlight the deep cultural ties we share with Ukraine. Canada is home to 1.3 million Canadians with Ukrainian roots. That is one of the largest Ukrainian diasporas in the world. Many of these folks have called Canada home for generations, but have never forgotten the beautiful country of their predecessors. That is why, now more than ever, our people-to-people and economic ties are crucial to cultivate and continue to strengthen. It is also encouraging to see that nearly 200,000 Ukrainian refugees have arrived in Canada, joining our Canadian family.

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However, recently I saw concerning reports that some of these folks may want to leave Canada due to the incredibly high cost of living. We all know the cost of living crisis was created by the Liberal government's inflationary spending, lack of a housing plan and its signature failure of the carbon tax. All these factors are affecting all Canadians, but the effects seem particularly acute for newcomers.

We have seen the difficult financial circumstances of international students and the challenges they are facing, housing included. Now we are getting reports that Ukrainian folks are saying that life in Canada is too difficult. Oleksii Martynenko fled Ukraine for Canada by way of Sweden after his city was attacked by Russian forces. Now he says he is planning to return to Sweden, where life is more affordable. His exact quote is, "I'm tired all the time now. I want to go back to Europe because it's such a difficult life in Canada." High housing costs and underemployment are among the challenges many Ukrainian refugees face.

It is a huge wake-up call for the Liberal government that what it is doing in terms of our country's finances, the economy and housing is not working. This pattern is in line with the recent studies that show that newcomers to Canada are leaving at much higher numbers than previously thought. These folks are increasingly leaving Canada for opportunities elsewhere, according to a study published by the Institute for Canadian Citizenship and The Conference Board of Canada.

The Liberal government has mismanaged the economy so badly that immigrants are finding Canada a place to leave rather than a place to stay and create a life. It is as simple as that. The polls across this country are showing exactly that for the larger Canadian population as well. Folks are struggling. Inflation has taken a huge bite out of family budgets. In fact, Scotiabank has calculated that interest rates would be 2% lower if it were not for the inflationary overspending of the Liberal government.

It is important to repeat this because it is strong evidence of where we find ourselves under the Liberal government. Things are so out of control when it comes to the cost of living that Ukrainian refugees and other newcomers to Canada are seriously considering leaving, or are actually leaving, this country. That is a very concerning thing to hear. It is concerning, but it can be corrected if the right actions are taken. That is why our Conservative team has proposed three key areas to address tomorrow's economic update.

First, the government must cancel the carbon tax increase. This is absolutely essential for affordability. Second, it must balance the budget to combat inflation and high interest rates, which have devastated family budgets across the country. Ultimately, the out-of-control spending piled on by the Liberal government has caused inflation to rise and forced the Bank of Canada to keep interest rates high. I agree with the Conservative leader when he says that the \$900 billion of mortgages set to renew at higher rates over the next three years have created an emergency on our hands to bring rates down before those mortgages renew. The third thing the government must do for affordability is to promote home building over bureaucratic expansion so that Canadians and newcomers, like our Ukrainian friends who have recently arrived, can afford a place to call home.

To get back to the trade agreement, I know that we as Conservatives believe in supporting our Ukrainian allies, including through trade. We have also supported Ukrainian defence capabilities. It was under the previous Conservative government that Canada undertook Operation Unifier. This operation was a Canadian Armed Forces mission to bolster the capabilities of the armed forces of Ukraine through the provision of critical military training.

● (1655)

Since the start of Operation Unifier under the previous Conservative government, the CAF has trained over 39,000 Ukrainian military and security personnel in battlefield tactics and advanced military skills. It is an effective initiative that has produced substantial results for our Ukrainian friends.

As I wind down my speech, I want to make sure folks at home watching this debate know that the Conservative Party of Canada supports Ukraine one hundred per cent. There should be no doubt about that. I also believe there is immense potential for further growth in our bilateral trade and investment between Canada and Ukraine.

In 2022, Canada's merchandise exports to Ukraine totalled \$150 million and merchandise imports from Ukraine totalled \$271 million. Canada's top three exports to Ukraine were motor vehicles and parts, fish and seafood, and pharmaceutical products. Our top imports from Ukraine were animal and vegetable fats and oils, iron and steel, and electrical machinery and equipment. In 2021, the stock of Canadian direct investment in Ukraine stood at \$114 million.

There is a lot of room to grow those numbers in sectors, and I look forward to it materializing in the near future. I believe both sides are after the same thing, which is a closer relationship between close partners. That is always helpful and is encouraging to see. It is a shame the Liberal Party is trying to muddy the waters by saying that not all parties in the House are in support of closer ties with Ukraine. Let us be honest and transparent with Canadians. Conservatives stand with Ukraine, and we always will.

In closing, let me say that Conservatives will always work to ensure trade agreements are in the interests of Canada and of all Canadians and that we are strong supporters of Ukraine. Also, we must do our jobs as parliamentarians. We need to closely examine this bill and engage with Canadians and stakeholders to get their feedback as we move forward.

I am thankful for this opportunity to speak on behalf of my constituents of Niagara West on this very important topic.

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Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, over the last few weeks we heard a number of comments about five Conservative members who went on a trip to London. What we have not heard a lot about is some of those members, at least one, had their expenses paid for by the Danube Institute.

The Danube Institute is a right-wing Hungarian think tank that recently published a paper that said, “the stakes of the Russia-Ukraine war are not Ukraine's sovereignty, but the victory of NATO, the expansion of the US 'deep state', 'wokeism', LGBT propaganda, climate protection goals and implementation of mass immigration.”

Coincidentally, right after that trip, Conservatives are now talking about this legislation as being woke. Can the member not just admit that at least some of the Conservative members in his party have gone down the MAGA rabbit hole we are seeing from U.S. Republican congressmen right now in the United States with respect to Ukraine?

Mr. Dean Allison: Madam Speaker, I do not believe the word “woke” was ever uttered in my speech, so I do not know what he is referring to. It may be other speakers.

What I am concerned about is that we have tremendous potential in this country when it comes to energy security. The member from Alberta just mentioned the fact that we had 19 opportunities to start plants to try to get people off Russian oil. This makes a ton of sense. We are talking about a trade deal, but we should also be talking about how we get Ukraine off the dependence of Russian energy.

Quite frankly, we should be energy self-sufficient as a country. Why are we not doing that? It seems crazy to me these Liberals seem to be sabotaging what is good for our country, what is good business and what is good for the energy security of our country.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, once again, we have heard another speech from the Conservatives, who spend a lot of time talking about things other than Ukraine and the assertion that they do support Ukraine, but at the same time they are delaying the implementation of this free trade agreement.

When the member says that he did not utter the word “woke”, we clearly heard the member for Cumberland—Colchester talking in opposition at committee to this trade agreement because it includes references to fighting climate change. What is the real agenda of the Conservatives in slowing down this agreement and supporting Ukraine? It is just not clear to me today in the House that their support for Ukraine is one hundred per cent.

● (1700)

Mr. Dean Allison: Madam Speaker, if this member were really concerned about climate change, he would be looking at getting China off of coal-fired plants. Why would we not be building more to get LNG to China to help take it off dirty coal? At the end of the day, LNG is a great asset we have as Canadians, and we should be doing a better job to produce it, export it and help other people get off dirtier forms of energy. We should be doing that right now, here in this country.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, the carbon tax has now become one of the most hated and reviled taxes in all of Canadian history.

When we talk about exports, it is quite interesting that the government has decided to export a carbon tax into a trade agreement for the first time ever. In all of the trade agreements Canada has signed across the world, there is no carbon tax; there is no mention of carbon price or carbon leakage. For the first time ever, the government has decided to put a carbon tax into a trade agreement with a country in the middle of a war. I wonder what the member thinks about that.

Mr. Dean Allison: Madam Speaker, in terms of the carbon tax, one of the things the Liberal government fails to understand is that nobody else is doing this. Our trading partners certainly are not. It is a complete and total competitive disadvantage for what we are doing.

If we just look at where the carbon tax comes from, it is paid by farmers. Right now, we have a Liberal government that is stalling a bill that we passed here in the House, Bill C-234. All members of Parliament and of the Senate passed it. The Liberal government is now stalling on trying to help farmers, to help them with what they are doing for heating or cooling their barns and drying their grain. Why would the Liberal government want to continue with a carbon tax that actually puts the price of food up? Then it goes to the truckers who have to pay the tax on their fuel. It goes all the way through. When we are in a complete and total financial crisis, an affordability crisis and a housing crisis, one would think that the government would be looking at other things, such as technology, something other than a carbon tax, when, quite frankly, most of the other countries in the world that we trade with do not have the same disadvantage.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House as a representative of the amazing people and spectacular region of North Okanagan—Shuswap.

Before I speak to Bill C-57, I would like to acknowledge that many of us have returned to Ottawa today after spending Remembrance Day and last week in our ridings. I would like to thank all of the volunteers who gave up their time to organize and participate in the Remembrance Day ceremonies in 16 different communities and locations across North Okanagan—Shuswap and those who participated across Canada. Without those volunteers, the many ceremonies of remembrance would not have been possible.

It is especially heartwarming to see the large turnouts paying respect to our veterans and heart-wrenching to know that, at the same time, there are still battles going on around the world with soldiers and civilians losing their lives to war every day.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-57, an act to implement the 2023 free trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine.

Government Orders

Conservatives have a long history of supporting free trade with other countries. My Conservative colleague, the hon. member for Abbotsford, served as Canada's longest-serving minister of international trade and worked on many successful trade agreements during his tenure in the portfolio, including Canada's existing free trade agreement with Ukraine, the agreement that this bill seeks to amend. In fact, he negotiated trade agreements with 46 countries in that time.

As we look at this bill and the agreement itself, we as legislators have a duty to ensure that the law and the agreement are in the best interest of Canadians. We are closely examining this bill, to ensure that this is the case. We as Conservatives and Canadians also believe in supporting our Ukrainian allies. Increasing trade between our nations is but one way of providing that support.

No one is debating whether we should have a free trade agreement with Ukraine. Indeed, we currently have free trade through the 2017 Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. In 2022, Canada's total merchandise trade with Ukraine was \$420 million, \$150 million in exports and \$270 million in imports. Obviously, trade is happening between our countries. In fact, following the ratification of the original Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement, non-coal exports to Ukraine grew by 28.5% between 2016 and 2019.

Canada's relationship with Ukraine is strong, with over 1.3 million people of Ukrainian origin living in Canada. Some of those are newcomers, who have come to Canada fleeing Vladimir Putin's ill-gal invasion of Ukraine, which began in February 2022.

I have had the pleasure of meeting some of those newcomers to Canada at special events in Vernon and Salmon Arm and other locations, where the outpouring of community support has made them feel welcome and eases the burden of fleeing their homeland, many with nothing more than what they could carry in their arms or on their backs. Meeting those newcomers from Ukraine and hearing their resolve to maintain their freedom and desire to return and rebuild their lives and their country has been inspirational.

This legislation aims to implement the 2023 free trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine, which contains 11 new chapters. These include rules of origin, government procurement, monopoly, digital trade, e-commerce and more. The document is around 600 pages long. Proposed paragraph 13.10(8) states, "promote the rapid transition from unabated coal power to clean energy sources".

It also contains purposes, including "promote sustainable development" and "promote high levels of environmental protection".

● (1705)

When I consider what this could mean, I find great differences in what the government promotes and what it actually achieves. I say this because Canada has some of the largest reserves of natural gas for producing liquefied natural gas, LNG, in the world, and yet when Canada was approached to supply LNG to Germany, a neighbour of Ukraine, to help break Europe's dependence on gas from Putin's Russia, Germany was told there was no business case. Not only would the export of Canadian natural gas have helped defund Russia's war machine, but it would also have helped transition Europe away from coal-fired power generation.

So here we have a free trade agreement that is to promote a high level of environmental protection and a government that refuses to acknowledge how much Canadian energy could do toward that goal if we were able to export it to replace energy from regimes with lower standards for production and disregard of human rights.

The government has denied the opportunity for Canada to export clean-burning natural gas with its burdensome, red-tape strangled regulatory process. Rather than promoting a product that would help Ukraine build and rebuild, and transition to a cleaner energy source, the Prime Minister said there was no business case for it. This is a loss of opportunity for Canadians and a loss of opportunity for Germany, Ukraine and other European nations. Canada could help displace dirty coal-fired electricity generation with cleaner LNG. There is a reason that this should be done expediently as Ukraine suffers from the ravages of war, requires energy to rebuild and can no longer obtain LNG from Russia. Canada could be helping.

I will go back to remind the hon. members here of the number of free trade agreements that were completed or negotiated under the previous Conservative government and the work that Canada, under a Conservative government, accomplished on the world stage. It is also worth noting that Canada supported democracy in Ukraine when we sent 500 observers to Ukraine to monitor the presidential elections in 2014.

Before I close, I would like to raise the matter of another item that should be addressed through a different free trade agreement, one affecting British pensioners living in Canada. These pensioners from the United Kingdom receive retirement pensions, but those pensions have never been indexed to the cost of living increases for U.K. pensioners living in Canada. This is an issue I hear about from U.K. pensioners living in the North Okanagan—Shuswap and I hear about how it is causing them to lose thousands of dollars in their retirement. While this government is negotiating a trade agreement with the U.K., I urge the government to press for indexing of U.K. pensions in Canada, just like Canadians retiring in other countries, including the U.K., have their pensions indexed.

As we continue debate on Bill C-57, an act to implement the 2023 free trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine, I urge this government to focus on what will be good for Canada, good for Ukraine and good for the people of our two countries by ensuring that our laws and trade agreements benefit both nations and do not unduly hinder our energy sector and the progress that could be made in both countries by promoting it.

Government Orders

• (1710)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this past weekend, I participated in the Halifax International Security Forum with members of Parliament across the way. We heard extensively about the importance of supporting Ukraine both currently but also with respect to their rebuilding. I quote from the head of the Centre of Civil Liberties Ukraine, "there is a huge difference between let's help Ukraine not to fail and let's help Ukraine to win. And we can practically measure this difference in types of weapons, in gravity of sanctions and speed of decisions."

We heard very clearly this weekend about the importance of helping Ukraine and making decisions with respect to this bill so that they can start predicting and making sure they have a capacity to rebuild. Will the member opposite support and vote in favour of Bill C-57?

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the member opposite the question back to her, but I do not think I am allowed to do that. Perhaps another time she would be able to explain why her Prime Minister, her leader, decided that there was no business case for exporting LNG from Canada to Europe when the U.S. has gone ahead and done this. Now, France has signed a 27-year agreement to import LNG from countries with far lower standards of production and far fewer human rights activities in their countries. Why would she do that?

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, we have another Conservative speech and another sense of this so-called clean fossil gas, and it is just simply not the case.

Over one-third of Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions comes from fossil gas. In addition, most fossil gas is produced by fracking. Fracking leads to toxic waste water. There is nothing clean about toxic gas. If the Conservatives wanted to critique this free trade agreement, they could talk about how the government is not on track to meet the 1.5°C target in the Paris Agreement, but they are not doing that.

Why is that the case?

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, I will talk about how the government has failed to meet any of its targets for carbon emissions. The only time it met a target was when the economy was shut down because of COVID, when nobody was moving. Nobody was doing anything because of the travel restrictions.

It has put out all kinds of ideologies and proposed all sorts of things, but it has accomplished so little in eight years. We are seeing that the government is just not worth the cost.

• (1715)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, experts have told us that the last 12 months were the warmest 12 months on this planet in 125,000 years.

Are the Conservatives seriously telling us today that the reason they are not moving ahead on implementing this free trade agreement is because it makes reference to climate change?

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, I made no such reference. We saw how hot it was when the fires took place in the North Okanagan—Shuswap, in my riding, this year.

However, the climate is a global issue. Canadian-produced LNG can be produced in a more environmentally friendly way than it can anywhere else in the world. If we can help get countries off dirty burning coal with our clean LNG, why would we not be doing that?

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech; it was great. There was a question raised by a Liberal member, who said that this bill, this legislation, this trade agreement is going to help Ukraine rebuild. The rebuilding of Ukraine is going to require concrete, steel and heavy equipment. All these things are very carbon-intensive.

If the Liberals actually wanted to help Ukraine rebuild, why would they have put a carbon tax into a trade agreement for the first time ever? Does my colleague think this is actually going to help with the cost of rebuilding Ukraine after it wins the war?

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, no, I do not think a carbon tax in a free trade agreement is going to help Ukraine rebuild whatsoever. It will need the lowest cost and the most environmentally friendly energy possible. It can get that from Canada, yet we have a government that is throwing up red tape, bureaucracy and regulations in the way of doing any of that.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to give the hon. member a bit of a redo. He said that nobody was doing much of anything during COVID. I would argue that there were some frontline workers who were doing significant things.

In addition, I would like to talk more about the fact that this FTA enhances some protections for workers. The Conservative Party has talked about how incredibly supportive it is of workers. However, this is a perfect example of how we could strengthen and enhance workers' rights around the world, such as the right to join a union and the right to strike, as an important part of this free trade agreement.

Is that too woke for this member?

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for bringing up the figure of speech I used, I guess wrongly. Yes, there were a lot of health care workers and other essential service providers who were doing incredible work during the COVID restrictions. I meant there was very little travel. All activity slowed down, so that was part of it. I thank her for that, and I was—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will have to leave it at that.

[*Translation*]

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

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

[English]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division, please.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Tuesday, November 21, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6:42 p.m.

• (1720)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am glad to be able to rise, following up on my question from a few weeks ago about the so-called carbon tax exemption being provided on home heating oil, which only 3% of Canadians are going to be able to enjoy, and only with the condition that it is for just three years. After the three years, everybody who is on home heating oil will have their carbon tax massively increased, which just so happens to be the timeline for the next federal election. This will be important for the question I am going to ask the parliamentary secretary. It drastically impacts the political fortunes of the Liberal Party of Canada.

I want to draw the attention of the House to a statement by an economics professor from the University of Calgary, who said the following: "In what can only be described as a cynical political move to grab regional votes, the Liberals have undermined their signature—and principled—cornerstone climate policy. They basically teed up the opposition comments for them. I fear and predict it all unravels from here." This was from Professor Blake Shaffer, an associate professor in the Department of Economics and School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary.

Another well-known Albertan, a professor from the University of Alberta, Trevor Tombe, says this: "The carbon tax is dead." He goes on to explain why it is dead.

Adjournment Proceedings

I want to draw the attention of the House, and also of my constituents, to this. My constituents are extremely worried. Their taxes have gone up massively. They are paying more on their mortgages, which have doubled. Rents have doubled. They are paying more on their natural gas bill, and for some it has more than doubled. There are many single-family detached homes in my riding, and on their natural gas bill, people are getting sticker shock month after month. We are heading into the winter months, and it is only getting worse. They will not get to enjoy a reprieve from the carbon tax; in fact, they are going to be paying more. Just like the people in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, many of us use natural gas for our home heating. I note that the Saskatchewan government has now moved to stop the Saskatchewan crown corporation from passing on carbon tax revenues to the federal government. There is a great Yiddish proverb that says that you can't dance with two people when you have only one. There is another term that sounds way better in Yiddish, but it suggests that one cannot do two things at the same time.

The government claimed, during the carbon tax case, that it must proceed with a backstop on all provinces in Canada, and it must impose it. It has undermined its own legal argument that it made before the Supreme Court of Canada. Justice Canada officials have made arguments that it must proceed with the carbon tax in this manner because any type of carve-out for home heating oil basically undermines the constitutionality now of the tax itself. In that case, the Supreme Court explicitly left open the possibility that regulations under the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act could be unconstitutional, even if the act is constitutional, and that the act's being constitutional is largely based on this fact, its indivisibility of a minimum price on greenhouse gas pollutants.

Then it goes on. There are two more legal reasons why it has completely undermined the legal case to maintain the carbon tax with this latest carve-out. It is that it is political. A Liberal cabinet minister made the claim that the only reason that it is not applying to those in my home province of Alberta, and in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, which do not have the reduction of the carbon tax temporarily, is that it is political.

My question for the parliamentary secretary is this: Does he not then agree with the economics professors from my home province that his own government has completely undermined the case for the carbon tax and that it is hurting the people of Alberta?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to answer this question. To my friend and colleague from Calgary Shepard I say *dziękuję bardzo*. I know he is a member of Polish heritage. I spent lots of time in Poland and I love the country very much. I used to race over there on Lake Malta. It is nice.

Adjournment Proceedings

Before I start my speech, I would like to correct the record, if I could. I believe the member opposite has mischaracterized Professor Tombe's position on carbon pricing, because very recently he came out in support of carbon pricing. He has suggested that Alberta produce a similar piece of legislation. A headline on a recent article from Trevor Tombe says, "How Alberta can benefit from a provincial carbon tax". He believes, "Whatever your priorities, using carbon tax revenues to achieve them requires Alberta [to] take back control." Alberta could and should take back control because of the opportunity that lies ahead with respect to renewable energies in that province.

We know that the Premier of Alberta has put a moratorium on the approval of new renewable energy projects in Alberta, which is a shame because Alberta is leading the country. It is an energy-rich province. Regardless of whether they come from the sun, underground or ideas above the ground, renewable resources from across the province are available. Unfortunately, the premier does not believe in renewable energy, but Canadians do. Albertans, Miltonians and Ontarians want us to address climate change.

I know that I have repeated this a number of times in the House, but it bears repeating again: All members from the Conservative Party ran on a promise to price carbon. Under Erin O'Toole, the Conservatives ran on a promise to develop a strategy to price carbon. It was a Zellers catalogue of green products that people could choose from. I believe "the more you burn, the more you earn" was the motto. I recognize that Canadians rejected that proposal. Canadians listed climate change and fighting it as one of their top priorities in the last federal election.

I would also note my friend the MP for Wellington—Halton Hills. During his leadership campaign for Conservative Party leader, he said very rightly that there is no way to win a federal election without having a plan to fight climate change. That is why, in his infinite wisdom, MP O'Toole ran on a promise to price carbon. My friend and colleague, the MP for Calgary Shepard, did also.

With the costs of climate change rising dramatically year over year, a climate plan to make life more affordable and fight climate change needs to be the cornerstone of any serious effort to make sure that Canadians can afford to heat their homes and make sure that we transition away from fossil fuels. If we ignore climate change, by 2025 we could see a \$25-billion annual slowdown in our economic growth. Being somebody who is very attuned to the economy, my colleague opposite cares about economic growth. Our climate plan is not just about the environment; it is a plan for economic stability as well.

Another thing the Conservatives love to ignore about our climate plan and our carbon pricing mechanism is that it sends more money back to the vast majority of people. It is a choice of the Alberta government, the Ontario government and other governments to use the federal backstop program. Before 2018, Ontario, for example, had a cap and trade program whereby the provincial government traded carbon credits with other jurisdictions. It was able to generate considerable revenue from that. Given that the future of Alberta is a green one, I would urge my colleague and friend opposite to go to his premier and the ministers of energy and natural resources to encourage them to roll back their moratorium on renewable projects and pursue more—

• (1725)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary has not answered the substance of my question.

The moratorium that has been announced is based on an ASO technical report of experts, and 13 projects have been suspended. That is it, as for what has been impacted. This is also temporary.

I will draw the parliamentary secretary's attention back to the legal arguments that have been undone by the government. The carve-out is based on the source and type of fuel that people are using to heat their homes. In this case, it is heating oil. However, in the argument presented by the government before the Supreme Court of Canada, the indivisibility of the source of the pollutants was in question, so if they are all over Canada and we tax them all equally, it is constitutional. Because the government created this carve-out, it lends itself to the charge that now the tax is unconstitutional. The parliamentary secretary has not addressed this.

My constituents are still suffering from a higher carbon tax than Canadians have in Atlantic Canada. How can he consider that fair?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Madam Speaker, I am glad the member opposite acknowledged that this plan to change the way we price carbon with respect to home heating oil is specific to the product and not the region, which is what we have been saying. It is a national program.

I know that there are many Albertans and many folks who live in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia who still use home heating oil to heat their homes. Home heating oil is not just the most expensive way to heat one's home, it is also the most carbon intensive. It is a dirty product, and it is outdated. It is the way people used to heat their homes in the late 1800s. It is basically more similar to diesel and kerosene fuel than other products, which are far cleaner.

Saskatchewan is greening its grid. Alberta is greening its grid, and Manitoba already has one of the greenest grids. It is far more economic and sustainable to heat one's home with electric technology, such as a cold air heat pump, which is one that they would employ in Alberta. However, there are still many Albertans who are using home heating oil, and that is sort of the low-hanging fruit.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1730)

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years, the socialist coalition's house of climate cards is collapsing. Courts have ruled much of this radical government's authoritarian agenda unconstitutional. It has been alarming to watch as this gang of socialists purge the small-l liberals from the deadnamed Liberal Party.

When the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that mass murderers do not deserve a single life sentence, I despaired that even our justice system had surrendered to radical woke ideology. However, somehow even this far left government found the limits of what Canadian courts would accept.

In just a few weeks, we have seen the Prime Minister admit his carbon tax is making life unaffordable for Canadians. The courts have struck down the Liberal law that claimed the federal government could impose its impact assessment on kids' lemonade stands. Now the courts have found the Liberals acted unconstitutionally when they declared plastics were toxic. What did this Prime Minister think would happen when he put a man who vandalizes the homes of premiers in cabinet?

The Roman emperors famously hired the vandals to provide security to the empire, only to have the eternal capital of Rome sacked. Our own self-styled Caesar thought he could bring the radical climate activists into his Liberal empire, only to have them lay siege to our Constitution. Now this self-confessed socialist and unrepentant vandal has promised Canadians he would resign rather than see any other Canadians get a break on their heating bills.

Tomorrow, senators will have a choice. They can choose to cut the carbon tax on the farmers who feed us, or they can reveal themselves as champagne-sipping socialists who sneer at hard-working Canadians. If they vote to lower food prices, the minister for climate radicalism will have to make a choice. Is he still the same hard-core, radical activist who was willing to repeatedly break the law in support of his principles, or has he become the prototypical arrogant Liberal who thinks he is indispensable? Only time and tomorrow's vote will tell.

While we do not know whether the radical, principled activist or the arrogant Liberal minister will show up tomorrow, we do know the Prime Minister is getting increasingly desperate, and a desperate Liberal is a dangerous Liberal. The Prime Minister would tear the country apart if he thought it would keep him in power. He has already dispatched his foot soldiers armed with worn out clichés. We saw this approach from the parliamentary secretary during my last adjournment debate.

The member for Milton claimed my videos were taken down from YouTube because of conspiracy theories. Any Canadian can still find all my videos on YouTube. I would encourage them to Google it, but that will not be an option in Canada much longer.

Only arrogant Liberals can accuse their opponents of holding nefarious hidden agendas while claiming we push conspiracy theories with a straight face. "Hidden agenda" is a Liberal dog whistle for progressive conspiracies. I have always been clear with Canadians.

There are no secret agendas or shadowy cabals when it comes to these Liberals. They are not hiding anything. The radical environment minister does not hide his plans with the communists who control China. He posts them online and promotes them in the press. The minister is not hiding his socialism; he admits it openly and proudly. Socialists have been appropriating climate change to decolonize capitalism. The Prime Minister's radical socialist agenda is not worth the cost.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will not for a second apologize for stating the facts and the truth in the House of Commons, which are fully ratified by Canadian media sources. I have them all in front of me here. One does not have to go very far to find the conspiracy theories that the member has been peddling for over two decades in the House of Commons. I have one here where she did backflips to attempt to apologize for an anti-gay remark she made in the House. There was another time when the MP compared abortion to an Iraq beheading. The list goes on of when the member peddled deranged conspiracy theories about the Liberals.

I will read from this article in which the Conservative member was promoting deranged conspiracy theories akin to those promulgated by supporters of former U.S. president Donald Trump. In the video, the member said that Liberals have become radicals who want to make all illicit drugs legal and to normalize sexual activity with children. This is not something I am making up. This is in, as the member would describe it, the mainstream media, which I guess, as she said, is her enemy. In fact, media is so important to the discourse of the Canadian dialogue and making sure that Canadians have access to good information.

When the member compared Liberals to cultural Marxists that have taken over every university administration and said we are trying to silence free speech on campuses, it could not be further from the truth. She also said there has been this great reset. She has propagated false narratives, conspiracy theories and misinformation on her much-beloved YouTube channel about the elites trying to pursue a great reset through a green new deal. This green new deal has become a code for conspiracy theorists, who see it as a plot by some global elite group to replace capitalism with a new socialist world order.

Adjournment Proceedings

For two decades, the member has been going to the lowest common denominator possible to try to earn support from fringe people in our country. It does a disservice to the discourse of the House. I will not apologize for a second for pointing it out, when it has been derogatory, homophobic and, frankly, completely unbecoming of anybody who pursues democracy and collaboration in this place.

To the question, low- and middle-income households in Canada are struggling financially right now. We are here to support them, as we have been since we were elected. The poverty rate in Canada was upward of 14% or 15% in this country in 2015, and Canadians were struggling as they never had before, with rising inequality and stagnant growth under 10 years of Stephen Harper. Since then, we have been there every step of the way through programs such as enhanced old age security, the Canada child benefit, child care and dental care for low- and middle-income Canadians. We believe in meeting the moment and making sure that low- and middle-income Canadians have the services and supports they need in order to succeed.

Recently, we announced new funding to help Canadians move away from home heating oil. Many of my colleague's neighbours in Renfrew still use home heating oil. It continues to be the most expensive, the dirtiest and the most emissions-intensive way to heat families' homes, and we want to help them get a free heat pump. We want to support them in getting heat pumps, so they can heat their homes with electricity. In Ontario, our grid is almost 85% clean. This means that the energy being provided to our grid is mostly from renewables, whether from hydroelectric, nuclear, wind or solar energy. I know that the member's neighbours in Renfrew are grateful for that program.

• (1735)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, only a Liberal could claim that he is reducing carbon dioxide emissions while emitting carbon dioxide with every word he speaks. I pity the poor parliamentary secretary, who is forced to stand there and claim that black

is white, that plastics are toxic and that the air we exhale from our lungs is pollution.

We know emissions have gone up under the NDP-Liberal government. The government knows it too. It knows Canadians in rural and remote communities have no alternatives to reduce carbon emissions. While some Canadians are privileged enough to be able to afford to sit on a two-year wait-list for an electric vehicle, if rural Canadians cannot drive, they do not work. If they cannot purchase a car because of a Soviet-style sales quota, they have no way of getting to the doctor's office.

The price of climate socialism is unaffordable, and the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Madam Speaker, this Trump-style, Republican brand of politics that the member is bringing to this House is unwelcomed by members from almost all parties. It is a shame that there are still remnants of the Canadian Alliance Party in this House. There is absolutely no space in this House for this kind of overblown conspiracy theory. This is the third time in as many weeks that I have heard a member from the Conservative Party refer to programs, which are there to support our neighbours, as "Soviet-style".

My mother escaped Soviet Hungary to come to this country to find freedom, and now she builds non-profit community housing, co-ops, for Canadians. She has been working in that sector for 30 years. The number of times the Conservatives have used the term "Soviet" to describe anything in terms of social welfare and making sure lower- and middle-income families have what they need is absolutely repulsive.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 5:40 p.m.)

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