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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, January 30, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

• (1000)

[*English*]

POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-59—PROPOSAL TO APPLY STANDING ORDER 69.1—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on December 12, 2023, by the House leader of the official opposition, concerning the application of Standing Order 69.1 to Bill C-59, an act to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 21, 2023, and certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023.

[*Translation*]

According to the House leader of the official opposition, Bill C-59 is an omnibus bill and therefore he asked the Chair to apply Standing Order 69.1(1), which provides as follows:

In the case where a government bill seeks to repeal, amend or enact more than one act, and where there is not a common element connecting the various provisions or where unrelated matters are linked, the Speaker shall have the power to divide the questions, for the purposes of voting, on the motion for second reading and reference to a committee and the motion for third reading and passage of the bill.

The Speaker shall have the power to combine clauses of the bill thematically and to put the aforementioned questions on each of these groups of clauses separately, provided that there will be a single debate at each stage.

[*English*]

The member relied on Speaker Regan's decision of November 8, 2017, to argue that Bill C-59 should not benefit from the exception provided by Standing Order 69.1(2). This exception stipulates that section 1 does not apply if a bill “has as its main purpose the implementation of a budget and contains only provisions that were announced in the budget presentation or in the documents tabled during the budget presentation.”

[*Translation*]

The House leader of the official opposition contended that the implementation of measures announced in the economic statement of November 21, 2023, is not enough of a common element to justify grouping them for voting purposes. He also asserted that an economic statement is not, properly speaking, a budget. The member said that Bill C-59 should be divided in 16 for the purpose of vot-

ing. He further stated that two of the 16 pieces, which are similar to bills C-318 and C-323, should simply not be put to a vote at all, given that the House has already passed those bills at second reading.

[*English*]

In response, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader pointed out that Bill C-59 mainly contains provisions implementing measures announced in the 2023 budget, along with some measures announced in the fall economic statement, whose common theme is addressing the affordability challenges facing Canadians. Consequently, he concluded that the measures included in the budget and those announced in the fall economic statement should be voted on together.

The Chair must first determine whether the main purpose of Bill C-59 is to implement the budget and whether it therefore falls within the exception provided by Standing Order 69.1(2).

The Standing Orders place very specific conditions on the consideration of budgets. For instance, a particular order of the day must be designated. Debate lasts a certain number of days, and votes take place at certain points in time. From start to finish, budgets are an integral part of the business of ways and means.

[*Translation*]

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, third edition, defines financial statements as follows on pages 901 and 902:

On occasion, the Minister of Finance makes an economic statement to the House, generally referred to as a ‘mini-budget’, that provides basic economic and fiscal information that will be the subject of policy review and public debate leading up to the next budget. Unlike a budget presentation, these statements are delivered without notice and do not precipitate a budget debate. Notices of ways and means motions are also tabled on these occasions.

Budget presentations and economic statements are therefore related concepts, but each has its own unique characteristics.

*Speaker's Ruling**[English]*

Both the economic statement of fall 2023 and the budget of spring 2023 are very long and complex documents. As indicated in its title, “An Act to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 21, 2023 and certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023”, Bill C-59 indeed contains many measures; some stem from the budget documents, others from the economic statement.

● (1005)

However, some measures are not to be found in either. The Chair takes the view that the main purpose of the bill is not the implementation of a budget, and the exception provided in Standing Order 69.1(2) does not apply in this case.

The Chair must now determine whether a common element connects the various provisions of Bill C-59 and, if not, to what extent all or some of the provisions are closely related. A broad common theme is not sufficient. As explained on November 7, 2017, at page 15095 of the Debates, the Chair must decide “whether the matters are so unrelated as to warrant a separate vote at second and third reading.”

[Translation]

In deciding whether a link exists, the Chair may consider several factors. Different measures may have a single objective or common elements, as the Chair found in its decision on Bill C-4 on September 29, 2020, whose common element was a public health crisis. Cross-references between parts of a bill, or a lack thereof, may also be an indicator.

After completing this analysis, the Chair believes that Bill C-59 should indeed be divided for the purpose of voting. As my predecessor noted on November 28, 2022, on page 10087 of the Debates, “[t]he objective here is not to divide the bill for consideration purposes, but to enable the House to decide questions that are not closely related separately.”

[English]

First, the measures in clauses 1 to 136, 138 to 143, 168 to 196, 209 to 216, and 278 to 317 appear in the 2023 budget. Since their purpose is to implement certain budget proposals, they would be grouped based on this unifying theme and voted on together.

Second, the measures that can be grouped under the theme of affordability, clauses 137, 144, and 231 to 272, will be subject to a different vote. Clauses 197 to 208 and 342 to 365 will also be grouped for voting because they amend the Canada Labour Code. Clauses 145 to 167, 217 and 218 will be subject to a separate vote because they relate to vaping products, cannabis and tobacco.

The remaining divisions of Bill C-59, consisting of clauses 219 to 230, 273 to 277, 318 and 319, 320 to 322, and 323 to 341, will each be voted on separately because they are not linked to any of the common themes mentioned earlier. In all, nine votes will be held. The Chair will remind members of this division when the bill comes to a vote at second reading.

Finally, I would like to remind members of the Chair's ruling on December 12, 2023, which also dealt with Bill C-59. The Chair

found that Bill C-318 and Bill C-323 can continue through the legislative process.

I thank all members for their attention.

● (1010)

ALLEGED BREACH OF STANDING ORDER 18—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: While I am on my feet, I am also ready to rule on the point of order raised on December 12, 2023, by the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader concerning the application of Standing Order 18 in reference to votes of this House.

[Translation]

Earlier in the debate that day, several members argued that it was a violation of this standing order to comment on how certain members or parties had voted on a particular issue. The parliamentary secretary sought clarification from the Chair, contending that members on all sides of the House routinely made such comments and this had always been viewed as acceptable.

[English]

While the Chair pointed to the wording of Standing Order 18 and to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which both emphasize that “No member may reflect upon any vote of the House,” there was some dispute as to the actual interpretation and application of the practice. The Chair took it under advisement and committed to return to the House.

On the issue of reflecting on a vote, Standing Order 18 states, “No member may reflect upon any vote of the House, except for the purpose of moving that such vote be rescinded.” The second part of that Standing Order is of particular interest.

[Translation]

I appreciate that the wording of the standing order can leave members with the impression that the rule prevents other members from commenting on or critiquing how particular members voted on a bill or motion. In the past, there have been occasions where the Chair, relying on this very strict interpretation of the standing order, may have provided guidance that, in my view, is inconsistent with the original purpose of the standing order.

[English]

The intent of the provision was to prevent members from putting into question a decision already made by the House except by way of a formal motion to rescind that decision.

Parliamentary Procedure and Practice in the Dominion of Canada, fourth edition, refers to the prohibition against reflecting on a vote in the section on “Renewal of a Question during a Session”. The section describes a prohibition, stating the following at pages 328 and 329: “That a question being once made and carried in the affirmative or negative cannot be questioned again, but must stand as a judgment of the House”.

This suggests to me that the section of Standing Order 18 should be interpreted as being linked to the fundamental principle of not questioning a decision once made.

[Translation]

This is consistent with *Beauchesne’s Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, sixth edition, at page 141, which states that:

A Member may not speak against or reflect upon any determination of the House, unless intending to conclude with a motion for rescinding it.

Finally, I would also refer members to the *Annotated Standing Orders of the House of Commons*, second edition. Footnote 20 under Standing Order 18, at page 484, lends credence to the contention that members can in fact comment on the voting record of other members. It states:

This Standing Order refers specifically to the votes of the House, and not the votes of individual Members.

● (1015)

[English]

I do not believe the purpose of the Standing Order is to forestall comment on the positions taken by particular members, or even parties, on a given vote. Indeed, even a cursory review of the Debates will show members of all parties regularly making such comments. In my view, this falls into the realm of acceptable debate. Members are accountable for the votes they cast in the House and should be able to justify their positions.

Nevertheless, I appreciate that some members may still have concerns about this practice. I would therefore suggest that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is well placed to undertake a review of the application of Standing Order 18 and, if it sees fit, return to the House with any appropriate recommendations.

I thank all members for their attention.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

PETITIONS

CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE

Hon. David Lametti (LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a petition signed by 514 of my constituents, who are calling for a reduction in the noise associated with the construction of the Champlain Bridge in my riding. This is for the Minister of Infrastructure.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians pay some of the highest cellphone rates in the world, but service is increasingly deteriorating. Complaints to the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-television Services are up 12%, and 36 breaches of the code of conduct have occurred.

The petitioners are petitioning this House to call for the Government of Canada to direct the CRTC to immediately review the integrity of Canada’s cellphone infrastructure and provide a quality of service report to this House by the end of February 2024. They also call for the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology to undertake a study comprising telecom service providers and the industry, etc., and report back to this House on the integrity of our oversubscribed cellphone infrastructure.

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to table a petition today in regard to the relationship between Canada and India, and the desire and demand, as the community has grown exponentially over the last number of years, to have more direct flights between Canada and India.

This is something that is very important to my constituents and to the constituents of many members of Parliament. I hope that the air industry and different ministries would at least pay attention to what our consumers would like to see happen.

FIREARMS

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour to stand in this place and present petitions. I am presenting a unique petition today, because this particular petition was offered to the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, but he refused to present it in this place.

Therefore, I stand on behalf of the people of Skeena—Bulkley Valley and present this petition that calls for a number of things, highlights the absurdity of Liberal gun rules and calls upon the Government of Canada to stop any and all current and future bans on hunting and sport shooting firearms.

It is an honour to stand in this place on behalf of the people of Skeena—Bulkley Valley and represent them, because their MP certainly is not.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order.

I know it is the second day back, but the Speaker is well aware that people cannot use petitions to make political speeches. Members are supposed to present the petitions. I would ask the Speaker to review the rules on petitions.

Routine Proceedings

• (1020)

The Speaker: I would like to remind members that the tradition is for members to present petitions and not to comment on them. I would ask all members to do that.

ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to present one of many petitions sought to be presented by MPs over the last few weeks.

It notes that the need for electoral reform continues to be an issue for citizens of all political persuasions. The petitioners note that politicians cannot agree on the best way forward, and they call for a new approach for developing a citizens' consensus on electoral reform.

The petitioners call on the House of Commons, first of all, to give citizens a voice on the subject of electoral reform and a right to make recommendations. More specifically, the petitioners would like to see a representative, non-partisan citizens' assembly that has the resources, the expert support and the sufficient time required to come to a citizens' consensus on recommendations to be delivered to the government.

The petitioners call on MPs of all parties to vote in support of Motion No. 86, citizens' assembly on electoral reform, which will be debated by this House and voted on in due course.

WOMEN'S SHELTERS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a number of petitions to present to the House today on behalf of my constituents, people from Skeena—Bulkley Valley and various other places across the country.

The first petition is in regard to the Liberal government's decision to cut funding for women's shelters. The petitioners note that women's shelters are sadly seeing increased demand, that the high cost of living and the housing crisis have made it harder on women and children fleeing violent situations and that we are living through a time when the Liberal government is dramatically increasing spending on bureaucracy and consultants while it is cutting \$145 million of funding for women's shelters.

The petitioners therefore call on the Government of Canada to restore funding for women's shelters.

FREEDOM OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling is in favour of an excellent private member's bill put forward by the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

This is a bill that would add political belief and activity as prohibited grounds of discrimination to the Canadian Human Rights Act, and it would protect the ability of people with diverse political opinions to be able to express those opinions and to speak out about their ideas without fear of reprisal in an employment or other context if they work in the federally regulated sector.

The petitioners are asking the House to support Bill C-257. The petitioners want the government to defend the rights of Canadians to peacefully express their political opinions.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling is calling for the release of an important democracy and human rights activist in Hong Kong. Ms. Chow Hang-tung, vice-chairwoman of Hong Kong Alliance, has been involved for many years in advocacy on human rights issues in China and Hong Kong. She has fought diligently for democracy and has encouraged Hong Kongers to participate in the pro-democracy social movement. She was arrested, charged under the national security law and sentenced to 22 months in prison as part of an effort to crush freedom and diversity of opinion in Hong Kong. She has also been awarded the outstanding democracy award by the Chinese Democracy Education Foundation.

Petitioners want to see the Government of Canada advocate for her release and to see all charges dropped, as well as advocate for the Hong Kong democracy movement and for the release of other unjustly detained political prisoners.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling deals with another human rights issue in the same region. It deals with the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China. Petitioners identify the history of the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners, including, but not limited to, the horrific practice of organ harvesting. The petitioners want to see the House take additional action to raise the plight of Falun Gong practitioners and to seek to hold those responsible for this persecution accountable through sanctions and other means and to continue the work on combatting forced organ harvesting, which the House began with the passage of a private member's bill on that issue.

• (1025)

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, next, I am tabling a petition regarding parental rights regarding the role of parents in the lives of their children. Petitioners highlight the fact that the Prime Minister has tried to interfere with New Brunswick's decisions with respect to parents' rights. Whereas the Leader of the Opposition has told the Prime Minister to butt out of those decisions, petitioners note that, in the vast majority of cases, parents care about the well-being of their children and love them much more than any state-run institutions, and the role of government is to support families and to respect parents and not to dictate how they should make decisions for their children. The undersigned call on the Government of Canada to butt out and let parents raise their own children.

HEALTH

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Next, Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition about changes the government has made to natural health product regulations. The petitioners note that the government is threatening access to natural health products through rules that would mean higher costs and fewer products available on store shelves. The petitioners note that so-called cost-recovery provisions could impose massive costs on all consumers of natural health products and undermine access for Canadians who rely on these products; and further, that provisions in the last Liberal omnibus budget have given the government substantial new arbitrary powers around regulation.

Of course, there is a private member's bill from a Conservative member that seeks to reverse these changes. Petitioners call on the Government of Canada to implement the proposals in that excellent Conservative private member's bill that is to reverse the changes made in the last Liberal budget regarding natural health products.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition that I will table highlights the issue of euthanasia, or medical assistance in dying, and a particular proposal to extend this to children. In a context where we see continuous radical proposals for the expansion of an already deeply troubled system, petitioners are concerned about a proposal from one witness before a committee to expand euthanasia to include babies from birth to one year of age who come into the world with severe deformities and very serious syndromes.

Petitioners underline their view that infanticide is always wrong, and they call on the Government of Canada to block any attempt to legalize the killing of children in any situation for any reason.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

DECORUM

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. I want to come back to the unparliamentary comments made by the member for Battle River—Crowfoot. My colleague from Timmins—James Bay addressed that a few minutes ago.

I want to cite a ruling from December 12. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies also attempted to do the same thing and, in an unparliamentary way, tried to mislead the House and mislead Canadians. At the time, Mr. Speaker, you will recall the ruling was that the attempt by the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies was not permissible and that the member should rise and apologize. Therefore, I believe you should ask the member for Battle River—Crowfoot to apologize for his unparliamentary use of the Petitions sector and for misleading the House.

The Speaker: I would like to thank the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby for raising this point and reminding the Chair of a similar ruling in the past. It is a new year and it is the second day we are back, so it is a little rusty in terms of the application and use. However, I do understand, agree with and affirm the statement, which was the decision made by the Chair. I see that the

Points of Order

member for Battle River—Crowfoot is on his feet, and I hope he will be able to put this issue to rest.

• (1030)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I appreciate the opportunity to highlight that, very specifically, the statement I made during petitions did not politicize—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Before I go to the point of order, I am just going to take a minute.

I am going to ask the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies for order.

Mr. Kurek is rising on a point of order. I am going to go to the point of order raised by the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, but I am hoping that Mr. Kurek—

Mr. Damien Kurek: I have been named before.

The Speaker: I apologize. I should not mention a member's name. There is no intention to name him at this point, and I hope there will never be an opportunity to do so. The member is an hon. member, and I am hoping that he can help us restore order to the House, so I will ask the hon. member to please continue with his statement, but very briefly.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I intentionally did not politicize the content of the statement, but rather highlighted the fact that there was a particular member of this place who did refuse to present that petition when given the opportunity in the past. I ask that my word be allowed to stand, because it simply is the truth, and I intentionally did not politicize what those petitioners from—

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The rules of this House are quite clear. You have asked the member to apologize. He has refused. He should not be recognized in this House until he apologizes.

The Speaker: I am just a little rusty. I did not ask the member to apologize. I did ask him to stand up to express, and I was hoping he would do so voluntarily. There was a ruling on December 12 of last year.

[*Translation*]

To ensure consistency with that decision, I would ask the hon. member to withdraw comments he made that could upset the House and apologize at all costs.

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I would ask for clarification on the ruling before I stand and apologize for something. I believe I did nothing wrong.

Points of Order

The Speaker: I am going to ask once again for the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, who was asked to apologize, to be consistent with the ruling of this Chair, because when members present petitions there should be no comment aside from the substance of the petition. To mention whether another hon. member presented it or did not, for whatever reason, it should stand as it is. Before we go to points of order, I will ask the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot to be consistent with this, to start the new year right and, please, to briefly apologize and withdraw those comments. In presenting petitions in the future, all members should just focus on the substance of the petitions and not make comments as to other issues.

I will ask the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot to please stand.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I will not apologize for standing up for the people of this country. They are not being—

• (1035)

The Speaker: Until the member does rise to apologize, the Chair will not be recognizing the member.

The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, just for clarity, this precedent was supposedly set because of what I apologized for. I said at the time that if I did something wrong, then I will apologize, I guess. It still was not clear whether I had broken any rules. However, I said I will never apologize for representing the people of Skeena—Bulkley Valley. That is exactly what I said.

There is no clear ruling on this saying that we even broke any rule by doing so, and so please—

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for that. We will certainly take a look to make sure everything is consistent. However, from the advice I received from the officers at the table, it is.

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think that the advice you are getting from the table officers has to be explained to the House. It is an honour to stand in the House—

The Speaker: We are getting into debate.

The Chair did explain what was brought forward by the table officers. I ask members to continue to be patient, and we will be able to bring it forward. I ask members to please take their seats for the moment while I go through the point of order. I will be getting back to the House.

Continuing with petitions, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

* * *

PETITIONS

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise and present my first petition of calendar year 2024. It is perhaps not too late to wish all members in this collegial and loving environment a happy new year.

I would like to present a petition from constituents who are concerned that we move towards a just transition, and that in phasing out fossil fuels and winding down the fossil fuel industry, there be a centring of workers in the process; good, green jobs and inclusive workforce development that proceed expeditiously; expansion of the social safety net to new income supports; decarbonization of public housing; and operational funding for affordable and accessible public transit.

There are a number of other points in the petition, but I think these are the salient ones that the petitioners hope the government will take on board and implement.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

DECORUM

The Speaker: On the issue that was raised by the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, we did look at Hansard and find that the member did apologize for breaking the rules. I would invite members to look at it and see that the member did apologize for breaking the rules. I thank the member for doing so.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I said, “if I broke the rules”.

The Speaker: There is no debate on this issue; there is just the presentation. The record has stood in the House of Commons as to what happened in December.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to bring to your attention your lack of consistency on this issue. The member from the NDP raised a point or order, and you immediately followed, saying that when presenting petitions, it should be the matter of the petition only that is addressed. Immediately following, another member made a quite extensive presentation regarding the petition he was presenting. You did not intervene then, so why would you intervene in the issue with the member for Battle River—Crowfoot?

Mr. Glen Motz: It's not because you're partisan or anything, is it?

• (1040)

The Speaker: That is not considered parliamentary. I invite the member to immediately stand up to apologize, or he will not be recognized by this Chair.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the comment, but these are comments that I hear from my constituents on a daily—

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for withdrawing the comment.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is rising on a point of order.

Points of Order

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to draw the attention of the House to an incident on December 15, 2023. The member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques presented a petition in the House. At the end of the petition, he said, “I hope that as a result of petition e-4604, the Liberal government will finally understand that it needs to meet the expectations and needs of our students and researchers.” I note that at that time, the Assistant Deputy Speaker objected to the member's statement and highlighted this rule: “The hon. member may present only the content of the petition. He cannot present his point of view on the petition to the House. I just want to make this point, because a member was about to raise a point of order on this subject.”

However, the Assistant Deputy Speaker at the time did not request an apology. That was one incident. I think there are many instances where members have been accused of going over the line in their commentary on petitions. When that has happened, other members have raised points of order. The Chair has sometimes chastened the member, encouraged the member to speed up or encouraged the member to stop.

It is without precedent that the Chair would demand an apology from a member who engages in this fairly minor and somewhat subjective transgression of the standing order. There are many examples. I have cited one of them from December 15, 2023, which I found after about 10 seconds of searching. I could find dozens of such examples where, yes, members may have gone over the line a little bit; yes, points of order may have been raised and the Speaker may even have said that the member should not have done that and should remember for the next time. However, it is not reasonable to simply make up a new standard, apply it to a particular member and require that member to apologize for such a minor infraction.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will take all of that precedent into consideration and provide some clarification.

• (1045)

The Speaker: Before we move on to a plethora of points of order, I will address the issue made by the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

It is, indeed, true that the member can point to many examples where members have made comments on petitions that have been presented to the House. That does happen from time to time and usually gets a rebuke or reminder by the Chair for members to focus on the subject of the petition.

However, there have been instances when the Chair, in this case the The Assistant Deputy Speaker, on December 15, 2023, when a member accused another member of lacking courage to present a petition or made a comment about the member's character. The member was asked to apologize. He did apologize for having broken any rules of the House if he had, which the Chair had determined he had done. That is the reason this is being asked for here today.

This is a matter that the Chair would be pleased to come back to members about with more detailed observations as to what should and should not be done. Suffice it to say that it makes sense that members' impugning the character of other members would be con-

sidered unparliamentary and usually would require an apology. This matter is now closed on this issue.

I am going to hear the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, who will rise on a point of order and cite some rules of procedure. After we hear him, I am going to be pretty satisfied that the matter is closed until the Chair comes back to the House.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, just for clarity, in my previous statement, I said that if I had said something wrong, I apologize. It was never made clear to me by the Table after that point that I had made an error.

Bosc and Gagnon say, “The Member may then give a brief statement to inform the House of the petition's content”, which is exactly what the member did. It does not say that a member cannot be mentioned, which is the NDP's whole point of order in the first place. It does not say in Bosc and Gagnon that I am not allowed to do that. It does say, “The Member may not make a speech or enter into debate on or in relation to the petition”, which I was not doing. I was making a brief statement about the petition then went into the petition. I broke no rules; therefore, I will rescind my apology because I did not make a mistake.

I would also challenge you with respect to the member for Battle River—Crowfoot. He did not make a mistake either and should not be prevented from speaking in the House.

The Speaker: The Chair will come back to the House on this matter. I thank the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies for quoting from the rules, but as he had also quoted as a preliminary to what he had raised, there is indication as to why the member was asked to apologize and what the Chair considered at the time for the rules.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I request a clarification because you said the issue was closed, and then said you will come back to the House.

The Speaker: This is the same matter that I heard from informal comments as from the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Discussion on this issue is closed. I will come back to the House with a fuller explanation so members can conduct themselves with greater clarity in the future.

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order that is not on this issue, as you will be coming back to the House.

The chamber is the place for members to voice their concerns with respect to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest is an experienced member. I am going to ask him to get to the point very quickly because it is sounding a lot like debate on the current issue. Otherwise, we will move on.

Speaker's Ruling

● (1050)

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Speaker, some parliaments ago there was a debate in the chamber over the rights of members to express themselves vis-à-vis their whips. The Speaker at the time ruled clearly that debates from both sides of the chamber had to be made in this room and not in the corridor behind us, so members came to this chamber and made their best arguments to inform the Speaker so the Speaker could make a better ruling.

My concern is the practice of the Speaker cutting off concerned points of order on an issue before the House. He is cutting the members out of the process and leaving it up to the Speaker to make a ruling behind closed doors. We would be well served to have a debate over the rules around petitions, and I regret the Speaker's decision.

He is going to come back here to say the matter is closed without having heard from members, in good faith, who want to represent their constituents when it comes to petitions. The Speaker would be well advised to hear from MPs who are here trying to work in a good faith effort to advance this House in a way that we—

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest for raising this issue. It is a valid point, but the Chair feels they have heard enough from around the table to be able to consider this matter and come back to the House.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, the Chair needs to clarify whether the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot will be able to speak prior to your further ruling. I appreciate you would like to take the time to—

The Speaker: That is very much on the subject matter that is before the House at this time. The Chair's decision stands that the member would have to apologize before coming back.

The hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap has been very patient. I ask him to rise on his point of order if it is a new point of order.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, I have been very patient. I asked you a direct question that I did not receive an answer to. I hope that will also be included in your response to the House.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member.

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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.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand today.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

HOUSING

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Edmonton Griesbach.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with utmost urgency I call to the House's attention the

housing and houselessness emergency facing all Canadians. Just recently, the City of Edmonton declared a housing emergency, joining cities across the country that are grappling with the outcomes of poverty, displacement and addiction without the power and money necessary to truly end the crisis.

First nations, Métis settlements and Inuit communities are struggling to ensure financial sustainability for housing growth and infrastructure maintenance, forcing many indigenous people into urban centres without the important community and cultural supports they need.

In addition, this emergency has Canadians scared they will never afford a home, while rent just keeps going up, and the housing market is only making the rich richer.

I want to ground my concern in recent experience. During my time back in my riding I joined neighbours such as Linda, a retired teacher, and Tabatha and Blake from the Edmonton Public Library; leaders such as Janis Irwin, Brooks Arcand-Paul and Brad Lafortune; community organizations such as Boyle Street Community Services, Tawaw Outreach Collective, Water Warriors, Public Interest Alberta, 4B Harm Reduction Society and Bear Claw; indigenous activists such as Kokum Kathy, Will Cardinal, Rachelle Gladue and Judith Gale; and so many more in witnessing the worst outcomes of this housing crisis. We watched as encampments were torn down in the brutal cold only to be resurrected a few blocks away. This is a death sentence for some and a horrid reality unfolding across our country.

We must break these cycles of violence while building safe, affordable and supportive housing for all. As well, we need to support and enact solutions brought forward by leading community organizations, which I know are found in every riding in our country. They are organizations like those in my community, such as the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, NiGiNan Housing Ventures, the Right at Home Housing Society and Radius Community Health & Healing.

We have the solutions. We just need the will. It is for these reasons I so hope the Speaker grants hon. members the important opportunity to engage in this emergency debate as soon as possible.

● (1055)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Edmonton Griesbach for his intervention and request for an emergency debate. However, the Speaker is not satisfied that this request meets the requirement of the Standing Orders at this time.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023

The House resumed from January 29 consideration of the motion that Bill C-59, An Act to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 21, 2023 and certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern Affairs and to the Minister of National Defence (Northern Defence), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-59 this morning. I waited very patiently for my turn as many in the House were unfortunately challenging the Speaker's decision. We have been here a long time. I think the rules are quite clear.

I would like to speak—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the member across the way just claimed that members were challenging the Speaker's authority. We were trying to inform the Speaker, prior to what he said—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are not going to debate that now. Everyone has the right to express themselves in a respectful manner. It is a debate that we are not going to start again.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, members have been told they cannot participate in the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is not what the Speaker ruled. The Speaker ruled that he had heard from enough members to be able to come back to the House with a ruling.

Right now, we are into the debate of a bill. The hon. parliamentary secretary made a comment that is not necessarily nice, but it is perfectly legitimate and is not unparliamentary. I would like to give the floor back to the parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, respectfully, your description of the events is distinct from what happened. The Speaker has said that a member of this House, prior to him making his final ruling, will be prevented from speaking.

The problem with the Speaker is that he is continually inventing new rules and applying ideas that are completely outside of the precedents of the House. If he is coming back to the House with a ruling, then the member for Battle River—Crowfoot should be able to be present prior to that final ruling, but—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That has been dealt with by the Speaker. There is—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: He is also going to come back—

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member is challenging the Chair.

There is another point of order from the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am growing more and more concerned about the confrontation with Speakers when they are occupying the chair. Even when you were standing up, Madam Speaker, the member did not sit down. Rather, he continued to chirp from his seat toward you. I think there—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I appreciate the hon. member's comments and they are duly noted, but we are not going to start a debate on this. There is no point of order.

We are resuming debate with the parliamentary secretary for northern affairs.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, members have challenged the Chair, and we just bore witness to it right here in the House again. I am not raising a point of order. I am giving a speech on Bill C-59. It goes without saying that in the House there is a lot of tension. Members are really not very restful in their seats, and every single little word motivates them to jump to their feet and challenge someone else who is in the chair.

I want to speak today about Bill C-59, a wonderful piece of legislation crafted by the Government of Canada in response to the people of Canada, who have continuously raised with us, in very eloquent and fundamental ways, the issues confronting them every single day in their lives and their communities, how that impacts them, and suggestions on how we can make life easier. That is what we have been doing. While the opposition has been playing political games in the House and outside the House, we have been attentive to what Canadians are saying.

Even in my home riding in rural Canada, we know that the issues around affordability have become much more challenging for people. We know that families are working harder to meet the demands of continuing with the quality of life they have enjoyed and want to have, and we are helping them along the way.

However, it is unfortunate that, every time we have proposed good legislation, good, creative ideas in listening to the people of Canada, we have had Conservatives vote it down. In the fall economic statement, under Bill C-59, the supports for Canadians under affordability are very important. They are very important because they come at a time when Canadians need them.

Government Orders

We have talked a lot about the Canada child benefit here. I visit families every day, and I know that, without that Canada child benefit going into their accounts every month, they could not provide the quality of life they want for their children. That is why I am proud of what we are doing under the Canada child benefit, a benefit Conservatives want to get rid, have voted against, and have campaigned on saying that it is not adequate for Canadians. What we know is that, without this benefit, without that monthly income going to families all across Canada, there would be so many children still left in poverty. This benefit alone has lifted children and families out of poverty, and I can cite case by case, community by community, family name by family name, how it has benefited them over the time we have implemented that benefit.

I also want to talk about what we have done around affordability today because the key pillar of our fall economic statement is really built around boosting the economy, as well as making life more affordable for Canadians. We have seen the inflation rate in 2022 go from over 8% down to 3.2%, which I think were the last numbers. We know that, while the inflation rate has fallen, the cost of living has not really shifted downward. The price of goods is still higher than people would like it to be. There are many reasons for that. Conservatives will tell us that it is because of the Liberal government, but the world will tell us a very different narrative. That narrative is really about supply chains, wars that are ongoing in countries, the self-sufficiency of countries around the world and how they are trying to meet their needs at a very challenging time.

The other thing we have noticed is what has been happening with competitors. Canadians have been very strong about this. We need to make changes to the Competition Act. We are doing that in the fall economic statement. As members know, ministers have called together leading competitors in the grocery chains to talk about affordable groceries for Canadians and how, with the co-operation of the business community, they would be able to make better, more affordable choices.

• (1100)

Many in the opposition mock that idea. They did not see it as a generational change that could occur within the competition laws in Canada, that could make it more affordable for people across the country. They just mocked the idea of even having the conversation, because that is what happens when there is a far right-wing government agenda. It is about getting rid of laws, regulations and fairness. It is about the competitors and businesses reaching a higher model and greater profits.

That is not the direction the Liberal government is going in. We are going in a direction that is bringing costs down and making life more affordable and sustainable for Canadians. We are not looking at a far-right agenda that caters only to the wealthy, the business communities and large-scale businesses, and where profit is the driving feature of the day. We have seen it. We have seen it here in Canada, and we continue to see it today.

My colleague opposite can shout all he likes, but it is not going to stop me from saying what I have to say today. The truth hurts. We all know how much the truth hurts. He is over there squirming in his seat right now, because he knows that what I am saying is 100% factual, and—

• (1105)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary again for a point of order from the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, there was no squirming whatsoever. The member needs to understand that when the Speaker ignores the rules and when the Speaker invents new norms, it undermines the ability of the House to function. The Speaker—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I appreciate the hon. member's comments. I am not the one who has to address them, but they will be addressed by the Speaker.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay on the same point.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I have been trying to listen to my hon. colleague, and all I have been hearing is this juvenile intimidation from the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are in a debate. Some things are going to provoke some reactions, and it is perfectly normal in this chamber.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): May I continue? This is perfectly normal behaviour, apparently, in this chamber.

I am going to allow the hon. parliamentary secretary to continue.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the opportunity. I guess my definition of squirming and the member opposite's definition are a little different. When I see someone trying to shift around in their seat, and their arms are moving, their legs are moving, their head is moving and their mouth is moving, I think they are squirming in their seat.

Let us get back to this very important speech that I am making on Bill C-59. What we are doing, in terms of competitiveness, is taking a historic step. We are cracking down on the abuses and the dominance of bigger companies and on predatory pricing. This is going to help so many families.

In the meantime, while we are introducing that legislation and making that crackdown to save money on grocery bills for Canadians, we are giving them an affordability allowance. A family with two children, for example, would have received about \$430. That allowance can go up to \$640 per family. While we are dealing with the Competition Act and making historic changes to regulate and ensure that there is fairer pricing and competition on groceries in Canada, we are paying out an affordability allowance to families to help them through this difficult time.

Government Orders

This is another incentive that the Conservatives voted down, yet they talk every single day about families that are out there struggling. We talk every single day about the same families that are out there struggling, but we are doing something about it. That is the difference. What they are doing is voting down every concrete initiative that we are bringing forward, whether it is the Canada child benefit, dental care for families who cannot afford it, an affordability allowance being paid out, or a rural rebate on carbon pollution to help people who are going through a difficult time to heat their homes in parts of Canada.

It does not matter how much the benefits are that are going to Canadians. The Conservatives vote them down because they have one strategy in mind: catering to the far right, catering to the wealthy and making sure that they slash good programs and good benefits, like the ones we are bringing to seniors and what we are doing under the Canada pension plan. These are concrete, fundamental programs for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I do believe we are talking about the Liberal government's economic statement. However, the speech I heard was more about criticizing the opposition, even though the topic is actually the government's economic statement.

They say they are taking care of people. It is shocking that, in their economic statement, they once again abandoned seniors by refusing to equitably index the OAS by 10%.

They are also abandoning workers. For the past eight years now, since 2015, then in 2017, 2019, 2021 and again now, the government has opted not to listen to workers or look at ways to strengthen the social safety net that is EI. These are urgent matters.

Can my colleague tell me how her government plans to sincerely address seniors' and workers' need for enhanced social programs?

• (1110)

[*English*]

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, that is a very sensible question. I agree with my hon. colleague. Seniors deserve the very best quality of life that we can give them. That is why our party has upheld the ability for seniors to retire at 65 and not at the Conservatives' suggested age of 67.

There are other things we have done. We have increased the old age security. We have reformed the Canada pension plan. We have increased the guaranteed income supplement. We have also done things like bring in the workers benefit, which has helped so many workers across Canada who work in low-income jobs and has allowed them to have that additional \$2000-plus per month in benefits to support their families.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member opposite, in her speech, spoke a little about following rules, the rule of law and so forth.

I think that it has been interesting over the last few months. We have seen the incredible disregard that this government has for our institutions and for adherence to rules. We had the court rule, for example, that the government's imposition of the Emergencies Act

was unlawful. We have seen, even today, how institutions are undermined when we have people in positions of authority, such as the Speaker, making outrageous rulings without any basis or precedent.

Can the member explain why her government and its partners in various positions consistently ignore precedent, ignore rules, ignore the law and think that they are somehow above the rules?

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question, because it gives me an opportunity to really talk about who is in favour of the rule of law. This is the same party that wants to withdraw from the United Nations and that wants to fire the head of the Bank of Canada. These are the kinds of things that we hear from the other side.

Let us talk about the Emergencies Act. Let us talk about the convoy on the streets of Ottawa in the absence of anyone dealing with that convoy. What would we have seen if the members opposite were in government? They would have walked away, ignored it and left the whole city in chaos, to implode. When there were people, radicals, camped out on the lawns of people's houses, when they had streets blocked and they were overtaking businesses, shutting down shopping centres, sending thousands of people in the city of Ottawa home and taking away their ability—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member will agree that she and I have been in some good scraps over the years, but we come to this place for the betterment of Canada, so when I see the opportunity to create good-paying jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador being attacked by the Conservatives, and the Conservatives say they are going to stop jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador, I ask why. It is because they want to burn the planet.

What does it say to people in Newfoundland and Labrador that there are Conservative members who want to burn the planet and deny jobs and good, clean energy, while we see in America, on the Atlantic coast, that the Americans are getting thousands and thousands of jobs, clean jobs?

What does that say to the people in Newfoundland and Labrador?

Government Orders

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, that is a good question. The Conservatives are voting against Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. They are voting against Nova Scotians. They are voting against the Atlantic accord. They are voting against 30,000 clean energy jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is not only that, but the Conservatives do not have confidence in the governments to do the job that needs to be done. My colleague from Newfoundland and Labrador yesterday insinuated in committee that the premiers in Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia were being hoodwinked by the federal government: hoodwinked into creating 30,000 new jobs in their province. They should give themselves some thought around that—

• (1115)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I get started I would like to say that I am splitting my time with the hon. member from the soup-and-salad bowl of Canada, Mr. Lake Simcoe himself, the hon. member for York—Simcoe.

Thomas Jefferson reportedly said that democracy would cease to exist when you took away from those who were willing and able to work and gave to those who were not.

Speaking from my own experience, coming as an immigrant to this country, my family, like many, came here looking for that Canadian dream that so many are coming to Canada for still. However, after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, we know it is not worth the cost. We see now, more than ever, that it is harder, whether for a Canadian or for a newcomer, to survive in this country. It is so much so that more than 400,000 people left Canada just last year. That is not a good sign for any country to think that it can prosper when 400,000-plus people are leaving. I look at the reasons that people are leaving or wanting to leave, and the number one cause is the cost of living. Number two is that their credentials are not being recognized. Both are issues that Conservatives have plans for.

I do not believe that anyone moves to this country thinking that their government will work against them, but when they get here they are proven wrong, time and time again, by the Liberal-NDP government. Their paycheques are attacked; their civil liberties are attacked; their freedom is attacked, and their freedom of speech is attacked over and over again by the Liberal-NDP government. It makes them rethink why they came to this country in the first place.

This is because everything does feel like it is broken here. People are getting taxed more. Their paycheques do not go as far as they used to. They are working harder. They are working so much that many people I have talked to are working two or three jobs. If I talk to anyone in any riding, one thing I am seeing as being more and more of a trend is that more people are picking up Uber jobs or Uber Eats jobs or Skip the Dishes jobs on top of the jobs they are already working. I remember, when growing up, that people would pick up taxi jobs or a job on the side just to make extra money above and beyond whatever their savings were. However, it is sad to see that after eight years of the current Liberal-NDP government,

that is a must now, even to pay for the basic necessities just to live here in Canada.

The inflation that was caused by all the spending by the Liberal-NDP government, which continues to spend, made interest rates go up in the last 19 months at the most rapid pace seen in the last 20 years. In fact, the intensity of those rate changes is actually the highest in Canadian history. Because the government spent and wasted so much money, the Governor of the Bank of Canada had to tackle that inflation by raising interest rates.

The government's own housing department officials say that they have no faith in the current government to build the homes that are needed today. In fact, CMHC said in a recent study that homebuilding was actually down 7%. When we look at some of the factors, we see that builders are not building and buyers are not buying, because of those high interest rates. They went up once again, because of the overspending of the Liberal-NDP government.

When we look at Bill C-59, we see that the only thing the government has included with respect to housing is that it changed the housing department's name and increased the funding for more photo ops. There is no concrete action that would be taken to help with housing affordability. After eight years, we have seen rents double and mortgages double, and even the down payment needed for a house has doubled in just eight years.

Canadians pay today over one-third of their income in taxes, and the rest goes to housing, with little or nothing left for groceries, gas and home heating. This is very concerning. People are making their shelter payments, but all the other payments are starting to go more and more onto Canadians' credit cards. Utilities and groceries are going up. Even though people are paying more for groceries, they are getting a lot less in groceries than they used to.

• (1120)

This is because of high taxes, like the carbon tax that made the cost of gas, groceries and home heating go up, which the Liberals plan on quadrupling this year. The household debt in Canada, in totality, is more than the Canadian economy. This is not a good sign for a country where we want people to come and be successful and prosper. We are missing out on a lot of talent that could come here, with new energy and new investment, because Canada is not affordable anymore. It is not a place where people can come and be successful.

Canadians have record credit card debt, and over half are only \$200 or less away from going bankrupt. The fact is that more and more people are putting more onto their credit cards. We are hearing horrific stories where students are living under bridges. Working people are living in their cars because they cannot afford housing. Mothers are putting water in their children's milk and parents have to choose less nutritious food because they cannot afford groceries. We are hearing about seniors who are having to wear blankets inside their houses because they cannot afford heat and have to turn down their heat. That is how they have to get by because of this punitive carbon tax the government continues to raise.

Bankruptcy and insolvency are up. All the increases for small businesses are crippling owners, who are the backbone of our country. The IMF also warns, because of the interest rate hikes, that Canada is most at risk in the G7 for a mortgage default crisis. More than 70,000 mortgages a month are now being renewed, sometimes at double the rate. That could mean anything from a \$400 increase to a \$1,200 increase. This is not sustainable. With the recent inflation numbers, where inflation is above the target rate, the Governor of the Bank of Canada has been clear that there is a fear of these rates staying higher for longer, which means the pain will be higher for longer. There is no hope in sight. There is no light at the end of this inflationary crisis tunnel we see right now.

When we look at the economy today, after eight years we are in a worse position than we have ever been before. In fact, Canada's economy has contracted, whereas our U.S. partner's has grown. This is because of the bad restrictive policies of the Liberal-NDP government, which have stifled any type of economic growth in our country, let alone productivity or any type of investment that should be made in Canada. Canada is a lot less competitive because of its tax regime, which has held back the country.

The GDP per person is a determining factor for how successful each person is in Canada, and it has been declining since September 2022. Canada is last in the OECD for GDP per capita. GDP per capita today is lower than it was in the last half of 2018, which means five years of the wealth of Canadians has been completely wiped out.

Taxes are high. The tax code is too complicated. Taxes have been taken from working Canadians and their families for Liberals to give to their insider friends, consultants, bankers, bondholders, Liberal Bay Street buddies, bureaucrats and woke multinational corporations to advance the Liberal virtue signalling and its unjust job-killing transition.

Canadians are being forced to go to food banks more than ever because of the productivity gap and more taxes. While the Liberal-NDP government thinks the government is the solution, we believe people are the solution, and we need to give them the freedom to spend and to earn the way they want to, not restrict them.

Once we have a strong Conservative government under our Conservative leader, we are going to bring home those powerful paycheques again and an economy that is strong like it once was before, where the GDP per capita works for more and more people and where powerful paycheques will become a reality, because what people earn, they will be able to keep more of it in their pockets. We are going to keep it simple by doing four things to bring it

Government Orders

home. We are going to axe the tax, we are going to build the homes, we are going to fix the budget and we are going to stop the crime.

* * *

● (1125)

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to inform the House that Thursday, February 1, shall be an allotted day.

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FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-59, An Act to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 21, 2023 and certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always marvel when I hear speeches from the opposite side. The Conservatives paint themselves as these magnificent fiscal stewards. Pre-2015, the Conservative government ran nine out of 10 straight deficits.

I ask the member opposite to come clean with Canadians. What programs would he cut? Is he going to cut the Canada child benefit, the dental care program or the child care program? Is he going to raise the age of seniors from 65 back to 67?

He should come clean with Canadians and tell us what Liberal programs, which you did vote against, you will cut.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member has to speak through me. I did not vote against anything.

The hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, first, we are going to cut the number of Liberal seats and replace them with Conservative seats so we will have a strong Conservative government. We are also going to cut waste, waste like the \$35-billion Infrastructure Bank that has built zero projects. The government have padded the pockets of Liberal cronies and insiders with that.

Government Orders

We are going to cut things like the arrive scam app that cost \$45 million, which went to, once again, Liberal insiders, and the \$1-billion slush fund that is under investigation for the same reasons. We are going to cut the woke policies. We are going to axe the carbon tax to bring down the cost of gas, groceries and home heating. The \$20 billion that has gone to Liberal consultants to cover up the cabinet's incompetence will be cut as well. That is just the beginning.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked a lot about the economy in his speech.

I think he will agree with me that small and medium-sized businesses are a key component of the Quebec and Canadian economies, and that they are extremely important. The pandemic has been hard on them. The government offered them a loan, which was coupled with a subsidy if they were able to repay the loan. It was called the Canada emergency business account, or CEBA. The repayment date was a few days ago, in early January.

I have been talking to entrepreneurs back home. Some of them are wondering whether they should close their businesses because they have not been able to reach a payment agreement with the government. The post-pandemic economic recovery we had hoped for has not materialized. In my mind, it is logical to think that the government would help these people, who contribute to the Canadian economy.

I would like to hear more from the member. Does he think this would have been a good measure for entrepreneurs, who are also facing the rising cost of living?

[*English*]

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member that the recovery after the pandemic was harder than what people thought. The Conservatives have been saying all along that when there are too many dollars chasing too few goods that is exactly why a lot of the businesses are suffering today, let alone everyday Canadians. The government continues to spend.

Let us remind everyone that 40% of the pandemic spending had nothing to do with the pandemic in the first place. Money went to organized crime through the government. Money went to people who literally were dead, to people who did not live in Canada and to public servants. The government is spending more and more money, yet it is not helping small businesses. It is raising their taxes. It slammed on a second carbon tax that applies without any rebate whatsoever. These types of things are stifling the economy.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very concerned. We are into the second year of Putin's brutal attack on Ukraine. We see that Trump has undermined Ukraine. We see that the far right, and we know the Conservatives have been meeting with the far right in Europe, is undermining Ukraine.

I want to ask why that member, his leader, his defence critic and his foreign affairs critic stood up to vote against funding to support the people of Ukraine in their time of need. That sends a very mesage that the Conservatives are on the Putin troll machine.

• (1130)

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, what we voted against, what will continue to vote against and what we always have voted against is a punitive carbon tax that the NDP-Liberal government is more than happy to put on Canadians. It is so ideologically obsessed with the carbon tax and ensuring people pay more for carbon that it wants to do that to the war-torn country of Ukraine. It does not want to help anybody. The fact that those parties have helped to try to cripple our energy sector is only empowering Putin to use the money from his energy sector to fund his war. Shame on them.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, when I look at the economic situation impacting Canadians right across the country, I cannot help but wonder this. Had the Prime Minister never entered politics, and had a more regular upbringing typical of most Canadians, he would very likely be cutting it on a drama teacher's salary. If he were, could he afford to live under the very same policies and economic conditions he is imposing on Canadians today?

Under these circumstances, I cannot help but wonder how the Prime Minister, if he were not the Prime Minister, could stretch his budget to cover feeding his family, clothing, mortgage payments, car expenses, cellphone bills and all the other obligations facing ordinary, but truly extraordinary, Canadians.

However, we know that the actual circumstances of the Prime Minister are far different than those facing most people across the country. He does not know what it is like to struggle to put food on the table or gas in the car, but Canadians are doing this, all the while going about their daily lives.

Increasingly, more Canadians are paying attention to what is taking place in Ottawa and what the government is doing, because they must. They can no longer go about their lives without being directly confronted and negatively affected by the actions and failures of the Liberal government. This is because everything is broken in Canada 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 before the Liberals formed government. Canada has been warned that it is the most at-risk country in the G7 for a mortgage default crisis. Violent crime is up 39%. Tent encampments can be found in most major cities. Over 50% of Canadians are \$200 or less away from going broke. Average household debt makes up 100% of the income of Canadians. Business insolvencies have increased by 37% this year. Despite our growth in population, there are fewer entrepreneurs and fewer new businesses than ever.

Government Orders

This is the day-to-day reality facing Canadians because of the generational high inflation and the fastest rise in interest rates in Canadian monetary history, an issue the Prime Minister says, if members recall, he does not think about. However, regular people do. Every single person living in our country has been impacted by rising costs; homelessness amid an unaffordable home ownership and rental market; not to mention rampant crime; and a destabilized society where basic government services, travel, medical care and so much more have become inaccessible, unreliable or non-existent.

Canadians know that the Liberal government has caused this misery with the rampant overspending, a record \$600 billion of inflationary debt and countless tax hikes that increase the price of the goods we buy and drives up the interest we pay.

Now, when Canadians are looking to the federal government and the Prime Minister responsible for everything being broken to see what is being done to tackle these issues, they see this, the 2023 Liberal fall economic statement. Talk about a day late and a dollar short.

The government did not implement any of the common-sense proposals the Conservatives called for to address the problem facing our country's citizens. Instead, the Liberals are forcing \$20 billion of new spending on Canadians that will further drive up taxes, inflation and interest rates.

Never before has a federal government spent so much with so little to show for it. Now Canadians are paying the price. In fact, the Liberal policies in the economic statement only make the problems piling up in our country so much worse.

● (1135)

The Liberals are now spending more on interest on the debt than they are on health care. Let us think about that. It is no wonder York—Simcoe still does not have a hospital. When justifying the failure of the economic statement, the Deputy Prime Minister said, “Canada is not and never has been broken.” Can people believe that?

Canadians are paying attention and they are being told by the Deputy Prime Minister, who is tasked with tackling these issues, that actually there are not any. She says everything is fine and Canadians have never had it so good. We should not be surprised. This is the same Deputy Prime Minister who spends thousands on limos while bragging she does not need to own a car. She can just walk out the door and get on a subway.

This is the same finance minister who is holding back the rural top-up fund from the carbon tax from the first nations in my riding of York—Simcoe, forcing them to pay more in carbon taxes simply because of where they live. That is dividing based on geography. She will pretend that a AAA credit rating matters, as if that will fill the stomachs of Canadians lined up at food banks. It does not matter to her that this rating is only maintained on the backs of Canadians through higher taxes and interest rates.

She will also brag that Canada supposedly has the lowest debt and deficit in the G7, but she ignores the fact that when we account for general government debt, federal, provincial and territorial,

Canada has the 10th highest debt-to-GDP burden in the OECD. With this economic statement, the Liberals would have people believe that, because the federal debt is only 42% of our GDP, it is all good. However, the truth is the government debt is 113% of our GDP when we account for all of it.

The Liberals’ refusal to admit that Canada is broken, that people in this country are suffering and that a change of course is necessary, proves to Canadians without a shadow of a doubt that the government is out of touch and incapable of responding to the crises it has made. There are crises. Let us look at the headlines from the past few months: “Canada’s worst fiscal crisis in generations is brewing”, “Federal efforts to solve Canada’s housing crisis” are failing and “Surgery backlogs...no family doctor: ...Canada’s health-care crisis”. There are so many more covering affordability, opioids, foreign interference, food insecurity and mental health. There is crisis after crisis after crisis.

After eight years, Canadians have never been more unhappy, more uncomfortable and more unsafe. This economic statement proves that the biggest crisis facing this country, and the root of all others, is a crisis of leadership. The approach of the Prime Minister and his NDP-Liberal government is not working. Prices are up, rent is up, debt is up and taxes are up. Time is up. Canada is broken and the only people who will not admit that are the very same people who caused it: the tired, corrupt and out-of-touch Liberal government.

There is a better way. Conservatives will axe the tax, balance the budget to bring down inflation and interest rates to bring home lower prices for Canadians in a Canada no longer defined by crisis. We can only speculate what could have been if the Prime Minister was never Prime Minister. I am confident that we will not need to wait much longer before the Prime Minister is not the Prime Minister anymore. With the many issues facing our country, and the repeated failures by the government to address them, what will his legacy be?

● (1140)

It is increasingly looking like he will forever be remembered as the Prime Minister who broke Canada. Instead of our out-of-touch policies, we need a vision for the country and a prime minister who believes in Canadians the way Canadians believe in their country. The Leader of the Opposition will be that prime minister, and Conservatives will axe the tax and fix the budget.

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member puts out the bumper sticker of “broken Canada”, and nothing could be further from the truth. If that was anywhere near the truth, one would have to say that we have a broken world.

When we look at how Canada has performed in comparison to others in the G20, such as the United States, England, France or Germany, Canada comes out quite well, whether it is the creation of jobs, interest rates, inflation or on the issue of affordability, and it continues on.

Maybe the member could step away from the Conservative spin and take a dip into reality. Can the member at least acknowledge one fact, that investment from abroad coming into Canada on a per capita, dollar amount is the best in the world? Would the member not acknowledge that that is a good thing?

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Speaker, we see that the hon. member for Winnipeg North is obviously not out in his riding talking to Canadians.

The people of York—Simcoe are on the outside looking in. I know the member for Winnipeg North quite well. We have talked about the Lake Simcoe clean-up fund for example. The Liberal government is all promises and all press releases. Since 2019, the government has promised the Lake Simcoe clean-up fund. We are in 2024 now, and there has been zero on it. That does not surprise me.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, every Conservative MP is claiming that their party will be forming the next government. Sooner or later, they are going to have to take a position and offer up some clear proposals.

Considering all the shouting back and forth lately, the Bloc Québécois is pretty much only the adult in the room. We therefore intend to keep our feet on the ground.

The Government of Quebec is asking the Liberal government for \$470 million to pay the costs associated with taking in asylum seekers. The Government of Quebec requested this \$470 million quite a while ago now. No one on the Conservative side has told me what they would do in the Liberals' place.

If Conservative MPs are a government-in-waiting, they should have an opinion on the matter. What is it? Would they give the Government of Quebec \$470 million to cover this cost?

I want to know what they would do, because, so far, they have not put any proposals on the table. All they do is engage in partisan attacks.

[*English*]

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Speaker, I have to take this opportunity to talk about what I would do. I have to stand up for my riding.

We know the carbon tax disproportionately affects rural Canadians. We do not even get the rural top-up now in York—Simcoe. We cannot even see the CN Tower. If we google the distance from the

Chippewas of Georgina Island to the Finch subway station, it would take 14 hours to walk there, and yet we are not entitled to the rural top-up.

We see the Liberal government dividing, based on geography. It has rolled back the CMA data for other ridings in Atlantic Canada but not for York—Simcoe. The Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation is an island. Let us think about this, any time the federal government has any interaction with them, they are classified—

● (1145)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There is another question.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is almost 12 noon; it is 11:45 a.m. I have been here since we started sitting this morning at 10 a.m., and the Conservatives have been playing games all day today, trying to delay this important work to get support to people.

I am thinking specifically about the Canada disability benefit and all of those people who are waiting for that money to come to them. Too many seniors are being ejected from their homes right now. There are encampments and people living in tents. The Conservatives have nothing to offer other than complaining about the fact that they are offended about something and asking the Speaker if they can get apologies. I am over it.

We need to get the Canada disability benefit to people now. Why are the Conservatives continuing to play games with people's lives?

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Speaker, the member alludes to the urgency and the crisis, which I spoke about in my speech; crisis after crisis after crisis. This government has done nothing. There is an old saying: One can only hold a beach ball under water for so long. We have seen that thing come shooting out now, and this is what Canadians are facing.

[*Translation*]

Hon. David Lametti (LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today, I am stepping down. This is my last speech in the House. I would like to begin by thanking the voters in LaSalle—Émard—Verdun for entrusting me, three times, with the responsibility of representing them in the House.

I am also leaving my academic home, the Faculty of Law at McGill University. Leaving both institutions makes this a very emotional day for me.

Serving as a member, as parliamentary secretary and as Minister of Justice was the pinnacle of my professional career and I loved every minute of it.

[English]

That is what I want to talk about with friends today in this place. It is a series of moments that are indelibly etched in my brain and my heart, ranging from laughter to tears and everything in between, from Vancouver to St. John's, from Inuvik to Iqaluit to Nain and around the world in Europe, Asia and South America.

[Translation]

I would like to begin in my riding, LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, with Les Bons Débarras bookstore, where I buy my vinyls, on Wellington street.

[English]

Then to St. John's where twice I have managed to get to Fred's Records and fill my bags with many good vinyls, which I would then spin in my office. Everybody knows that Justice 306, as Brian Tobin and Anne McLellan have told us, is the best office on the Hill.

At impromptu gatherings with my team, many of whom are here, such as when we passed the MMP's bill, we would spin some vinyl, have some fun and honour and thank each other for the work that we had done to make those moments special.

There are many humorous moments. I sat for two years as the benchmate to Rodger Cuzner, who is now in the other place, including two Christmas speeches. I will not attribute my sense of humour to Cuzner, because his is quite unique, but it was certainly a wonderful experience.

[Translation]

As a member, I learned rather quickly to remove my earpiece when the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie had the floor.

[English]

I will not forget the first Press Gallery dinner sitting at a table with Rona Ambrose and hearing her speech, and those who were there would remember it well; or driving through Rome with our ambassador and watched the havoc being wreaked by the police escort that we had, I do not have hair but I would not have had after that anyway, and then later that evening going to V.I.P. Pizza, not the finest culinary experience in Rome, but still a good one; or throwing my suitcase in the back of a rented Ford F-150 when we were travelling in north.

There were serious moments too, such as the swearing in at Rideau Hall as a cabinet minister and the swearing in as an MP on three occasions. There was signing a proclamation at Rideau Hall proclaiming Charles the King of Canada, a one-time experience.

I listened to the stories of Italian Canadian families whose grandfathers or great-grandfathers were interned during World War II, realizing that I was the minister of justice and that a previous minister of justice had signed the decree to intern those people. There was working with my Italian Canadian colleagues in the House to get that apology done and attending the memorial unveiling in the riding of the former Speaker in North Bay with the indefatigable Joyce Pillarella.

Government Orders

I met David Milgaard in my office with James Lockyer and promised him that we would create an independent commission to review wrongful convictions. David Milgaard signed my album by the Tragically Hip, *Fully Completely*, which contains the song *Wheat Kings* that they wrote about him. Also, his sister Susan was present to announce the tabling of Bill C-40, and I will not be smiling fully until that bill receives royal assent.

• (1150)

This summer, at the G7 in Japan, I realized I was the senior justice minister around the table. I had my first conversation with Attorney General Merrick Garland of the United States. We had finished our agenda, and I had a chance to ask him whether the HBO series on the Unabomber was accurate. Attorney General Garland's voice lit up as he went on for 10 minutes about the accuracy and inaccuracy of the portrayal of the Unabomber case, but his view was generally favourable, and he said it was an important moment in his career.

[Translation]

When I was parliamentary secretary to the Minister of International Trade, I went to Namur, in Wallonia, to sell the Canada-Europe free trade agreement.

I was prepared to be the bad cop, as they say. It was fun. The minister was able to arrive a few weeks later to reach an agreement. In the same vein, I was the bad cop with Boeing at the Farnborough International Airshow in England. That was during the time when we had disputes with Boeing. There too, other ministers showed up afterward to make peace.

[English]

I had many wonderful moments on the hockey rink. This is Canada, after all, and I still try to lace up my skates, notwithstanding my advanced age. I had a wonderful moment in Gananoque, when a number of us in this House were celebrating the life and memory of our former colleague, the late Gord Brown. I will not forget that, because it was a wonderful non-partisan moment, and I was proud to be part of it.

I took part in a Métis-ITK hockey game, in which my defence partner was 45 years younger than me and one of the best players on the ice. She was fantastic. Another game was our first game in the Ottawa Senators arena against the Conservative Party, when the Liberals got their backsides kicked. There was a game on the ice rink on the Hill for the 150th anniversary celebration against a group of very young and impressive Mohawks from Kahnawake. The result was never in doubt. The only thing I would say that ties those last number of games together was the near complete incompetence of our goaltender, the current Minister of Immigration.

I exchanged puns on *Jeopardy* and *Jeopardy* metaphors with Chief Justice Ritu Khullar of Alberta, as well as a previous chief justice, Justice Mary Moreau of Alberta, in our speeches in Edmonton at Chief Justice Khullar's swearing in.

Government Orders

I have a number of memories of walking, such as with the member for Prince Albert and talking about trade, but talking more about our families. I walked with Alex Steinhouse in Yellowknife on a hike. It was absolutely stunning. I walked with Aluki Kotierk and Natan Obed in the hills above Nain. I walked to the Hill every morning from my Ottawa apartment.

I walked across the floor when I first became minister of justice to tell the member for St. Albert—Edmonton that I was going to support his private member's bill on supporting juries. I was proud of that moment, and I still am.

I am proud of some historic moments in this House. For example, we voted unanimously on a bill to outlaw conversion therapy. I will be forever grateful not only to the members of my caucus but also to the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, as well as the member for Calgary Nose Hill, the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka and Erin O'Toole for the work they did to make that unanimous vote a reality. We saved lives that day.

I remember when the then minister of public safety, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence, and I sat down with provincial and territorial ministers of justice and public safety ministers to get to a unanimous agreement on bail reform. Not only did we commit to agree on our federal legislation, which is now law, but the provinces also committed to work at their end to make the bail system work better.

There were moments with Black community leadership across Canada on the Black justice strategy. In particular, in Nova Scotia, there was a very real pride in the room from that community because of their leadership on creating the movement toward pre-sentencing reports.

● (1155)

There were many moments with indigenous leaders across Canada, many of whom I now count as close friends. A moment in Williams Lake, at the site of a former residential school, is not something I will ever forget. There, I went into a barn where a number of the children would go, back in the day, and carve their names in the wood.

On the positive side, there is the pride of the Tšilhqot'in leadership in having established their indigenous title; they used the courts and succeeded. I would meet them annually here in Ottawa and in their offices in the B.C. interior, and I saw the pride.

In Iqaluit, as a guest of President Obed of ITK, I was in the room when Pope Francis heard the stories of sexual abuse directly from survivors or the children of survivors. I saw the reaction of the pope and also, in particular, the reaction of the archbishop who was translating. At a certain point, the pope put his hand on the translator's shoulder because of the difficulty he was having in relaying the words.

There were other momentous moments, such as the House rising for what we thought would be two weeks at the beginning of the pandemic, all the urgent committee work we did during the pandemic, and the occupation and the understanding of the gravity of the Emergencies Act.

These were balanced by lighter moments, such as trying to buy a white suit online so I could represent Canada at the swearing-in of

the president of the Dominican Republic. I had to buy two suits and then keep the one that fit. I got on a plane to the Dominican Republic and sat down beside Moises Alou; we talked baseball the whole way down. Another time, I bicycled along the Lachine Canal; I saw the work that we had done as a government on rebuilding the walls of that canal and knew that they were going to be there for my children and my grandchildren. In another moment, I was stopped on Wellington by an older gentleman.

[*Translation*]

He said to me, "Mr. Lametti, I often see you at Verdun Beach."

[*English*]

Verdun Beach, in the middle of Wellington Street, is my favourite restaurant with an oyster bar. I had just been outed.

[*Translation*]

I think of places like Aj's, Shooters, Riccia, Station W, and now Monk Café; of the conversations with my constituents, particularly on Saturday mornings, when I go buy my bread and sandwiches at Bossa; of the statue of Saint Anthony and the time I stood next to it, during the saint's feast day in Ville-Émard with the Italian community.

● (1200)

[*English*]

These are times of a life, and I will cherish them. I thank those people who were involved in making those moments a reality, many of whom are in this room and in the gallery.

I want to underscore that UNDRIP is the future. It will allow us to reset our relationship with indigenous peoples. It is a true road map, a co-developed road map, to reconciliation.

It is a singular moment. Indigenous leaders want to participate in nation building. I have heard this time and time again, that they want to be part of this project Canada and they want their children to have the same opportunities as other non-indigenous kids have had, as I have had.

I am the son of Italian immigrants, who came to this country with no formal education. Because they chose to come to this country, I got to have an outstanding education at Canadian universities and at international universities. Because they made this decision, I got to be a professor at an outstanding law faculty in Canada. I could run to be a member of Parliament and even aspire to be minister of justice.

Indigenous peoples want a share in that dream. UNDRIP is a way for us to make it happen together.

We are many nations in this country. That is a source of strength and understanding as we move forward in the future. This recognition allows us to work on what unites us and to develop and protect languages and culture. This is true for indigenous peoples, as well as for Quebec.

[Translation]

We need to work together. We all understand that protecting and nurturing the French language and culture in North America is very important. We need to work together to ensure they live on and flourish in the future.

[English]

That means we need to stop scapegoating the English community in Quebec. People in this community are very bilingual and committed to Quebec; in many cases, they have been there for 300 years.

[Translation]

I have to say that the Charter is not optional, and the preventive use of the Charter suggests that the Charter is optional.

[English]

At some point, with everything we have said, we need to understand that constitutional change will be necessary, and we need to prepare for that. We need to be able to disagree with respect, and recent weeks have underscored that. I tried to be only as partisan as I had to be and only as partisan as necessary; I tried not to get personal. I did not always succeed, but I did my best. I think we all need to do our best, especially on social media and in this world where we are moving toward artificial intelligence.

Artificial intelligence does not exempt us from being human. Our human intellect, our emotions and our empathy will become even more important as AI supplements the more routine forms of intelligence. We cannot let it replace those other human qualities. Our survival as a country and as a species depends on nothing less.

It remains to thank people. I want to thank the Prime Minister for naming me parliamentary secretary and minister of justice.

[Translation]

I thank my colleagues here in the House and, especially, my critics, the members for Fundy Royal, Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, Rivière-du-Nord, and, for medical assistance in dying, the member for Montcalm.

[English]

My chiefs of staff, Rachel Doran and Alex Steinhouse, have been fantastic, and my political teams have been outstanding. None of what we achieved could have been done without them, and I thank them.

I thank my constituency teams for their dedication, hard work and service, oftentimes when I was not around much as a minister. In particular, I want to thank Nicole Picher, who has been with me for eight years.

I want to thank other elected officials in my riding at all political levels, and of all political parties, with whom I worked. I want to

Government Orders

thank my political association, my volunteers and my donors, who helped me get elected.

My friends kept me grounded. Here in Ottawa, Mélanie Vadeboncoeur and the La Roma gang made sure I stayed humble. I thank my many friends in this place, such as the member for Eglinton—Lawrence, the current Minister of Immigration, the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North, the member for Oakville, Catherine McKenna and everybody else who has come through this place and with whom I hope to stay friends.

I thank my friends at McGill and the McGill deans for their support. I thank my ex-wife, Geneviève Saumier, who began this journey with me and with whom I share three wonderful kids; she continues to give me good advice. I thank my children. Perhaps the years away have been hardest on them.

[Translation]

I want to tell André, Gabrielle and Dominique that I love them. I thank them for their patience and devotion to their father.

[English]

Last, I have two points: First, kindness is not overrated, especially in a world of AI. We could all stand to be kinder, and we would all be better for it.

Second, this place is not overrated. The Right Hon. Paul Martin has said that you can get more done in five minutes in this place than you can in five years anywhere else. Paul has been a mentor to me. I am a successor in his riding, and he is a friend.

[Translation]

I would like us to prove him right every day.

• (1205)

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is a difficult moment for me, not because I had to find a new seat near the exit, not because it took me two tries to get to Ottawa because of the fog and not because I come from an Irish family of criers, but because it is really a moving moment for me.

Government Orders

I want to thank the member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun for the friendship we have developed in the House. He has a great record of accomplishment, about which he spoke, but I want to point out something someone asked me on the plane last night, and that was how I could go to work in such a negative place. My response was that, unfortunately, all people see is question period, which is theatre, where people have other agendas they are pursuing, but they do not see the hard work that goes on behind the scenes, the co-operation and the friendships that are built. I really meant that, and the member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun is a great example of this.

I made a quick list, because I had 15-minutes notice that I had this opportunity, on the number of things he and I worked on together and his willingness to take action to ensure we improved the justice system in Canada, in particular for indigenous people and the work he did on Bill C-5 to reduce mandatory minimums, which fall very hard on the most marginalized in our society.

He mentioned the conversion therapy ban. His work with the leader of the Conservatives and all parties meant we were able to pass that ban unanimously, something which I remain very proud of the House for doing.

He worked on Bill C-40, with which we are not quite finished, on the miscarriages of justice commission. Again, miscarriages of justice fall very hard on the most marginalized, particularly indigenous women. My pledge to him is that I will work as hard as I can to get that done, hopefully by the end of this month. We only have a couple of days, but I think we can get that done.

He also helped shepherd medical assistance in dying legislation through the House when I was initially the NDP critic. This was the most difficult issue in my 13 years here because of the very strong feelings on all sides of the issue. The minister always demonstrated his ability to listen, to be empathetic and to try to find solutions that would keep us all together on this very important issue about reducing suffering at the end of life, not just for the person but for the families of people who need that assistance at the end.

One last one is that I approached the minister about the publication ban on survivors of sexual assault and how many of them felt stifled by the publication ban. He asked what we could do to fix it. Eventually he agreed to add the ability to lift the publication ban in Bill S-12, and it came to the House. This was an example of how, when I approached him with an idea and a problem, he always looked for solutions and a way to bring us all together.

I know he will continue to contribute to Canada once he leaves the House, though I am not sure in exactly what way or if he is sure in exactly what way. He is one of the finest members of Parliament I have ever had the privilege to work with, and I thank him for his contributions here.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with some emotion that I rise to pay homage to the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, for whom we have tremendous respect and esteem.

I vividly remember when he was appointed minister. I had to make a few comments at the time. In fact I was reviewing the appointments that had been made. A journalist asked me what I thought about Mr. Lametti's appointment as justice minister. I think I can use his name. I am a member of the official opposition, and I have to be loyal to my position, so I was trying to find something a bit harsh to say. However, I began reading the minister's resumé and I saw that he was a renowned jurist, a university professor cited by others across the country, and someone who was extensively involved in the justice system in Canada. I really had to say something negative, so I asked why the Prime Minister had not appointed him sooner. I said he should have been appointed sooner.

During question period, the parties have 30 to 35 seconds to argue their point of view. This certainly can be a rough and even brutal experience. However, I always had intelligent, articulate, reasonable and reasoned conversations with the justice minister. We know that we are worlds apart on many issues, but we have always had tremendous respect for one another. I would like to thank him for his attention when I was consulted about certain appointments. He always acted with honour and dignity.

Regarding what he said about his family, I would like to point out that such is the case for millions of Canadians. I, too, am the son of immigrants. My mother was born in Italy. I, too, have felt the personal responsibility to continue what my parents started by choosing this country and being chosen by this country. The minister, whose family did not have much education, arrived here and had a brilliant academic career. He served the university and he served Canada in the highest possible positions for a jurist. He has honoured his family.

In closing, I will tell members what I often tell my friend the member for Québec, who is himself a seasoned academic with executive experience. I hope that he will continue his teaching career to share his experience as an academic and executive with hundreds and thousands of students.

I wish Mr. Lametti all the best in his future endeavours.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to my friend, *amico mio*, over there.

There are so many things I would like to say to a colleague who has served with such distinction. I heard the minister thank us all, but on behalf of my colleagues here today, I think it is our turn to express our gratitude.

Government Orders

I am going to make a prediction: He will go down in history as a great minister of justice and attorney general of Canada—not necessarily because of all his achievements in the House, but because he is, above all, a caring man, a man of conviction, a strong leader. I think all Canadians will end up admiring him. The country already appreciates him, but, as the years go by, people will see how much he has marked the history of Canada as minister of justice. He will be one of the ministers who paved the way toward reconciliation.

Without revealing any secrets, I can say I have seen him in action.

• (1215)

[English]

When he was talking about moments, I was thinking about how many moments I would say that he had been crucial for the future of this nation. When we talk about dreams, I can imagine the young students around the country looking to someone like him with his great intellect. All of my colleagues have recognized that. However, I am sure that today, and also in the future, he will make our young generation dream of public service, dream of what is possible, dream of following their convictions, dream of being who they are and dream of making changes. That is who the former minister of justice is.

We will remember him for kindness. I have known a lot of people in this place, and I think all my colleagues would agree, but kindness is something that, although he attributes that kindness and says we need more kindness, he has embodied since the day I met my friend.

I think about getting things done. I do not know if there will be many ministers of justice in the history of the country who will have a record of having so many bills approved in the House, bills that have changed the nature of our country, for which we should all be proud.

One thing I will say is that I have yet to meet someone who has the same type of deep respect for the institution that we serve. He has achieved a lot of things in his life and he will achieve much more in the future. We have talked about his future career. Trust me, the opportunities and possibilities are endless; he just has to pick one.

He will be remembered for his respect for the institution and his service to the nation. This country owes a lot to my dear friend. I think future generations will look up to him as a leader, and I think we all will miss him very much. *Grazie, amico mio.*

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to join my voice to that of my colleagues who have thanked our colleague from LaSalle—Émard—Verdun for his exceptional work in the House of Commons since he arrived eight years ago. We were both elected to the House at the same time, in 2015.

At the time, I thought I would be the one appointed minister of justice. Unfortunately, that did not happen. I engaged many times with the ministers of justice who followed. I too must say that the

member from LaSalle—Émard—Verdun did excellent work as minister of justice. Of course, we did not always agree.

There was some talk about dreams earlier. I tried to convince the member that Canada would be much happier with a respectful neighbour, a wonderful, independent Quebec that would work with him on many fronts, but the member from LaSalle—Émard—Verdun never conceded on that point—and he certainly did not agree with me when I spoke to him about judicial appointments that I felt were overdue. These were not disputes, just minor differences of opinion.

What struck me most about the member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun is that his respectfulness never faltered, despite any differences of opinion we may have had. His words were always measured and kind. The member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun is someone I consider a “gentleman”; there are a few of them here. I truly enjoyed my discussions with him about all aspects of our work, whether about matters we agreed on—and there were many—or the few issues where our opinions diverged.

I can only congratulate the Fasken law firm for persuading the member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun to join them. It is a distinguished firm.

I was listening to my colleague just now who asked why the Prime Minister had not appointed him Minister of Justice sooner. Personally, I wonder why the Prime Minister was unable to hold on to him.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands also wishes to speak.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank all my colleagues and acknowledge their comments.

• (1220)

[English]

It really says a lot about the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, as a former minister of justice and a member of a cabinet, when so many of his colleagues from the opposition benches who worked with him closely rise to praise his work and thank him for his collegiality, particularly my neighbour from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, who shared in so many of those victories in abolishing the horrible practices, and we have spoken of it, unanimously.

I was very moved by the words from the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, who spoke so clearly and eloquently of his appreciation for the work of a Liberal cabinet member. We could hear more of that sort of thing in this place. Maybe people should not have to resign or die before we say nice things. I am thinking of our tributes to Ed Broadbent the other day. Sorry about that; no one has died recently.

I want to say a few words from my point of view as a member of the Green Party.

[Translation]

I also thank the Bloc Québécois for the comments given by our colleague from Rivière-du-Nord.

Government Orders

[English]

I have been really touched so many times by my friend's willingness to share things in moments that were very stressful. I am not pointing out anything the rest of the members do not know. I do not represent a big caucus here. I am not my caucus's critic on justice. I have half the files. Ministers who have time to share confidential information, trusting that I can be trusted and that we can share difficult conversations, particularly during the occupation, I will always be grateful for the friendship and for the enormous privilege of sharing even a little in those conversations, those votes and those very tough decisions.

I will be clear that I wish you were not leaving. I know I have just broken a rule by speaking directly to the member. I know you, Mr. Speaker, are not leaving, but I needed to speak personally for just one nanosecond.

Be well and have a wonderful next phase of a very long career and a very long life. God bless.

The Deputy Speaker: I would also add my little story to this. The opportunity that I had one night at the airport in Halifax was to be late for that airplane, or the airplane was late for us.

The hon. member was on the same flight as I was, and we were going to miss our connection in Montreal. I thought that, as he was from Montreal, he would be staying at his house that night, but no, because of his perseverance, because of his hard work ethic, he was on his way to Ottawa that evening as well.

I was lucky enough that my wife and I were able to jump into his ministerial car, to fit into the third row and to not listen to any of the discussions that were happening inside the car because they were still working that evening. He did get my wife and I here to Ottawa. It is something he did not have to do. He could easily have said, "Enjoy your night staying in Montreal and getting to Ottawa in the morning." However, being the gentleman that he always is, he found the opportunity to put us in there. There might have been an exchange of a certain liquid. In this case, I think it was a moonshine that we were going to share.

On behalf of the 338 members who sit in the House of Commons, I just want to thank the hon. member for his service to Canada. We are going to miss him. Like we would say in French, "*tu nous manqueras*".

He will be missing from us, and I think that is important. He has done something for Canada and for this chamber. We will always be *reconnaisants* for that work.

I thank hon. members and everyone who participated in the discussion this afternoon for this opportunity.

[Translation]

Good luck.

[English]

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my colleague from across the floor who represents LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, and I wish him all the best in his future endeavours and all the best to his family.

Further, I will be splitting my time with the member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake.

It is an honour to speak to Bill C-59, the government's fall economic update, 2023.

In my time as a member of Parliament, I have focused on priorities that matter to the constituents of Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan. Sadly, those priorities are not in the government's update.

People in Saskatchewan will be disappointed but not surprised that Saskatchewan is not even mentioned in the finance minister's fiscal update, outside of a few tables in the annex, but this is something we should all expect in Saskatchewan and in the west in general. We have never been a priority for the government.

Agriculture is one of the industries, if not the largest, in my riding. Again, it is a topic that is ignored altogether in this update. Farmers are struggling. Conservatives have put forward Bill C-234 that would axe the punitive carbon tax on fuel used on farms. I have heard from farmers in my riding who are paying thousands of dollars a month on that tax. Instead of supporting this common-sense idea, the government is quadrupling that tax in April, which puts the burden of a punitive policy directly on the shoulders of the people who feed our country.

If the minister cared about lowering grocery prices for Canadians, that would be a tremendous first step. The adage, if one does not want to be questioned about what one is doing, one should look busy by walking around with a clipboard, looking important and pretending to do something, is being replaced by the minister having weekly photo ops to pretend to Canadians that he is doing something. That does not impress or fool the constituents of Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, where we have seen a rise in food bank usage by a whopping 39%.

If agriculture is not the largest employer in Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, then mining and its related industries are a close second. Potash has become one of Saskatchewan's prime exports. I am privileged to represent a riding that has several of the largest potash mines in the world, if not in Canada. As we all know, Canada is the world's largest producer of potash, an important fertilizer that is in huge demand globally. At a time when other large producers, mainly Russia and Belarus, are waging an illegal war in Ukraine, Canadian potash is even more important. While it is already a massive Canadian success story, it is sadly another key industry ignored by the government's fiscal update.

During this period of global instability, the world is looking to Canada for help. Time and time again, we are turning our backs on good trading opportunities with other nations in need, whether it is LNG or potash. During unstable global times, Canada has always been a nation the world can rely on to come to those in need. Time and time again, we have, as a nation, called upon our Canadian Armed Forces to answer the call. It is important work and a priority to support our armed forces and veterans.

As I hope everyone here knows, 15 Wing Moose Jaw is home to Canada's iconic Snowbirds, so the air force is an issue close to my heart. As we look around the world and see conflicts erupting everywhere, we should be investing in the Canadian Armed Forces. Instead, we are hearing top commanders say that they cannot meet basic requirements. Recently, the Department of National Defence's own report stated that the military's operational readiness is strained. It said that the military is not ready to conduct concurrent operations and is not meeting the requirements of Canada's defence policy from 2017.

● (1225)

I quote:

Readiness of [Canadian Armed Forces] force elements have continued to decrease over the course of the last year aggravated by decreasing number of personnel and issues with equipment and vehicles.

Adding to this, Vice-Admiral Angus Topsishee, commander of the Royal Canadian Navy, has said that “the RCN faces some very serious challenges right now that could mean we fail to meet our force posture and readiness commitments in 2024 and beyond”. He added that the Harry DeWolf class, the navy's new offshore patrol vessels, can currently only be deployed “one at a time” due to personnel shortages. Clearly, the Canadian Armed Forces is in a crisis and needs urgent investment, not vague commitments that government budgets will not affect the Canadian Armed Forces.

I have had the pleasure to serve on the veterans affairs committee since I was elected in 2021. I found it to be a tremendous committee that does some very important work that is, sadly, generally ignored by the current government. The fiscal update's sole mention of Canada's brave veterans is the statement that their benefits are indexed to inflation. Veterans on a fixed income are dependent on those benefits and, as we know, with all government payments, they are slow to reflect the inflation we are seeing now. Even if they do, the cost of many of life's necessities, namely groceries and housing, is easily outpacing the official inflation rate.

We are seeing more and more veterans turn to charities and not-for-profits to help feed themselves. It is heartwarming to see these organizations do this important work. Many are created by veterans for veterans; however, they should not be needed. Canadian heroes should never have to go to a charity to feed or house themselves because Veterans Affairs is not providing them with sufficient benefits.

The government's fall economic update falls short of the mark, and it has a negative trickle-down effect on other levels of government. There is only one taxpayer. School boards are realizing the effects of inflation. I recently received a text that the local school board is over-budget by \$1 million because of the current government's inflationary spending and punitive carbon tax, which direct-

Government Orders

ly impact its operational and capital budgets. Next year, this school board will be another half a million dollars short, totalling \$1 million in funds that local taxpayers will have to pay or find cost savings and measures.

● (1230)

Municipalities and police services are also being impacted. In Saskatchewan, the impact of inflation and the carbon tax is directly affecting its budgets, which are now increasing in double digits in communities in my riding, in my province and in this country.

The impacts will be negative. School budgets will be cut. Ten-dollar day care cannot help. Water, roads and other important infrastructure required to keep communities thriving will be cut, and that single taxpayer will receive less service for more dollars, which is a familiar theme with the current government. The future of our country is bleak if we continue to be held hostage by a coalition NDP-Liberal government. That is right. We are being held hostage by the government.

However, I have faith in the people of Canada to elect a Conservative government that is listening to our people. My faith in the next generation is being restored. I met Ashton, an 18-year-old university student studying accounting, and he is working at a local grocery store. His parents have traditionally been Liberal supporters, which is a rare thing in Saskatchewan. Ashton shared with me that he has overheard customers in the grocery store where he works say that this will be the first time they will need to visit the food bank in order to feed their families.

Ashton told me these stories are breaking his heart. He is a critical thinker and has made the choice to not vote Liberal in his first election and to break the family tradition. He sees that the current Liberal government is doing nothing concrete to help families struggling to feed themselves. Ashton knows that a Conservative government would axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Let us hope, for everyone's sake, including Ashton's, that it comes sooner rather than later.

● (1235)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives talk about government expenditure, what they are talking about is where they are going to be making cuts, but they do not necessarily want to tell Canadians.

Government Orders

Today, the Conservative finance critic said they would cut the Canada Infrastructure Bank, as an example of what the Conservative Party would cut. The Infrastructure Bank does many projects in all the different regions of Canada. I am wondering if the member could explain why the Conservative Party has made the decision to cut the Infrastructure Bank.

While he is at it, if he does not want to give the details of that, maybe he could give us a sense of some of the other things that the Conservatives would be cutting in their hidden agenda.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Mr. Speaker, this is right up my alley as a former mayor of the City of Moose Jaw, where we attracted over \$1.3 billion, going aggressively to the open market to attract business, to build a school where there would be a community surrounding it. We had no help from the Canada Infrastructure Bank. That was money that was just sitting in a bank that we could not access.

Municipalities spend thousands upon thousands of dollars on bureaucracy and red tape to try to access money that should be going directly to them.

Ms. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, similar to the member's riding, I have one of Canada's military bases in mine. I frequently hear about the impact of the carbon tax and how it is having a real impact on the lives of the people who put their lives on the line each and every day for us.

Could the member explain a little more about what he is hearing in Moose Jaw?

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Mr. Speaker, that is a very interesting question.

The negative impacts of bad policy from the Liberal government are affecting the training hours for preparation for our pilots. That really puts us on our back foot. Our preparedness and readiness to defend our country is diminishing. This needs to be reversed, so I really appreciate my colleague for actually recognizing that. Obviously 15 Wing is very closely related with Cold Lake; a lot of our pilots go up there to finish their training and often stay there.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, happy new year to everyone. It is my first time speaking since 2024 arrived.

I would like to thank the member for his intervention. Thanks to the supply and confidence agreement between the Liberals and the NDP, we have been able to secure a great dental care program for children. I wonder what the member will be saying to his constituents about why he voted against dental care for children in his riding.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Mr. Speaker, the challenges that are facing my riding include an increase in food bank usage. People are absolutely shocked. They do not know where their spending power is going. They do not know where their money is going.

It is insidious. The carbon tax and the inflation that the Liberal government has imposed on people are a train coming at us. People are going to be renewing their mortgages and going from 2.55% up to 6%. It is going to be a big shock, and it is impacting a lot of constituents in my riding.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is wonderful to be here today and to be able to speak to the amendment to this bill, an amendment I was very proud to second from our leader of the Conservative Party.

In fact, the Conservative leader, the hon. member for Carleton and Canada's next prime minister, delivered a really clear message to Canadians on Sunday: Axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget, stop the crime.

I hear from Canadians regularly, from right across Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, who are struggling. What they are seeing are higher grocery prices, higher home heating costs, higher electricity costs, higher gasoline costs and higher mortgage and rental costs, and they are seeing their limited paycheques being spread thinner and thinner.

Unlike the Liberal government, the hard-working people I talk to know that there are consequences, real consequences, for spending beyond their means. They understand that budgets do not balance themselves, and they, in turn, are making sacrifices to accommodate these inflated prices. They are angry when they see the Liberal government out jet-setting and this out-of-touch Prime Minister continuing with out-of-control spending.

The fall economic statement announced \$20 billion in inflationary spending, further driving up interest rates, which further makes life harder. A record two million people visited a food bank in a single month. Housing costs have doubled. Mortgage payments are 150% higher than they were before the Prime Minister took office eight years ago. Violent crime is up 39%. Tent cities exist in almost every major city and in small towns across the country. Over 50% of Canadians are less than \$200 away from going broke. Canadians who are renewing their mortgages will see an increase from 2% to 6% or even higher. The IMF has warned that Canada is the most at risk in the G7 for a mortgage default crisis, and business insolvencies have increased by 37% this year.

These results of the costly new spending spree can be summed up simply: Prices are up, rents are up, debt is up, taxes are up, and Canadians I talk to every single day have told me that they want the Prime Minister's time to be up. They want to see an election today. They want to make a decision on the leadership of our country, because they know that their finances cannot afford another year of this Prime Minister.

In 2024, for the very first time, we are going to be spending more money on payments to service our debt than we will on health care, more money to finance the reckless spending than on health care. More than \$50 billion is going to be spent just on the interest payments to service the debt.

I think that this is shameful, and the Canadians I talk to totally agree. They are not running up their credit cards unless they have no other option, yet the government has options. It is just choosing not to take them.

Government Orders

The reckless spending risks a mortgage meltdown on the \$900 billion of mortgages that will renew over the next three years. Personally, I am concerned about the countless people I have heard from who are currently under water on their homes. Their homes are worth less than what they owe to the bank. This is because of the government's relentless attack on Canadian energy, which has had a real impact on the home prices in many communities right across Fort McMurray—Cold Lake.

Our eco-activist environment minister has made no secret of the fact that he not only dislikes Canada's energy industry, having a socialist idea of government transitioning it to something else, but also seems to have a problem with the very concept that we have an energy industry here in Alberta. Quite frankly, there is a serious problem with having a Soviet-style transition away from Canada's energy industry.

I am proud to come from northeastern Alberta and to have grown up in Fort McMurray, seeing the major innovation that has taken place in our energy industry over decades. During this most recent Arctic vortex, just a couple of weeks ago, many energy workers were working outside. They were bundling up. They were going to work when the rest of us were very grateful just to get to stay inside. These brought temperatures across the Prairies of -50° and even lower in some areas, with the wind chill. In those temperatures, frostbite can set in in a matter of minutes, yet these energy workers bundled up so we could stay warm. That is, for the families who could afford to keep the heat on.

- (1240)

The Liberal government has consistently doubled down on charging the carbon tax on home heating in the Prairies, which continues to ratchet up the cost of our home heating. We do not have a choice in the Prairies during an Arctic vortex or throughout the winter as to whether we can or cannot heat our homes. If a home is not heated in -50°C , the pipes will freeze. There will be additional costs, and people will die. That is the reality. Frostbite will set in in minutes, yet this government has decided to have a carve-out for Atlantic Canadians, allowing them to have a pause on the carbon tax because of plummeting polls. However, in the Prairies, where we were facing -50°C weather this winter, in those areas we continue to have to pay the carbon tax. Not only do we have to pay this punishing carbon tax, but it is set to continue to increase on April 1. That is no joke.

With plummeting polls, the Liberals are making it so that a Canadian is not a Canadian is not a Canadian. The Canadians I have had the opportunity to chat with thought that this unfair, callous and crass decision of carving out the carbon tax away from Atlantic Canadians was wrong.

Canadians are out of money, and this government is completely out of touch. Conservatives have been and will continue to stand up, clearly asking this costly coalition of the Liberal-NDP government to remove the carbon tax on everything for everyone. The government rejects this, but we continue fighting, so, in the interests of Canadians we have asked for a variety of carve-outs: eliminating the carbon tax for farmers, eliminating the carbon tax on first nations, eliminating the carbon tax on home heating and many others. However, make no mistake, a Conservative government will

axe the carbon tax on everything for everyone. This is common sense. Canadians need relief, not higher taxes.

After eight years, the Liberal Prime Minister does not understand that if we tax the farmer who grows the food, the trucker who transports the food and the store that sells the food, we ultimately tax the family buying it. I have talked to moms who are having to make hard choices as to whether they put extra water in their babies' formula just so they can afford to feed their families. I talk to families who are struggling as to whether they are going to continue bundling extra sweaters onto their children, because they cannot afford to turn the temperature in their home up an extra degree or two to keep them nice and toasty.

This is why the Conservative Party introduced a very common-sense bill, Bill C-234, to axe the tax on farmers. It would have made the cost of food more affordable for everyone by saving farmers \$978 million between now and 2030. It passed through the House of Commons, yet the unelected Senate gutted our common-sense bill under pressure from the PMO and the eco-activist environment minister. In fact, the same environment minister threatened to quit if there was another carve-out. The same environment minister even admitted during an environment committee meeting that he had called up to six senators to pressure them into voting to keep the tax on farmers. That is shameful. Now, all Canadians will have to pay a higher price at the grocery store.

Common sense means getting rid of the carbon tax to lower the cost of living for all Canadians. It means capping reckless spending and getting rid of waste to balance the budget and lower inflation and interest rates. Common sense means cutting tax to make hard work pay off again. This NDP-Liberal government needs to rein in spending and balance the budget so that inflation and interest rates can come down and Canadians can keep more of the money they work so hard for. They need relief.

It is clear that after eight years of waste and incompetence, the NDP-Liberal government is not worth the cost. Canada's Conservatives have provided a clear, common-sense plan to reverse course and undo the damage the Liberals have done. Only common-sense Conservatives can be trusted to axe the tax, balance the budget, bring down inflation and interest rates, and build homes, not bureaucracy, to bring lower prices to Canadians. I'll say it again: Axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

Government Orders

• (1245)

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one thing that is very clear is that the Conservatives are going to axe the tax, as I have heard time and time again. However, I would ask the member opposite what other programs are going to be axed by her and her party. Are they going to axe child care? Are they going to axe the Canada child benefit?

The member spoke very passionately about what families cannot afford, yet she voted against child care, dental care and other programs that would save families thousands of dollars a month. Therefore, I would ask the member opposite what programs she and her party will axe.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Mr. Speaker, first of all, we plan to axe Liberal members of Parliament from right across the country, so that is a simple one. We also plan to axe interest rates because Canadians deserve affordability. As well, we plan to axe inflation so Canadians can keep more of the money they have worked hard to earn.

Frankly, it is very hypocritical for a member from Atlantic Canada who got a carve-out on the carbon tax and does not have to pay the tax on their home heating this winter to tell me that somehow people in the Prairies deserve to continue paying carbon tax on home heating in -50°C weather.

I will not take any lessons from that side.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. However, I have some questions about what she is telling us. She is talking again about getting rid of taxes, saying, “Axe the Tax”.

We see in this budget that \$30.3 billion are granted in subsidies to the oil and gas industry in the form of tax credits, meaning that all taxpayers in Quebec and Canada will subsidize the oil and gas industry, which we are trying to transform to develop clean energy. Apparently \$30 billion is not enough for my colleague or for the rest of the Conservative members of Parliament who want us to get rid of taxes and give more to oil and gas companies.

We also see in this budget that a department of municipal affairs is being created, which is in violation of the Charter.

Does my colleague think it is a good thing to pour \$30 billion into subsidies to the oil and gas industry?

Also, what does she think of the federal government creating a kind of department of municipal affairs to be called the department of housing, infrastructure and communities? What does she think of this interference in areas under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces?

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Mr. Speaker, I know that voting for the Bloc Québécois is very costly.

One of the problems we see is that the Bloc supports and continues to support the Liberal Party's ever-increasing expenses. It continues to vote in favour of Liberal budgets that increase costs for all Canadians and Quebecers.

The Conservative Party will continue to build a country where Canadians can keep the money they worked very hard to earn.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are now two years into the brutal invasion of Ukraine by Putin and the mass killing of people in Ukraine, yet the member voted against Operation Unifier, which is a fundamental connection supporting the people of Ukraine, while the Trump MAGA team has attacked Ukraine and while Danielle Smith brings a white supremacist and Putin troll to Alberta to celebrate. He is a man who has attacked Zelenskyy and the people of Ukraine.

How dare the member stand and support the Putin machine and undermine the people of Ukraine?

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Mr. Speaker, in my previous answer to one of my Liberal colleagues who asked what I was going to cut, I forgot to say that I really want to cut the NDP member for Timmins—James Bay—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. A question was asked, and I want to hear the answer. I cannot hear it with everything going on.

I will allow the member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake to start again.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Mr. Speaker, in my previous answer, I said I wanted to cut Liberal members of Parliament. I also want to cut the NDP member for Timmins—James Bay because, frankly, he is not serving his constituents. He voted to keep the carbon tax on home heating for his constituents in northern Ontario, and that is absolutely shameful.

Frankly, as a proud Ukrainian Canadian, I have continued to stand up for Ukraine. I do not understand in any way, shape or form how Liberals and New Democrats can get up on their high horse and supposedly support Ukraine while they allowed a turbine that fuels Putin's war machine to go back there. I also do not understand why they are refusing to support Canada's oil and gas industry, which could be providing gas to Europe and around the world and starving Putin's war machine. Instead, they want Putin to continue producing oil and gas, undermining Ukraine.

I am sorry; I am not going to take any lessons from the member.

• (1255)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to comment on the last answer we heard from the Conservative member, because it somewhat defies the reality of what the Conservative Party's actions are versus what some of the members actually say when it comes to Canada and Ukraine and the need for Canada to support Ukraine in a very real and tangible way.

Government Orders

Just last December we had a series of votes. I want to make reference to how the member actually voted when it came to Ukraine. There was a vote for Ukrainian immigrants settling in Canada, with respect to helping them find accommodation and receiving initial financial support. She actually, as all the Conservatives did, voted no to that. They also voted no to training Ukrainian soldiers through Operation Unifier. Not to be outdone, they also voted no to Canada's NATO mission.

The real twist on this is the Conservative Party's approach to the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement. Imagine the President of Ukraine, at a time of war, coming to Canada and signing a trade agreement with the Prime Minister. The expectation of the community of Ukrainian heritage, which is well over 1.3 million people, not to mention of a vast majority of others, was that the Conservative Party would support that particular Canada-Ukraine deal. In my original comments on the legislation, I suggested that the Conservatives would be supporting it. Boy, was I wrong. It is unbelievable.

That is where there is a whole mix-up as the Conservatives try to throw a red herring as to why they are voting against the trade agreement. What they are saying is that it is because of the carbon tax and that they do not think Canada should be imposing a carbon tax on the people of Ukraine. News for them, as one of them applauds, is that Ukraine already has a price on pollution. It has had a price on pollution since 2011. This means that even when Stephen Harper was prime minister, the people of Ukraine were farther ahead in recognizing the climate reality than the Conservative Party was in 2011.

Why, then, are Conservatives opposing the Canada-Ukraine agreement? It is because of what many are suggesting is the far right element, the MAGA Conservative movement, which is kind of creeping up from the United States and seeping into Canada. It is being advocated by no one other than the leader of the Conservative Party and the minions of Conservative MPs who sit behind the leader to talk—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: I want to remind folks not to cause disorder in the House. It comes from both sides. I want to make sure we have good debate on the bill before us and on the amendment.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the point is that the Conservative Party of today is so extreme that it has even now taken a position that is not in the best interests of the Canada-Ukraine agreement. It is not just the Liberal Party that is saying this. It is usually the New Democrats who vote against trade agreements, but not this trade agreement, because they too recognize the value of it. It is only the Conservative Party that has voted against it.

I have had a couple of meetings. I was hosting a lunch, and a couple of hundred people showed up. They were more than happy to sign a petition on the issue. The issue is that they, much like the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and the Ukrainian ambassador to Canada, want to see the Conservative Party flip-flop and support the Canada-Ukraine deal.

I would encourage the member who spoke and provided that answer to take what she put in the answer, talk among any Conservatives with rational minds and see whether they can meet with the leader of the Conservative Party and get him to come onside and support the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement.

That was not what I was going to talk about today. I was going to talk about the Canadian economy and the types of things we are hearing.

I love the idea of contrasting the Liberal Party and the government's policy with what the Conservative Party is saying. Let us do the contrast. The Conservatives came in yesterday, and they were all gleeful and happy, saying they have four priorities and were going to hit a home run on them. What were the four priorities? There were at least a half-dozen members who talked about them yesterday.

I will give an example. Their shiny one is the bumper sticker that is going to read, "Axe the tax." I will stay away from the idea that the Conservatives are climate deniers and do not have any policy on the issue of climate change and the impact it is having on Canadians. Rather, they have a wonderful little slogan they want to use, and it does not matter.

Yesterday I said that the Conservatives' policy would actually be taking money out of the pockets of a majority of the people who live in Winnipeg North, because we have a carbon rebate that goes to the people of Canada. When the leader of the Conservative Party says they are going to axe the carbon tax, that means they are going to axe the carbon rebate too. More than 80% of the constituents I represent get more money from the rebate than they actually pay in the tax.

That would mean less money in their pockets, as a direct result of the Conservatives' ignoring the climate issue and choosing to change their opinion from what they told Canadians in the last federal election, when the Conservative Party, all of it, in its election platform, made very clear that its members supported a price on pollution. It is only under the new leader and with the bumper sticker idea that they have actually done a flip-flop on that particular issue, and now they are prepared to take money out of the pockets of Canadians and completely disregard the importance of sound environmental policy.

That is one of the Conservatives' priorities. What a dud that one is. I will talk about the second dud: their talk about housing. They want Ottawa to play a role in housing. There has not been a government in the last 50 or 60 years that has invested more in housing than the current government has. We are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars.

● (1300)

We are talking about working with provinces, municipalities and non-profit organizations, many different stakeholders, to ensure that Canadians will have the ability to get homes, rent and own, into the future. The federal government has stepped up to the plate in a very real and tangible way.

Government Orders

When the leader of the Conservative Party was housing minister in the Stephen Harper government, he was an absolute disaster. He had no concept of what a housing strategy was, let alone have the ability to construct houses. He now wants to take it on. Really? It just does not make sense.

The federal government, unlike any other government in the last 50 or 60 years, has stepped up to the plate and demonstrated strong national leadership, and we are working with the municipalities, the provinces and other stakeholders on the file. That is something the Conservative Party would not do.

What about the Conservatives' third priority? Their third priority is the budget. People need to be very concerned when Conservatives talk about the budget. This is where the whole hidden agenda comes in. Every so often, we get to see some of that hidden agenda ooze out.

An example I will use is the issue of the Infrastructure Bank. All the members across the way support getting rid of the Canada Infrastructure Bank. Their finance critic made that statement earlier today and we have heard it before, if people want to talk about a dumb idea. It does not matter as facts and reality are completely irrelevant to the Conservative Party.

The reality is the Canada Infrastructure Bank has been exceptionally effective, yet the Conservative Party will say it has not done anything. It says that knowing full well that is just not true. The reality is we are talking somewhere in the neighbourhood of about \$10 billion.

Mr. Speaker, if we take a look at \$10 billion coming from the Canada Infrastructure Bank, that money is being tripled. In total, that is another \$20 billion through different sources because of the investments being made by the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

Members opposite are saying to tell them how many projects there are. At last count, we are talking 48 projects. How many did the Conservative Party say? Zero. We are not talking about the intellectual capabilities of the Conservative Party when I say zero. I am saying that is what it says the number of projects are.

If members do not want to believe me, they can take a look at the website. There are all forms of projects that are not only on the books, ongoing, but are also completed. It is truly amazing.

They are in all different areas of the country: public transit, 11 projects; clean power, eight projects; green infrastructure, 17 projects; and broadband, eight projects. Some of the broadband ones are in Manitoba for rural Internet connections. We would think that many of the rural Conservative MPs might be a little sensitive and want to support that but no.

Keep in mind that in everything we are talking about here, the billions and billions of dollars, a lot of private dollars, the Conservatives oppose it. They oppose that sort of development. That is building a healthier economy. That is building Canadian infrastructure. We all benefit from that.

There is a reason the foreign investment in Canada is as healthy as it is today. It is because, as a government, we support investing. It has paid off significantly. The finance critic was critical of the

government, saying we do not have foreign investment. The reality, the facts, play no role in what the Conservative Party says.

• (1305)

At the end of the day, on foreign investment in Canada, on a per capita basis, from last year, in real dollars, Canada was number one in the world. One would think that the Conservatives would understand that concept, yet the finance critic is saying that we are down on foreign investment.

Conservatives cannot accept the reality of good news. In terms of job numbers, there are well over a million new jobs from pre-pandemic levels. That is good news. One would not know that because we constantly have the Conservative Party going out about the nation saying that Canada is broken and is just not working. How does that actually compare to the reality of the situation?

As I pointed out earlier today in a question, if the Conservatives say Canada is broken, they have to believe that the entire world is broken. We can compare some of the measurements that the Conservative Party uses. They talk about things like the inflation rate. Have they taken a look at Canada's inflation rate compared to other G20 countries? Whether we are talking about France, Germany, the U.K., the United States or any of the other countries in the G20, we find that Canada is ranked at the top, in terms of the lowest inflation rates. It is the same for interest rates.

The government policy that we have put in place, whether through budgetary or legislative measures, has helped bring down inflation rates. Even though we recognize that, relatively speaking, compared to the rest of the world, Canada is doing exceptionally well, we still need to do better. That is the reason we are seeing policies being brought in that have made a difference. We will continue to work with Canadians and other levels of government in order to improve conditions. We want an economy that is going to work for all Canadians.

We want to continue to invest in Canada's middle class and those who are aspiring to be a part of it. That should not be a surprise. Virtually since 2015, when we were elected to government, Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it have been the first priority of the Liberal government. We continue in that area. We continue to support programs that would lift people out of poverty.

We can talk about the GIS increases, the Canada child care benefit and the many different programs we have put in place to support Canadians, pre-pandemic, during the pandemic, and going in and out of some very difficult times that people are experiencing today.

When it comes to the economy or the budget, on priority number three, I warn members to be very much aware of that Conservative hidden agenda. It is going to disappoint a great number of people.

Government Orders

Their fourth point was on the issue of crime. Let us stop and think about that one for a moment. We just brought forward the bail reform legislation that had the support of the provinces, law enforcement agencies and a number of stakeholders from all over the country, and every political party inside the chamber except the Conservative Party. We had filibustering taking place on that important piece of legislation, even though, months prior, the Leader of the Conservative Party said we would pass that bill lickety-split. That did not happen. He wanted to filibuster the legislation, putting the government in a position where we had to force the legislation through.

• (1310)

That is why I say very candidly that, whenever the election is, although I suspect it will be in 2015, at the end of the day, I look forward to being able to share who the Leader of the Conservative Party really is and remind him of some things: the cryptocurrency issue; his talking about firing the governor of the Bank of Canada; the flip-flop about the price of pollution, the flip-flop about Facebook and the big Internet companies. There is so much out there that one is going to be able to go to people's doors and share with Canadians from coast to coast to coast, in contrast to the Liberal Party with a solid record of working with Canadians, supporting Canadians. Compare that to a Conservative Party that does not even have an idea about the environment nowadays, that does not want to tell Canadians what its real agenda is all about.

I love to make that contrast. I look forward to many more days, months and a couple of years of debate, no doubt.

• (1315)

The Deputy Speaker: First of all, I just need to help the hon. member with his math. We are not having an election in 2015. It could be in 2025 but 2015 has already gone by.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for York—Simcoe.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg North is right about one thing. Conservatives are going to axe that tax.

Let us talk about that tax, although I suspect he is not going to answer my question. The Prime Minister said his most important relationship was with our first nations, yet he is discriminating against the first nations in my riding based on geography.

Let us talk about that carbon tax rebate. The Prime Minister made an announcement out east. I know the member for Avalon is here. His riding got rolled back with its data from the census so that it stayed rural. My riding of York—Simcoe is now considered to be a part of Toronto so that no one gets the 20% rural top-up. The member for Winnipeg North knows that it would take 14 hours to walk to the Finch subway station from my riding. The Deputy Prime Minister likes to say that she does not even need to own a car as she can just walk out of her house and get on a subway. We do not have subways, we do not have streetcars; we do not have transit.

I would like him to comment on that. The answer will be astounding, I am sure.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I wish the member had provided an answer to many of the questions that others would have of him in regard to the price on pollution. That member actually campaigned in the last election based on, in part, an election platform document that said very clearly that the Conservative Party supported a price on pollution. It is only in the last two years that that member and the Conservative Party have made a flip-flop saying now that they do not support a price on pollution. Who knows? I suspect they might even have some bumper stickers already printed saying they want to axe the tax. Even if that ends up taking more money out of the pockets of Canadians, they are not prepared to abandon that priority. I will give them that much.

I look forward to having that particular debate whenever it comes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, many things struck me in my colleague's speech. He said that no government in 50 years had invested so much in housing. I do not know the statistics, but it is possible, even probable.

I wonder if he is not a bit embarrassed by the lack of results they have been able to produce with all those investments. Today we need 3.5 million housing units by 2030, after investing \$82 billion in the great national housing strategy.

The housing accelerator for municipalities was voted on in the 2022 budget, almost two years ago, and yet not a single door has been built under this program.

I wonder if my colleague is not a bit embarrassed.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I do not find it embarrassing at all. Since 2015, we have had a national government that has recognized it has a tangible role to play in housing. That role has continued to grow under this administration to the degree in which we are seeing historic funding and programming to support housing.

However, it is not just the federal government. The provinces also play a critical role, and the Bloc needs to recognize that even the Province of Quebec has non-profit housing supported by federal dollars, but there are also many other things that it and other jurisdictions, whether municipalities, provinces, territories or indigenous communities, can do. It takes a team approach, not just the federal government throwing a whole lot of money at it. That means there has to be a strategy and ongoing discussions, and homes are getting done. A great example of that is getting rid of the GST for purpose-built rentals. We have seen some provinces adopt that very same policy at the provincial level to ensure more purpose-built rentals will be built.

• (1320)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government member just said that, since 2015, the Liberals have recognized that the federal government needs to be involved in housing. That is not true.

Government Orders

I am the representative for the NDP on HUMA. The housing minister of the very recent past refused to acknowledge that the Liberals have a market-driven lens on their take on housing. I can tell members that it has been damaging to my community of Port Moody—Coquitlam, and they are still doing it.

I think about the rents right now and the seniors in my community who are being displaced by the gentrification. There has been luxury condo after luxury condo that the federal government has loaned money for. It has not spent a dollar on operating, when it needs to subsidize and help those seniors stay in homes. We have seniors living in tents.

I am not going to let the Liberals take a victory lap on the work they have done since 2015 because they have done nothing.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, that is just not true. The federal government provides tens of millions of dollars, likely going into the hundreds of millions, to subsidize non-profit housing units on an annual basis. This government has increased that funding. We are talking about tens of thousands of units across the country. In the province of Manitoba, my best guesstimate is probably somewhere around 20,000 units. Many of those units are for seniors, so to try to give a false impression does a disservice.

The bottom line is that, since 2015, we have had a national government and a Prime Minister who are very much committed to the housing file. I would suggest that he is second to no other prime minister in the last 60 years here in Canada.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Châteauguay—Lacolle.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the riding of Châteauguay—Lacolle, but soon it will be the riding of Les Jardins-de-Napierville.

[*English*]

My hon. colleague made a number of excellent points, including alluding to the election of 2015.

What galvanized me and many other folks in my region was when we were threatened by the previous Harper government with an extension to age 67 in accessing old age security, when we knew that the family allowance was taxable and when people knew that cuts were being made to balance the budget. It was penny-wise and pound foolish, as I like to say, on the backs of Canadian citizens.

I would like to hear more from my colleague about what the world would have been like if we had not won in 2015. Indeed, we need to win again in 2025.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, yes, I would suggest that 2015 was a wonderful year.

The member raises a valid point. If we go back to the last federal election, I can recall the Conservatives saying that they were going to rip up the child care agreements that were being talked about. Today, we have \$10 child care. Out of fear, we also had to bring in legislation to ensure that we will have that ongoing funding. However, let there be no doubt, that is on the table with the Conservative Party.

I was sitting in the third party over in the corner of the chamber when Stephen Harper, while he was overseas, made an announcement that he was going to raise the age of the OAS from 65 to 67. One of the very first initiatives we took, back in 2015, was to lower it from age 67 back to age 65.

We have to beware of the Conservatives and their hidden agenda.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member brought up the idea of a hidden agenda. Just this week we saw a story in the news that the Liberals and the NDP were plotting behind the scenes and in secret about amendments to the Elections Act, without bringing in two of the major parties in this House. These were secret negotiations to change the Elections Act before the next election.

I am wondering if the member could enlighten us as to exactly what that bill is going to have in it and why the Conservative Party of Canada was not invited to participate in discussions around changing elections in Canada.

● (1325)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I was at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs when the leader of the Conservative Party went to PROC to try to justify electoral reform. There were a lot of manipulations of the Elections Act there. If I only had more time, if I had another couple of minutes, I would be more than happy to expand on my answer.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Mirabel, whose remarks are always intelligent, relevant and even amusing, although I would not want to put any pressure on him for his 10-minute speech.

I read Bill C-59 and looked in vain for any substance. I looked for any tangible measures that would help Quebec and Canada to deal with the problems we are facing right now, but I could not find anything. In fact, I am rather discouraged because Canada is currently facing various crises.

There is the language crisis in Quebec. We have often mentioned the fact that the French language is in the process of disappearing. There is only one solution to this problem, and it is an independent Quebec. We will get there. We think that the stars are aligned for the election of a separatist government in Quebec within three years. That means there could be a referendum within five years. We could be saying “so long, pals”. We will not be here anymore. Most members of the House will be happy not to have the Bloc Québécois underfoot anymore. They find us annoying. They wonder what the Bloc members want. They complain that we do not even want to form government, that we just want to defend the interests of Quebecers, that we are revolutionaries, that we are so annoying, that we are nothing but trouble. If all goes well, in five or six years' time, we will not be around anymore to fix the language crisis.

Government Orders

Then there is the climate crisis. We saw all the forest fires and floods last summer, yet Bill C-59 grants \$30 billion in direct and indirect assistance to the oil industry. Why are my Conservative friends always complaining? I would like to remind my friends that, in 2022, the five largest oil companies collectively made \$200 billion in profits. Now the government is giving them \$30 billion for carbon sequestration, despite the fact that no one can say whether that technology really works. It is investing \$30 billion in that.

There is the housing crisis as well, obviously. How can we not mention that? Canada needs to build 3.5 million housing units by 2030. That is a colossal project. One would think that a bill like Bill C-59 would have some meaningful measures. One would think the government would have come up with a plan to address this crisis. Too bad there is no plan. All the government is going to do is change the name of the department. It is just a propaganda operation. The government is just going to change the name of the department. That is the only thing Bill C-59 has to offer.

I toured Quebec over the last few months. I wanted to see what was happening on the ground. The figures that CMHC has given us on vacancy rates are insane. We know that homelessness in Quebec has doubled since 2018. My colleague was talking about spending earlier. He said that this government has spent more on housing since 2015 than any other previous government. If that is true, then why did homelessness in Quebec double over the same period? I do not think this spending has worked. Quebec needs to build 200,000 housing units a year. Do my colleagues know how many were built last year? Only 39,000 were built, and there was a 7% reduction in housing starts across Canada.

Let us be serious. If the Liberals' strategy were working, we would know. Someone would have said so at some point. Someone would have said, "Wow! Well done!" We are not the only ones criticizing the government on this point. There are organizations, people in the field working with struggling Canadians, and they see it. The only thing I heard on my tour of Quebec was that the \$82-billion federal strategy is not working. In life, it is important to have the humility to say that we tried something and failed. Now we need to use that money differently. We need to invest it in social housing and truly affordable housing. Why are we still spending millions of dollars to build apartments in Montreal that cost \$2,000 a month?

• (1330)

No one can afford to rent the units offered under the national housing strategy right now. We just need to stop and think about what we do next.

I also learned something else. The government is not investing enough, but that is not all. Earlier, I spoke about the 10,000 people experiencing homelessness. There is a federal program called Reaching Home that assists organizations and people experiencing homelessness. Not content with knowing that we are getting nowhere and that people all over Quebec will die this winter and are already dying because the federal government has underinvested in housing for the past 30 years, the government is going to reduce that program's budget by 3%. Three per cent may not seem like much, but how can the government even think of doing such a

thing at a time when homelessness in Quebec has doubled? Half of these people are in Montreal.

One thing struck me during my tour of Quebec. We used to see homeless people in Quebec City, Montreal and major Canadian cities like Toronto and Vancouver. My colleague was saying earlier how dire the situation is in Edmonton. Right now, however, we are seeing something we have never seen before: tent cities in small towns across Quebec.

I visited the Lower St. Lawrence, where cities have sprung up in places they have never been seen before. There are homeless people on street corners and living in tent cities next to the town hall. There are seniors sleeping in tents. How can we allow such a thing to happen? There are tent cities in Saint-Jérôme and Longueuil as well. Granby has decided to do something about the situation and set up a shelter. How can something like this be allowed to happen in a G7 country? How can we institutionalize tent cities and allow people to sleep there in wintertime when it is -30 degrees out?

I do not know how that can be allowed. I feel like we are going in the wrong direction. I feel like we have been saying that for years. Naively, I always believed that, in a democracy, people work together to find solutions. Naively, I believed that if the government realized something was not working, it would be willing to try a better solution suggested by someone else. I thought a government was supposed to work for people in need, not pose for photo ops. Ultimately, we have been talking about this for four years. I am not the only one. Many people in the House are concerned about housing and homelessness. Unfortunately, the system is stuck.

There is one basic issue to consider when it comes to homelessness. Obviously, we have to prevent people from freezing to death, but what is the ultimate problem? In the past, there used to be a continuum of services for people experiencing homelessness. Quebec, for one, understood that. There were 24-7 emergency shelters where people could sleep and eat a good meal. There were also shelters where people could stay for up to 90 days, to take the time to reintegrate into society, overcome drug addiction, rejoin the workforce and get back in touch with family. There used to be 90-day shelters. It worked because, at the end of the 90 days, people had access to social housing. They could return to work and get their life back on track. Today, in Quebec, these resources are overwhelmed. Since there is no social housing anymore, people end up staying in the shelters for longer, anywhere from six to nine months, so no new people can get in. We have work to do on a lot of fronts, but we especially need to build housing units.

Government Orders

I have criticized the national housing strategy a lot, and we will continue to do so. I am writing a report on my tour of Quebec, which I will present around February or March. We will make very specific recommendations. All I hope is that someone across the aisle will hear us. During my tour, I was often asked why I, a member of the opposition, was touring Quebec. I was asked why the minister himself was not sitting down with people in Saguenay, Saint-Jérôme, Rouyn-Noranda and Gaspé. People wanted to know why the minister and the government were not coming to see how difficult things are on the ground. Instead, it was I, a member of the opposition, who went. My colleagues can be sure that the findings from my report will help us make progress on this issue.

• (1335)

We have solutions that we are going to put forward.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for that very fiery and timely speech. I always enjoy his contributions to the House.

I know he supported Bill C-13, a piece of legislation of great importance to Canada and Quebec. It was the first time a government recognized the decline of French in Canada. He also knows that a strong Quebec makes for a strong Canada. It goes both ways. A strong Canada makes for a strong Quebec. I hope Quebec will always be part of our wonderful Canadian family.

Before 2015, the government invested \$2.2 billion in French in Canada. That amount is now \$4.1 billion. It is almost twice as much. My colleague must be impressed by that. Maybe he should talk about the importance of French in Canada as a whole.

I would like him to comment on that.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, whom I like very much. Indeed, French is in jeopardy across Canada. It is rather sad to see how tough this has become. Maybe \$4 billion will help, but I would like to throw a question back to my colleague.

How is it that the government is going to invest \$700 million over the next five years for anglophone communities in Quebec? If there is a community that is not in jeopardy, it is the anglophone community, not only in Quebec, but across Canada and North America.

Why spend \$700 million to save a community that is not at risk and never will be?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and his passion for fighting homelessness, for standing up for people and for getting housing that is not just for the super rich, but social housing and truly affordable housing. He is very familiar with the file. It is always interesting to hear him talk about it.

In Canada, we do not have a lot of social or co-op housing. It makes up roughly 3% to 4% of the entire housing stock. In Finland, it is 10%. In Denmark, it is 20%. I think there are examples we can use.

I would like my colleague to talk about Conservative Party leader's position. It seems that his solution to the housing problem is to

insult the mayors in Quebec. I would like to know what the member thinks about the Conservative leader's attitude and his lack of real solutions.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague. I did not mention it in my speech, but I too, like many Quebecers, was truly insulted by the Conservative leader's remarks. Together, Montreal and Quebec City make up roughly half of Quebec's population. The mayor of Montreal and the mayor of Quebec City are therefore two elected representatives of half of Quebec. As a solution, or as an approach to these elected officials, the Leader of the Opposition of this country insults them. He says they are incompetent.

How can anyone think that this man, once in power, would have any solutions? At some point, he will have to sit down with decision-makers from other levels of government to find solutions to this crisis. I do not see how he could possibly find any solutions.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish you a happy new year. I know it is a little late, but people say that it is like RRSPs: We have the first 60 days of the year to offer our best wishes. I wish all my colleagues a very happy new year.

I find it fascinating that we are starting this new session with a debate on the economic statement. It is curious, because during the holidays, the Conservative leader was very interested in budget issues; he spoke of them often. Since we are starting off nice and slow and we seem to have a pretty good atmosphere, I thought I would tell a joke. What is the difference between Quebecers and the leader of the official opposition? Well, they are both in the wrong country. At some point, we Quebecers will need to get our independence. The Conservative leader is living in a conspiracy theory. We heard him over the break. The glasses have come off. All he needs now is the orange tan and the blonde hair.

The dictionary says that a conspiracy is someone who thinks there is a secret agreement against someone or something. The Conservative leader toured Quebec saying that the Bloc Québécois supports 100% of the Liberals' economic policies. The Conservative leader's tone, the unpleasant, disrespectful tone he had over the holidays, which he has here in the House, and his gratuitous attacks on everyone that have no basis in fact, clearly show us that the Conservatives' best strategy is to say that offence is the best defence. Why? There is one party in the House that supports each and every Liberal policy. I am not talking about the NDP, whose members are Liberals by definition. I am talking about the Conservatives. It is even worse for Quebec Conservatives.

Government Orders

A Conservative member from Quebec is basically just a Liberal. Both parties have a fetish for oil. Some people have a foot fetish, while others, like the Conservatives and the Liberals, have an oil fetish. Bill C-59 gives oil companies \$18 billion in subsidies, or what the Liberals are referring to as tax credits and clean investments. How do they define “clean”? For them, clean means building nuclear reactors paid for with Quebecers' tax dollars—both the Liberals and the Conservatives are compulsive taxers—so that we stop cleaning up the oil sands with gas and so that we can export gas. I hope that the Conservatives and Liberals get cleaner than that when they shower. It is all the same.

The carbon tax does not apply in Quebec. They sounded so foolish that they stopped saying it. There is a reason why they are against the carbon tax in the other provinces. If there is no more carbon tax, then emissions will rise, and they will be able to impose more taxes on Quebecers and give more subsidies to oil companies with Quebecers' tax dollars. Those are their equalization payments. The Quebec Conservatives, like the Liberals, are people who live only for western Canada and dirty oil.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the OECD, has said that the storage tax credit is an illusion. It has no role to play in any structured solution to global warming. Bill C-59 provides \$12.5 billion in carbon storage investments. Who is in agreement about these subsidies? The Liberals and the Conservatives are. The Conservatives have supported the Liberals' economic policies at every turn.

That is interference in Quebec's affairs. It is funny, though. Trampling all over Quebec, meddling in its affairs and engaging in interference are practically Liberal hallmarks. The Liberals have a lot of experience in this regard and, as the bill shows, unique expertise too. They tell us that they are going to put together a department of municipal affairs, an undertaking that has failed before. To listen to the Liberals, it would almost seem that no stop sign or speed bump could possibly be installed in any residential neighbourhood without the federal government's help. Complicating existing structures, picking more fights and adding more phases to negotiations, only to build no housing and make no progress, is classic Liberal behaviour. As the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert aptly said, it is what Liberals do.

• (1340)

We thought the Conservatives were different, but no. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition may have had a little too much time on his hands during the holidays. What did he do? He managed to outdo the Liberals when it comes to meddling. He went to Longueuil, Montreal and Quebec City to insult the mayors and demonstrate his total lack of knowledge of how the system works. Quebec municipalities receive their funding from Quebec City and the transfers go to Quebec City. This kind of meddling, the Conservative king of meddling, is the guy who, when he was a minister, built nothing but housing slabs—no deliverables, no construction. The Leader of the Opposition could not even recognize a two-by-four in a hardware store. Who supports the Liberals' economic policies? The Conservatives do.

Here is something surprising. When half of Quebec was being insulted during the holiday season, where were the Quebec Conser-

vatives? Were they off buying turkeys by the dozen and attending tons of New Year's Eve parties? They were absolutely nowhere to be seen.

Let us move on to the Liberal policy on asylum seekers. Ottawa owes Quebec \$470 million. Why is that? Quebec welcomed 65,000 asylum seekers in 2023, or 45% of all asylum seekers, even though we represent only 22% of the Canadian population. We welcome them with open arms, as best we can, with all the resources at our disposal. When Quebec asks to be compensated for its contribution, the Liberals reply that they are not an ATM, as if Quebecers do not pay taxes to Ottawa.

How many Conservatives from Quebec rose to defend the Premier of Quebec when he made this request? Not a single one, because the Quebec Conservatives are red from head to toe. They could almost run for the NDP; there would be no difference.

That is what is happening in the House. Only one party is worthy of Quebecers' trust. We see that on the ground; we feel it. Only one party is consistent, only one party stays true, only one party does not spend its time flip-flopping, sloganeering and campaigning two years ahead of an election: the Bloc Québécois.

The Bloc Québécois is the only party that will always stand up for seniors and demand an OAS raise for everyone over 65 so as to put an end to the two classes of seniors the Liberals created.

Only one party is demanding an end to fossil fuel subsidies. Not even the NDP is calling for that; only the Bloc Québécois is.

Only one party called for the CEBA repayment deadline to be extended to keep small and medium-sized businesses afloat. That was us. Even the Conservatives did not join our efforts to save businesses and innovators, the people who make up the industrial and commercial fabric of our cities, our towns and our regions.

Only one party is calling for a media fund. The Conservatives want to shut down the media, and the Liberals are staying mum.

Only one party is calling for an emergency homelessness fund. The only thing the Conservatives want to do about homelessness is speed up global warming so that the winters are not so hard on the homeless. Only one party is doing that. As the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert says, only one party is calling for an affordable housing acquisition fund for our non-profit organizations in Quebec.

Bearing all that in mind, who really supports the Liberals' economic policies in the House? The Conservative members from Quebec do. Quebecers will remember that.

Government Orders

Quebeckers can see that and they are smart. We appeal to Quebeckers' intelligence, and that is to our credit. We will continue to do so. We will continue to be trustworthy. When the election comes, Quebeckers will understand that we have been steadfast and consistent, and that we have worked for them.

Should a day come when Quebeckers grow tired of making agonizing choices about which bad party they should vote into power in Ottawa, there is a solution: We can vote for independence, pack up and leave, and let the other provinces and territories resolve their issues as a family.

• (1345)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed my colleague's speech, especially when we consider the expression "the enemy of my enemy is my friend". He spent most of his speech making completely valid attacks against the Conservatives. Just before I ask my question, since we are joking around here, I want to say "hello, bonjour" to you, Mr. Speaker, and wish you a happy new year. I am saying that because we are all Quebeckers and we, on this side of the House, also speak for Quebeckers.

I wanted to point out a few contradictions. When he was the environment minister for the Parti Québécois government, the leader of the Bloc Québécois approved oil exploration off Anticosti Island. He also approved other things that I believe go against the principles that the Bloc Québécois is advocating for today.

Why did the members of the Bloc Québécois vote against our budget? By so doing, they voted against the investments in housing that we made for Quebec.

• (1350)

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat surprised that the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle is happy to hear me say that the Conservatives are as bad as the Liberals. Apparently, they take compliments any way they can.

I did my Ph.D. in Ontario. I am bilingual. In Quebec, we greet people in French. I think that is one of our selling points, something that makes us valuable. I understand that the member is very comfortable with the fact that her government will be pouring \$800 million of public money, including Quebeckers' money, into English-speaking organizations to defend English in Quebec over the next few years. She may have political reasons for doing so. I think it is appalling.

I will conclude by saying that I am very proud that Quebec's CO₂ emissions trading system was implemented by our leader when he was the environment minister, and I think history will remember that.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his attacks on the Conservatives, on the next government. He got some good practice in. It will come as no surprise that the Conservatives may very well form the next government.

I would like my colleague to lay out the costs of all the demands he made in his speech so we can have an idea of where to head with future budgets.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, when his leader was attacking all the mayors in Quebec over the holidays, my colleague went into hiding.

Sometimes we have to bug them a bit to get a reaction.

I will take just a few seconds to tell my colleague that Bill C-59 provides two years' worth of equalization payments in subsidies for the oil companies. I will give him a chance to think about that.

[*English*]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): [*Member spoke in Inuktitut*]

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, what I just said in Inuktitut is that I am always so happy to rise and speak in Inuktitut in the House.

As we all know, most MPs here are settlers or are ancestors of settlers, Quebec included. I wonder if the member has, or if anyone in his party has, consulted with the indigenous peoples in Quebec, the Cree and the Innu, who most likely would wish to stay in Canada as opposed to what the member shared in his intervention.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, I think that the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert did a good job earlier explaining what might happen if there were a referendum. If one is called, there will be a national conversation in Quebec. Thank goodness it will be far away from this Parliament.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish you a happy 2024. I will be sharing my time with the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

My speech today will be on the economy, which is very important, but also on our government's position on the economy. I will talk about affordability and, of course, housing, an important topic.

[*English*]

I want to underline that we are in a great position economically right now as country. I want to share some of our strengths, and this comes not just from me but from other sources around the world. Let us keep in mind that Canadians created 1.4 million jobs before COVID. We recaptured that 1.4 million, built on it and Canadians now have an extra one million jobs.

Statements by Members

The International Monetary Fund predicts that this year Canada will have the strongest economy in the G7. The OECD also said that Canada received the third-most foreign direct investment in the world last year. Also, on labour, when we took power in 2015, the unemployment rate was at about 7%. Now the unemployment rate is down to 5.7%. These are facts.

Before COVID, inflation was at 2%. COVID pushed it to 8.1%. Today it is down to 3.4% and it continues to drop. We continue to have our AAA credit rating, which is extremely important.

When it comes to affordability, there are two pieces. The first is what we have done since the last election in 2021. We have made some great investments for Canadians because we know that affordability is challenging and that we need to be there to support them.

We doubled the GST credit for two payments for those receiving it, which helped 11 million people. It also helped over 300,000 Nova Scotians. We added supports for a grocery rebate, which again helped 11 million people and over 300,000 Nova Scotians.

On the Canada workers benefit, which represents about \$2,461 per year, we made adjustments so they receive three quarterly payments. This helps with affordability as well.

We have of course eliminated the interest on Canada student loans, helping young Canadians in dealing with affordability.

We have indexed, and this is crucial, key benefits to inflation. If another government takes over some day, it will not be able to stop it, unless it brings legislation to the House. We indexed the Canada child benefit, ensuring that young families will continue to prosper. We have also indexed the GST and the Canada pension plan, which we made major changes to with the provinces back in 2017. The OAS and the GIS have both been indexed and will ensure seniors can continue to prosper as well.

• (1355)

We also brought in dental support for children under 12 years old, of which over 1,200 Nova Scotians have taken advantage.

These are some investments we made in the past two years. What the fall economic statement brings to the table today is also key areas of investments.

We are expanding the dental benefit to not just children 12 and under, but to 18 and under. For seniors, January, February, March and April are important months because they will have access to dental care, which is very important. People with disabilities will also have access starting this year. Next year, all Canadians who make \$90,000 or less and are not part of a dental plan will be able to receive dental care. Those are major investments supporting Canadians and affordability.

Other investments include removing the GST from psychotherapy and counselling. This is important for affordability for people who have challenges with their mental health.

We are going to crack down and make major changes to the Competition Act. This will ensure that we can bring prices down and ensure competition is strong in Canada, that no anti-competition happens. We need to do a major review of that area and make

improvements, which is exactly what we will be doing as we move forward.

Another area I want to touch on is housing. We are focused on four areas. The first one is new, increased and continued investments in housing, which is important. There are going to be challenges with labour in the building sector, so we are going to make changes that would allow workers to move from province to province and territory to territory. We will prioritize workers for permanent residency in key areas of need, with construction being one and education being another.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

TEMPLE INAUGURATION

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the history of the oldest religion in the world, January 22, 2024, marked the beginning of a new era for 1.2 billion Hindus across the world, including a million Hindus in Canada.

After centuries of anticipation and immense sacrifices, the divine temple at Ayodhya was inaugurated with Bhagwan Shri Ram's "Pran Pratishtha" ceremony, an act that transforms an idol into a deity.

Like Hindus across Canada at about 115 Hindu temples and events, I witnessed the live coverage of this emotional moment at Ottawa's Hindu temple.

The birthplace of Hindu Dharma, India, that is Bharat, is rebuilding its civilization to emerge as a major global economic and geopolitical power. Canada and India are natural partners for sharing economic opportunities and addressing global challenges.

* * *

EMERGENCIES ACT

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Federal Court of Canada could not be clearer in its 190-page ruling. In 2022, there was no justifiable reason to invoke the Emergencies Act.

Statements by Members

The Liberal government's use of the act directly violated Canadians' most essential rights to freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression. The decision to invoke the Emergencies Act was unnecessary from the start. For Canadians to have any faith in our democracy, the Liberals must show that they understand the court decision and have learned their lesson. They should drop their plans to appeal and should promise to abide by the Constitution instead of breaking the law. When will the Prime Minister admit that he was wrong, apologize to Canadians for his actions and drop the appeal?

* * *

ELECTIONS IN TAIWAN

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to share today that Taiwan successfully completed presidential and legislative elections on January 13, 2024. This marks the eighth milestone in Taiwan's history, and I would like to congratulate the new President of Taiwan, Mr. William Lai. With a proven track record of dedication to public service and a deep commitment to the values that define Taiwan, President Lai embodies the spirit of progress and inclusivity.

As Taiwan embarks on this new chapter, let us rally together in support, embracing the shared vision of a Taiwan that thrives on innovation, justice and the unwavering spirit of its people. These elections are another testament to Taiwan's strong commitment to democracy and freedom. The democratic process is the heartbeat of the people of Taiwan.

Once again, congratulations to President Lai and the people of Taiwan.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GUY ROUSSEAU

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it came as a shock to everyone in the riding of Trois-Rivières when my friend, Guy Rousseau, executive director of the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de la Mauricie, announced his retirement.

Guy Rousseau has been a fixture in Trois-Rivières for 40 years. He served the Conseil central de Trois-Rivières for a decade, first as a union representative, then as president. He was on the front lines of every battle. It was quite a journey for a liberation theologian.

Guy devoted all of his skill and energy to promoting Quebec culture and the French language. Nary a borrowed word or anglicism was tolerated in his presence, nor in his absence, for that matter.

In 2015, Guy was awarded the Rosaire-Morin prize for individuals whose writings and actions have made a significant contribution to enhancing Quebec's national conscience and championing Quebec's interests.

Guy Rousseau has organized national holiday celebrations in Mauricie and is a tireless advocate for Quebec independence. He leaves a lasting legacy in Trois-Rivières.

On behalf of myself and of everyone in Trois-Rivières, I thank him for his years of service to the community.

* * *

CANADIAN DENTAL CARE PLAN

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many seniors in Alfred-Pellan and across Canada are neglecting their oral health because they cannot afford dental care.

Untreated dental problems can escalate, causing a person's general health to deteriorate and putting even more strain on an already overburdened health care system.

That is why our government introduced the Canadian dental care plan to help ease financial barriers to accessing oral health care for eligible Canadians.

I invite seniors in Alfred-Pellan and across Canada who have an annual family net income of less than \$90,000 and who do not have access to dental insurance to apply for the plan today. Once registration is confirmed, coverage can start as early as May 2024.

* * *

● (1405)

[*English*]

OPIOIDS

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister and his NDP coalition, Canada is in the midst of an unprecedented addictions crisis, one that continues to get worse. Last year, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions assured Canadians that the Liberals would end their decriminalization experiment if public health and public safety indicators were not met. One year in, there are out-of-control crime and chaos and unprecedented deaths: nearly seven a day in British Columbia alone. It is time to end this dangerous experiment.

Many leading addictions physicians from across the country have stated that the Liberal-NDP's so-called "safe supply" continues to fuel new addictions. These courageous physicians demand an immediate end to the programs that are flooding the streets with taxpayer-funded narcotics.

Conservatives would listen to the experts and shut down government-supplied drug programs. We would bring hope, with a common-sense plan for treatment and recovery. Conservatives believe recovery is possible, and that should be the goal. We believe that every Canadian with an addiction deserves the treatment—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Toronto—Danforth.

* * *

EAST YORK

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to celebrate a special first. I am asking everyone in the House to please join me in wishing a special 100th birthday celebration for East York. It is an important part of the community that has played an important role in Canadian history.

*Statements by Members***WOMEN IN PEACEKEEPING**

Agnes Macphail, the first female MP in this place, came from East York. Our first honouree of the East York Hall of Fame, John Candy, was from East York. He was not only an important actor and comedian but also a great supporter of the Argos. Let's go, Argos!

Let us say that East York is such an important place, and every day we see that spirit. In fact, East York has the longest-running Canada Day parade in all of Toronto. We celebrate year after year, bringing a small-town feeling to a big city. There is also the East York Historical Society, which helps to preserve and keep telling that history.

I thank community members for keeping that spirit alive. Happy birthday, East York.

* * *

2023 CANADIAN MUSIC CLASS CHALLENGE

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at St. John Fisher Elementary School in Pointe-Claire, music is deep. The school is one of 13 schools to win the 2023 Canadian Music Class Challenge, a competition that salutes music education in Canada, sponsored by CBC Music in association with the music charity MusiCounts.

St. John Fisher's grade 3 class, under the direction of music education specialist David Arless, claimed top prize in the primary vocal category with their rendition of *Turning the Tide* by Luke Wallace. Competition judge and Canadian musical artist Victoria Duffield said of the students' performance that it captured her ears and heart right from the opening chorus and that the musicality displayed through the vocals and instruments showed a great degree of skill and teamwork.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating St. John Fisher's grade 3 class on this truly wonderful accomplishment.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government's soft-on-crime policies, crime, chaos, drugs and disorder are ravaging communities across our country.

Under the Prime Minister, crime is up 39%. Shootings are up, extortion is up, car thefts are up and homicides are up. Canadians do not feel safe walking down their own streets anymore. They are waking up to find their cars stolen and shipped out of the country. Car thefts have increased by 34% nationally. What is the government's response? It is more photo ops, large summits, more talk and no action. The Prime Minister is not worth the crime or the chaos.

Only a common-sense, Conservative government would bring back jail and not bail for repeat violent offenders. We would secure our ports to stop stolen vehicles from being shipped out, and we would bring back mandatory jail time for serious violent crimes that were repealed by the government. It is time to support victims and put them first, not the criminals. That is just common sense.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last December I had the opportunity to lead the Canadian delegation to the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial in Accra, Ghana. It was encouraging to hear so many countries talk about the importance of women, peace and security and, in particular, the Elsie initiative.

Known as the "Queen of the Hurricanes", Elsie MacGill was the first woman in the world to earn an aeronautical engineering degree and did much to make Canada a powerhouse in aircraft construction. She was a champion of gender equality in an industry that had, up to that point, been entirely dominated by men. The Elsie initiative carries forward her legacy.

Since its launch, the Elsie initiative has created interest globally as a unique, bold and insightful policy intervention that seeks to ensure that military and policewomen are represented in UN peacekeeping, across all ranks and functions, in an environment that is conducive to their meaningful participation.

* * *

● (1410)

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is a question: How many Canadians stayed in a \$9,000-a-night resort owned by a friend over Christmas for free? The answer is very likely none, but there was one, and that was the Prime Minister.

At a time when two million Canadians are using food banks, the carbon tax is punishing families and businesses, housing is unaffordable for young Canadians while those in their houses can barely afford them as mortgages become due for renewal, and seniors cannot afford groceries and are not eating nutritiously because of the NDP-Liberal government, the Prime Minister did not for a second think that maybe an \$87,000 free vacation to a luxury resort was not a good look right now. He clearly did not care.

What about the 100 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions put into the atmosphere from the not one but two private jets he needed for the trip? We can understand why Canadians are upset about his lack of judgment and his hypocrisy.

It is clear to everyone that after eight years of the Prime Minister, he is not worth the cost. Canadians see that everything is about him, and that while we live in his world, the rest of us are just squirrels looking for nuts, nuts that not many can afford anymore.

*Statements by Members***CARBON TAX**

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians across this country are paying a high price for the NDP-Liberal government's tax-and-spend agenda.

After eight years with the carbon tax-obsessed Prime Minister, Canadian families are struggling to put food on the table, put gas in their tanks and keep a warm roof overhead, yet the Prime Minister only wants to punish them more. His April 1 carbon tax is only going to make things worse for the two million Canadians who are already lined up at food banks.

Bill C-234 is a common-sense piece of legislation that would remove the carbon tax on farm operations to help lower our grocery prices. However, the Prime Minister is hell-bent on quadrupling the carbon tax on farmers and on Canadians.

It is clearer than ever that the Prime Minister is simply not worth the cost.

* * *

GENDER EQUALITY

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend marked the 108th anniversary of a historic milestone in our nation's journey towards equality. It was on January 28, 1916, that my home province of Manitoba blazed a trail by granting women the right to vote; it was the first province in Canada to do so.

This decision was the result of years' worth of brave and courageous actions by women across Canada, marking a turning point for our country, fostering inclusivity and shaping a more representative democracy. Their efforts deserve our recognition and gratitude.

As we celebrate this anniversary, let us take pride in the progress made, acknowledge the depth of work yet to be achieved, and commit to continuously advancing gender equality in all spheres of Canadian life.

* * *

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Nuu-chah-nulth people have suffered enormous loss throughout their 200-year history of colonization, not the least of which has been the devastating loss of language and culture.

Today, Nuu-chah-nulth elders, educators and learners are making tremendous progress towards revitalizing their indigenous language, in spite of the uncertainty of federal funding from one year to the next. Now their language program funding may be cut by up to 57% because of a newly proposed federal heritage funding formula. The formula fails to recognize that British Columbia has the highest concentration of indigenous language and cultural diversity of any province or territory in the country, with 35 distinct languages and more than 90 dialects.

As B.C.'s First Peoples' Cultural Council reminds us, "the revitalization of languages, arts and cultural heritage is an essential step in recognizing the rights of and finding reconciliation with indige-

nous peoples." Language revitalization is essential to reconciliation, along with fair, predictable, sustained and long-term funding.

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[*Translation*]**CANADIAN COAST GUARD AUXILIARY VOLUNTEERS**

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the evening of September 21, 2018, off the coast of the Lower St. Lawrence, a 22-foot sailboat ran violently aground on a reef, leaving its two sailors clinging to the mast, fearing the worst. Despite extreme weather conditions, 100-kilometre-an-hour winds and three-metre waves, the Canadian Coast Guard auxiliary volunteers in my region took to the sea with one goal in mind: to save lives. Thanks to Ted Savage and his crew, the worst was avoided.

More than five years after the events, the men who risked their lives to save others have never received any recognition. These people, acting on a volunteer basis, with very little means, deserve all the honours in the world for the acts of bravery they carry out every day.

That is why I feel humbly compelled to officially thank Johnatan Brunet, Philippe Charbonneau, François-Xavier Bérubé-Dufour and Ted Savage on behalf of the people of Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

* * *

● (1415)

[*English*]**CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA**

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians will face a choice in the next election.

One choice is the out-of-touch, NDP-Liberal coalition. It is a costly coalition with an ever-increasing carbon tax pushing grocery and gas prices higher and higher. It has doubled the cost of housing and increased violent crime by 40%; its dangerous, taxpayer-funded drugs have destroyed thousands of lives.

However, the other choice is the common-sense Conservative plan to axe the tax on gas, heat and grocery bills; to build more homes instead of more bureaucracy; to cap spending and cut waste to bring down Liberal inflation and interest rates; to make our streets safer by bringing treatment, not taxpayer-funded drugs; and to bring in jail and not bail for repeat violent offenders.

The choice is clear, and in the next election, Canadians will choose a common-sense Conservative plan to bring it home.

AJIT SINGH BADH

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a community leader, Mr. Ajit Singh Badh, who passed away on January 13 at the age of 87.

Mr. Ajit Singh Badh immigrated to Canada in 1969, and over half a century, he made several impactful community contributions. He was a founding member of the first Canadian Sikh Panth magazine, Sikh Samachar, and the first individual to own and operate a Punjabi-language radio station outside India.

Pioneer Ajit Singh Badh deeply believed in the power of community in creating meaningful and positive change. I offer my sincere and deepest condolences to the entire Badh family. Although Mr. Ajit Singh Badh will be deeply missed, his legacy will continue to inspire for generations to come.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the Prime Minister says that he had no choice but to double the national debt and drive up inflation and interest rates because every penny he spent was absolutely necessary.

Today, however, we learned that 76% of the contractors paid from the \$54 million spent on the ArriveCAN app did no work.

Will the Prime Minister get our money back and stop wasting it?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know full well that when Conservatives talk about spending, what they really want is to make cuts.

They want to take away dental care for Canadians. They want to shut down child care centres. They want to end investments in the green economy. That is the reality of Conservative policy, which is so dangerous for Canada.

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will cancel the \$54 million for the ArriveCAN app, an example of corruption and a Liberal scandal.

There is also the carbon tax on farmers. The other day when I said that the leader of the Bloc Québécois fully supported the Liberals' economic policies, the spending, the taxes, and the hikes in inflation and interest rates, the Bloc leader flipped out. However, yesterday, he admitted that he was going to change his mind and vote to keep the carbon tax on farm buildings.

How much will this tax cost farmers and people who buy food?

● (1420)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously, as an anglophone and member from Ontario, I cannot speak for the Bloc Québécois,

Oral Questions

but I know that Quebec, the Quebec nation, understands the importance of the environment and the importance of industrial investments in the green economy.

We are proud to do that. We are proud to do that with the support of all members who understand the importance of Canada's industrial economy.

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister doubled the debt and drove inflation and interest rates to their highest levels in a generation, he said he had no choice, that every penny he spent was necessary. Along came ArriveCAN, a \$54-million app that we did not need, that did not work, and that could have been done for \$200,000 or \$300,000. Now, we have learned, based on the ombudsman's audit, that 76% of the contractors did absolutely no work for the money they received.

Will the Prime Minister get back this stolen money for taxpayers and stop the waste that is not worth the cost?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have learned through bitter experience that, when Conservatives talk about the public finances, what they are really talking about is cutting the government support Canadians depend on. What they are talking about is cutting early learning and child care, which is supporting labour force participation at record levels in Canada and, by the way, making life more affordable for Canadian families. They want to cut dental care. They want to cut essential investments in our green future.

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we want to cut waste and mismanagement; this has risen to a level that is not worth the cost after eight years under the Prime Minister.

Speaking of wasteful, the Prime Minister loves to lecture Canadians on how they use energy. He says that he is just like every other Canadian when he stays with a friend for an \$89,000-a-week vacation. The average Canadian emits 15 tonnes of carbon per year. His trip emitted 100 tonnes of carbon in one week.

Did he pay the full carbon tax on each tonne he emitted for his luxurious vacation?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since we are asking questions of MPs, I have a couple of questions for the Leader of the Opposition. I want to know how much it costs to heat the 19-room government mansion that he lives in. That would be interesting for Canadians to understand.

The good news for Canadians is that we are helping them with the cost of heating with the carbon rebate. Did his family cash their carbon rebate cheque? It is almost a thousand bucks.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member that I pay for my own vacations and those of my family. Canadians who pay for their own vacations are also paying too much for food. We have a common-sense Conservative bill, Bill C-234, that would take the carbon tax off the farmers who feed us and the consumers who desperately need to put nutrition on their tables.

Will the Prime Minister stop blocking the bill and pass this law so that Canadians can afford food?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, people who live in glass houses really should not throw stones, and the Leader of the Opposition may be bragging about what he pays for, but I think Canadians should understand that he does not pay any rent on that 19-room mansion that he lives in. In fact, he has been on the government payroll for more than 20 years, and he qualified for a full pension at 35. Now, he wants to take the rebate away from Ontario families. It is \$1,000 a year, and he wants to take that away.

* * *

• (1425)

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister said that “immigration levels are based on our capacity to welcome and integrate newcomers.” Unfortunately, that is entirely untrue.

As early as 2022, his public service warned him that if he raised his immigration targets, he would worsen the housing crisis and other things. The Prime Minister went ahead and did it anyway. Now he has to fix a situation caused by his poor judgment.

On November 1, the Prime Minister promised to review his immigration targets as early as 2024 on the basis of intake capacity and after speaking with Quebec.

Will he keep his word?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we can welcome newcomers and build housing at the same time. That is why we negotiated a \$1.8-billion contribution agreement with la belle province to build 23,000 housing units and 8,000 affordable housing units.

[English]

We are going to continue to work with our partners in Quebec to welcome newcomers who contribute essential skills to our economy and build houses at the same time.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals knew that increasing immigration levels would exacerbate the housing crisis. They did it anyway.

Today, the consequences are blowing up in their face and there is no sign of them rectifying the situation, which they seem incapable of doing.

No, on the contrary, in 2024, the number of immigrants will increase to 485,000 and in 2025, to 500,000. Even in the middle of a crisis, they continue to increase immigration targets against the advice of their public service and economists.

When will they do the responsible thing and adjust immigration levels to integration capacity?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member across the way seems to forget that we have a unique agreement with Quebec, the Canada-Quebec accord, which transfers more than \$700 million a year to Quebec precisely to manage its levels.

Quebec is almost exclusively responsible for choosing who comes to Quebec. We will work with Quebec to ensure that this is consistent with its integration capacity.

I have a question for the member across the way. He seems to want to reduce immigration. Where would he like to make these cuts?

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with 24 Liberal MPs in Toronto, we get a housing crisis and a Davenport MP who gaslights and attacks the city and the housing workers who are struggling to make sure people have a place to call home. Whether someone was born here or moved here, no one should live on the streets. The city and the housing groups are just asking the Liberal government to do its fair share.

Will the Liberals provide the \$250 million that Toronto needs now?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for pointing to the importance of the great city I have the privilege of representing, Toronto, which is such an engine of economic growth for our entire country. We are having very constructive conversations with the City of Toronto and with the Province of Ontario. We are providing \$1.5 billion for Toronto in 2023-24. We are there for Toronto more than any government in Canadian history.

*Oral Questions***GROCERY INDUSTRY**

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the out-of-touch Liberals continue to let down Toronto.

[*Translation*]

Yesterday, the Minister of Industry made me laugh. He said he was disappointed in the big grocery stores. He asked people to read the flyers and failed to stabilize prices, and now he says that we need another investigation. We know what the problem is: People are getting taken for a ride as the CEOs fill their pockets.

When will the Liberals stop protecting the big grocers' profits?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important question. I think the price of groceries is an issue that affects all Canadians. That is why Canadians understand that the best way to stabilize prices in the medium and long term is to have more competition in this country. That is exactly why we amended the Competition Act in December to give the commissioner of competition more power. Yesterday, on behalf of all Canadians, I asked him to use these new powers to help stabilize prices in Canada. The leader of the NDP should be happy about that.

* * *

• (1430)

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, another year means another carbon tax increase on April 1. It was -50°C in some places in this country where Canadians cannot even afford to heat their homes.

Yesterday, the finance minister lectured Canadians on her out-of-touch version of events, and then we learned that the Liberals were going to change the name of the carbon tax. Taking money out of the pockets of Canadians rebranded is still taking money out of their pockets. So, instead of paying high-priced consultants to change the carbon tax name, they should take some free advice and cancel it April 1.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me tell members what is really out of touch. What is out of touch is for a Toronto MP, like the one sitting opposite, to be saying to the people of Ontario, to the hard-working families of Ontario, "We are going to take away the \$974 you are getting back thanks to the price on pollution. We are going to cut that money that goes directly to your family budget. Oh, and by the way, we are going to cut day care and dental care along the way too."

That is not going to help anyone in Canada.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not remember a government so indifferent to the plight of Canadians. The minister's advice of cutting Disney+ is cold comfort to the woman who is putting water in her children's milk. The cost of some produce is up 94% since she got here. The Liberals can lower the cost of food, gas and home heating by cancelling the increase instead of quadrupling the tax. They paused it for one region where their MPs revolted. Where are the rest of their silent MPs who

should be speaking up for their neighbours who are asking to cancel the increase?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to being out of touch with regular Canadians, I will tell members what was out of touch. It was having a temporary leader who charged \$20,000 to move into her temporary house and then charged Canadian taxpayers more than \$5,000 for bed and bath linens, which is for towels and sheets.

What Canadians need to know is that these Conservatives would cut child care, dental care and the carbon rebate people are getting.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that Deputy Prime Minister is so out of touch. This is the truth: After eight years, Canadians cannot afford to eat, heat or house themselves. Last year, two million Canadians needed help from food banks every month. That is a shocking 78% increase from just two years before, and food banks say that 2024 will be even worse.

The Conservative common-sense bill, Bill C-234, would take the tax off farmers to lower food prices right now, but the Liberals forced senators to gut it. Why will the Liberals not axe the tax on farmers to bring down food prices for Canadians?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will take no lessons from these austerity Conservatives when it comes to supporting the most vulnerable Canadians. Since we formed government, 2.3 million Canadians have been lifted out of poverty, and the poverty rate has fallen from 14.5% when they were in government to 7.4%.

The Conservatives want to cut child care and dental care. That MP from Alberta wants to cut the \$1,500 Alberta families are getting from the price on pollution.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' schemes, scams and spin jobs do not help the millions of desperate hungry Canadians struggling just to get by every single month.

This is the fact: when one taxes the farmer who produces the food, the trucker who ships the food and the cost of heating and cooling and storing the food, Canadians cannot afford the food.

These out-of-touch carbon tax crusaders do not care. They are going to quadruple it on April 1. Conservatives would axe the tax for all for good.

Oral Questions

Why will these Liberals not just pass Bill C-234, reject the Senate amendments, axe the tax on farmers and bring down food prices today?

• (1435)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will tell us where Conservatives were focused just over a week ago. A who's who collection of Conservatives gathered for a pep talk from far-right U.S. commentator Tucker Carlson—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

It is important, once again, for us to be able to hear the questions and the answers. I know that, yesterday, if we will recall, there was a member who had complained about the noise level, which made it difficult to hear, especially for people who need to listen to the translation.

The hon. minister, from the top, please.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, last week, a who's who of Conservatives gathered in Alberta for a lecture in a series with far-right commentator Tucker Carlson. In that speech, one of them, which had the premier, Danielle Smith, attend, we heard attacks on francophones, homophobic jokes and the traditional best hits of MAGA politicians.

A Conservative nomination candidate in my riding went on Twitter and had lots of fun on it.

Will his leader stand with the candidate or call him out or is he standing with Tucker Carlson?

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this NDP-Liberal government, Canadians who used to belong to the middle class are going hungry. The Prime Minister and his radical environment minister know that if it costs the farmer more to grow food, it is going to cost Canadians more to buy food. This Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

Farmers, ranchers and producers are asking for Bill C-234 to lower their costs. Will the Liberals finally reject the amendments to Bill C-234 from the Senate, remove the carbon tax completely and lower the price of food for all Canadians?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I fully understand the importance of looking after the land. Being a farmer, I fully understand taking steps to prepare the industry for the future.

That is why we invested, as a government, \$1.5 billion to make sure our farmers, ranchers and processors are ready for the future. We are going to continue to make sure our farmers and ranchers remain on the cutting edge.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the two million Canadians who rely on food banks deserve better than that cheap deflection. One in five Ontario households who struggle to put food on their tables deserve better. They need this government to stop inflating food prices. They need the Prime Minister to stand up to his radical environment minister and carve

out the inflationary carbon tax for our farmers, producers and ranchers.

Would the Liberals finally do the right thing, reject the Senate amendments to Bill C-234, remove the carbon tax for farmers and lower the price of food for Canadians?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, being a farmer, the member must fully understand that it is so important that we invest in what farmers do. When one sees what takes place across the country, with the devastating fires and floods, it is so important that we take care of the environment.

Farmers fully understand that one has to take care of the land and the environment, and if not, one's food price will increase dramatically. We will continue to make sure we support our farmers and ranchers right across this country.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since 2021, the federal government has been withholding the money it owes Quebec for taking in asylum seekers. It has been so long that the bill has reached \$470 million.

Yesterday, at last, the government announced in the newspapers that there would be some good news today. It is 2:40 p.m., and there is still nothing. Yesterday, in his first question of 2024, the minister talked about playing politics at the expense of immigrants. Do they know what it means to play politics at the expense of immigrants? It means withholding for years the money needed to provide them with services.

Where is the money?

• (1440)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member was here in the House. He did not learn about it in the papers, unless he did not listen.

I was the one who announced that there would be good news this week. It will deal with matters under my authority, and naturally, Quebec will not be getting all that it asked for. That is very clear, but it will deal with matters under my authority.

It is our responsibility to support asylum seekers and to support Quebec in its efforts to ensure that these people are well supported. It is a dual responsibility. We will continue our good work together.

Oral Questions

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec does not play politics on the backs of immigrants. These people need services, and Quebec is scrambling to provide them at Quebecers' expense. People come first and money matters come later.

It is only here, in Ottawa, where the policies are not up to snuff. It is only here that the government has been trying for years to save money at the expense of asylum seekers and Quebec. Today, I would invite the federal government to take the high road and face up to its responsibilities.

Where is the \$470 million?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is not saving money by giving Quebec \$700 million a year under the Canada-Quebec accord, in addition to a surplus of over \$700 million that we have never asked Quebec about. We never asked for an accounting, but obviously there will have to be a conversation about that with Quebec. We are ready to have that conversation. We are already having some good discussions.

As I said, there will be good news later this week.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, obviously, the heart of the matter is the quality of services offered to asylum seekers. Money is essential, but there is much more to it than that.

Last year alone, Quebecers welcomed more than 65,000 asylum seekers. That is almost half the total for all of Canada. Our public services and community organizations are overwhelmed. We lack resources. Quebec has exceeded its integration capacity.

In the interest of fairness—but, more importantly, to guarantee adequate services for asylum seekers—will the minister finally organize how integration is shared among the provinces?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to hear the member opposite admit that this responsibility falls to both levels of government. Last year, he was claiming that it was solely Canada's responsibility, and that all the provinces needed was money.

We are clearly going to work together. We clearly need to make more effort. There are two provinces that are overburdened, Ontario and Quebec. This is something we can do as a team. We are a federation, and a beautiful one at that.

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[English]

HOUSING

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for far too many Canadians, the dream of home ownership is dead, and it lays squarely on the Liberal-NDP government. After eight years, mortgages have doubled and a staggering three out of four families cannot afford a home.

Canadians know that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost, a cost brought about by a truly impressive mix of arrogance and indifference to the suffering of many Canadians.

When will the government take a break from its Jamaican junkets and actually address the housing hell in Canada?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect, my hon. colleague is simply trying to prey on the very real anxiety that families are feeling across this country. At the same time, she advances a plan that will build fewer homes than we are already on track to build.

We have removed the GST from homebuilding in this country. The Conservatives want to put it back on. We are investing directly in affordable housing. The Conservatives want to cut it. We have put a \$4 billion fund on the table to reduce red tape with cities, and they have committed to doing away with that too.

We will get the homes built. They only stand in the way.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those are more empty words while Canadians are spiralling out of control. It is not only home ownership that the Liberal-NDP government has managed to turn from a dream into a nightmare but also rent. In the last two years alone, rents have increased by 22%. That is nearly \$400 a month. After eight years of its war on affordable housing and rent, the government is forcing Canadians out from the suburbs and into tent cities in parking lots.

When will the government stop the photo ops and actually fix the housing and affordability crisis that is hammering Canadians?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for years, the Conservative approach to policies that would actually help people was to prey on their anxieties rather than to advance ideas that would actually address them.

The member is supporting her leader's plan, which is going to build fewer homes than we are already on track to build. We have removed the GST from apartments to help bring down rent. She is campaigning on a commitment to put that GST back on for a lot of middle-class apartments, which would increase the cost of living. When it comes to affordable housing, we have put programs in place to support their construction. They have promised to cut it.

We are going to continue to put money on the table to build more homes. The Conservative's policies would drive up rent.

Oral Questions

● (1445)

[Translation]

The Speaker: Before I give the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent the floor, I would urge all members to show respect for those listening to the interpretation and refrain from commenting during questions and answers.

The member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the impact of the Liberal housing crisis is devastating.

Yesterday, Radio-Canada reported that university students in Montreal are having to go to Auberges du cœur, a homeless shelter. According to the president of the Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec, “This speaks to the magnitude of the crisis. Going there is not a solution. It takes spaces away from people experiencing homelessness.” This kind of thing should not be happening in Montreal. It should not be happening in Canada.

The Bloc Québécois supports the Liberals' economic policies, but when will this government understand that inflationary budgets help nobody?

[English]

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand well the challenges that young people in this country are facing when it comes to finding a place to live that they can actually afford.

That is why, just yesterday, we advanced a new policy that is going to make low-cost loans available to build more student residences across this country. We are going to continue to advance policies that do not just allow students to find places they can afford next to where they go to school but that are going to free up supply that exists within communities today.

The Conservatives will tap into people's anxieties for their political gain. We will advance policies that actually address them.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no political gain. This is the truth, the reality of Canadians on a daily basis.

[Translation]

What has this government achieved over the past eight years? It has doubled the cost of rent and doubled mortgage payments. We need 3.5 million new houses. We barely got 35,000 last year. Two million Canadians are using food banks. That is not politicking; that is the Liberal record.

When will this government act in the best interest of all Canadians?

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my opposition colleague and I can see he is very passionate about this.

Having said that, I am happy to be on this side of the House, with a government that began rolling out the very first national housing strategy in 2016 to put a roof over the heads of Canadians across

the country, rather than with a party that wants to insult the mayors of our cities, because when someone insults mayors in Quebec, they are insulting all Quebeckers.

* * *

*[English]***GROCERY INDUSTRY**

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, no one should miss a meal.

However, seniors in Canada cannot afford sky-high grocery prices. While big grocery CEOs rake in record profits, seniors are making difficult decisions at the grocery store. It does not stop there. Loblaws even tried to cut discounts on nearly expired food. Corporate greed has no limit.

While the Liberals continue to let it happen, the Conservative opposition wants to let those big companies get even more of a payout. Why are the Liberals allowing CEOs to gouge Canadians?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we remain focused on the affordability needs of seniors.

In fact, we are very proud on this side of the House that one of the first things we did was to make sure the age for OAS was maintained at 65 years old, not 67. This was not a change that should have been made here in the House or a change that should have been made at the World Economic Forum, which it was, in Davos, Switzerland.

Instead, we are maintaining and increasing supports for seniors in this country.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the over-25,000 Palestinians killed by Netanyahu's brutal bombardment, the Liberals have done nothing to uphold international law and to protect innocent civilian lives. When it comes to Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian hate crimes, the Liberals have failed to stop it here in Canada.

The community feels so betrayed that yesterday, the National Council of Canadian Muslims cancelled their meeting with the Prime Minister because they are tired of his broken lies—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1450)

The Speaker: The hon. member is an experienced parliamentarian. He knows very well that we cannot accuse hon. members of deliberately lying. That is unparliamentary language. I will ask the hon. member to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Matthew Green: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw it, because they are tired of the broken promises.

What will it take for the Liberal government to listen, to start protecting Palestinian lives in Gaza and to combat Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian hate here in Canada?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this gives me an opportunity to talk about the announcement we made today to deal precisely with this issue. There is \$40 million, additional, to deliver life-saving food, medicine and other supplies to Palestinians through trusted international partners, including the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme, UNICEF and many others. We have always centred our decisions around the protection of innocent civilians in Gaza, and through this allocation, we have upped our game to \$100 million in humanitarian assistance to Palestinians.

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DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the past few months, there has been a significant rise in hate impacting communities across the country. All of us have a role to play during these difficult times to bring Canadians together.

Can the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities share some of the measures we have taken to support Canadians and to encourage unity?

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during this difficult time for so many communities, we know there is still more that unites us than divides us as Canadians. That is why I am pleased to announce \$3 million toward a building community resiliency call to action. This funding seeks to support local initiatives that drive positive change by building bridges and connecting communities together.

When it comes to fighting discrimination and racism, let us learn about each other from one another. Our focus continues to be working together to heal divides and to protect communities from hate right here at home.

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has been in power for eight years. Let us consider the damage it has done to our country. This Liberal Prime Minister has plunged Canadians into the worst housing crisis. We Conservatives have a plan: We will reward cities that accelerate housing construction, like Saguenay, Trois-Rivières and Victoriaville.

What does the Prime Minister have to say to desperate families that are unable to afford rent or those who cannot find housing?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it must be extremely difficult to be a Conservative member from Quebec.

Members will recall that before the holidays, the Conservatives repeatedly voted against Quebec, against the Plains of Abraham project, against farmers, against the Magdalen Islands and against the St-Tite festival. This year, their leader added fuel to the fire by coming to Quebec and insulting all Quebeckers and our leaders.

I urge the member to leave the dark side and come join us in working for all Quebeckers.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, this government is spreading disinformation.

The member for Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine is also misleading the House. She should worry about her own region. The Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands are grappling with an unprecedented housing crisis. Members do not have to take my word for it. This is coming from Ambroise Henry, the director general of the Groupe ressource en logements collectifs, the communal housing resource group in the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands.

What is she actually doing to help the people of the Magdalen Islands find a solution for housing?

The Speaker: I often have a hard time hearing the members on the far side of the room. I would ask the member for Lac-Saint-Jean to be quiet when members are asking and answering questions.

The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned yesterday, I would say to my colleague across the way, who tells us to get off our islands, that we have indeed left our Magdalen Islands and that Magdalen Islanders have gone all over Canada. These are people who are involved in their community.

If he has a backbone, he will stand up and apologize to Magdalen Islanders.

● (1455)

The Speaker: Members know full well that they cannot impugn the reputation of another member. I invite the minister to withdraw her comments about the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Mr. Speaker, I apologize.

The Speaker: I thank the minister.

The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

[English]

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every day the Minister of Housing rises in the House, he has a new program, a new announcement. The cheque is in the mail. All of these things—

Some hon members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I invite the member for Dufferin—Caledon to start from the top, and I invite other members to please listen to the question without interruption.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, every day, the housing minister pops up and has a new program, a new plan—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I invite the government House leader and the chief whip to please ask their members to listen quietly to the question without interruption.

Oral Questions

The hon. member from Dufferin—Caledon, from the top. I hope it will be the last time he will have to start his question again.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, every day, the housing minister pops up and celebrates his new announcement, his new project or his new scheme, but the sad thing is that the Liberals do not actually build a single house.

Meanwhile, in the real world, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, rents are skyrocketing. In fact, asking rent is now up 22%. Donna's rent in Orangeville is going up again and she cannot afford it.

When will the minister realize that these announcements are doing nothing and that housing is a disaster, and apologize to Donna and to Canadians?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps my hon. colleague is confused about the pace at which we are advancing new policies, because on the Conservative side he is not used to seeing the work actually getting done.

Let us compare our plan to theirs. They would put Canada on a track to build fewer homes than we were already projecting to have built in the years ahead. We have cut taxes; they will raise them. We have made investments; they will cut them. We have completely changed the way large cities in this country are zoning to build more housing; the Conservatives oppose that too.

We will do what it takes to build homes, to bring down rents and to make sure every Canadian has a roof over their head.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of that leads us to exactly where we are today: nowhere. Rent for a one-bedroom apartment is up 12% to \$1,900, and rent for a two-bedroom apartment is up 9.8% to \$2,300. Rent is now at a record high across Canada: \$2,100, up 8.6%. Why is that? It is because all they have are phony announcements and photo ops.

When will he finally admit they have made the mess that Canadians are suffering through, apologize to people like Donna and apologize to Canadians? It is their mess.

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the adoption of the national housing strategy, hundreds of thousands of homes have been constructed or renovated to support Canadians who need help. There are millions of Canadians who have benefited directly from government supports to ensure that they could keep a roof over their head. We are going to continue to put policies in place that will improve the quality of life people get to enjoy, by helping them find a place they can afford.

The Conservative plan would raise taxes on home building, cut funding for cities that are trying to change their rules and eliminate supports for affordable housing altogether. That is the wrong approach. It was tried; it has failed.

We will build the homes to support Canadians.

• (1500)

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about a public servant from the Quebec City area who ended up \$25,000 in debt because of the government. It all began in 2016 when the Phoenix pay system began to repeatedly forget to issue him his paycheque. Now, seven years later, despite all of the calls he has made and everything he has done to try to remedy the problem, he has had to refinance his home and is struggling with a great deal of stress.

I have to ask. Would this happen to the minister? Would the system “forget” to issue a paycheque if the payee were the minister?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague is well aware and as she said so well, it is completely unacceptable for public servants, those who put all their talent and energy into working for the public service, to not be paid properly and on time. That is why we must work harder every day so that people like the person the member mentioned get what they need and what they are owed for the work they do, for the time and talent they put into serving our country.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, an isolated case would be cause enough for a scandal, but we are talking about 448,000 Phoenix-related payroll problems in 2023 alone. Public servants are even avoiding changing their address or accepting a promotion because they are afraid of experiencing pay issues if they make the slightest change. Worst of all, this government sees no urgency in paying what it owes its own employees.

When will the minister finally open his eyes and fix this incredible fiasco that would bankrupt any private company?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank our colleague once again for raising this issue. She is right. We need to invest more in order to pay our public servants on time and correctly, and that is why we are currently hiring hundreds of new compensation officers. We are investing in improved technology that will enable better information flow between the departments concerned and the payroll centre, most of whose employees are in Miramichi. We have already done a lot of work, but there is a lot more to come over the next few months.

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[*English*]

FINANCE

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are great at breaking things. They have broken the bank. They have broken the law, and they have broken the budget.

It turns out that budgets do not balance themselves. Record government spending leads to record inflation and soaring interest rates. Canadians need the budget fixed. A dollar of new spending must be met with a dollar of savings. It is a simple concept; even children can understand it.

Will the Liberals finally end their inflationary spending, or will they keep breaking the budget?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, bitter experience has taught Canadians that whenever Conservatives talk about public finances, whenever they talk about saving money, what they are talking about is taking money away from Canadians.

They are talking, to be very specific, about taking away early learning and child care. They are talking about taking away dental care and about taking away the investments in things like the EV factories in Ontario that are the jobs of today and the future.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will tell members what Conservatives are going to cut. We are going to cut broken apps and we are going to cut high-priced consultants because Conservatives talk directly to Canadians, so we do not need to spend billions of dollars to find out what Canadians think.

Let me tell members what Canadians are thinking. They want to axe the tax. They want to fix the budget. They want to build homes. They want to stop crime. Will the Liberals finally listen to them?

• (1505)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have learned just now about one specific thing Conservatives will cut. I am an MP for Ontario. The member opposite is too. They are going to cut the nearly \$1,000 that an average family of four in Ontario is getting right now. That is money that is helping people every day. Of course they are going to cut child care; they voted against it. They are going to cut dental care, and they will not make the investments our economy needs.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has been spending recklessly for the past eight years. The ArriveCAN app cost \$54 million. The billion-dollar green fund is turning out just like the sponsorship scandal, the Canada Infrastructure Bank and any number of other unnecessary expenditures that make it impossible to balance the budget. Then there are the massive amounts of money spent on contracts for consultants of all kinds. Conservatives want a plan to balance the budget.

Does the government plan to listen to common sense and use its next budget to achieve that balance in the near term?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to get a question from a Quebec MP about our government's investments, because this gives me the opportunity to talk about our investments in early childhood care. This initiative started in Quebec. We are proud to be helping Quebec with this crucial work.

Oral Questions

We are also proud that our work with the province has led to the biggest investment in Quebec's history, the investment in Northvolt.

* * *

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government cares deeply about Montreal East. This area has long been neglected and associated with refineries and heavy industry, but the time has come to transform it into a hub of economic and social development.

Can the minister tell us how the federal government is working with other levels of government to help revitalize Montreal East and support businesses like Les Laboratoires MZL Inc.?

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I ran in 2019, and with the government's support, we made a commitment to host the very first Sommet de l'Est, a summit about Montreal East. Last November, working with the Chambre de commerce de l'Est de Montréal, we managed to gather together more than 800 participants from all levels of government and announced over \$750 million in investments. This was the largest show of support that Montreal East had ever seen.

We are here for Montreal East. We are going to work with all partners to ensure that Montreal East achieves the socio-economic potential it desperately needs.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, Liberal insiders have never had it so good, and Canadians are paying a high price.

Yesterday's ombudsman report on ArriveCAN reveals that procurement policies were ignored over and over again. Companies were given preferential treatment even though they lied in their bids to secure millions of dollars in contracts. This is more Liberal corruption and waste, proving that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

When will the Liberal ministers come clean with Canadians and tell them why they gave this work to their buddies?

Oral Questions

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to remember that the ArriveCAN app was built to help save lives during an extraordinary time. However, with that being said, we expect the procurement process to be followed, and I have said time and time again in the House that any wrongdoing in the procurement process would face consequences. The CBSA has already begun this important work by calling in the police when necessary and by doing internal audits. We are committed to ensuring that the procurement processes are always followed.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, scandal continues to follow it with the ArriveCAN app.

Liberals insisted there were no forged resumes. However, it is a fact that almost 40% of the resumes GC Strategies sent in were forged. Liberals insisted security was never compromised, but it is a fact that almost 80% of all contracts did not follow security protocol. Liberals insisted procurement rules were followed; the fact is that the system was rigged in favour of GC Strategies.

I have a question for the Liberal government: What kind of operation is it running over there?

• (1510)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we expect from the public service is that it implement contracts based on government policies that follow the rules and procurement policies, and when we were aware—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

I ask colleagues to please keep it down so I can hear the answer from the hon. member.

The hon. parliamentary secretary, from the top, please.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, when our government released government policies during the global pandemic to help save Canadian lives, we expected the public service to implement these contracts following the procurement policies and rules set out by the government.

We are concerned with some of the initial findings, as is the CBSA president. That is why she has already implemented measures, including calling in the police when necessary and conducting more internal audits. There will be consequences for anyone who did not follow the procurement processes.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, we have a Prime Minister who has been caught misleading Canadians multiple times. Most recently, it is his \$84,000 gifted vacation to a luxurious Jamaican villa. What he told Canadians was that he was paying for it, but we do not know

what he told the Ethics Commissioner. Now we do know that in fact it was a gift. He did not pay anything. He took an \$84,000 gift.

The Ethics Commissioner said that, unlike what the government House leader said, the trip was not pre-cleared, so when will the House leader and the Prime Minister start telling Canadians the truth?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course the member was able to hear this directly from the Ethics Commissioner this morning when he appeared at committee. He was very clear on this matter. He confirmed that the office had been consulted by the Prime Minister's Office before the Prime Minister and his family went on their vacation. He also confirmed that his office provided advice on this matter and that the Prime Minister took that advice and went on a Christmas holiday with his family. The commissioner told committee members that, as far as he concerned, there is nothing further on this matter.

* * *

LABOUR

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government believes workplaces should be safe, respectful, and free from harassment and violence. The Canada Labour Code includes numerous provisions to that effect, and Canada has international obligations that outline that same commitment. One year ago today, Canada ratified convention 190 of the International Labour Organization on violence and harassment.

Can the Minister of Labour provide insight on this convention and the important role Canada plays in international organizations like the ILO?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one year ago today Canada signed convention 190 of the International Labour Organization, which is a part of the United Nations. Convention 190 aims to eliminate violence and harassment in workplaces across the globe because no one should face violence or harassment on the job, not in Canada, not anywhere. Today this becomes a protected right for every worker in Canada. Canada is proud to be a founding member of the ILO, and let me add that on this side of the House, we are proud to be a founding member of the United Nations.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I joined the hundreds of workers on strike at the Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services. Their key demands are fair wages, better job security and respect, but the Liberal government refuses to even sit down to negotiate a fair deal. These are workers who support our military with critical wellness services. When they wrote to local Liberal MPs asking for support, they were told the minister did not know that these 4,000 workers were his responsibility.

Orders of the Day

Will the Minister of National Defence finally accept his obligation to these workers and get back to the bargaining table?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is an important question because the services provided by those non-public employees are important to the Canadian Armed Forces, and those workers deserve a decent contract. We support a resolution of this labour dispute at the table, and we will continue to support both sides coming back to the table. That is the right place to find the solution.

* * *

● (1515)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is another winter, and another tragic fire in Treaty 9. Children at Eabametoong First Nation have no school because it burned in a fire, and there was no fire service. Last winter, Peawanuck lost a beautiful 10-year-old child to a fire, and the government's response was, "We'll buy you a truck, but we're not going to pay for the fire hall." How does one do fire safety at -45°C without a fire hall?

Will the minister stop nickel-and-diming the people of Treaty 9 and commit to, for all the communities, properly funded fire halls and vehicles, and for the children of Eabametoong, a new school? Every child deserves safety and a comfy school.

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think all Canadians were so sad to hear about the fire that destroyed the school in Eabametoong. I spoke with Chief Atlookan on Friday night to reiterate to the chief that we will work with the community, not only on fire prevention, with the truck waiting for the ice roads so it can be delivered, but also on making sure that those students have a plan to complete their year of study. I will be meeting with the chief, and indeed the CEO of Matawa First Nations tribal council, to be very clear about the support our government will continue to provide to Eabametoong.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move that this House call for the immediate release of Vladimir—

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: I am already hearing a number of noes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I wonder if you could clarify the cases in which an individual is expected to apologize for a violation of the rules and when an individual is not expected to apologize for a violation of the rules.

During question period, a member used unparliamentary language and was not expected to apologize. Meanwhile, earlier today, a member of the Conservative caucus was forced to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: The member is right next to me, but I cannot hear anything.

I would ask the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan to give us the substance of his point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you could clarify the rules with respect to the cases in which members are expected to apologize for a violation of the rules and the cases in which members are not required to apologize.

I note the difference between the treatment of a member of the NDP caucus during question period and that of a member of the Conservative caucus this morning, even though the violation by the member from the NDP caucus was evidently much more egregious.

The Deputy Speaker: I know the Chair is seized with the issue that transpired this morning. The Speaker will be returning with a ruling on that as soon as is practicable.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from January 29 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 3:18 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the motion to concur in the 55th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Call in the members.

● (1530)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 613)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Block	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chabot
Chambers	Champoux
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	Desbiens
Desilets	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferrieri	Findlay
Fortin	Gallant
Garon	Gaudreau
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Glada

Orders of the Day

Godin	Goodridge	Davies	Desjarlais
Gourde	Gray	Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Hallan	Hoback	Diab	Dong
Jeneroux	Kelly	Drouin	Dubourg
Khanna	Kitchen	Duclos	Duguid
Krniec	Kram	Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek	El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Kusie	Lake	Fillmore	Fisher
Lantsman	Larouche	Fonseca	Fortier
Lawrence	Lehoux	Fragiskatos	Fraser
Lemire	Leslie	Freeland	Gaheer
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Gainey	Garrison
Liepert	Lloyd	Gazan	Gerretsen
Lobb	Maguire	Gould	Green
Majumdar	Martel	Guilbeault	Hajdu
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)	Hanley	Hardie
McLean	Melillo	Hepfner	Holland
Michaud	Moore	Housefather	Hussen
Morantz	Morrison	Hutchings	Iacono
Motz	Muys	Idlout	Ien
Nater	Normandin	Jaczek	Johns
Patzer	Paul-Hus	Jones	Jowhari
Paupé	Perkins	Julian	Kayabaga
Perron	Plamondon	Kelloway	Khalid
Poilievre	Rayes	Khera	Koutrakis
Redekopp	Reid	Kusmierczyk	Lalonde
Rempel Garner	Richards	Lambropoulos	Lametti
Roberts	Rood	Lamoureux	Lapointe
Ruff	Savard-Tremblay	Lattanzio	Lauzon
Scheer	Schmale	LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Seebach	Shields	Lightbound	Long
Shiplay	Simard	Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Sinclair-Desgagné	Small	MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
Soroka	Steinley	MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Ste-Marie	Stewart	Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Strahl	Stubbs	Masse	Mathysen
Thériault	Therrien	May (Cambridge)	May (Saainich—Gulf Islands)
Thomas	Tochor	McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
Tolmie	Trudel	McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Uppal	Van Popta	McLeod	McPherson
Vecchio	Vidal	Mendès	Mendicino
Vien	Viersen	Miao	Miller
Vignola	Villemure	Morrice	Morrissey
Vis	Vuong	Murray	Naqvi
Wagantall	Warkentin	Ng	Noormohamed
Wagh	Webber	O'Connell	Oliphant
Williams	Williamson	O'Regan	Petipas Taylor
Zimmer— 149		Powlowski	Qualtrough

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra	Rogers	Romanado
Ali	Anand	Rota	Sahota
Anandasangaree	Angus	Sajjan	Saks
Arseneault	Arya	Samson	Sarai
Ashton	Atwin	Scarpaleggia	Schieffe
Bachrach	Badawey	Serré	Sgro
Bains	Baker	Shanahan	Sheehan
Barron	Battiste	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Beech	Bibeau	Singh	Sorbara
Bittle	Blaikie	Sousa	St-Onge
Blair	Blaney	Sudds	Tassi
Blois	Boissonnault	Taylor Roy	Thompson
Boulerice	Bradford	Trudeau	Turnbull
Brière	Cannings	Valdez	Van Bynen
Carr	Casey	van Koeverden	Vandal
Chagger	Chahal	Vandenbeld	Virani
Champagne	Chatel	Weiler	Wilkinson
Chen	Chiang	Yip	Zahid
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)	Zarrillo	Zuberi— 178
Cormier	Coteau		
Dabrusin	Damoff		

PAIRED

Members

Bragdon

Joly— 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the main motion.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote, please.

Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, as you know, the member for Beloeil—Chambly, leader of the Bloc Québécois, was unable to open his app because it failed. He was unable to open Zoom.

I seek unanimous consent for his vote to be recorded as no for the last vote.

• (1600)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: I am hearing “no”s.

• (1605)

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

(*Division No. 614*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag

Alghabra

Ali

Anand

Anandasangaree

Angus

Arseneault

Arya

Ashton

Atwin

Bachrach

Badawey

Bains

Baker

Barron

Battiste

Beech

Bibeau

Bittle

Blaikie

Blair

Blaney

Blois

Boissonnault

Boulerice

Bradford

Brière

Cannings

Carr

Casey

Chagger

Chahal

Champagne

Chatel

Chen

Chiang

Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)

Collins (Victoria)

Cormier

Coteau

Dabrusin

Damoff

Davies

Desjarlais

Dhaliwal

Dhillon

Diab

Dong

Drouin

Dubourg

Duguid

Ehsassi

Erskine-Smith

Fisher

Fortier

Fraser

Gaheer

Garrison

Gerretsen

Green

Hajdu

Hardie

Holland

Hutchings

Idlout

Jaczek

Jones

Julian

Kelloway

Khera

Kusmierczyk

Lambropoulos

Lamoureux

Lattanzio

LeBlanc

Lightbound

Longfield

MacAulay (Cardigan)

MacGregor

Maloney

Masse

May (Cambridge)

McDonald (Avalon)

McKay

McLeod

Mendès

Miao

Morrice

Murray

Noormohamed

Oliphant

Petitpas Taylor

Qualtrough

Rodriguez

Romanado

Sahota

Saks

Sarai

Schiefke

Sgro

Sheehan

Sidhu (Brampton South)

Sorbara

St-Onge

Tassi

Thompson

Valdez

van Koeverden

Vandenbeld

Weiler

Yip

Zarrillo

Aboultaif

Albas

Arnold

Barlow

Barsalou-Duval

Bergeron

Bérubé

Orders of the Day

Dzerowicz

El-Khoury

Fillmore

Fonseca

Fragiskatos

Freeland

Gahey

Gazan

Gould

Guilbeault

Hanley

Hepfner

Housefather

Iacono

Ien

Johns

Jowhari

Kayabaga

Khalid

Koutrakis

Lalonde

Lametti

Lapointe

Lauzon

Lebouthillier

Long

Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)

MacDonald (Malpeque)

MacKinnon (Gatineau)

Martinez Ferrada

Mathysen

May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)

McGuinty

McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)

McPherson

Medicino

Miller

Morrissey

Naqvi

O’Connell

O’Regan

Powlowski

Robillard

Rogers

Rota

Sajjan

Samson

Scarpaleggia

Serré

Shanahan

Sidhu (Brampton East)

Singh

Sousa

Sudds

Taylor Roy

Turnbull

Van Bynen

Vandal

Virani

Wilkinson

Zahid

Zuberi— 174

NAYS

Members

Aitchison

Allison

Baldinelli

Barrett

Beaulieu

Berthold

Bezan

Government Orders

Blanchette-Joncas	Block
Brassard	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Caputo	Carrie
Chabot	Chambers
Champoux	Chong
Cooper	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
Desbiens	Desilets
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ellis	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Ferreri
Findlay	Fortin
Gallant	Garon
Gaudreau	Généreux
Genius	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Khanna
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Larouche	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lemire
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Maguire
Majumdar	Martel
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLean	Melillo
Michaud	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Normandin
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Perkins
Perron	Plamondon
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Savard-Tremblay	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shiple	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Small
Soroka	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Tochor
Tolmie	Trudel
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Villemure
Vis	Vuong
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Williams	Williamson
Zimmer— 145	

PAIRED

Members

Bragdon

Joly— 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 48 minutes.

* * *

RUSSIA

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am going to try this again. I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent from all members of the House for the following. I move:

That this House calls for the immediate release of Vladimir Kara-Murza, honorary Canadian citizen and Russian democracy and human rights leader.

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

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

The Deputy Speaker: As a reminder to those folks who had the failure of the app, the more we have in to do the count in the chamber, the better this all works sometimes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT,
2023

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-59, An Act to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 21, 2023 and certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: When we left this, the hon. member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook had the floor, and the hon. member has four minutes remaining in debate.

The hon. member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook has the floor.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my Conservative colleagues who said that the information I shared about the strength and position of the Canadian economy was so great that they wanted me, like an encore in music, to come back and continue the show. I am very happy to be back here to share some of the news and information.

Government Orders

I was sharing that Canada's economy's position in the world is at the top. These are some of the facts the Conservatives need to share and to talk about. Canadians have created one million jobs since COVID and 1.4 million before. That is 2.4 million in total. The unemployment rate, when we came into power in 2015, was almost 7%. Today it is 5.7%, which is very impressive. Inflation, which was at 2% but because of COVID went to 8.1%, is now down to 3.4% and heading downward as we speak. We have a AAA rating once again, which shows Canada's strength.

Members should not believe me, but believe the facts. The International Monetary Fund said it is predicting this year that Canada will have the strongest economy in the G7. They said it; I did not say it. The OECD indicated a few months ago that Canada received the third most foreign direct investment in the world. They said it; I did not say it.

Because of our position, we are able to continue to support Canadians. Let us not forget that we have already lifted, since 2015, 2.3 million Canadians out of poverty. That is very important information. Canadians appreciate that work but know we have more work to do.

As I was sharing about the housing investments, there are four major components of course. The first one is the investments we are bringing forward in housing, which are crucial in ensuring that we are able to fill the demand because when we construct more houses, we have more labour needs.

Therefore, we have two approaches to labour. One is internal mobility, which means construction workers can move from province to province and territory to territory. We also have express entry for immigrants coming in to fill some of the jobs in the labour force with education in construction, etcetera.

The third piece of this is short-term rentals in provinces and territories where municipalities have prohibited short-term rentals. We will deny the income reduction, of course, on the building and construction of those. Finally, we will support more Canadians with the mortgages. Understanding that the interest rate is up and that there are many challenges Canadians are facing today, we will provide, if they want, tailor-made relief that will allow for a temporary extension of their mortgages and will waive some of the fees. Those who have qualified and want to change banks do not have to requalify, which is very important. Of course, the banks need to communicate with Canadians four to six months prior to the end of their mortgages.

• (1610)

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, on a point of order for me and for the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, I have had my hand up since we were calculating the votes.

I know we are past the calculations now, but as I had technical difficulties, I would like to seek unanimous consent to cast my vote as a nay on the last vote.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin.

• (1615)

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, I vote nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The votes will be added to the tabulation of the vote.

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 know that the member from Atlantic Canada has always been a very consistent, strong advocate for that region of the country.

Could he provide, from his personal perspective through consultations and in working with his constituents, his thoughts with respect to the overall budgetary measures of the government?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, that is a very important question because throughout the summer months and in the fall session, I had lots of opportunities to meet many constituents in my riding. I can tell the House that there are a number of areas they are really focused on.

One area is seniors. Seniors are looking for support, and they were extremely happy to hear that we had indexed to inflation the OAS and GIS, which is extremely important. Canadians were telling me how proud they were that we had moved forward on indexing the CPP as well. Let us not forget the young families, for whom we have indexed the CCB. Those are very important investments. Nova Scotians were also telling me that up to 300,000 of them benefited from the doubling of the GST and the grocery rebate.

Those are very important investments that Canadians have experienced and benefited from, including Nova Scotians such as my constituents in the riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, this economic statement obviously will not make history because it was supposed to address an urgent situation, namely the housing crisis, but the only solutions the Liberals proposed for solving the housing crisis will not apply until 2025 or 2026.

We are talking about budgets. They are saying that construction will be pushed back by a year or two or three. Considering the other agreements the Liberal government is making with the provinces, like Quebec, we may have to wait another three years.

I would like to know if my colleague feels any embarrassment over this situation. When will there be money to build housing in Rouyn-Noranda or anywhere else in Quebec?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very important question.

Government Orders

Let us not forget that our government is the first government in Canadian history to launch a national strategy. An enormous amount of work has been done since 2015. Through our accelerator fund alone, we are seeing municipalities improving zoning. That will help not just Canadians in my region, but also Quebecers who live in the beautiful province of Quebec.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this fall economic statement is about investing in Canadians and supporting Canadians, in particular those who need supports right now. What we are continually seeing from the Conservatives is how they talk down these supports. They start talking about removing the carbon incentive rebate cheques, taking those away from Canadians. They are talking about the putting the GST back on building homes for Canadians who need them right now.

I am wondering whether my colleague could share his thoughts on the stark difference for Canadians in terms of an option between what we are providing and what the Conservatives are proposing.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, that question is so important, because let us be real: If the Conservatives ever take power, they are going to be making cut after cut. I remember, as if it were yesterday, when the Conservative government in 2014 made major cuts on the backs of our veterans, our men and women who have served and continue to serve. It was totally unacceptable.

Since we took power, we have contributed over \$11 billion to support the men and women who have served and continue to serve.

I can tell young families that if the Conservatives take power, their CCB cheques, which are tax-free and 30% more than what the Conservatives were giving, will be gone as well.

We need to continue to focus on and support Canadians. That is exactly what we are doing. We will continue to do that.

• (1620)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, good afternoon to you and to all my hon. colleagues in this wonderful and esteemed House. It is my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-59, the fall economic statement. Before I begin my formal remarks, I will say that it is really great to share our thoughts and be the voice of the residents of our ridings, whom we get to represent with much privilege and honour.

When we look at Canada today, the country we are blessed to call home whether we were born here in this generation or prior, like our parents and grandparents, however we ended up here, we are very fortunate as Canada is a land of opportunity for its residents, our constituents and our children. We are going to keep it that way. All 338 members of the House aspire for this country to be the best it can be, and to provide opportunity and fortune for our children and our prosperity.

Today the International Monetary Fund came out with its economic growth outlook projections, and the growth outlook for Canada looks quite impressive. In fact, in 2025, out of all of the G7 countries, Canada will have the fastest economic growth rate forecast for real GDP. We will grow at almost 2.5%. It is 2.3% to be

exact. In 2024, we will be a snick behind the United States and will be the second fastest-growing country in the G7.

That does not happen by accident; it happens through the hard work of all our residents and entrepreneurs. It also happens through collaboration with government, labour and industry. That is how we grow an economy. That is how we create prosperity, by collaborating and working together.

As I was reading through the fall economic outlook today, it was great to see that the choices we have made and continue to make as a government are creating economic growth, jobs and prosperity for all Canadians, not only the wonderful residents in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge but also those across this country.

In the fall economic statement there is talk of the \$4-billion housing accelerator fund. I was proud to stand with the Prime Minister of Canada and my mayor, the Hon. Steven Del Duca, to announce a \$59-million investment into the city of Vaughan to streamline the processes to build housing to ensure that we prioritize housing near transportation infrastructure, much like is being done at the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre and all along the Highway 7 corridor along York Region in the city of Vaughan.

We will continue to make those strategic investments in our communities. Why will we? It is because we believe in Canadians, and a confident government invests in its people, its entrepreneurs and its country. That is what we continue to do.

There is one measure I think we must all look at and applaud, which is the first-time homebuyer savings account. This account has been taken up by over 500,000 Canadians. It combines the best of the tax-free savings account and an RRSP account. It puts them together: tax-free in, tax-free out. People get a tax deduction for investing in the account, and when they use it to purchase a home, it is tax-free: tax deduction in, tax-free out. It is a powerful measure that 500,000 Canadians have taken advantage of.

On the building side, we put in place a 100% GST rebate with respect to new purpose-built rental housing. I know this is something that, for many years, rental builders across this country have asked for, and we have delivered that.

We brought in the Canada child benefit and an early learning and child care plan, which I know the Province of Ontario, under a Progressive Conservative government, is celebrating day in and day out, but the opposition apparently criticizes.

I would say “shame”, because we know, and the member opposite knows, that my riding, York—Simcoe, and all the ridings across this country are benefiting from the agreement we have signed with the provinces.

We know that Canadians are facing high consumer prices, which is putting pressure on their families.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

Over the past year, the federal government has taken other measures to make life more affordable for those who need it most in our country. Those measures include doubling the GST credit for six months in the fall of 2022 and providing a new one-time grocery rebate in June 2023, which enabled us to deliver hundreds of dollars in targeted inflation relief to 11 million Canadian households.

On July 28, 2023, the government began distributing the first quarterly payments of the enhanced Canada workers benefit, a measure designed to help Canada's lowest paid but often most essential workers. A family could receive up to \$2,461 this year.

[*English*]

The Canada workers benefit is like the unsung hero, the grinder on the ice, doing its job. This benefit has lifted millions of Canadians out of poverty. Almost two and a half million Canadians have been lifted out of poverty since 2015. The poverty rate has been reduced by more than half, 650,000 children. We will continue doing what is right. When the government does what is right, when a parent does what is right, when an entrepreneur does what is right, they know they are going in the right direction. We are certainly doing that.

[*Translation*]

These are just a few examples of how our government continues to support Canadians at a time when some prices are still too high.

[*English*]

Bill C-59 builds on these efforts by introducing new measures to further the government's economic plan and continue to support a strong middle class. We are seeing it. We have a AAA credit rating, and that is not by fluke; it was by hard choices made many years ago to keep that under all governments. We celebrate it. We maintain it. We have a strong fiscal foundation.

Our deficit-to-GDP ratio, across the board, is one of the lowest, if not the lowest, in all the G7 countries, and it continues on the right path. We know that Canadians are feeling elevated prices, but we have made the right choices to support them, and we will continue to do so.

We will support Canadians' right to repair, preventing manufacturers from refusing to provide the means of repairing devices and products in an anti-competitive manner. We have further modernized merger reviews and enhanced protections for consumers, workers and the environment, including putting the focus on worker impacts and competition.

We empowered the commissioner of competition to review and crack down on a wide selection of anti-competitive collaborations.

Government Orders

Finally, we are broadening the reach of the law by enabling more private parties to bring cases before the Competition Tribunal and to receive payment if they are successful.

Bill C-59 and Bill C-56 would provide generational changes to the competition laws for Canadians.

Again, on competition, I love capitalism and I love the creation of wealth. That is what creates jobs. That is what drives prosperity, not only here in this beautiful country but across the board. However, we can do that only when we have a regulatory regime in place that ensures that anti-competitive practices, abuse practices on pricing, collusion and drip pricing, and all those of types of measures are looked at and examined, and folks are held to account.

We need to do that, whether there are circumstances like a few years ago with bread or in any circumstance today. We need to ensure that the commissioner of competition and the Competition Tribunal have teeth. We need to ensure that the law with regard to competition is on the side of Canadians, not on the side of corporations. Believe me, I want all companies and corporations to succeed, whether it is a limited partnership, whether it is a CCPC, whether it is publicly listed or a family business, or whether it is one of the 18,000 or 19,000 small businesses that exist in the city of Vaughan, literally the economic engine of York Region, the largest economic centre, with almost 1,300,000 residents.

[*Translation*]

Our government also recognizes the importance of enabling Canadians to access the mental health services and support they need when they are at their most vulnerable.

For example, therapy and counselling services play a critical role in the lives and mental health of millions of people in Canada, but they can also be costly. To ensure that Canadians can get the help they need, the federal government is taking the necessary steps to make these essential services more accessible.

• (1630)

[*English*]

We removed the GST-HST when an individual needs to go see a therapist of any sort. We know how important the mental health of our friends, families and loved ones is, especially in this world today, where we are so interconnected yet millions of people still feel alone. They need the help.

Government Orders

I see I have about a minute or 30 seconds left. I would like to say that I look forward to answering questions or comments from my hon. colleagues. I hope they and their families are doing well. Let us make sure that all the climate action incentive payments are received by all Canadians out there, including all the wonderful seniors in my riding, who I know are better off for receiving the climate action incentive payments.

I look forward to receiving and answering questions from the hon. opposition, as well as my colleagues.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague is a neighbour of mine, and we both represent parts of the great city of Vaughan.

The member says he supports making life more affordable for the citizens of Vaughan and those across Canada. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has made it clear that Bill C-234 would save Canadian farmers \$1 billion by 2030, reducing the cost of food for Canadian families currently struggling to afford groceries.

I am wondering if the member can explain to the residents of Vaughan who are currently struggling to afford groceries why he will not support Bill C-234.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, when we look at all the measures that have been put in place to aid farmers in Canada, it is clear that we have the backs of farmers. Everyone knows that. The farmers themselves know that, and we will continue to make sure we support them.

Last week, I went on a tour of the Ontario Food Terminal, where \$3 billion of economic activity takes place on an annual basis. I saw the potatoes, fruits and vegetables coming in from all over Canada and different parts of the world. We will always assist farmers so they can compete and we have food security and affordability.

On the affordability front, we have put in place a number of measures that have exempted fuel under the carbon pricing regime. We will continue to do that. Eight out of 10 Canadians are better off under the carbon pricing regime. We will continue down that path. We have to move to a carbon-neutral economy. We know that. The entire world is going there. Innovation is going faster than we in this House know; it will continue to go faster, and we will always have the backs of Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, housing has been a hot topic because it is clearly a need throughout Quebec and Canada. I was recently in Kuujuaq. Poverty is rampant and the housing index is very low. Three or four families may end up having to live together. They are experiencing the unthinkable right now, and it is happening throughout Quebec.

Another hot topic has been the workforce. There are no incentives to get people back to work, either seniors or people who want to work. The cost of living is another hot topic.

What is this government doing about these issues with its bill?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, it is very important for our government to help Canadians across the country deal with the affordability issues caused by rising prices.

[*English*]

However, we see prices coming down and relief on the inflation front, which is important. We put in place prime measures, whether it is the Canada child benefit, early learning and day care, the Canada workers benefit, middle-income tax cuts, work on the housing front, the \$4-billion housing accelerator program or the \$4 billion for housing in rural and indigenous communities in the north or northern Quebec and those areas. Those funds are directed specifically to those areas.

I hope I answered the member's question.

• (1635)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague is not only the MP for Vaughan—Woodbridge but also a former resident of the great city of Prince Rupert. The member mentioned housing. In Prince Rupert, the single most important investment to empower new housing development is replacement of the city's water mains, which are on the brink of imminent collapse. The Government of British Columbia has already invested \$35 million in that project, and now it is time for the member's government to step up to the plate with a significant financial commitment to that urgent priority.

Does the member not agree that this should be made a top priority for the federal government?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, as a former resident, born and raised in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, of course I know the infrastructure in that community needs to be upgraded and fixed. Our government will work in collaboration, as it always has, with the current NDP government in British Columbia to ensure that residents of Prince Rupert have clean drinking water and the right infrastructure for their families. It is one of the most important port cities on the west coast for trade from north and central South America. It is increasingly becoming an economic engine for Canada. It is a logistics hub and major transportation point for our country.

I would like to say hello to friends and family who still reside in Prince Rupert. It is near and dear to my heart, as I was raised there. Canada is a beautiful country, and I am blessed to call two places home, Vaughan being my current home.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for King—Vaughan.

Government Orders

After eight years of this Prime Minister, two million Canadians are visiting food banks in a single month. After eight years of this Prime Minister, housing costs have doubled. After eight years of this Prime Minister, people are struggling to keep their homes, because their mortgage payments have doubled. After eight years, violent crime is up 39%. Tent cities exist in almost every major city, and over 50% of Canadians are \$200 or less away from going broke. After eight years, this Prime Minister is simply not worth the cost.

Just last week, the Prime Minister said that the Conservative Party wants to “take Canada backwards”. If that means taking Canada back to a time when inflation was at historic lows or taking Canada back to a time when young people could afford to buy homes or back to a time when rent and groceries were actually affordable or back to a time when people felt safe in their own neighbourhoods, if this is what taking Canada backward looks like, then I am all in.

People rightfully wonder how it got like this. Let me explain.

In 2020 the Bank of Canada made a decision to increase the money supply in order to buy government bonds. The bank said it did this to keep interest rates low, but the reality was that the Liberals needed money, and lots of it. That money was ostensibly to pay for pandemic emergency programs, but soon after the pandemic, the Parliamentary Budget Officer found that \$204.5 billion in new spending had absolutely nothing to do with the pandemic.

What happens when the central bank prints money? It means we have more dollars chasing fewer goods. Each dollar is worth less. Imagine that, in the whole economy, there were only \$10, and that \$1 was the price of a loaf of bread. Now imagine that, all of a sudden, there are \$20 in the economy but still only 10 loaves of bread. Each dollar is now worth half, its value diluted by the creation of a new dollar. That is what caused inflation, not supply chains, not the war in Ukraine, not so-called “greedflation”, but money printing. That is the cause: money printed to feed the Prime Minister's reckless and inflationary spending.

From 1867 to 2015, the total federal debt was \$600 billion. Today it is \$1.2 trillion. The Prime Minister has doubled the national debt. He has borrowed more money than all other prime ministers who came before him.

What happens when we have inflation? How does a country get it back under control? It is forced to raise interest rates; that is how.

This is the monetary policy part, by the way, that the Prime Minister says he does not want to think about. He did not think that his out-of-control spending might cause a vicious cycle of inflation that would force the Bank of Canada to raise interest rates, but it did.

He now likes to call this spending “investments”, but what does he have to show for these investments? Our economic growth has flatlined. The OECD predicts that Canada will have the worst per capita GDP growth in the OECD for the next 30 years. Per capita GDP has actually declined. The Bank of Canada said in its monetary policy report just last week that it expects economic growth to be flat.

What do you call spending \$600 billion for zero economic benefit? Economic malpractice is what you call it.

What about the high interest Canadians pay on all this debt? The Prime Minister likes to say that he took on debt so Canadians would not have to, but Canadians are stuck with the bill. Canadians are about to spend more money on interest on the Prime Minister's debt than on health care, on child care, on EI or on national defence.

The Bank of Nova Scotia economists have said that government deficits are adding two full percentage points to interest rates on the backs of Canadians.

The bank governor just confirmed in committee that the GST is adding 0.6% onto inflation.

Common-sense conservatives keep telling the government that Liberal spending is making life more expensive for Canadians. Did the Liberals listen? No. They just added another \$20 billion of additional inflationary spending. At the same time, we have a housing crisis and out-of-control crime in this country.

● (1640)

A Conservative government would axe the tax, build more homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. It is time to rein in the NDP-Liberal coalition's inflationary spending and balance the budget to lower inflation and interest rates to ensure that Canadians can afford their lives again. Despite warnings from the Bank of Canada and the Canadian financial sector that government spending is contributing to Canada's high inflation, the Prime Minister ignored their calls for moderation and, yet again, decided to spend on the backs of Canadians, keeping inflation and interest rates high.

What are the ramifications for ordinary Canadians? The IMF warns that Canada is the most at risk in the G7 for a mortgage default crisis. High interest rates risk a mortgage meltdown as billions of dollars in mortgages renew over the next three years. At finance committee, the representative from The Mustard Seed food bank told us that food bank usage has increased 78% since 2018, with a marked increase in double-income families. Many Canadians are having to choose between buying food, heating their homes and paying rent. People's dreams of purchasing their first homes have been crushed. It used to be that Canadians were paying off their mortgage in 25 years. Now it takes that long just to save up for a down payment.

Government Orders

The good news is that it was not like this before this Prime Minister, and it sure will not be like this once he is gone. For the last eight years, all the Liberals have to show for housing are broken promises, half measures and endless photo ops. Their precious national housing program has only completed 106,000 homes. CMHC officials say we need to build over five million homes by 2030. Only in Canada has housing become so unaffordable so quickly. Toronto is ranked as the world's worst housing bubble, and Vancouver is the third most unaffordable housing market on earth. They are worse than New York City; London, England; and Singapore, a tiny island with 2,000 times more people per square kilometre than Canada.

The problem is that we are not building enough homes fast enough. We built fewer homes last year than we did in 1972, when our population was half the size and I was 10 years old. This is happening because the Prime Minister subsidizes government gatekeepers and the red tape that prevents builders from getting shovels in the ground and people into homes they can afford. In Vancouver, regulations add a staggering \$1.3 million to the cost of an average home. In Toronto, government adds \$350,000. That means that over 60% of the price of a home in Vancouver is due to fees, regulations and taxes.

Conservatives have a plan to fix this. It would be called the building homes not bureaucracy act. It would put keys in doors and people in homes by giving more money to the municipalities that are building homes and taking money away from cities that are not. It would incentivize unaffordable cities to build more homes and speed up the rate at which they build homes every year to meet housing targets. Cities must increase the number of homes built by 15% each year. If targets are missed, a percentage of their federal funding would be withheld, and it would be equivalent to the percentage the target was missed by. We would reward big cities that are getting homes built by providing a building bonus for municipalities that exceed a 15% increase in housing completions.

Also, we would make sure that cities build high-density housing around transit stations. Transit-oriented development is a major solution to our housing crisis. All of this is just common sense. Thanks to the Prime Minister, this is the worst time in Canada's history for Canadian people, and particularly for the middle class. The good news is that we have a common-sense plan that would axe the inflationary carbon tax to bring home lower prices, cap spending, cut waste to bring down inflation and interest rates, and remove bureaucracy to build more homes so that, once again, people could afford to rent or pay their mortgages. Conservatives will work every day to make Canada a country that works for the people who do the work.

• (1645)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned government gatekeepers as being the problem behind the housing crisis, and he promised transit-hub-oriented development. In the region I represent, there are no transit hubs. I also do not think one could characterize the village council of the Village of Telkwa, the town council of the Town of Smithers or the city council of the City of Terrace as being gatekeepers. These folks can approve housing development in a matter of days or weeks.

The challenge in these communities is infrastructure. Does the member support investing in key municipal infrastructure, as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has called for, and as the City of Prince Rupert has called for, where his leader just was? Does the member commit to investing the tens of millions of dollars required to ensure that our communities can deliver a quality of life for their residents?

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, the member knows well that municipalities set their own infrastructure priorities and decide which infrastructure needs to be built. All we are saying is that, through the build homes not bureaucracy act, we would reward cities that build more infrastructure to get more homes built. That is really what the program is all about. Ottawa is not in the business of telling municipalities where to build their infrastructure, but we do have financial tools at our disposal to incentivize municipalities to get more homes built, and that is what we will do.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find it interesting that the member just said that Ottawa is not in the business of telling municipalities what to do, when the leader of the Conservative Party just recently called two municipal leaders incompetent: the mayor of Montreal and one other. I wonder if the member has had the opportunity to talk to his leader about how inappropriate those comments were.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, to the first part of the member's question, what I said is that the federal government is not in the business of telling municipalities what infrastructure they should build. We are in a position, though, to incentivize municipalities through financial contributions to build more homes. That was the point I was making.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bill C-59 mentions the creation of a federal department of municipal affairs, to be known as the department of housing, infrastructure and communities. This could open the door to more interference, more disputes and more delays, despite the urgency of the housing crisis.

My colleague also talked about removing the bureaucracy. What are his thoughts on the creation of a federal department of municipal affairs?

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, it is important we distinguish between levels of government and their jurisdictions. Municipalities are best positioned to decide what infrastructure to build and where it should be built. I spent time on a municipal council myself, and I certainly respect the hard and important work that they do.

We do have a housing crisis in this country. CMHC says we need to build well over five million houses by 2030, and the government's own housing program has only built 106,000 homes, so whatever it is doing is not working. We need to respect municipalities but provide the financial tools municipalities need to get more homes built.

• (1650)

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley talked about the need to focus on affordability, but I did not hear him talk at all about the increased corporate profits that are leading the rising inflation we are seeing. One of those examples is the oil and gas industry. In fact, 18¢ of every dollar at the pump that folks are seeing increases on are going directly toward increased profits of the oil and gas industry, leading to \$36 billion for the top five companies in 2022 alone.

Does the member support, at the very least, a windfall profit tax on even just 15% of the profits above a billion so we can invest in affordability measures across the country?

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, frankly, I am just tired of socialist members of the House wanting to penalize success in our society. Of course we would not support something like that. We want private enterprises to be successful so they can employ more people, provide good-paying jobs and make sure we have more powerful paycheques in society. More than that, and I have said this before in the House, I find it astounding how some members think that increasing taxes on Canadians will make life more affordable for Canadians. It simply will not.

[Translation]

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

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 Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Natural Resources; the hon. member for Kitchener Centre, Persons with Disabilities; the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot, Public Services and Procurement.

[English]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for King—Vaughan has the floor.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House on behalf of Canadians. Today, I rise to speak to what I call the “false promise statement” implementation act. Everything is looking up. Prices are up. Rent is up. Debt is up. Taxes are up, and time is up.

When the Prime Minister took office, he inherited a rich legacy. Interest and inflation rates were at record lows. The budget was bal-

anced. Taxes were falling at a record pace, and it took 25 years to pay off a mortgage, not to save up for one.

Our next prime minister, the leader of the official opposition, would not be as fortunate. Today, interest rates are at an all-time high. Inflation is out of control. Taxes are up, and a new measure announced in this false promise statement is a 90-year mortgage. I will let that sink in for a moment: a 90-year mortgage. I have never heard of such a thing.

The Prime Minister has added more debt than that of all our previous prime ministers, combined. Canada's growth for the next four decades is projected to be the worst of the developed countries. The finance minister told Canadians that the budget would be balanced by the year 2028. Canadians have found that to be an interesting statement, considering her boss believes the budget will balance itself. However, since she made that statement, she has announced another \$100 billion of additional debt. This year, the Prime Minister will spend more taxpayer dollars servicing the debt than he will funding our health care.

This mini-budget would do nothing to help Canadians who are struggling to put food on the table. Under the NDP-Liberal government, we are witnessing millions of food bank visits in a single month. According to Food Banks Canada hunger in Canada statistics, seniors are the fastest-growing group of food bank users. The government should be ashamed. Across the country, food bank visits have increased 78% since 2019.

Trevor Moss, the CEO of the Central Okanagan Food Bank, is projecting a 100% increase in the next three to four months. During the last break, I had the opportunity to visit the Sai Dham Food Bank. Co-founders Vishal and Subhra educated me on the crises Canadians are facing. I was shocked to find out that, in one month, the food bank served 3.17 million meals and delivered groceries to 3,000 seniors in the GTA.

Seventy-two-year-old Linda Godin lives on a fixed income in Edmonton and is among those who have had to turn to food banks due to the rising cost of living. She told CBC news that, despite her best budgeting efforts, it is hard to make ends meet. The skyrocketing cost of food and housing is due to the high interest rates, which have been caused by the reckless overspending of the Prime Minister.

The finance minister suggested that cancelling one's Disney+ subscription would fix the issue. She is on the right track, but it is not Disney+ that needs to be cancelled. It is the carbon tax. Since the NDP-Liberal government refuses to do that, it is time it was cancelled.

Government Orders

Let us take a look at the impacts of the carbon tax. Farmers who grow the food are taxed. What is the result? The cost goes up. Truckers that ship the food are taxed. What is the result? The cost goes up. What would be a common-sense way to bring relief? It would be to axe the tax.

• (1655)

I scoured the entire document and found it to be very useful as a paperweight. The Liberal-NDP government has nothing in this budget to help seniors. Its members talk a good talk; they have referenced OAS and GIS, but they have proposed nothing. They have simply reannounced current policies under the Prime Minister. Seniors are worse off than they were eight years ago. If the Liberals continue this trend, things are only going to get worse. There are seniors who are on the brink of homelessness and forced to live in their vehicles or other unsafe places. Working moms cannot afford to feed their families. The NDP-Liberal government is playing politics with their lives while Liberal insiders get rich.

After years of careful financial planning, Maria, a senior in Vaughan, retired. She thought she had the funds to support herself, but after eight years, the Liberal-NDP government has forced her to go back to work. Eight years ago, if someone told me something like this would happen, I probably would have laughed. Today, this is the reality of far too many Canadians, and no one is laughing.

As we witness the misery that the Prime Minister has created, I cannot believe how far we have fallen as a nation. This country deserves better. Sunny ways are not quite so sunny anymore unless, of course, one is the Prime Minister and takes an \$84,000 family vacation to Jamaica.

Do the Liberals even listen to what Canadians are telling them? It appeared for a hot second that the member for Avalon heard the voices of Canadians; he told a Radio-Canada reporter that he believed the Liberal Party was in desperate need of a leadership review.

Canadians need financial relief, not billions in more spending, which will only result in more taxes. Instead of listening to common-sense Conservatives, the Prime Minister decided to fund half measures, which will do nothing to resolve the problems that everyday Canadians face.

Under the Liberal-NDP government, housing costs have doubled. Toronto has been rated the worst housing bubble in the world. Canadian homes now cost 50% more compared with homes in the United States. One can buy a 20-bedroom castle in Scotland for less than a two-bedroom home in Kitchener.

Before someone across the aisle jumps up to sing the praise of the \$4-billion housing initiative, let us take a look at that program. It is, in its very design, set up to favour projects in Liberal ridings, and the numbers prove it. It has recently been reported that the funds were disproportionately allocated. Let us look at the numbers. Thirty-four per cent of the country is represented by Conservative members of Parliament, but those areas received only 15% of the funding. However, the areas represented by Liberal MPs received 49% of the funding. I guess this just proves the point made by the member for Long Range Mountains that if one wants special treatment, one needs to vote for a Liberal MP.

This document is nothing more than a last-ditch attempt for the finance minister to drum up support. However, 48% of Canadians are within \$200 of financial insolvency, and the government expects Canadians to trust it with their tax dollars. Canadians cannot afford any more of the Liberal-NDP government. It is time for my colleagues across the floor to reflect on the approach they have taken and on the misery they have unleashed on this country.

However, there is some good news. Conservatives have a common-sense plan, and we will axe the tax to bring home lower house prices, cut wasteful spending to bring down inflation and interest rates, and remove the bureaucracy to build more homes so people can afford to rent and pay their mortgages again. Under a Conservative government, Canada will once again become a country that rewards hard work rather than penalizing a strong work ethic, a country where Canadians are motivated to work hard. The Conservative Party understands that, as elected officials, we are servants, not masters. We are united under our common home. For members' home, my home and our home, let us bring it home.

• (1700)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague in this House, my neighbour in the city of Vaughan, which we both get to represent, along with another member. We have the most entrepreneurial and most generous residents in the city that we live in.

The hon. member is the shadow minister for seniors. Our government is putting in place a Canadian dental program that, right now, is enrolling millions of seniors in the hon. member's riding of King—Vaughan, in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge and in all 338 ridings. This will literally benefit millions of seniors. We are going to reduce costs for them. We are going to provide them oral care and dental care, which we know is part of health care. It is a transformational measure that all members of this House should support.

Is my hon. friend and colleague across the way going to vote for the Canadian dental care program for seniors in King—Vaughan, yes or no?

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Madam Speaker, the Liberal government cannot even deliver benefits to government employees, and now it is asking Canadians to trust it to deliver benefits to everyone else in Canada.

Many Canadians are worried that they are going to lose coverage. How can we trust this wasteful government to ensure that it is going to have a plan that will not encroach on the current system?

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, the member and I are both on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, so we work together on issues relating to the status of women.

Another file that interests both of us is seniors. She is her party's critic for seniors. We have had a number of very interesting conversations. I completely agree with what she said on the subject. This economic update lacks measures for seniors. There is nothing in it for them. The Bloc Qu b cois has long been asking the government to do something for seniors. That is one of the Bloc's priorities, and it is one of the things we have asked for in economic updates and budgets. Seniors have been getting poorer and poorer for too long.

Next week, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities will begin its study of Bill C-319.

Will the Conservative Party actually do what seniors are asking them to do, seniors like the ones from Saguenay and Chicoutimi that I met with just last week? They want the House to pass Bill C-319 to make things fairer for seniors. They do not want seniors to be divided into two classes, those under 75 and those 75 and over.

• (1705)

[English]

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Madam Speaker, I have a lot of respect for my colleague. I agree with her that we have to do more for seniors.

One way we could help seniors ensure that they enjoy their retirement is by cutting expenses, one of which is the carbon tax. Recently, the Fraser Institute released its latest investigative report, which proves what Conservatives have been saying since the beginning: The Prime Minister's "Net Zero 2050 Plan Will Impose at Least \$45 Billion in Costs with Almost No Environmental Benefits".

If we could reduce that cost, we could ensure that seniors have more money to support themselves. I just posted a bill from one of my seniors, who showed me that he pays more in taxes than the fuel that he receives. We need to cut expenses and leave more money in seniors' pockets.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have such a good time working with the member on committee.

What I have heard from the Conservative leader is that he plans to cut the CPP. That would place seniors in greater poverty. My question is in regard to a guaranteed livable basic income, particularly for women. We know a lot of women work their whole lives in unpaid care work, and they are now becoming seniors living in destitute poverty. We know GIS rates are not keeping up.

Would my hon. colleague support a guaranteed livable income for seniors?

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Madam Speaker, I have enjoyed working with my hon. colleague on committee.

What we need to do is revisit the tax structure in this country. Right now, the tax structure is not fair. If we could reduce taxes and

Speaker's Ruling

ensure that there is more money left in the pockets of seniors and every individual, we would not even be having this discussion. Seniors have worked their whole lives; the member is correct about that. We need to provide them with the essential necessities of life.

I look forward to making sure that, when we form government, seniors will not be left behind.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

DECORUM—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I think it is important to all members for the Speaker to make a ruling and brief statement regarding questions raised earlier today concerning the interventions during presenting petitions.

Standing Order 36(7) is clear. It states, "On the presentation of a petition no debate on or in relation to the same shall be allowed."

[Translation]

In addition, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states at page 1192, and I quote:

No debate is permitted during the presentation of petitions. Any comment on the merits of a petition—even a Member's personal agreement or disagreement with the petitioners—has been deemed to constitute a form of debate and is therefore out of order. Members are permitted a brief factual statement, in the course of which they may allude to the petition being duly certified, to its source, to the subject matter of the petition and its prayer, and to the number of signatures it carries. In any event, petitions are not to be read in their entirety and Members presenting them should avoid straying into debate or argument.

• (1710)

[English]

As they currently stand, the rules of the House do not allow for petitions to be debated. In essence, the role of members in regard to petitions, and it is an important role, is to act as an intermediary between petitioners and the House for the sole purpose of presenting the views of petitioners to Parliament. Thus, members should not comment on petitions they present. While some latitude is occasionally granted, the Chair has generally been quick to call members to order when they veer too strongly into debate.

This morning, in the moment, I concluded that the member for Battle River—Crowfoot was out of order because he was engaging in debate when he criticized another member for not presenting the same petition. I have had an opportunity to further review the matter, and I have concluded that this was the correct interpretation. Members are, of course, free to challenge each other during debates, within the established bounds of decorum in the House, but it is inappropriate to criticize individual colleagues while presenting a petition. This is especially true in that there is no opportunity for members to respond to the attacks launched against them. To use the occasion of presenting a petition to question another member's commitment to their constituents is clearly inappropriate.

Government Orders

[Translation]

While the Chair frequently has reminded members of the rules for presenting petitions, when the Chair deems it necessary, it can also admonish a member that persists in breaching the rules and defying the authority of the Chair. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at page 320 states, and I quote:

On occasion, a Member who is called to order by the Speaker may not immediately comply with the Speaker's instructions; in such a case, the Speaker has given the Member time to reflect on his or her position, declining in the meantime to "see" the Member should the latter rise to be recognized.

[English]

In the past, there have been numerous instances of my predecessors calling members to order if they persisted in debating a matter when it was not permitted. This could reach the point of not recognizing them for the remainder of the sitting or until such time as they complied with the Chair's direction.

This informed my decision when the matter was raised. I also considered the decision made by the Assistant Deputy Speaker on December 12, 2023, when a similar situation arose. When the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies made a similar comment, he was called to order and told this was inappropriate. When he then repeated the same comment, he was asked to apologize.

[Translation]

Even if members do not agree with this approach, when the Chair directs a member to withdraw remarks and apologize, the member to whom such a request is directed is bound to do so. Disregarding the authority of the Chair can be considered a disrespect for the House.

[English]

Should the member for Battle River—Crowfoot apologize, as requested, he would then be recognized by the Chair.

I hope this clarifies the matter and I thank all members for their attention.

* * *

FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-59, An Act to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 21, 2023 and certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Charlottetown.

I am thankful for the opportunity and privilege of rising in the House to participate in today's debate on Bill C-59, the fall economic statement implementation act, 2023. The legislation would deliver key measures from the 2023 fall economic statement, as well as budget 2023, to help the middle class by stabilizing consumer prices and making housing more affordable by supporting the construction of homes that Canadians very much need.

Our approach to tackling the housing crisis is multi-faceted. On that note, the federal government is collaborating with the provincial and territorial governments across Canada to do a number of things, such as cutting red tape, speeding up permitting approvals, lifting zoning restrictions and, consequently, building more homes much faster. This collaborative effort has already yielded substantial results, as evidenced by the following. There is the construction of more than 71,000 new rental homes through the allocation of over \$25 billion in low-cost financing via the rental construction financing initiative. This is an initiative on which I received a lot of calls in my constituency from the developer, who is very interested in participating in it.

We are targeting the construction of over 12,000 affordable homes for those with severe housing needs or those experiencing homelessness through the rapid housing initiative. There will be 12,000 more homes for those who are homeless and 71,000 new rental homes for those looking to rent. We are also providing housing providers with low- or no-cost options to build 4,500 new homes by utilizing over \$200 million through the federal lands initiative by repurposing surplus federal lands and buildings. We are now getting involved by providing those surplus federal lands and allocating and working with partners to build homes. In addition, we are investing \$6.7 billion in housing for first nations on reserve, as well as Inuit, Métis and first nations self-governing and modern treaty communities.

To maintain pace with our expanding communities, we recognize that rental housing supply must also increase. Builders need access to low-cost financing, which would enable the construction of more new rental units much faster. The federal government has already made significant strides in this direction, but, naturally, there is more to come.

The 2023 fall economic statement announced an additional \$15 billion in new loan funding for the apartment construction loan program starting in 2025-26. This supports the construction of an additional 30,000 new units across Canada by bringing the total loan funding to over \$40 billion. By 2031-32, this program will have contributed to the support of over 101,000 new apartments for people to live in.

Affordable and community housing also plays a critical role. We were talking about providing housing and rentals and now we are talking about providing affordable and community housing for the most vulnerable Canadians that they can call home. To build more affordable housing for the most vulnerable Canadians, an additional investment to support non-profit co-op and public housing providers has been announced in the 2023 fall economic statement to build more than 7,000 new co-op homes.

Government Orders

To help build more homes faster, the 2023 fall economic statement also removes the goods and services tax from new rental home construction for co-operative housing corporations providing long-term accommodations, as well as apartment buildings, student housing and seniors' residences. This move, alongside the formal establishment of the Department of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, underscores our commitment to support the construction of homes across Canada.

I am particularly proud of the recent initiative in my riding of Richmond Hill. On Monday, November 27, I joined my hon. colleague, the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities; my neighbour, the member of Parliament for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill; and the mayor of Richmond Hill, His Worship Mayor David West, in announcing an agreement to fast-track over 780 housing units over the next three years in my riding.

• (1715)

This initiative is part of a broader vision to create over 41,500 new homes in the next decade, supported by a \$31-million investment from the housing accelerator fund for Richmond Hill.

I am also proud to witness the government's substantive investments in our community that demonstrate what can be achieved with innovation, collaboration and a steadfast resolve to address the housing needs of Canadians in Richmond Hill and across Canada. I congratulate the Municipality of Richmond Hill for its innovative housing action plan and the broader community in Richmond Hill, as well as other municipalities within the York Region that are the recipients of this fund.

In addition to addressing housing needs, the government is acutely aware of the challenges posed by global inflation, particularly the high cost of food, and is actively working to alleviate the burden on Canadians. Recognizing the importance of affordability in daily life, we implemented new measures last fall to make groceries more accessible and more affordable. Key among these initiatives is the amendment of the Competition Act, through Bill C-56, the affordable housing and groceries act. This amendment aims to enhance competition in the grocery sector, thereby helping to lower costs and offering Canadians more choices in their grocery shopping.

Furthermore, we are actively working on securing commitments from Canada's five largest grocery chains, which constitute 76% of the market, to assist in stabilizing prices for Canadians. The establishment of a grocery task force further bolsters these efforts. This task force is not only supervising the efforts of major grocers to stabilize prices but also actively monitoring and investigating other practices in the sector, such as shrinkflation. As we move forward, the government remains vigilant and committed to ensuring that Canada's largest grocers uphold their promise to stabilize prices.

The bill would also advance the government's fiscally responsible plan to build a cleaner, stronger economy. It would introduce measures to create well-paying jobs, generate growth and build a cleaner economy that works for everyone by advancing Canada's competitiveness through the implementation of investment tax credits. The government has been in the position to be the third-largest recipient of foreign investments, which is the envy of the world. Investment tax credits are a key part of the government's

broader plan to work with industry toward the goal of decarbonization, which includes the carbon capture, utilization and storage investment tax credit.

It is evident that Bill C-59, the fall economic statement implementation act, represents a comprehensive approach to some of the most pressing challenges facing our nation, namely affordability, the environment, housing and security. In essence, supporting Bill C-59 means endorsing a strategy that balances economic growth with environmental stewardship and social responsibility. It is a step toward not only addressing the immediate needs of our citizens but also securing a healthier, more prosperous future for Canada.

• (1720)

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have to say I am shocked. In his speech, the member mentioned cutting red tape, and breaking news is that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business' Paper Weight Award for the most absurd red tape just went to the Canada Border Services Agency, Health Canada and Finance Canada. What do they all have in common? It is the \$54-million ArriveCAN app.

The member sat with me on committee yesterday and voted against a common-sense motion to cut red tape, so he is upside down. He obviously wrote his speech two days ago. Could he clarify how the federal government, with Bill S-6 languishing in the House, is actually cutting red tape and making that a priority?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that the hon. member did appear at the OGGO committee on Monday, which I believe was his first appearance in the many sittings we have had.

However, a motion for study has absolutely nothing to do with cutting red tape, or citing unrelated and unsubstantiated references as a preamble and asking the government to remove all red tape across all services, across all sectors, within 30 days. So, if there is anybody who is upside down, I think it is the member and his party. It is upside down to be asking us, representatives of the people, to remove all regulations and remove all red tape within 30 days across all sectors.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, the government brags about being a great environmentalist and bringing in all the necessary measures to protect the environment. Nevertheless, the government has offered the oil companies tax credits to the tune of \$83 billion in the last two budgets. We can add to that the billions of dollars it is giving them to set up carbon capture plants, which the International Energy Agency says are an illusion, an experimental technology.

Can my colleague tell me what real measures the government is going to bring in to truly support the economy and the environment?

• (1725)

[*English*]

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, I have the privilege of working with the member as well in our government operations committee, and I find her quite ethical and supportive.

On the environment, our government, from day one, supported measures that protect the environment, which is one of the four pillars that this government has been focused on.

As it relates to the tax credit for businesses, specifically oil and gas, with a focus on capturing CO₂, capturing carbon, this is a best practice and it is being done. I am not sure what the hon. member is talking about in that these are phantom policies; they are not, they are best practices. Also, we are working with industry to make sure that not only do we support it in protecting the environment but also enable the labour force, the Canadians who are in that sector, by supporting them through various labour laws.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, as members know, we have an affordable housing crisis in this country. Part of the issue is the current Liberal national housing strategy and the Liberals' definition of affordable. Their definition of affordable is not affordable. We need more affordable housing with rent geared to income. We need more co-op housing. I am wondering if the hon. member across from me feels it necessary to actually create a definition of what "affordable" really is so that more people are not left out on the streets.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, indeed, I agree with the member across that we need more affordable housing, and we need to make sure that the price of the house, whether it is affordable or community-based housing, etc., is reflective of wage growth.

The whole issue of affordability, of being able to secure a home for one's future, is something that our government is committed to and continues to work on. As members heard during question period, we are rolling out, every day, measures to be able to help Canadians secure their homes.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the residents of Charlottetown, the birthplace of Confederation, in support of Bill C-59, the fall economic statement implementation act, as tabled by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

These last few weeks, I have had the privilege of spending time in my constituency and having meaningful conversations with resi-

dents about their priorities, their concerns and their hopes. In doing so, I have heard their message loud and clear: Canadians want their government to manage the needs of today while having a solid plan for tomorrow. That is why I am pleased that our government's fall economic statement reconciles these equally urgent demands through a fiscally responsible plan that addresses the concerns of Canadians and lays a foundation for the future.

The statement focuses on several key areas, the first of which is housing. We know that housing is top of mind for Canadians of all ages, from young first-time homebuyers to seniors looking for accessible housing that would allow them to stay in their communities as long as possible. In 2019, this chamber recognized that, in Canada, housing is a human right. Our government is making sure that this right is within reach for everybody, regardless of income or region.

In Prince Edward Island, our housing supply is currently increasing at only a third of the necessary pace for all Islanders to have a place to call home. It is critical that we build more homes, faster. The housing initiatives in Bill C-59 include an additional investment of \$15 billion for the apartment construction loan program, which would provide low-cost financing to builders and developers and would speed up financial approvals to federal housing construction programs. These initiatives would directly address the need to increase our housing supply. Indeed, along with existing programs, they would create over 200,000 new homes in the next eight years.

I would like to take a minute to celebrate one of these existing programs, the housing accelerator fund. Since September, our government has signed agreements with municipalities to build over 21,000 new homes from coast to coast. By working with local governments, we are ensuring that we are meeting the unique housing needs of each town and city while also laying the groundwork for long-term housing sustainability.

In Prince Edward Island, one of these agreements has been signed with the City of Summerside. The City of Charlottetown is in the final stages of negotiations to conclude an agreement with the Government of Canada. It has been a long process because the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities has, basically, pushed a hard bargain, but it appears that we are very close to being able to make an announcement. I look forward to that day.

Government Orders

Our government is also increasing access to the existing housing supply by cracking down on non-compliant short-term rentals. Bill C-59 would deny tax deductions for those short-term rental operators who do not abide by the proper provincial and municipal licensing requirements. We would also invest \$50 million over three years to support enforcement of municipal restrictions on short-term rentals. I am particularly pleased by this measure as short-term rental regulations came into effect in my riding in the city of Charlottetown just last November, and proper enforcement would bring hundreds of units back into the long-term rental market and would make it easier for Islanders to find a home.

Just to give a little local context, Prince Edward Island is a place with 180,000 people, who receive 1.5 million visitors a year. Therefore, if someone is in the short-term rental market, it is a pretty lucrative business. Because it is a pretty lucrative business, it has a significant impact on the housing stock. That measure contained in the fall economic statement would be a very significant aid to ensure that short-term rental operators stay within the established rules. Those rules have been thoughtfully put together by Charlottetown city council to address the challenge we have around short-term rentals, around the housing stock, which is all tied into how lucrative it is because of how popular Prince Edward Island is during the tourist season.

When we look at housing, our government is addressing not only supply but also affordability. I would like to quote the PEI Fight for Affordable Housing, which advocates for safe, affordable and accessible homes. "Governments must be ready and willing to intervene in the market in order to preserve existing affordable housing which is at risk."

• (1730)

This is the political leadership that Bill C-59 shows, by removing GST from new co-op rental housing and investing \$1 billion over three years to support non-profit, co-op and public housing providers in building more than 7,000 affordable homes by 2028.

These are welcome initiatives that will allow middle- and low-income Canadians to access safe, stable homes to live and thrive in. Again, just in the riding of Charlottetown, a city of 45,000 people, under the national housing strategy we have received more than \$80 million and have built or are in the process of building 430 homes. About half of those are deeply affordable under the national co-investment fund or the rapid housing initiative, and the other half are below market rents.

These are not just photo ops. All but one of those projects are built and fully rented. When I say fully rented, I mean no vacancy. That is the case right across Prince Edward Island, with the challenge we have with supply.

For current homeowners, Bill C-59 introduces the Canadian mortgage charter, which looks at new measures for tailored mortgage relief and ensures that Canadians are informed of their mortgage relief options at a time when interest rates are high. This is a crucial initiative that will help homeowners keep their homes through financial difficulty.

Through Bill C-59, we are demonstrating the commitment to support all Canadians, be they renters, potential homebuyers or

mortgage-holders, in meeting their housing needs for generations to come.

The fall economic statement also recognizes the challenges facing seasonal workers. Included in the fall economic statement is something called pilot project 22. Pilot project 22 will provide four additional weeks of EI benefits for the regions of this country that have the most seasonal workers. That includes all of Prince Edward Island. This will be a significant benefit to all seasonal workers on P.E.I. It is, however, a band-aid.

It is a band-aid that has been proven necessary by a cynical political manoeuvre that happened to seasonal workers in Prince Edward Island in the dying days of the Harper government, in October 2014, when Stephen Harper split P.E.I. into two zones and, in so doing, favoured one part of the island, pitting islanders against one another. People working beside one another in the same seasonal operation were treated differently at the end of the season.

This is compounded, quite frankly, by the last eight years of our government, during which we have not reversed this cynical manoeuvre. I am here, on behalf of the people of Charlottetown, to say that Stephen Harper should never have done it to us, but it should be fixed by now.

That has been a recommendation from the Standing Committee on Human Resources on a couple of occasions. It has been in the mandate letter of the relevant minister, this one and the previous one, but we are still in a situation in which we are putting a band-aid on this problem. That band-aid will help those who are eligible for EI, but it does not help those who are not eligible and who are on welfare because their period ran out because of what Stephen Harper did.

That is the situation. It is a good thing as far as it goes.

Over the last eight years our government has introduced a Canada child benefit, which has lifted over 400,000 children out of poverty since 2015. We have worked with the provinces to deliver \$10-a-day child care, which will deliver 250,000 new affordable child care spaces by 2026. Through these measures, we will continue to support families.

The measures I have highlighted, as well as all others contained in the fall economic statement, build on the work that we have already done and set the stage for the next few years.

I am, again, pleased to speak to this ambitious, fiscally responsible statement and how it will address the needs of hard-working Canadians. I encourage every member of this chamber to support the statement and vote in favour of Bill C-59.

Government Orders

• (1735)

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the rosy picture that the member across paints, but in his own province it would appear that there are 700 families each month going to a food bank, which is an increase of 200 per month over two years. In 2015, the average rent in P.E.I. was \$790 a month. It is now more than \$1,750 a month. Violent crime, from 2021 to 2022, in one year, increased 5.5%. Could this member please explain to all those great Canadians who are listening, including those in P.E.I., why the great job his government is doing has led to the crime and chaos, doubling of mortgages and doubling of rent that we see all across this great country for which his government is responsible? Shame on you.

The Deputy Speaker: That is shame on, “through the Chair”.

The hon. member for Charlottetown.

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, I also expect, as someone who has advocated so strongly and so successfully for the removal of HST on psychotherapy services, that the member will be supporting Bill C-59. I expect that it is in Bill C-59 because of the member's advocacy.

There is no denying that we are in tough economic times. There is absolutely no denying that and that is the reason for the measures that are in Bill C-59. That is the reason for \$10-a-day child care. These measures are working. There is a lot of work to do; I acknowledge that. There are people who are hurting and we will continue to be there for them.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the budget statement was read for the first time last fall. It is now the end of January, and February is just around the corner. We expect a budget to be presented in March or April.

At the rate things are going, does the member really expect his government to successfully get bills passed? It seems to me that the Liberals' legislative calendar has been very sparse for the past two or three years.

Does my colleague sincerely expect to see this bill passed before the next budget? Are we doing all this for absolutely nothing?

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right. Things are really very difficult here in the House. There is not a lot of collaboration. In the last parliamentary period, a lot of legislative acrobatics went on to delay the progress of any bill introduced by the government.

I look forward to seeing this bill pass. I am sure it will benefit my constituents and Canadians as a whole. However, the pace of this whole process depends on all of the members here. The lack of co-operation is real, and sometimes I think it does not necessarily serve the best interests of Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in his comments, the member mentioned just how long it has been taking for the Liberal government to take action on employment insurance reform. Recently, there was a social services tri-

bunal ruling that says that denying women access to their regular employment insurance benefits for having taken employment insurance maternity leave is a case of clear gender discrimination within the employment insurance system. Would the member agree that this is something that should also be fixed on an expedited basis?

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons I am repeatedly told as to why the zoning problem in Prince Edward Island has not been fixed is that the government is intent on a major overhaul of the entire EI system. That, for me, is frustrating, but that would give the chance to solve my problem and the problem identified by the hon. member.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the federal government and the Prime Minister has been trying to work with municipalities. We have had the Minister of Housing going across the entire country, talking to mayors and to councils to work out deals on how the federal government can support building housing throughout our country and yet we see the Leader of the Opposition trying to bully mayors, calling them incompetent and subjecting them to ridicule through his platforms at every opportunity he gets. Which approach does the member think is better and more constructive at getting houses built across the country in a way that will benefit Canadians?

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, this confrontational approach has no place here. It has no place anywhere. It certainly has no place in intergovernmental relations.

The model that was used by the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities to urge Charlottetown along to get on board with the housing accelerator fund is one that is going to bear fruit, and it is one that displays a level of respect that is merited among public leaders at all levels.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to take a moment off the top to ensure the memory of my father is forever etched into the record of this place. Over the holidays, my brother and I, and our families, suddenly lost our father, Michael Lantsman, whose sacrifices were the sacrifices of heroes. We know that he could not wait to see the love of his life and the centre of our universe, whom we lost three years ago, my mother, Ora Lantsman, in the next world.

Together, I think they are reunited knowing that they built a life for us, which has given me the opportunity to ensure that Canadians will know their selflessness, their sacrifices and their hardship as I will continue to be guided by the values they imparted and to tell their story, as I have in the House. Their story is the story of so many Canadians who chose this country, made it their home and built a better life than the one they left behind. His memory will be a blessing, and I certainly will make sure of that.

I will go back to the regularly scheduled programming. For some, the holiday break was a chance to rest, to see family and to do important work in the community. However, for the Prime Minister, it was a chance, again, to flaunt the rules and to demonstrate just how out of touch he is.

Let me start by saying that the Prime Minister has bad judgment. We have seen it. This is a guy who thought it would be a good idea to dress in blackface, to dress up in costumes on a business trip, to flagrantly and blatantly break ethics laws multiple times and to confide trust in ministers who do exactly the same things.

We were still shocked to see him accept a free luxury stay last month valued at over \$84,000. Mr. Speaker, \$84,000 is more than the average family makes in a year. It is a sum that could buy 20,000 meals for a homeless shelter. It is a sum that translates to over \$9,000 a night. I would be very interested to learn from the Prime Minister at a future question period what \$9,000 a night might buy.

I would be even more interested to learn why he did not have the common sense to refuse that free stay, knowing just how ethically dubious and out of touch it was. It is evidenced, of course, by the PMO changing its story three times on who paid for the luxury vacation and when. Let me say, and I think Canadians would agree, that the Prime Minister has every right to take some time off, as do all Canadians.

However, that luxury vacation, its cost, its size and its magnitude, is just another example of conveniently deciding to set aside any personal or professional principles to profit from his status in office. It further proves that he is simply out of touch, and it underlines that he understands nothing about the Canadian middle class.

The fundamental truth is that the Prime Minister, who is so comfortable in the lap of luxury, cannot pretend to understand Canadians who are struggling. It is evidenced by this bill we have seen in the House that fails to meet the needs of the middle class, to meet the needs of struggling Canadians from coast to coast who tell their MPs, and I am sure they hear it on the other side, of their struggles.

We now have rent prices that have doubled. We have seen the reports throughout Christmas. Housing prices have doubled under the government. The cost of home heating has doubled. The price of groceries has increased by 25% this year, all after eight years of a Liberal government led by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister says that Canadians from all walks of life who are struggling, because of statistics like this, are just “grumpy”. That is what he said in a year-end interview.

I have to say to the Prime Minister that “grumpy” is something that happens when, perhaps, one's private jet breaks down, or when the custom sock store runs out of one's favourite pair. What is happening right now is not people being “grumpy”. These are people who are faced with the fear and the anxiety that come with thinking about the survival of their families. These are people confronting the reality that their generation, or their kids, might not be better off than they were. That is real fear and anxiety in the Canadian public right now.

- (1745)

People fear for their lives in the face of violent crime, which is up 39% since 2015, and gang-related crime, which has doubled. People are scared when they are faced with the highest murder rate in 30 years. People in the GTA cannot even park their car in the laneway because auto theft is up 50% in just two years; it is up

Government Orders

217% since the Prime Minister has come to office. That is if they are lucky enough to even have a laneway at all, because to buy a home in Toronto, one needs to commit nearly 85% of one's income just for housing costs.

Under the Prime Minister, Canada is still on track to have the worst economic growth out of 40 OECD countries, while inflation and high interest rates take more money out of Canadians' pockets and off their paycheques. Housing remains unaffordable thanks to the refusal to force gatekeepers to get out of the way and actually build homes.

On top of this, it is the former immigration minister who broke our immigration system and overwhelmed our housing market with policies that, according to his own cabinet colleague, the current immigration minister, caused the system to get “out of control”. Despite this, and, as usual, people fail upwards in the current government, the minister's failure was recognized when he became the new housing minister. He is expected to fix the problem that they in fact created over the last eight years. As well, two million people a month visit food banks just to put a decent meal on the table, or worse, they go without.

The response to all of this is the fall economic statement. It is an anemic response to a country that so many beyond these walls do not recognize anymore. We know the source of the misery, and we all want it to be over. It is out-of-control government spending that drives up the cost of the goods we buy and the interest we pay. It is the out-of-control taxes that make it more unaffordable to buy a home, to put gas in the car or to buy groceries. It is the out-of-control bureaucracy that makes it harder to build things and to create good-paying jobs. The solution, of course, is to cut spending, cut taxes and cut the bureaucracy, but instead, the bill would continue the deficit spending that is putting us way beyond our means.

Now Canadians are realizing that the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost. However, this is what we expect and this is what we get after eight years of the Liberal government. We should now expect that the government will do the opposite of the rational thing. We should expect that the Prime Minister is going to remain detached from the everyday realities and ignore every single point of view that differs from his own.

Government Orders

The country needs a lot of change after eight years. We cannot trust the people who have gotten us into this mess to get us out of it. After a cabinet retreat in a downtown luxury hotel about the middle class, of course, far away from anyone in the middle class, and after a Christmas when Canadians actually cut back without anyone over there taking notice, my Conservative colleagues and I are looking forward to a day when we can see a fall economic statement that actually addresses the misery that Canadians have been telling us about every single time we are at home in our communities.

There is going to be a clear choice. People can have the Liberals, who will raise taxes and inflate regulation and red tape, pump up inflation and interest rates and let crime, chaos, drugs and disorder run rampant, or they can have Conservatives, with a simple plan of axing the tax. We are going to build homes, fix the budget and stop crime. That will be the future choice for Canadians. It is a future where housing is affordable and food is affordable, where communities are safe, and where our nation is strong at home and back to being respected abroad. We know that future is possible, because we knew it before. Life was not like this before the current government, and life will not be like this when it is gone.

● (1750)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to see my friend from a neighbouring riding stand in the House and speak to the fall economic statement. Again, to the member for Thornhill, I give my condolences on her father's passing.

In the city of Vaughan a few months ago, we announced an investment of \$59 million from the housing accelerator fund to assist the City of Vaughan in accelerating the approval and development of housing projects for homes for individuals who live in our city and families who are moving to our city. There are about 7,000 to 10,000 people a year who move to the city of Vaughan, which the hon. member is well aware of. Much like the hon. member at one time worked in a private administration that collaborated with the provincial government to announce the building of the subway that is now in the city of Vaughan, the government is collaborating with the City of Vaughan with a \$59-million investment.

Does the hon. member not agree with this investment, which will benefit the city of Vaughan and the residents, current and future, who will live in the member's riding, in my riding and in the other member's riding?

● (1755)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate the member opposite and my neighbour standing in fancy photo ops with the mayors and the housing minister making announcements, the homes have not been built in Vaughan.

In fact, after eight years of the Prime Minister, rent has doubled in Vaughan, the price of a house has almost doubled in Vaughan, the price of a mortgage interest rate payment has doubled in Vaughan, and it used to take 25 years to pay off a mortgage in Vaughan and now it takes most people in the GTA 25 years to save for a down payment. I am not sure why the member opposite is patting himself on the back, but I will not support his fancy photo ops.

Conservatives will get houses built. We will get the private sector to put shovels in the ground.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to give my condolences on the loss of the member's loved one.

I already kind of know what the Conservative government would look like. Under the leadership of the member for Carleton, in his nine years in government, we saw 800 affordable homes lost under his watch. He supported the Liberals in a \$55-billion tax cut to CEOs. We know the number of Canadians living in poverty increased, health care funding was cut by \$43.5 billion, nine veteran support offices were closed and, worst of all, under his watch, the retirement age for seniors moved to age 67. I already know the story, because I have seen the same old Liberal-Tory story since the beginning.

I know that the Conservatives talk a good game about affordable housing when their real plan is to line the pockets of investors. I want to ask the member a very specific question. Is her government committed to building rent-geared-to-income co-op and public housing?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her condolences.

At every opportunity, and I think the member's constituents ought to know this, she supports the Liberal government, and it is at every single stage of the game and in every single confidence vote, to raise taxes, to put forward a photo op plan for building more houses. There is innumerable waste on that side.

This is what a Conservative government would look like. It would be a government that takes care of people and does not line the pockets of its own friends.

I like that the member opposite asks what the future government will look like. I think she should get used to saying that. We will certainly put forward a plan when that time comes.

The Deputy Speaker: We are out of time but before moving on to the next member, I believe the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot has a point of order to speak to.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for that apology.

Continuing debate, the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is my first opportunity to speak in the year of Our Lord 2024.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I hope members sort out among themselves just what the apology is for, given that memories seem to be somewhat short here.

Government Orders

I am rather hoping that I can bring a bit more light than heat to this debate. I propose to divide my remarks into three parts. The first part is to actually refer to the fall economic statement. I know that is a novel idea. The second part is to canvass why Canadians are pessimistic about the economy. Then, in an aside, I will compare that to why Americans are pessimistic about their economy.

With that, there is no doubt a disconnect between the economic metrics and how Canadians are feeling about their general state of welfare. If we open the fall economic statement, the first chart shows that Canada is number one in the G7 for real GDP growth. If I said that at the front door of some member of my constituency, they would probably close the door on me. Maybe they would be polite, and maybe they would not. Nevertheless, those are the facts. Our peer nations are not experiencing economic growth at the rate that Canada is experiencing economic growth, and I would contrast that to the concerns Canadians have about their economic welfare and ask them if they would prefer to be at the bottom of the G7 growth spectrum.

The second chart has to do with foreign investment. It appears that foreign investors have a great deal of confidence in Canada's prospects, as we are third in the world, and probably second, since the United States necessarily attracts by far the most investment.

The third chart is with respect to the budgetary balance projections for G7 nations. As Sir John A. Macdonald used to say, "Don't compare me to the Almighty. Compare me to the alternative." The alternatives are Germany, Japan, the U.K., Italy, France and the U.S. We are number one in terms of budgetary projections. For all the harping, whining and complaining we hear in this chamber about the management of the fiscal framework, Canada is number one, and dramatically ahead of our neighbour to the south.

The fourth chart is on consumer price inflation, which has fallen over the course of the last 12 months by about four points, a significant drop in inflation.

Only economists could possibly be interested in some of these other charts. They are very difficult to convey to folks. I sometimes wonder why they put these charts into these economic statements, but they do.

In real GDP growth in G7 economies from Q1 of 2022 to Q2 of 2023, Canada is again number one in economic growth.

On employment and the change in employment, again, Canada is number one, way ahead of all the other nations. In fact, Japan and the U.K. have experienced negative employment growth since 2020.

I appreciate that trying to convince people, based on charts, about Canada's management of the fiscal framework, the monetary policy and the economy generally is somewhat of a challenge, and I have probably already lost the chamber. Having said that, it is a necessary setting in order to address the concerns Canadians have about their own economic well-being. I would just make the point over again about whether Canadians would prefer this government and this Parliament to address their concerns from a different position in the charts I have just mentioned. Would they like to be last in economic growth? Would they like to have challenges with employment? This is the environment in which we operate, and I think

it is a necessary corrective to some of the conversation I have heard today.

• (1800)

If we ask what the concerns of Canadians are, economic uncertainty is their number one concern, along with income inequality, housing affordability, job market challenges, high household debts, climate change and environmental concerns, and global economic trends.

I put the economic uncertainties in the context of global events. We have had a Ukrainian war, the Middle Eastern war and instability in Asia-Pacific. These concerns are of great significance to Canada, particularly as Canada is a trading nation; a great deal of our GDP depends on trade. We have yet to see how the rerouting of ships in the Suez Canal area is going to affect Canadian prospects; it is necessarily going to be an added cost to the cost of goods and services in this country. We have yet to see that play through, but it is a dispute that Canadians are internalizing and recognizing, and I expect that the result will be an increase in commodity prices.

Income inequality is a serious concern, and I have to say that, over the course of this government, there have been a number of really innovative initiatives on addressing income inequality. The first, and one of the most significant in my riding, is the Canada child benefit. Because I have a relatively impoverished riding with quite a number of children, that means something in the order of \$100 million a year into my riding alone. If it is not the number one riding in Canada, then I think it is one of the higher-ranked ridings for the receipt of the Canada child benefit. It is similar with the Canada workers benefit and the child care initiative. These are all concerns that have been internalized by Canadians and create anxiety, but the address by the government is well placed in terms of addressing issues of income inequality.

Finally, before you open the trap door and make me disappear, Mr. Speaker, I thought it would be interesting to compare what Americans' concerns are as opposed to ours. A number of the concerns are clearly shared: income inequality, stagnant wages, job insecurity and cost of living. One is student loan debt. We recollect that President Biden tried to do something about it, but Congress has defeated him on that. Furthermore, Americans are deeply disturbed by their health care costs, even with Obamacare. There is also political polarization and policy uncertainty. We cannot turn on a television without commentary on the almost intractable policy and partisan contrast. Those last three things are not challenges that this country faces thus far, thank goodness, but they do cause a level of anxiety. Moreover, we somewhat reflect the concerns of Americans here with respect to our own economic uncertainty.

Government Orders

The reconciliation between the metrics of this economy and how people are feeling about their own personal economy is the challenge of this government and this Parliament, and it will continue to vex us all. The government has taken a number of initiatives, such as the housing initiatives, that can ameliorate the immediate effects.

Therefore, I encourage colleagues to support this bill, recognizing fully that they are hearing the same thing that we are hearing at the door: Canadians are concerned about their own personal situation.

• (1805)

The Deputy Speaker: I want to assure the hon. member that I have no trap door anywhere in this chamber, even though there are times that I do wish I had one.

With questions and comments, we have the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is a difference between affordable housing and social housing. One is barely 10% below market value. The other offers services and ongoing support, which is something older people in particular need. Speaking of older people, some people aged 65 to 74 are in good shape, others not so much. Creating two classes of seniors is a problem, especially for women, who were not able to put as much away for retirement because they were looking after children and being family caregivers.

Here is what I want to ask my colleague. Recent budgets and the latest economic update did not put an end to this discrimination against seniors. When will the government take care of that?

• (1810)

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, on the category of seniors, of which I am a proud member, I too share the concern of the hon. member. I take note of the irony that, when there was a boost for post-75 seniors, there was not a boost for those 65 to 75. The point being that, from a policy standpoint, the older one gets, the less able one is to adjust to economic uncertainty. I am sure that the hon. member would agree with me that our senior seniors are the people we should address first. I think the government has done an admirable job in that area.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was an interesting presentation. I am sure that the Canadians out there who are \$200 away from insolvency every month were absolutely riveted by that information, telling them how great their lives are, when we know that violent crime in and around Toronto is up around 15%.

We know that Toronto has one of the worst housing bubbles in the entire world. We know that rent has gone up, doubled. We know that mortgages have doubled and that it is almost unaffordable for anybody to live in Toronto, certainly for newcomers to Canada wanting to move there.

I would like the member to rectify for all of us here, and for all of the Canadians watching, the incredibly boring and non-enlightening way the rosy picture of Canada was presented, when Canadi-

ans know that, every month, two million of them are visiting a food bank. As I said at the start, they are \$200 away from insolvency.

Could the member tell us how this equates to this great job that his government is doing?

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, generally my colleagues do not describe my speeches as boring in public. They may privately say that my speeches are boring. I feel badly for the hon. gentleman, who missed the central point of the speech.

The central point of the speech is that the metrics of the country are very good. Would he prefer, in Nova Scotia, to have 10% unemployment, or would he prefer to have 4% unemployment? Would he prefer to be dealing with the challenges of his constituents with 4% unemployment or 10% unemployment?

I regret that the hon. member finds my remarks boring, but maybe, if he had paid a little bit more attention, he would have been able to articulate the central dilemma I was speaking to.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, he mentioned how proud this government is. The Liberals are proud of the child care program they put forward, which, of course, New Democrats worked very hard to push this government on, and we are happy to see it. There is value there for his constituents, and certainly mine, in ensuring that especially women can come into the workplace and participate in greater levels.

That is very necessary for the growth of our economy. However, one thing the Liberals have not done is to ensure that those who work within child care are paid adequately. Potentially, could the hon. member explain the future plans of the Liberal government to do so, so that we could ensure that those who are taking care of children while we are at work, and we know that we need that excellent care, those in that sector, are being provided with livable wages?

The Deputy Speaker: We are out of time.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood with a quick answer.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, we are out of time but you are not going to pull the trap door. Thanks.

The hon. member raises an interesting issue, and this is where the \$10-a-day day care comes in. This is largely a program that is funded by the Government of Canada for, in our case, the Government of Ontario. The provision of the quality of the day care worker and the wages he or she receives and the quality of the workplace are largely dependent upon the Province of Ontario.

• (1815)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House this evening and speak for a few minutes about the fall economic statement and Bill C-59. Of course fall has turned to winter, and yet the topics we have been debating in this piece of legislation are as relevant as ever, particularly the topic of housing. That is where I will focus my remarks this evening.

Adjournment Proceedings

The need for affordable housing is an issue in every single community in northwest B.C. I know many members in this House are familiar with what is going on in northwest B.C., particularly the level of investment in industrial development. That has brought opportunity for many people. There are many people making good incomes in various industrial industries, but not everyone.

I remember, months ago, talking to a fellow on his doorstep in the city of Terrace. He was a carpenter. He was working on the construction of the new hospital in the city, a much-needed and much-awaited project. He told me about his struggles affording rental housing. He was renting what I believe was a modest two-bedroom townhouse. He had two kids with a third on the way. He said that he and his partner needed more space but they just could not afford it.

There are many people in that situation and people who are earning even less. When we think about people working in the service industry, there are many people who are struggling to make ends meet and struggling with the cost of housing. What we have heard in this debate is that both the Liberals and the Conservatives are relying almost solely on the market to provide housing solutions. As for the ideas that they have presented, whether it is the idea of browbeating what they are calling municipal gatekeepers or building density near transit hubs, northwest B.C. does not have transit hubs. It barely has public transit. These are not ideas that translate to rural British Columbia.

We need different ideas. We need a government that is committed, in particular, to building the infrastructure that our communities need. In cities like Prince Rupert, that means a major investment in water infrastructure. In the city of Terrace, in the town of Smithers, in the small community of Port Clements, people are struggling, and communities are struggling with the cost of infrastructure, like waste water and drinking water. That is what is needed in order to facilitate the expansion of housing development. These communities would welcome private sector development, public sector development, but they cannot do it without the infrastructure.

I will leave it there, and look forward to continuing my remarks at a future date.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:18 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

The House resumed from November 3, 2023 consideration of Bill S-202, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (Parliamentary Visual Artist Laureate), as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

The Deputy Speaker: There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in.

The Deputy Speaker: 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.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 98, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, January 31, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1820)

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I get started, I just want take a minute to thank all the great workers in the natural resources sector, and also our farmers and our producers, for making sure that the lights can stay on when it is -50°C, that our homes can stay warm and that we can still produce food. I also thank all the transport workers, who make sure that food, clothing and resources can get all the way across our country regardless of the temperature, whether it is warmer like it is today or if it gets to be, like I said, -50°C as it was a couple of weekends ago back home in Saskatchewan.

Canadians understand how important it is for us to have energy security. Before we all came back to the House, western Canada had to deal with the alarming effects of extremely cold temperatures. The worst of it hit my home province of Saskatchewan, but it was also in Alberta and British Columbia. As we might expect, there was a surge in demand for electricity, but this time, it all put a strain on the system. It got to the point that Alberta had to send out an emergency alert asking everyone to limit their electricity use in order to avoid blackouts. For hours, people were asked to do different things to cut down on their usage, such as turn off their lights, avoid cooking with a stove and delay charging their electric vehicles.

Alberta also received some power from other places, including Saskatchewan. Here is what our Premier Scott Moe said on X at that time. “SaskPower is providing 153 MW of electricity to AB this evening to assist them through this shortage.” It goes on to say, “That power will be coming from natural gas and coal-fired plants, the ones the Trudeau government is telling us to shut down (which we won’t).”

Adjournment Proceedings

We fired up Boundary Dam 4 in Estevan country to produce more coal-fired power, and I am sure the folks in Alberta were very grateful that Saskatchewan was able to do so. Meanwhile, the government's emissions cap would prevent this from happening. Thankfully, we avoided having a worse situation with rolling outages. However, it is something that could happen, and we do need to take that situation seriously. For the NDP-Liberal government here in Ottawa, it should serve as a wake-up call.

Most people across the country understand that Canadian winters are tough, but I am not sure if some members, Liberal ministers or parliamentary secretaries realize what it is like to live through a typical prairie winter, where it is normal to have a wind chill of -50°C . Our average temperatures can be terribly low and last for a long time. They do not just come and go right away. There are times when it is actually not safe for people to stay outside for very long. People need to be somewhere indoors with a reliable source of heat. That is how we survive. It was one of those extremely cold days when people were faced with the power going out.

My province had greater energy demand as well, and we met that demand from reliable sources. When push came to shove, the overwhelming majority of it came from natural gas and a bit from our coal plants. At the same time, we were also able to lend a hand to our friends over in Alberta. It made a difference for them. It is not a mystery why the premier says he does not want to get rid of affordable and reliable energy. In a critical moment, we all had something solid to fall back on.

The real question is why the Liberals are obsessed with weakening our energy supply with their carbon tax, their emissions cap and the so-called just transition. Not long before all of this happened, they announced some new electricity regulations, and they were shocked to hear that the premiers of Saskatchewan and Alberta would refuse to go along with it. This threat of power outages, while enduring extreme cold temperatures of -50°C , is exactly why.

Are the Liberals going to listen to what our western premiers are trying to tell them? Do the Liberals get it yet? Does the Minister of Natural Resources understand why Saskatchewan will not accept his radical agenda? Will they finally give Canadians a break?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question that actually started this late show talked about oil imports as well, so I would like to address that, because that seems to have been at least what generated this further conversation. I will start with the fact that it is really important for Canadians to know that under the previous Conservative government, oil imports were actually double what they are today. I think that is just an important piece to take into account when we are talking about these things.

I also really feel that it is important to note that the Conservatives need to wake up and realize that climate change is a scientific reality that requires urgent and sustained action, and that if we take that action there is also economic opportunity. It is economic opportunity that they should be seizing.

When we talk about the work that we are doing to reduce emissions, we have also been working with our allies to become a trust-

ed resource for the energy they need. That is particularly in the wake of Russia's brutal and unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine.

To benefit our growing energy sectors, Canada must consider leveraging all possible sources of energy for export. Of course, that includes conventional energy sources, which we are investing to decarbonize, but, most vitally, it is also about continuing the production of all forms of energy that we are working on, like the exportation of hydrogen fuels.

In Stephenville, we launched the Canada-Germany hydrogen alliance to ensure that our resources can help European allies get off Russian oil and gas. This is something that perhaps the member opposite, having been on the natural resources committee, might really want to focus on, as part of that work is also on Atlantic offshore wind. There is a bill right now that is at committee, which would unlock Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador's wind power potential. That will help them to power their homes, and it will also allow for the sale of that clean power to make hydrogen fuel for our allies. It is great for their local economies, and it is great for their energy resources back home.

The International Energy Agency has said that the offshore wind industry is a trillion-dollar market, and the House must pass the piece of legislation that is before it to unlock the potential in the Atlantic for offshore wind. Right now, 45% of offshore wind energy production happens in China. Taiwan and Europe are also making substantial strides in this market, and they have projects also along the east coast of the U.S. If we want to help our allies and claim our share of this massive opportunity, we must continue to move forward with renewable energy and build on the investments we already have in place.

Taken together, I am talking about all sorts of opportunities that we are building right here. We have a range of investment tax credits to support industry, including those for clean technology, clean hydrogen and clean electricity. We have hundreds of millions of dollars that we have invested to expand infrastructure for zero-emission vehicles across Canada and to support Canadians in making their homes more energy-efficient. We are working with our allies, as I said, on renewable energy. These are important opportunities that we have right here at home and should be seizing.

I am going to take this moment and ask the member opposite: Will he work with his party, with the Conservatives, to make sure we unlock Atlantic Canada's offshore wind potential? It will help to support their energy security; it will help to create jobs, and it will create opportunities as well for us to help our allies abroad.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1825)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, of course Conservatives support the development of all types of energy. What we do not support is the government picking winners and losers and putting barriers in the way of provinces being able to set up whatever it is that they want.

I have actually worked in the wind industry. This is just a quick fact. In Alberta, 88 of 88 wind farms were producing next to zero power when it was -50°C, because it was literally too cold for them to operate. It was too dangerous. We need to consider other variables at play in a Canadian winter as to why we cannot go that far in on wind and certain other technologies. We can supplement a grid with them, but we cannot replace the reliable, predictable, affordable energy that we get from natural gas.

That is something that Saskatchewan has decided to do more and more of. We have the Chinook Power Station in Swift Current, which produces all kinds of wonderful power. They are building another one in Moose Jaw. The government needs to support those kinds of projects instead.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that what I heard from the member opposite is that he is going to be encouraging his colleagues on that side of the House to support the legislation that we have in the House, to support offshore wind and the development of offshore wind in our Atlantic provinces. I am sure that he recognizes the importance, like I said, to the energy grid in the Atlantic provinces and for the creation of jobs, as well as for opportunities to support our allies abroad.

We know that the premiers from Nova Scotia and from Newfoundland and Labrador are in fact asking for the passage of this legislation. I hope that he can change the minds of the people on his side of the House, so that we can see it pass quickly.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, with Parliament back this week, I am glad to rise tonight to continue pushing the government to end legislated poverty for people with disabilities and, as a significant step in this direction, to adequately fund and properly implement the Canada disability benefit with urgency. Sadly, while the Canada Disability Benefit Act was passed last June, no money has yet been set aside for the benefit. It continues to be the case to this day that 40% of those living in poverty across the country are people with disabilities.

Tonight I will focus on following up on a specific concern about how the Canada disability benefit is being designed. Here is the story: As many Canadians know, nearly every important decision about the benefit, from who is eligible to how much it is going to be, is being left to regulations that are now being drafted. Late last year, though, I began to hear from organizations that serve the disability community about how the Department of Finance is considering determining eligibility through the incredibly burdensome application for the disability tax credit. When I say “burdensome”, I mean that it is one of the most difficult government programs for a person to qualify for. People qualify by submitting a T2201 form, a 16-page form that applicants need to have their doctors complete 15 pages of.

A recent report from the Kids Brain Health Network, in collaboration with researchers from the Disability Policy Research Program and McGill University, breaks down how bad it is. First, long delays in processing applications and inconsistent knowledge of staff lead to rejections that are often viewed as arbitrary. Second, difficulties with the T2201 application form, including that it lacks clear instructions and criteria, often lead to requests for additional instructions and information and even specific wording being required for approval. Third, doctors' level of knowledge about the form itself and their level of tenacity to reapply will affect the extent to which the applicant may or may not be successful. Fourth, there is a constant need to reapply, including when recipients have lifelong conditions. As a result, there is an entire industry of disability tax credit consultants set up to charge people with disabilities simply to apply for the credit.

We should not even be having this conversation. I thought we had already solved this issue. Back when the Canada Disability Benefit Act was at committee, out of the nine amendments that got through, my team and I were successful in passing five amendments to improve the bill. One of these addressed this very issue. It changed the bill to say the following: “The Governor in Council may make regulations...respecting applications for a benefit, including regulations providing for an application process that is without barriers, as defined in section 2 of the Accessible Canada Act”.

When I proposed the amendment, I gave the example of a person with a disability who has already qualified for a program when completing their taxes, as is the case for many other benefits. This is why I asked the minister in December if the government would just follow the law that is now passed. She did not answer me at the time, so I am going to ask again tonight.

The Canada Disability Benefit Act requires the Canada disability benefit to be barrier-free. However, it is clear that the disability tax credit is full of barriers. Therefore, will the parliamentary secretary now commit to the government following the law and developing the regulations to ensure that the Canada disability benefit is barrier-free?

• (1830)

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Kitchener Centre for his important advocacy around the disability benefit, for highlighting concerns and bringing them to this House.

Adjournment Proceedings

The disability community is keen and anxious to see that the benefit will be realized, and realized correctly.

[*Translation*]

We understand that many Canadians with disabilities need the additional support from the Canada disability benefit.

[*English*]

Our government is eager to get money into the pockets of those who need it most. We must get it right. The delivery of the benefit needs to be smooth, targeted, effective and possible.

While the previous Conservative government made promises to Canadians and to the disability community, we actually fulfilled these promises and are going to realize them. Our government has delivered to persons with disabilities. We will continue to do so.

We carefully crafted consultations with the disability community. I, myself, over the last five months of being parliamentary secretary to the minister, have learned about the disability community and have learned about the contours, the uniquenesses within the community, and there are many. The disability benefit will reflect these contours, the uniquenesses of the community.

Bill C-22 received royal assent on June 22, 2023. Immediately, within a month, we announced the start of meaningful consultations. These consultations are informing the design of the regulations to serve those in need. This is absolutely necessary.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

The regulatory process is crucial and we must respect it.

[*English*]

There is no better way to get it right than to include those with lived experiences. Persons with disabilities need to have the opportunity to contribute to the design of the benefit's regulations. The disability community must have a say in how this benefit will look, and reflect those concerns. In fact, it is required by the Canada Disability Benefit Act.

The benefit has real potential to reduce and alleviate poverty and to support those who are seeking financial security, those who are of working age and Canadians with disabilities. We know what the target is. We will hit the mark.

Our latest engagement has been via an online tool, where Canadians throughout the country shared their thoughts on details of the benefit. We sought the advice also within key areas from experts, the disability community and advocates.

This addresses the member's question on how the application process should be structured. We are now analyzing those very responses from coast to coast from advocates, from people who are living with disabilities and from those with the variations of disabilities reflected within our country.

We are assessing those responses right now, and we are drafting the regulations. They are being put into the final stage. We are making sure obstacles are removed so Canadians, those with disabilities, will have access to this important benefit.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Speaker, respectfully, the fact is that the government has not delivered the Canada disability benefit. I will agree though with the parliamentary secretary that they do need to get this right. What the disability community is trying to tell him is that the government needs to follow what is in the Canada Disability Benefit Act, and specifically, that the benefit must be barrier-free.

Stakeholders are being told that the disability tax credit may be used as a way to access the Canada disability benefit. This is in contravention of the act. It is not what the community is calling for. What I have been asking from the minister, I am asking again tonight. Very specifically, will the parliamentary secretary make it clear that the disability tax credit will not be used in delivering the Canada disability benefit because it is not barrier-free?

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Mr. Speaker, I want to again thank the member for Kitchener Centre for his advocacy.

To pick up on the previous reply, we are currently collecting the responses of Canadians who have fed into the process thus far. They are being put into regulation. Those regulations will be first in draft form, when again Canadians will be able to reply to them and to improve them. The feedback we are getting across the country is being put into draft regulations, and Canadians will again have the chance to reflect on them before the benefit is rolled out. This benefit is being done in full consultation with the community following the principle of "nothing about us without us", which means we can only get to this benefit hand in hand with the disability community.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as always it is an honour to be able to rise and address such important issues in this place, in particular in relation to the question I asked the Prime Minister on November 23, 2023, which specifically had to do with what has come to be known as the green slush fund.

We have heard from high-level whistle-blowers and bureaucrats, those involved, who have said that this is a sponsorship-level type of scandal. For those who may not be familiar with that specific scandal, because it was about two decades ago, millions of dollars were funnelled into Quebec. Specifically, public funds were misappropriated for the benefit of a few Liberal elites and those who were closely connected.

However, since November 23, we have a growing laundry list. In fact, I was looking at the list of the Prime Minister's scandals and those of his government. The list of scandals is long; there are dozens and dozens since he became Prime Minister. Even since November 23, we see a growing list. Most recently, there was the \$80,000-plus holiday, a free gift given by a so-called friend of the Trudeau family. The Prime Minister did not have any concerns like any other Canadian, and went to stay at an \$80,000 luxury resort. Certainly, the Canadians I know do not have friends who own \$80,000-per-week luxury resorts.

We have seen the smackdown in the courts of the Emergencies Act, a calling-out of unbelievable proportions, showing that the government was completely wrong in its application of the criteria required to take away the rights of Canadians, yet it did it anyway. It was another unbelievable scandal, and this is just since November 23. The list of scandals has grown.

We see more information related to the arrive scam app. It was recently revealed that there was fraudulent activity that continues to force us to ask questions about where the money went and who got rich.

We see that the pattern of poor judgment speaks to something that erodes trust in the institutions of government because it is a very serious issue. It is something that will have to be grappled with not only today but also for decades to come, as current and future parliamentarians wrestle with the fact that the Prime Minister and the Liberals were so irresponsible with the trust granted to them to govern our country.

What I have heard from so many constituents, and what Conservatives have heard across the country, is that while the Liberals are living high at luxury resorts, playing loose with the public purse, Canadians are suffering, visiting food banks in record numbers, seeing the cost of housing become unaffordable and, in some cases, losing their home. When a senior goes to the checkout and is forced, incredibly embarrassingly, to put items back or ask the cashier to not ring them through because they cannot afford them, the reality Canadians are facing could not be more dire. Nonetheless, the scandal-plagued Liberals are so out of touch that they have ignored the reality Canadians are facing, while they and their buddies get rich.

Canadians deserve better.

• (1840)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the content of the question, at least in the first instance and maybe slightly now, was about Sustainable Development Technology Canada. I am going to be speaking about that.

When the government first became aware of the allegations related to the management of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, the minister took action. Immediate action was taken because any organization entrusted with public funds is expected to act with diligence, care and integrity in all facets of its work. An investigation was undertaken to get to the facts of the situation and determine the most prudent forward plan of action. The fact-finding

Adjournment Proceedings

exercise conducted by the firm of RCGT was just beginning. That exercise found no clear evidence of deliberate unethical behaviour.

There were, however, several instances in which the organization was not in full compliance with its contribution agreement. To strengthen practices, SDTC was issued a management action plan with a deadline of December 31 for implementation. SDTC has worked diligently to provide documentation to demonstrate the changes it has made. The department is now in the process of assessing the completeness of SDTC's response and ensuring that the appropriate measures are in place to restore confidence in the management of the organization. Everyone involved is eager to get back to supporting Canadian business.

As we know, after discussions with the Auditor General, there is now a full audit of the organization under way. We look forward to the report of the Auditor General and will act with the same prudence we have demonstrated on this file to implement any of the Auditor General's recommendations.

There is no cover-up. We have put in place a process for any current or former employee to come forward and share their views. The law firm McCarthy Tétrault has been appointed to conduct a review of human resources management at SDTC. The organization has agreed to take the steps needed to enable this thorough review, allowing current and former employees to speak freely without violating any applicable settlement agreements or non-disclosure agreements. This process is under way and I am confident that it will lead to strengthened practices at SDTC.

The government has done its due diligence. This issue has been taken up in the most appropriate venues; that is, the Auditor General, the HR review by McCarthy Tétrault and the Ethics Commissioner investigation. The issues brought forward in this case are important and require us to apply the appropriate due process and due diligence to get to the truth.

• (1845)

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, let me translate what the parliamentary secretary just stated: Do not worry; we have got it; it is not really our fault, but if it is do not worry about it because we will figure out some way to deal with it somehow, sometime in the future, but again, just do not worry; we will move on.

Canadians are tired of the irresponsible management of the public purse. Canadians are tired of the scandals. They are tired of the pattern of poor judgment that starts at the top.

Adjournment Proceedings

I come from a rural area where common sense rules, while those Liberals, in some cases literally, want Canadians to freeze in the dark because of their bad ideological decision-making. It is about time that those Liberals realize that the buck stops with them. It is time for them to take responsibility, acknowledge their failures, acknowledge the scandal that has plagued them every day since they were elected, take responsibility and start respecting the public purse.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, it is integral that due process and due diligence continue to guide our actions. The work of the AG, the Ethics Commissioner and the review being led by McCarthy Tétrault will provide the facts that we need to guide our next steps. At the same time, department officials are working to ensure that the organization has met its obligation to implement the correc-

tive measures prescribed by the management response and action plan. We are committed to ensuring that the appropriate governance structures are in place going forward, and we can all agree on this. It is imperative that we focus all of our efforts on supporting Canadian innovators in the clean-tech sector.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the members for their interventions tonight. This is also a quick reminder that when we have an adjournment debate we try to stick to the questions that were originally submitted for that debate.

The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:48 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Tuesday, January 30, 2024

Points of Order

Bill C-59—Proposal to Apply Standing Order 69.1— Speaker's Ruling	
The Speaker	20333
Alleged Breach of Standing Order 18—Speaker's Ruling	
The Speaker	20334

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Petitions

Champlain Bridge	
Mr. Lametti	20335
Telecommunications Industry	
Mr. Epp	20335
Air Transportation	
Mr. Lamoureux	20335
Firearms	
Mr. Kurek	20335
Electoral Representation	
Mr. Morrice	20336
Women's Shelters	
Mr. Genuis	20336
Freedom of Political Expression	
Mr. Genuis	20336
Human Rights	
Mr. Genuis	20336
Falun Gong	
Mr. Genuis	20336
Children and Families	
Mr. Genuis	20336
Health	
Mr. Genuis	20337
Medical Assistance In Dying	
Mr. Genuis	20337

Points of Order

Decorum	
Mr. Julian	20337
Mr. Kurek	20337

Petitions

Climate Change	
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	20338

Points of Order

Decorum	
Mr. Genuis	20339

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lamoureux	20340
---------------------	-------

Request for Emergency Debate

Housing	
Mr. Desjarlais	20340
Speaker's Ruling	
The Speaker	20340

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Fall Economic Statement Implementation Act, 2023

Bill C-59. Second reading	20341
Ms. Jones	20341
Ms. Chabot	20343
Mr. Genuis	20343
Mr. Angus	20343
Mr. Hallan	20344

Business of Supply

Mr. Sajjan	20345
------------------	-------

Fall Economic Statement Implementation Act, 2023

Bill C-59. Second reading	20345
Mr. Long	20345
Ms. Michaud	20346
Mr. Angus	20346
Mr. Davidson	20346
Mr. Lamoureux	20348
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	20348
Ms. Zarrillo	20348
Mr. Lametti	20348
Mr. Garrison	20351
Mr. Deltell	20352
Mr. Champagne	20352
Mr. Fortin	20353
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	20353
Mr. Tolmie	20354
Mr. Lamoureux	20355
Mrs. Goodridge	20356
Ms. Idlout	20356
Mrs. Goodridge	20356
Mr. Long	20358
Mr. Fortin	20358
Mr. Angus	20358
Mr. Lamoureux	20358
Mr. Davidson	20361
Mr. Trudel	20361
Ms. Zarrillo	20361
Mrs. Shanahan	20362
Mr. Morantz	20362
Mr. Trudel	20362
Mr. Samson	20364

Mr. Boulерice	20364
Mr. Garon	20364
Mrs. Shanahan	20366
Mr. Gourde	20366
Ms. Idlout	20366
Mr. Samson	20366

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Temple Inauguration

Mr. Arya	20367
----------------	-------

Emergencies Act

Mr. Aboultaif	20367
---------------------	-------

Elections in Taiwan

Ms. Sgro	20368
----------------	-------

Guy Rousseau

Mr. Villemure	20368
---------------------	-------

Canadian Dental Care Plan

Mr. Iacono	20368
------------------	-------

Opioids

Mrs. Goodridge	20368
----------------------	-------

East York

Ms. Dabrusin	20368
--------------------	-------

2023 Canadian Music Class Challenge

Mr. Scarpaleggia	20369
------------------------	-------

Public Safety

Mr. Khanna	20369
------------------	-------

Women in Peacekeeping

Ms. Damoff	20369
------------------	-------

Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada

Mr. Brassard	20369
--------------------	-------

Carbon Tax

Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	20370
--	-------

Gender Equality

Mr. Carr	20370
----------------	-------

Indigenous Language Revitalization

Mr. Johns	20370
-----------------	-------

Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary Volunteers

Ms. Michaud	20370
-------------------	-------

Conservative Party of Canada

Mr. Strahl	20370
------------------	-------

Ajit Singh Badh

Mr. Dhaliwal	20371
--------------------	-------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Public Services and Procurement

Mr. Poilievre	20371
Ms. Freeland	20371

Carbon Pricing

Mr. Poilievre	20371
Ms. Freeland	20371

Public Services and Procurement

Mr. Poilievre	20371
Ms. Freeland	20371

Carbon Pricing

Mr. Poilievre	20371
Ms. Freeland	20372
Mr. Poilievre	20372
Ms. Freeland	20372

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Mr. Therrien	20372
Mr. Fraser	20372
Mr. Therrien	20372
Mr. Miller	20372

Housing

Mr. Singh	20372
Ms. Freeland	20372

Grocery Industry

Mr. Singh	20373
Mr. Champagne	20373

Carbon Pricing

Ms. Lantsman	20373
Ms. Freeland	20373
Ms. Lantsman	20373
Ms. Freeland	20373
Mrs. Stubbs	20373
Ms. Freeland	20373
Mrs. Stubbs	20373
Mr. Boissonnault	20374
Ms. Rood	20374
Mr. MacAulay	20374
Ms. Rood	20374
Mr. MacAulay	20374

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	20374
Mr. Miller	20374
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	20375
Mr. Miller	20375
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	20375
Mr. Miller	20375

Housing

Mrs. Kramp-Neuman	20375
Mr. Fraser	20375
Mrs. Kramp-Neuman	20375
Mr. Fraser	20375
Mr. Deltell	20376
Mr. Fraser	20376
Mr. Deltell	20376
Ms. Martinez Ferrada	20376

Grocery Industry

Ms. Blaney	20376
------------------	-------

Mr. O'Regan	20376
Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Green	20376
Mr. Hussen	20377
Diversity and Inclusion	
Mrs. Zahid	20377
Ms. Khera	20377
Housing	
Mr. Godin	20377
Mr. Rodriguez	20377
Mr. Godin	20377
Mrs. Lebouthillier	20377
Mr. Seeback	20377
Mr. Fraser	20378
Mr. Seeback	20378
Mr. Fraser	20378
Public Services and Procurement	
Mrs. Vignola	20378
Mr. Duclos	20378
Mrs. Vignola	20378
Mr. Duclos	20378
Finance	
Mr. Lawrence	20378
Ms. Freeland	20379
Mr. Lawrence	20379
Ms. Freeland	20379
Mr. Généreux	20379
Ms. Freeland	20379
Regional Economic Development	
Ms. Lattanzio	20379
Ms. Martinez Ferrada	20379
Public Services and Procurement	
Mrs. Block	20379
Ms. O'Connell	20380
Mrs. Kusie	20380
Ms. O'Connell	20380
Ethics	
Mr. Barrett	20380
Mr. MacKinnon	20380
Labour	
Mr. Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	20380
Mr. O'Regan	20380
Ms. Mathysen	20380
Mr. Blair	20381
Indigenous Affairs	
Mr. Angus	20381
Ms. Hajdu	20381

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Committees of the House

Procedure and House Affairs

Motion for concurrence	20381
Amendment negatived	20383
Motion agreed to	20384

Russia

Ms. McPherson	20384
Motion	20384
(Motion agreed to)	20384

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Fall Economic Statement Implementation Act, 2023

Bill C-59. Second reading	20384
Mr. Samson	20384
Mr. Lamoureux	20385
Mr. Lemire	20385
Mr. Gerretsen	20386
Mr. Sorbara	20386
Mrs. Roberts	20388
Ms. Bérubé	20388
Mr. Bachrach	20388
Mr. Morantz	20388
Mr. Bachrach	20390
Mr. Gerretsen	20390
Mr. Beaulieu	20390
Mr. Morrice	20391
Mrs. Roberts	20391
Mr. Sorbara	20392
Ms. Larouche	20393
Ms. Gazan	20393

Points of Order

Decorum—Speaker's Ruling

The Speaker	20393
-------------------	-------

Fall Economic Statement Implementation Act, 2023

Bill C-59. Second reading	20394
Mr. Jowhari	20394
Mr. Davidson	20395
Mrs. Vignola	20396
Ms. Gazan	20396
Mr. Casey	20396
Mr. Ellis	20398
Mr. Lemire	20398
Mr. Blaikie	20398
Mr. Gerretsen	20398
Ms. Lantsman	20398
Mr. Sorbara	20400
Ms. Gazan	20400
Mr. McKay	20400
Mrs. Vignola	20402
Mr. Ellis	20402
Ms. Mathysen	20402
Mr. Bachrach	20402

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Parliament of Canada Act

Bill S-202. Report stage	20403
Mr. Aldag	20403
Motion for concurrence	20403
Division on motion deferred	20403

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Natural Resources

Mr. Patzer	20403
------------------	-------

Ms. Dabrusin	20404
--------------------	-------

Persons with Disabilities

Mr. Morrice	20405
Mr. Zuberi	20405

Public Services and Procurement

Mr. Kurek	20406
Ms. Dabrusin	20407

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