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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 9, 2022

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

HEALTH

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to address the real freedom fighters of this pandemic. I want to acknowledge the vast majority of Canadians who have graciously fulfilled their civic duty time and time again. I am referring to those who have chosen to exercise their freedom in pursuit of the common good and continually protect the health and safety of others.

They have made sacrifices to help their families, community and country in its time of need. They have lifted people up and demonstrated their unwavering compassion in the most challenging of circumstances. They have consistently prioritized the collective welfare of their fellow citizens, rather than dwelling on what they have had to do or give up.

We are forever grateful to them for doing their part, for trusting in science and joining the almost 90% who have gotten vaccinated. They should know that their countless number of selfless deeds over the past two years speak thousands of times louder than all the horns and voices of angry demonstrators.

The immense contributions they have made to our pandemic response make up the convoy that will defeat COVID-19.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with a profound mix of both anger and sadness that I rise today to condemn the events that took place on Monday in my

two riding offices and those of our colleague, the member for West Nova.

We received envelopes containing chemical irritants. One staff of mine unwittingly opened the envelope and had to be rushed to hospital, treated and decontaminated. Thankfully, he is fine and back at work.

This act underscores a deeper challenge regarding the demise of civility and respect in our democratic discourse on social media, through email, through mail and in person. We can debate. We can disagree. We can protest peacefully. Those things are the essence of democracy. Hateful acts of violence to servants of the people are not an attack on us individually but an attack on democracy itself. An attack on one is an attack on all.

My message is this: No member of this House will be intimidated. We will continue representing our communities, making Canada a better place for all.

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, February is Black History Month. It is a time to learn about the histories and cultures of Black Canadians and how they have contributed to Canada. It is also a time to celebrate legacies left and legacies in progress.

My riding of Humber River—Black Creek benefits greatly from the contributions of Black Canadians in the past and now. That is why I am happy to stand today and recognize some key Black leaders from Humber River—Black Creek.

First, Mr. Winston LaRose is a leader so embedded in the community that he is referred to as Mr. Jane and Finch. Devon Jones works with area youth at the Youth Association for Academics, Athletics and Character Education. We call it YAAACE for short.

There is also Adaoma Patterson, president of the Jamaican Canadian Association; Pastor Francis at Youth Now on Track Services; Risa Antoine at the Jane and Finch Boys and Girls Club; Pastor Olu at Inner City Outreach; and Cheryl Prescod at the Black Creek Community Health Centre, who has worked tirelessly to aid our community over the pandemic.

Statements by Members

There are dozens more I could name but my time is limited. To all of the simply phenomenal Black leaders in my community and across the country, we say thanks.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SPECIAL OLYMPICS CANADA

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Special Olympics Canada is a unique organization. It provides a comprehensive playground to podium sport experience for people living with an intellectual disability.

The organization comprises 50,000 athletes and 23,000 volunteers. Recently, I had the pleasure to meet Valérie, a swimming medalist, who talked about what an important role Special Olympics Canada has played in her life.

Unfortunately, we have learned that the additional federal funding for the organization is expiring and will not be renewed.

However, Special Olympics Canada needs that additional funding to continue its vital mission and succeed in rebuilding. That is why we are calling on the government to maintain the current additional funding in budget 2022.

I congratulate Special Olympics Canada for all of the great work it has done.

* * *

● (1410)

[*English*]

OTTAWA BUSINESS OWNERS

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I want to share with the House the work that Chef Joe, a resident of Orléans and well-known owner of Thali Ottawa and Coconut Lagoon, has done through his leadership and philanthropic work during the pandemic.

Chef Joe has really stepped up throughout this crisis. His dedication in helping to support the most vulnerable is commendable.

Despite the stress of opening and having to carry a payroll, Chef Joe decided to continue with his advocacy and support the community of Ottawa. Just this week again, he donated two weeks' worth of meals to the Shepherds of Good Hope, and for Joe, his business has been and is significantly impacted by the convoy.

Monday was supposed to be a good day for Joe and many restaurants and stores in the downtown corridor, but it was not. I want to salute Joe and all our business owners and residents in Ottawa. We hear them. We know they are there, and we will continue to advocate for them.

* * *

HEALTH CARE TRANSFERS

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the pandemic has underscored the current state of health care in Canada. Our health care institutions are overwhelmed. Massive gaps have been detected. There are shortfalls, and the entire

system is on the brink of collapse. Intensive care units are consistently filled with patients. Surgeries and procedures have been delayed, and staff are completely exhausted.

On February 4, Canada's premiers came together and called on the Prime Minister for help, requesting an unconditional \$28-billion boost to health care transfers.

Earlier this week at finance committee, we uncovered \$70 billion in new spending, yet none of it for federal health care transfers. Some economists were suggesting any new money should be directed at health care federal transfers.

We know two things about the Liberal government: The Liberals love to spend money, but refuse to listen to Canadians. Will they listen to Canada's premiers?

* * *

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two years ago today, we were horrified to learn of four-year-old Keira Kagan's death at her father's hands. Despite her mother, Dr. Jennifer Kagan's pleas for Keira's safety and providing ample evidence of a history of coercive control and abuse, the court system failed her and a bright little girl was lost.

Dr. Kagan's cry for action as a mother resonated across Canada. For victims of domestic abuse and coercive control, their struggle to protect themselves and their children is a real and terrifying challenge played out in mediations and family courts across the country.

On Monday, I joined my colleagues from Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle and Oakville North—Burlington in tabling Bill C-233 to ensure training and education of judges on the warning signs and dangers of domestic violence and coercive control.

I want to thank the many families who joined Dr. Kagan not only in her pain but in her courageous advocacy to protect our most vulnerable. We hear Jennifer. We hold her in her pain, and we will work to protect others from this harm and abuse. Keira's light shines bright and her memory is forever a blessing.

* * *

EDWARD MOXON ROBERTS

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to join me in sending our condolences to the family of the late Edward Moxon Roberts. Edward was an historian, a political leader, a lawyer and an author. He was a powerful influencer and political statesman in Newfoundland and Labrador in Canada.

For five decades, he committed himself to outstanding advocacy, research and legislative policies that changed and shaped communities and led the way for future opportunities. He had tremendous respect for those who served in political life and was a loyal and dedicated servant himself, serving as a member of the House of Assembly, a minister of the Crown, the 11th Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador and a trusted adviser to many provincial premiers.

In 2009, he was recognized with the Order of Canada. I, along with my colleague from St. John's South—Mount Pearl, will remember him as a loyal friend.

We acknowledge his dedication and how it has benefited the people of his time and the generations that follow.

* * *

● (1415)

BRADFORD BYPASS

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is time to get York—Simcoe moving. After decades, the Bradford bypass is finally being built, ensuring that residents can get from Highway 400 to the 404 faster and safer than ever. This connecting link will ease gridlock and traffic congestion, bring economic benefit and ensure that our growing region is ready for the future as new immigrants move into the area.

The bypass has the support of more than 85% of residents, including the farmers in the Holland Marsh, the soup and salad bowl of Canada, who need safer access to their fields and a better way to ship their produce. The bypass is being built to reduce emissions and combat climate change, with minimal impact on the environment and to the Lake Simcoe watershed.

Downtown activists are trying to stop the bypass from being built, but they do not know how needed the highway is. York—Simcoe is glad the Ontario government is moving ahead with the bypass. Let us get it built.

* * *

GUNRAJ GILL, LYNN WHITEHOUSE AND CHARITY AMOUZOU-MAY

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as politicians, we all appreciate those who help us. Today, I would like to recognize three of those individuals who played important roles on my team but are no longer with us.

Gunraj Gill came to me in 2014 as a campaign volunteer when he was still a teenager. When asked what role he wanted to play, he responded “campaign manager”. After my election, he came with me to Ottawa and loved the Hill. He tragically passed away in July, 2019, at the age of 23.

Lynn Whitehouse worked at the Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce for more than 30 years. Lynn was a fierce advocate for good public policy that supported small businesses in our community. After Lynn's retirement, she joined my constituency team. Lynn lost her battle with cancer this past Christmas.

Statements by Members

Charity Amouzou-May was a volunteer in my campaigns in 2015 and 2019. She played a key role with my constituency religious leaders' round tables and my youth council. Charity lost her battle with cancer this January.

I appreciate being allowed this moment to recognize these three individuals, all of whom I miss daily.

* * *

HAVE A HEART DAY

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Blue Quills University, near St. Paul in Lakeland, was a residential school in the 1930s. Fifty years ago, it became Canada's first indigenous-controlled education centre. It promotes pride in indigenous heritage and reclaims traditional knowledge and practices. Blue Quills is owned and governed by the Beaver Lake, Cold Lake, Frog Lake, Whitefish Lake, Heart Lake, Kehewin and Saddle Lake first nations.

The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society is promoting Have a Heart Day. Blue Quills is encouraging students to send Valentine's Day cards to the Prime Minister, and my office will help deliver them. Their message is:

Happy Valentine's Day! Please have a heart, First Nations children should not have to fight for services all other Canadians enjoy. Give First Nations children the same chance to grow up safely at home, get a good education, be healthy, and proud of their cultures.

I agree with them. Beyond empathy and words, the Prime Minister must take real action to improve the well-being, the opportunities and the futures for indigenous children, just as for all Canadian kids.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we now know that, before the last election, the Prime Minister made a very purposeful political decision to divide Canadians based on their vaccine status, deliberately tearing at the fabric that unites Canadians in order to hold on to his own privileges and power.

The Prime Minister continues to purposely stoke anger and division, hoping that Canadians will turn on each other rather than on his incompetent government that continues to fail at every aspect of COVID response. To those who felt the sting of this discrimination from their own government, we acknowledge their suffering, trauma and loss. We hear them, we see them and we will continue to speak up for them.

Statements by Members

It is time to change course. It is time for Canadians to reject the politics of fear and division. It is time to heal the divisions that have been intentionally sown. It is time to unite Canadians, give them back their freedoms, and end the discriminatory vaccine mandates once and for all.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN SCHOOL COUNSELLING WEEK

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since this is Canadian School Counselling Week, I would like to take a few moments to recognize the important contributions of school counsellors, a growing profession Canada.

[English]

The school counselling profession supports the personal, social, academic and career development, and the mental health and well-being, of all students in Canada in order to provide them with the opportunity to achieve in school and to plan for a career.

● (1420)

[Translation]

These professionals play a key role in the lives of students who face challenges during their school years. School counsellors are there to listen and encourage students to express their emotions and talk about what they are going through.

[English]

Those counsellors are committed to helping students, to working in partnership with parents and teachers, and to focusing on positive ways to enhance the students' development.

I thank those counsellors for being there for our students.

[Translation]

We thank them for listening to our young people.

* * *

[English]

MIDDLE EAST

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, Amnesty International released a report titled, "Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime Against Humanity".

The report, four years in the making, contains a number of recommendations to the Government of Israel, the United Nations, and states and donors such as Canada. The findings in this report are extremely serious. Both Palestinians and Israelis have the right to live in security and safety. This report has made it clear that Palestinians are experiencing neither.

Canada must be a stronger advocate to ensure Israel is respecting international law and human rights. Canada can take concrete steps, including suspending arms sales to Israel and banning products from the illegal settlements until the end of the illegal occupation.

I ask all my colleagues in the House to read this report. This is a conversation we must have. As parliamentarians, we have the obli-

gation to make ourselves aware of human rights abuses, and to hold ourselves and our friends to account.

* * *

[Translation]

TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to draw the House's attention to Teacher Appreciation Week.

Being a teacher means meeting children where they are and, little by little, helping them develop every type of intelligence. That work is not confined to the classroom.

One can take the teacher out of the school, but one can never take the school out of the teacher. I know that for a fact.

Anyone who wants to get together with a friend who is a teacher has to set it up outside of planning and marking time, and certainly not at report card time.

How many books does a teacher need? More than they have, always just one more. If a teacher walks by a bookstore without buying a book, that is practically a miracle. Need a pencil? Ask a teacher. A teacher will always have one handy and many more tucked away somewhere. If one sees a teacher buying school supplies, they are for their class.

In a nutshell, teachers think about our children all 12 months of the year, they are utterly devoted to their profession and they deserve our respect.

I am grateful to all teachers.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian people have suffered an overwhelming amount of trauma in the past two years. This is due to forced isolation, countless pandemic restrictions and moving goalposts. Countries such as the U.K., Denmark and Switzerland are returning to normal life, yet the Prime Minister of Canada will not give a signal of doing the same. It is leaving people confused, frustrated and hopeless. Domestic violence has increased dramatically. Mental health concerns are through the roof. The use of opioids has skyrocketed. Life-saving medical treatments have been withheld. Cancers have gone undiagnosed, and people have lost their jobs because of a personal medical choice.

I am calling on the government to provide compassionate leadership, and abandon the harmful lockdown measures and hateful rhetoric that so often accompanies them. We need to come together as a nation and heal. We need to restore dignity, honour and respect. The bulk of the responsibility rests on the Prime Minister's shoulders. Starting today, I am calling on him to lead with compassion. I am calling on him to end the vaccine mandates once and for all.

* * *

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Keira Kagan was going to change the world.

I wish I had met Keira. She was a bright and beautiful four-year-old whose life was stolen by an angry father who killed himself and Keira two years ago today. Keira should be playing with her brother and making her mom, Jennifer, and stepdad, Philip, laugh and smile. Instead, Jennifer has had to become an advocate for changes to the court system to educate judges on domestic violence and coercive control. I cannot begin to imagine the heartbreak that Jennifer faces every day, but I can support her advocacy work to ensure that no other child is killed because our judicial system does not recognize that domestic violence and coercive control are real and must be taken into account. I can continue to work with Jennifer to see Keira's Law, which is part of the member for Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle's private member's bill, Bill C-233, become a reality in Canada.

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1425)

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, countries around the world are opening up, even countries with lower vaccination rates than Canada, and provinces are beginning to lift restrictions and getting life back to normal. Why? It is because they are following the science.

Canadians are ready to get their lives back, but it seems like the Prime Minister wants to live in a permanent pandemic. Dr. Tam, Dr. Henry, Dr. Moore, Dr. Hinshaw and Dr. Shahab all agree that it is time to shift out of the restrictions and back to normal life.

Why is the Prime Minister so offside, not only with the science but, it would seem, with a growing number of his own MPs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we intend to follow the science and are working closely with Dr. Tam and other public health officials to ensure that we get through this pandemic as best we possibly can, and that has been through vaccinations.

The fact that nine out of 10 Canadians have gotten vaccinated is one of the reasons why we are able to get through this. It is why we have been able to prevent our health systems from being completely overrun. Vaccinations are the one thing through this, and that is why we are continuing to encourage Canadians to get vaccinated.

Oral Questions

Why, unfortunately, the Conservatives are against vaccination is, quite frankly, beyond me.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the science and the evidence are simply not on the Prime Minister's side. Many of the reasons previously used to keep Canadians under restrictions are vanishing before our eyes. Other countries are opening up. Provinces are opening up. As he just said, 90% of Canadians have the vaccine.

The Prime Minister needs to put his ego aside. He needs to do what is right for the country. He needs to end the mandates. He needs to end the restrictions. He needs to listen to his own caucus.

Will he do that?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada and Canadians have made it through this pandemic better than many other places because Canadians stepped up. They were there for each other, and their government had their backs.

We worked closely with provincial and territorial leaders. Every step of the way, we kept focusing on vaccinations, on public health supports and on business supports, which has allowed us through. Canadians are continuing to get vaccinated. Sixty thousand Canadians got vaccinated with their first dose just last week. We are continuing to make sure Canadians get vaccinated, because this is how we get through this pandemic.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know this Prime Minister has politicized the pandemic. Last summer, as B.C. was burning, Afghanistan was falling and we were in the fourth wave of a pandemic, the Prime Minister called an unnecessary \$600-million election to capitalize on this crisis. According to a senior Liberal MP, a decision was made "to wedge, to divide and to stigmatize". It is a country more divided than ever before.

Can the Prime Minister tell Canadians why he would politicize the pandemic, why he would try to stigmatize Canadians, and why he would do this to a country that was already suffering and deeply damaged by so many of his policies?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about last year's election. It was an opportunity for Canadians to weigh in on the path forward for our country, and on how to continue to fight this pandemic. What we saw, unfortunately, from the Conservative Party of Canada was a refusal to step up on vaccination and a refusal to follow science. As they were talking about how we get through this pandemic, they could not ensure that their own MPs got vaccinated.

Canadians spoke loudly and clearly in the last election, and said that science and vaccination were the way through. They gave us in this House a mandate to move forward on that, and we did.

Oral Questions

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is clearly trying to strategically and very selfishly divide and stigmatize Canadians. We live in a beautiful country, but our country is suffering. Our country is divided. Our country is tired, and Canadians need leadership.

Again, I will ask the Prime Minister this. His senior Liberal MP said that there was a strategic decision made on that side to, and these are not my words, “stigmatize”, “divide” and “wedge”.

This is what the Prime Minister did. Why?

● (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while Canadians have made it through this pandemic, what this government has provided is responsible leadership that has put the health and safety of Canadians first and foremost. That is exactly what we did. That is exactly what we talked about in the last election campaign. That is exactly what we are going to continue to do in following the science.

The member opposite talks about Canadians' suffering. Supply chains are disrupted and Canadians are in their homes worried of walking their streets because the Conservatives continue to support blockades that are hurting businesses across the country.

Will the Conservative leader stand up and condemn those blockades?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked the Prime Minister a simple question yesterday. The current member for Louis-Hébert and former chair of the Quebec Liberal caucus has revealed the Liberal government's underlying motivation in its approach to the pandemic. He said that on the eve of the last election campaign, a decision was made to go from a positive and unifying approach to one that would divide and stigmatize.

The member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin agrees.

Did the Prime Minister himself make that decision to divide and stigmatize people for his own benefit?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, in the last election, we were there to unify Canadians around vaccine mandates. Canadians voted for a government that would put science first. They rejected the Conservative Party, which would not even confirm whether its own members were vaccinated.

Now we are going through another difficult situation, with blockades at our borders and in the city of Ottawa. The Conservative Party will not even condemn these blockades and the impact they are having on Canadians across the country, who are losing their jobs and struggling to put food on the table.

* * *

COVID-19 PROTESTS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it all comes back to leadership in this crisis. Criticism in the media has been harsh and internal issues in the Liberal Party of Canada are compromising the government's ability to take action.

Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that he needs to communicate better, perhaps with a little more humility and a more conciliatory tone without changing the fundamental objective, and acknowledge that it is not just truckers who are increasingly concerned? Will he acknowledge that the siege urgently needs to be lifted before the weekend?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I absolutely acknowledge that.

Our government has acknowledged for more than a week now that this siege is unacceptable. It is having an impact on small businesses, manufacturers, and supply chains.

We must do everything we can together, at every level of government, to end these blockades at the border and in Ottawa.

It would be extremely helpful if the Conservative Party told its supporters to stop blocking our economy and go home.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, he is not a political commentator. He is the Prime Minister.

The international press is making fun of Canada. More protest groups like the one in Ottawa are popping up in other cities around the world. How is that for leadership? Congratulations. Canada is back.

Canada's image has been tarnished and unfortunately Quebec's as well. Quebec City managed the city and the government properly.

What will it take for the Prime Minister to get moving, jump in, do something, take action?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the provincial and municipal governments were able to manage the protests that occurred in Quebec City a few days ago very well. Nevertheless, we were there if more help was needed. They managed the situation well, as did other cities.

There are certain challenges in Ottawa, and we are here to support the local authorities, to work with the province and to ensure that law and order are restored.

However, it is important that the Conservative Party of Canada call for an end to the blockades and stop encouraging its supporters to continue blocking Canada and the economy.

● (1435)

[*English*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have truckers who are stuck at the Coutts border crossing in Alberta. We have truckers stuck at the Ambassador Bridge crossing in Windsor. We have an occupation in Ottawa that has hit the citizens, residents and small businesses there with extreme difficulty, and we know that a significant portion of the funding for this convoy is from foreign U.S. dollars.

Will the Prime Minister do everything possible to stop this convoy and these protests by contacting U.S. officials, investigating where these funds are coming from and working with them to stop it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working very hard with partners at different levels of government to make sure that the flow of funds through criminal activities is interdicted. We are going to continue to do that while, all at the same time, ensuring that there is a right of free and open legal protests. That is extremely important in this country.

I will highlight, however, the irony the member opposite brought up, which is indeed a harsh one: While this convoy originally was all about truckers protesting, now it is truckers being protested and being prevented from doing their jobs of putting food on our tables and supporting our manufacturers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, truckers are currently blockading the border crossings in Coutts and Windsor. There is also a siege, an occupation, happening in Ottawa.

The entire country has been hit hard by the convoy protests, and it is clear that they are being financed in part by foreign money.

Will the Prime Minister speak to his U.S. counterparts to investigate and stop this money from coming in?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have worked with our partners, including international partners, to track the funds that are being sent to organizations, businesses and criminal activities here in Canada, and that work will continue.

However, it is interesting to note that the blockades and convoy that were originally supposed to be by truckers are now preventing other truckers from doing their jobs. These truckers are unable to deliver purchases to Canadians or deliver merchandise and products to our manufacturers. Truckers are now the victims of these—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester.

* * *

[*English*]

HEALTH

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year an all-party parliamentary committee urged the Prime Minister to promise he would not call an election. In fact, at that time, the Prime Minister himself said he had no interest in calling an election during the pandemic. Canadians were misled. Instead of prioritizing the health and safety of Canadians, he forced an election.

This begs the question: Why did the Prime Minister jeopardize the health of Canadians to save his own job?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in that election, Canada had an extremely important conversation about how to move forward through this pandemic. Partially because of the clear answers—

Oral Questions

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I will have to interrupt the right hon. Prime Minister. The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester asked a question and I am sure he cannot hear the answer with all the shouting going on around him. I ask everyone to tone it down so the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester can hear the answer.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, in the last election, Canadians were presented with a very clear choice of moving forward with strong vaccination policies that would ensure Canadians were safe, or the Conservative proposal to not really step up on vaccinations, not even ensure that all Conservative members were vaccinated as MPs and not give the kind of leadership on science they wanted.

Canadians made a very clear choice to vote for parties that supported vaccine mandates, and that is exactly what has gotten us through the pandemic to this point, with lower death rates than other countries around the world have had, despite all the tragedies we have faced.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, sadly, what we ended up with is seeds of division having been sowed and Canadians suffering. We have suffered financially, socially, morally, mentally and physically, and according to the misery index, we are a very miserable nation.

For almost two years now, Canadians have borne the yoke of loss, uncertainty and lack of hope. The backs of Canadians are about to break. Canadians are miserable because of the Prime Minister. We want to know on what date the mandates will end.

• (1440)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again we see the Conservatives are willing to twist the facts to their own partisan ends. The reality is that vaccine mandates, and the fact that Canadians stepped up to get vaccinated to almost 90%, ensured that this pandemic did not hit as hard here in Canada as elsewhere around the world.

We stayed focused on following the science and promoting public health rules, and Canadians stepped up in their communities, stepped up for their frontline health workers and stepped up for each other. Canada has never been as strong and together as we are now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in November, the Prime Minister said that the top priority was keeping Canadians safe and following the science.

Oral Questions

Today, we know that his decisions were not based on science. Not one, but two of his MPs have stated that the Prime Minister's response to the pandemic was politicized and divisive.

Over a dozen developed countries have already begun to lift public health restrictions, but the Prime Minister is trying to control Canadians. Can the Prime Minister tell this House when he will lift the federal COVID-19 restrictions?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ever since the beginning of the pandemic, Canadians have all wanted to know when it would be over and when we could go back to the way things were before.

Every step of the way, we have had to adjust measures, develop proposals and introduce programs to help Canadians in a timely manner. The drop in omicron cases means that we will be able to make some changes. Things have already begun to change across the country, but we are going to follow the science, the evidence, as we have done from the start, to keep Canadians safe.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is clear, what we found out yesterday, is that, under the guise of fighting the pandemic, the Prime Minister voluntarily played with Canadians' mental health.

He manipulated people to get votes in the last election. He kept parliamentary activities to a minimum to prevent us from scrutinizing his cabinet's decisions. He stigmatized all Canadians whose opinions differed from his. His strategy was to divide Canadians.

Will the Prime Minister finally admit that he used the pandemic to win the election and save his job?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have put Canadians' health and safety front and centre every step of the way.

That is exactly what we did by following the science, but here is the truth: The Conservative Party is still playing partisan games by supporting the blockades and their supporters, who are blocking our supply chains and the City of Ottawa.

They are refusing to condemn these illegal demonstrations. They support them. They bring the demonstrators coffee. When will they start showing responsible leadership?

[*English*]

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two Liberal MPs have said that the Prime Minister purposely politicized the pandemic for crass, political gain in order to save his own job. The Prime Minister deliberately divided Canadians. We have federal mandates still in effect that are stifling industries like travel and tourism, while countries around the world, with the same information, are finding ways to live with this virus.

On what date this month will all federal mandates be lifted?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, policy in this country is set by a government that listens to science, that follows data and that does not listen to people blockading our streets and blockading our borders. That is not the way to make public policy in this country. It is not the way to bring Canadians together.

We are going to stay focused on keeping people alive, safe, healthy and indeed prosperous. The fact that the Conservative Party continues to refuse to condemn the blockades that are hurting our supply chains, driving up prices and limiting our manufacturers from being able to bring their parts across the country is a shame on them.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan and Alberta have announced an end to restrictions. Canada's chief public health officer is calling for normalcy. Two Liberal MPs have called out their own for divisiveness.

Canadians have done everything asked of them for the last two years, and while many other countries are offering a plan of hope, the Liberals continue to stifle industries like travel and tourism for little benefit. It seems the Prime Minister has gotten a little too comfortable with using the force of government rather than trusting Canadians.

On what day this month will all travel advisories be lifted?

● (1445)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talks about stifling industries. The reality is the support of the Conservative Party of Canada for people barricading our streets and our border crossings is harming businesses. It is harming Canadians who are putting food on the table. It is driving up prices. It is causing uncertainty, instability and frustration for people who have suffered too much because of the pandemic over the past two years. It is time for the Conservative Party to show responsible leadership and condemn these blockades, and for all of us to move forward together.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member for Louis-Hébert understands that the Prime Minister's position on health transfers is untenable.

It is imperative that the Prime Minister increase health funding in the long term. This is essential if we are to catch up on all the delayed surgeries, hire nurses and increase the number of beds, so that we never again have to lock down an entire population in order to protect the health care system. Some 85% of citizens are calling on the Prime Minister to increase health transfers to cover 35% of health care costs.

Will the Prime Minister listen to them? He has their money in his hands, not his own.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of this pandemic, we have been there to increase health transfers and health investments, and that is on top of the \$43 billion we transfer to the provinces and territories every year for their health care systems.

Oral Questions

Throughout this pandemic, we have invested an additional \$63 billion to support our health care system.

Yes, we will continue to increase funding, in the medium and long term, to ensure that Canadians are safe. The federal government will be there for them, just as it has been for the past two years.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the phrase “be there” is losing all meaning.

The Prime Minister is the only one too stubborn to increase the federal share of health care funding to 35%.

Even his member for Louis-Hébert is criticizing him. In doing so, his member is joining every party in the National Assembly, the governments of Quebec and every province and territory, 85% of Canadians and 86% of Quebecers.

When someone is the only one who is right, often that is because they are too stubborn to admit they are wrong. Instead of going against everyone else, when will the Prime Minister provide the federal government's fair share for health care?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what more I can say. The member across the way cannot seem to take yes for an answer.

Yes, we will be there to continue increasing health transfers because, yes, we were there with an additional \$63 billion from the federal government for our health care systems.

We will continue to be there. We know how much we need to work together to provide better health care systems to Canadians. The federal government will be there for our health care systems, just as it was there with \$8 out of every \$10 spent during the pandemic.

[*English*]

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, people across the country are asking the Prime Minister for clarity, leadership and hope. People are so frustrated with the Prime Minister that there are protests nationwide. Canadians are just asking for respect and to be listened to.

With regard to the continued uncertainty and brazen disregard for legitimate concerns around the state of our country, I ask the Prime Minister this simple question: Can he share with us what evidence he has to justify implementing an interprovincial trucking mandate?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we cannot end a pandemic with blockades. We cannot end a pandemic by decreeing it. We cannot even end it with legislation. We need to end it with science. We need to end it with public health measures. We need to end—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1450)

The Speaker: I just want to point out that when the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan asked his question, there was dead silence. I believe he deserves that same respect when he is getting his answer.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, we cannot stop a pandemic with blockades. We cannot end a pandemic by decree. We cannot end a pandemic with legislation.

We need to end a pandemic by relying on science, by following public health measures and with vaccinations. That is exactly what we have focused on through these past two years, and even while Canadians are tired and impatient for it to end, we are going to continue to be there for them, to support them through it and to make sure we do everything necessary to end this pandemic.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister just demonstrated why Canadians are so frustrated. He does not listen. I asked him to show me some evidence and science around interprovincial trucking mandates, and he totally ignored that question.

My question for him might be a redo, but maybe he will get it right the second time. How high do grocery prices have to go? How empty do grocery stores have to be for him to not implement an interprovincial trucking vaccine mandate?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the member opposite has criticized something that we have not even done, so there is already that issue there. Secondly, he talks about empty grocery store shelves, and he talks about disruptions to supply chains.

The reality is that right now people in Windsor are suffering and losing their jobs because they cannot get auto parts across the Ambassador Bridge. People in Alberta are seeing shelves empty because they cannot get deliveries across the Coutts border crossing. The Conservative Party, which supports these blockades, will not even stand up and say enough is enough and it is time to go home.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Ireland, Sweden, Norway, Israel, Czech Republic, the U.K., Spain and Denmark are all removing restrictions, including vaccine mandates, even though they have lower vaccine rates than we do here in Canada. Saskatchewan and Alberta provincial governments have also announced plans to remove their restrictions.

When will the Prime Minister follow our international allies, follow the science, follow the expert advice, follow the premiers and give Canadians a plan as to when he will remove the federal travel restrictions here in Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout the pandemic, different jurisdictions have handled things differently every step of the way. This includes jurisdictions across the country, which we have been there to support, and different countries that have had much worse outcomes in some cases and many more restrictions in other cases.

Oral Questions

The reality is that we will continue to do what is right for Canadians to keep people safe as we get through this pandemic. Yes, I understand how frustrated Canadians are, and how much we need to see an end to this pandemic, but we cannot do it by decree. We can only do it by continuing to trust science and getting people vaccinated.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is the problem. There the Prime Minister goes again refusing to answer the question. It seems he would rather wedge, divide and stigmatize fellow Canadians. The problem is Canadians are better than that. They are sick and tired of his divisive games. They have done their part and they deserve to know when Canada will follow our international allies and end our restrictions.

On what date will the restrictions end?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have done their part. They have continued to step up and get vaccinated to a higher percentage than the Conservative caucus has. Canadians have continued to follow public health advice. They have continued to be there for each other, to lean on each other.

We now see the Conservative Party continuing to egg on its supporters to shutdown border crossings, and to encourage its supporters to blockade downtown Ottawa because they are upset they lost an election. We are going to continue to focus on supporting Canadians, keeping people safe and vaccinations.

• (1455)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have done their part. They have gotten vaccinated. They have followed public health measures. They now want a plan to get us past this pandemic. That plan is going to mean we will have to work with our public health officials. It also means we will have to make sure that our health care system is never pushed to the brink of collapse again.

Will the Prime Minister put forward a plan that will chart the course for us to get past this pandemic, which would include properly funding our health care system, so it is there for our loved ones when they need it most?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that our health care systems have been stressed during these past two years. That is why, as a federal government, we have continually stepped up.

Every year, the federal government sends about \$43 billion to the provinces for supporting their health care systems. Over the past two years, on top of those regular transfers, we have invested about \$63 billion in health care for everything from vaccines to transfers for provinces to other measures to keep Canadians safe. Yes, we will be there to increase health care transfers to ensure that we have a stronger medical system into the future.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are vaccinated. They have followed the advice of public health experts. Now, they need a plan. How are we going to get out of this pandemic?

This plan will follow public health advice. This plan must also acknowledge that our health care and health care system have been pushed to the brink several times during this pandemic. Will the Prime Minister commit to investing in our health care system so it is there for our loved ones when they need it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, we will be there to invest even more in our health care systems.

Over the past two years, we have invested an additional \$63 billion in our health care systems and programs to get Canadians through the pandemic.

We are in talks with the provinces and will continue these talks because we know that it will take more money to deliver better results and to make our health care systems more resilient.

We will be there to work in partnership with the provinces and territories.

* * *

[English]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, whether it be \$10 a day for child care, or historic investments in affordable housing, our government is committed to making life more affordable for Canadian families. We know that, traditionally speaking, Canadians have paid some of the highest cellphone bills in the world.

Could the Prime Minister please update the House on actions being taken to make cellphone plans more affordable?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the member for Mississauga—Malton for his important question. We promised Canadian families that we would reduce the cost of their cellphone bill.

Today, I am happy to announce that we have met our 25% price reduction target. In fact, we have done so three months ahead of schedule. This is wonderful news, but we know there is still more work to be done. We will continue to push to improve cell coverage and to make life more affordable for all Canadians.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister continues to try to convince Canadians that all is well with the economy, but what she does not seem to understand is that the majority of Canadians just do not see it that way.

What they do see is that their family cannot afford the same groceries that they used to, and they will try to squeak in just one more trip back and forth to pick up the kids from school before having to buy another tank of gas.

Oral Questions

Canadians are facing a cost of living crisis. When will the finance minister take this inflation crisis seriously and provide solutions?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, does that member know what is driving up the cost of living, the cost of groceries and the cost of parts for manufacturers this week? It is the blockades, which the Conservative Party continues to support, at the Coutts border crossing, at the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor and even in downtown Ottawa.

Canadians have struggled for two years because of this pandemic in so many different ways. They have stepped up and made sacrifices, and we have been there to have their backs. Why, right now, does the Conservative Party not have Canadians' backs, instead choosing to support those who are blockading their neighbours and our economy?

• (1500)

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been six years and these Liberals have failed to make life better for Canadians. They have delivered the largest cost in price increases we have seen in Canada in 30 years, plus Ottawa's anti-Canadian energy policies have only added to the pain in the Canadian economy.

The rising price of energy sets the prices for virtually everything else in the Canadian economy. Why is the Prime Minister making victims of seniors, working families and small businesses?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, small businesses in downtown Ottawa have been struggling for the past two weeks because Conservatives are supporting the people who are blockading them.

Businesses in Windsor are suffering because goods cannot get across the Ambassador Bridge, and Conservative Party supporters are being encouraged to continue their blockades. In Alberta, groceries are getting more expensive because the Coutts border crossing is blocked, and the Conservative Party will not condemn those protesters or ask them to go home.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the price of regular gas in Quebec has reached an unprecedented high of more than \$1.60 per litre.

This inflation is going to impact everything that is transported across Canada. In the meantime, the Prime Minister seems to have been caught off guard by what is happening.

What will he do, and when, to help low-income families deal with this unprecedented hike in the cost of everything they eat and use in their day-to-day life?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the current global inflation crisis has been caused by COVID-19. The disruptions in the supply chains are due to COVID-19 and in part to the blockades supported by the Conservatives.

We will continue to fight COVID-19 with vaccines and public health measures to ensure that Canadians soon get back to what they enjoy the most, and that is getting together and being there for

one another. That is our goal, and we are working very hard to get there.

[English]

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, gasoline is up 34%, housing is up almost 27%, sugar is up 20% and Canadian bacon is up 17%. Inflation has increased two times faster than the wages of those working in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia.

Families in Canada are being stretched too far. When will the Prime Minister get off his MacBook at his cottage and fix skyrocketing home prices, supply chain shortages and the cost of living crisis?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that we are in a global inflation crisis right now because of COVID-19, and the best way to get through that is to end this COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, we cannot end it with legislation and we cannot end it with barricades. We need to end it with science, and that means vaccinations.

If the Conservative Party is truly concerned about our supply chains, about the cost of living for Canadians, Conservatives should tell their supporters in Coutts and in Windsor to stand down those barricades and let the goods flow to Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

SENIORS

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, over the past eight months, the Prime Minister has reduced guaranteed income supplement payments for seniors who legitimately collected CERB. These are not wealthy seniors. They work part-time to pay for rent, groceries and prescriptions.

It took months for the Prime Minister to realize that was wrong, and he is going to make it right—but not until May—and he is still going to cut benefits every month until June.

These seniors have made sacrifices for eight months. Does the Prime Minister think they deserve something better than misery until the end of spring?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the pandemic has been very hard on seniors, and the government has been there to help them.

We are helping seniors with a one-time payment to seniors whose benefits were affected by pandemic support measures. Today we introduced Bill C-12 to exclude pandemic benefits for the purposes of calculating GIS.

We are calling on all parties, including the Bloc Québécois, to support us and pass this bill quickly to prevent any future reduction in GIS for low-income seniors. Our government will continue to be there for seniors.

Oral Questions

• (1505)

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, seniors are suffering as a result of the cuts to the guaranteed income supplement. Some of them are going hungry, selling their possessions and even losing their homes. These people cannot wait until late spring for the federal bureaucratic machine to get moving.

The Prime Minister proved with CERB that he can get cheques out quickly when he really wants to. If the Prime Minister was able to make CERB payments to millions of people within 10 days of them applying, he has the capacity to provide support to the most vulnerable seniors before the end of spring.

What is stopping him from taking action?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been there for Canadians, including seniors, for the past two years with unprecedented support. We have supported them with extra money during this pandemic, because we know it has been very difficult.

Yes, because of that money, some seniors risk losing the benefits they need this year. That is why we will soon be sending a one-time payment and why we introduced a bill yesterday with proposals aimed at solving this problem once and for all. We expect the other parties that care about seniors to support us.

* * *

[English]

PRIVACY

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago the ethics committee, including all Liberal committee members, unanimously agreed that a tender should be postponed in order to stop the Liberals from secretly collecting the mobility data of Canadians until MPs could be sure that the privacy rights of Canadians were not being violated.

However, in an unbelievable move yesterday, the entire Liberal caucus, including the same members who voted for it, voted against stopping the RFP. What a disgrace. Why would the Prime Minister vote against the committee's recommendations to make sure that the privacy of Canadians was protected?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservative Party, we believe data, science and evidence need to inform our response to COVID-19. It is crucial to inform policy and decision-making.

The Public Health Agency of Canada has used de-identified data without personal identifiers to inform the government's response to the pandemic. We have also publicly provided the data to Canadians to keep them informed. We remain focused on Canadians' health and safety and we continue to uphold the privacy standards they rightfully expect.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why was this vote so important yesterday? It was because the Liberals, with their "no" vote, have signalled that they will continue collecting this data without the consent of Canadians. If we connect the dots, we see a pattern of the Liberals using the distraction of a pandemic as an opportunity for massive expansion and overreach to

abuse the rights and freedoms of Canadians, including their privacy rights.

Would the Prime Minister at least provide a coherent reason for why he thinks it is a bad idea to pause this tender until we can ensure that Canadians' privacy protection rights are protected?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are fighting a global pandemic right now, and every step of the way we have been informed by science and data to do that. Yes, we have been protecting Canadians' privacy rights, which are always important, but we will use the tools we have to keep Canadians safe and defend their rights and values.

Unfortunately, we see the pattern of the Conservative Party, which tried to scrap the long-form census and is constantly against data and evidence and pushes back against science and data.

We will be informed by the facts and by science in what we do.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at the public safety committee, I asked Toronto's deputy chief of police if the Liberals' plan to spend a billion taxpayer dollars on a firearms buyback would have any effect on improving public safety. His answer, which has been echoed by law enforcement across this country, was that gun buybacks don't work.

My question is for the Prime Minister: Why is he ignoring law enforcement experts? Why will he not scrap this ineffective, wasteful ideological scheme?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to be crystal clear right now, the Conservative Party of Canada is asking us to bring back, to re-legalize, assault weapons. That was something that was debated during the election campaign that they are trying hard to forget.

We banned—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I want to remind the hon. members to watch their language.

I am going to have to ask the hon. member to stand and apologize or withdraw.

• (1510)

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, I will say that—

The Speaker: I am not asking for a long diatribe. I am asking for an apology.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, I will not give you one. I apologize for saying that he lied, but in 1977—

Oral Questions

The Speaker: No, that is over. That is it. Now, please sit down. You apologized. That is all we need.

The right hon. Prime Minister, please continue.

Let us give the hon. member for Sturgeon River—Parkland the opportunity to hear his answer.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year we banned 1,500 different models of assault-style weapons in this country. The Conservative Party is proposing to reverse that ban. They do not think it will keep Canadians safe. Well, we had an election which included that, and they were soundly rejected in that argument.

Canadians want to see their communities safer. That is why we are for strengthening gun control, while they, unfortunately and inexplicably, are for weakening it.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Heath MacDonald (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the interruption of trade resulting from a localized outbreak of potato wart has significantly impacted the economy of P.E.I. and many of my constituents. From small multi-generational family farms to large producers and from packers to processors and shippers, nearly every islander has been affected by this issue.

I know our government has been working diligently on this file, and yesterday was a huge step forward. Can the Prime Minister update the House on how the government is progressing toward the resumption of exports of the best darn potatoes in the world?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Malpeque for his question, his hard work and his continued advocacy for islanders.

Restoring market access for P.E.I. fresh potatoes to the U.S. and supporting P.E.I. farmers continues to be a top priority for our government. Thanks to the work of two of our colleagues who went to Washington, and their science-based approach, the export of table stock potatoes to Puerto Rico can now resume.

We will continue to defend our farmers and to push for a science-based approach until potato exports are completely restored.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on August 13, the Prime Minister announced mandatory vaccination at the federal level. On August 15, he called a useless election. On February 8, the cat was let out of the bag.

Contrary to what he has been saying since the beginning of question period, two members of his own party are denouncing his party's decision to knowingly adopt a divisive approach that stigmatizes people strictly for electoral purposes. As Emmanuelle Latraverse said so well, “the Prime Minister can say he is following the science, but it is pretty clear that it is all relative”.

Why has the Prime Minister turned his back on Canadians? When did he make the decision to divide, stigmatize and conquer?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the last election, we presented Canadians with a very clear vision of how we could get through this pandemic.

That included vaccine mandates for all those who wanted to board a plane or a train and for employees of the federal public service. Canadians had their say on those issues during that election, and the vast majority voted for members of parties that supported these vaccine mandates. That is the reality. It was very important for this country to be able to move forward with a clear mandate to end this pandemic through vaccination, and that is exactly what we have done.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Louis-Hébert was much clearer.

We cannot end this pandemic without leadership. We cannot end this pandemic by dividing and stigmatizing Canadians. We cannot end division by hiding and refusing to take responsibility. The Prime Minister was in hiding, and it was not until one of his own members of Parliament, the chair of the Quebec Liberal caucus, spoke out about his Machiavellian election ploy that he came out.

Will the Prime Minister admit he made a mistake, apologize to Canadians for the decision he made, and work with the party leaders to put an end to the division and the protests?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during this pandemic, our government chose to follow the science, to support small businesses, seniors and workers, to encourage everyone to get vaccinated, and to institute mandates for travellers and the federal public service. All of these decisions saved lives and helped us get through this pandemic better than many other countries.

Canadians have been there for each other this whole time. That is what the government will continue to do, but I encourage the Conservatives to be there for Canadians and call for an end to the blockades.

Oral Questions

● (1515)

[English]

COVID-19 PROTESTS

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear: Conservatives want the protests and the barricades to end. We want people to be able to head back to work and go home, knowing they have been listened to and that they have been respected. The Prime Minister holds the key. I have sent the Prime Minister a letter and asked him if he would be willing to meet with other leaders and with me so that we can work constructively to end this impasse.

Will he meet with us? Can we work together to find a solution?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the interim leader of the Conservative Party knows well that we spoke right after her election as leader to be able to work together to end this pandemic and to end these barricades and this blockage. Unfortunately, we see Conservatives members continuing to encourage and support the blockades that are going on in downtown Ottawa, at the Coutts border crossing and at the Windsor bridge.

When are Conservatives going to stand up for ordinary Canadians by putting food on their shelves and standing up for their jobs? When are they going to stand up and condemn these barricades?

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is International Development Week.

We would like to thank the sector's workers, partners and volunteers who are working hard to improve the lives of people in many countries. This year, I would like to draw the House's attention to women and girls who face unique challenges that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Can the hon. Prime Minister tell us what Canada is doing to support women and girls abroad?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle for this question and her hard work.

She is quite right, and that is why we have transformed the way in which Canada works abroad so we can be at the forefront of this global effort. As a result of our feminist international assistance policy, we are working closely with our international partners to reduce poverty and inequality and to address the unique challenges faced by women and girls.

We will continue our efforts in that regard.

* * *

[English]

COVID-19 PROTESTS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Ambassador Bridge crossing in Windsor is one of the busiest in all of Canada, and it is vital to the people of Windsor and the sur-

rounding region. Windsor and the surrounding region rely heavily on travel back and forth between the borders. Residents, small businesses and manufacturing sectors all require it. Right now, because of the convoy protests, truckers are being blocked and it is severely impacting Windsor and the surrounding region.

What is the Prime Minister doing to end that shutdown and open up the border for the truckers to get back home and deliver their goods to Windsor and the surrounding region?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Ambassador Bridge is critical for trade, and this blockade poses significant risks to our supply chains. Illegally blocked trade routes mean empty shelves, higher prices and layoffs in the trucking, manufacturing and retail sectors. It is ironic that a protest and blockade that was ostensibly by truckers is now blockading truckers themselves.

Canadians have the right to peaceful protest, but they do not have the right to illegally block our roads or harass residents. I want to once again thank the 90% of truckers who have been vaccinated and who are working hard every day to keep our economy moving.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend to the Prime Minister my hopes that he and his children are recovering well.

This week marks two years since we had any financial update from the Trans Mountain corporation, one that we lamentably own after incredibly foolishly buying the climate-killing Trans Mountain pipeline. It now appears to be five times above its original cost estimate.

Will the Prime Minister agree that we need a full, transparent review of the alleged costs and benefits before a single additional penny is wasted on this project?

● (1520)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that we need to make sure we are decarbonizing our economy and reaching net zero by 2050, but in the coming years we are going to continue to rely on oil and gas as we move forward in our economy. That is why making sure we get the best possible price for our oil resources so we can invest in the transformation of our economy is important. That is why the Trans Mountain pipeline, which allows us to get product to countries other than the United States, is important for our economy. However, it is also a way to make sure we are investing in the transformation toward a greener economy.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF CANADA
(THE SASKATCHEWAN ACT)

The House resumed from February 8 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:20 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Regina—Lewvan relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

Before the taking of the vote:

The Speaker: I want to compliment our technical team. In the last couple of days there was a bit of choppiness. They found what the problem was and wanted to make sure everything was secure. I want to compliment them on the work they did. This is for our techies in the background making sure that everything runs smoothly.

● (1535)

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

(Division No. 21)

YEAS

Members

Aboultarif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Benzen
Bergen	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney
Block	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Bragdon
Brassard	Brière
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Cannings
Caputo	Carr
Carrie	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Chambers
Champagne	Champoux
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Chong
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)

Business of Supply

Cooper	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Dalton	Damoff
Dancho	Davidson
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	d'Entremont
Desbiens	Desilets
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Doherty	Dong
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Epp
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Fergus	Ferreri
Fillmore	Findlay
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Gallant
Garneau	Garon
Garrison	Gaudreau
Gazan	Généreux
Genuis	Gerretsen
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gould	Gourde
Gray	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hallan	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Hoback	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Jeneroux	Johns
Joly	Jones
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Kelly	Khalid
Khera	Kitchen
Kmiec	Koutrakis
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lake	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lantsman
Lapointe	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
Lawrence	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lehoux
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lightbound	Lloyd
Lobb	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKenzie
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Maloney	Martel
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean

Routine Proceedings

McLeod	McPherson
Melillo	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Michaud	Miller
Moore	Morantz
Morrice	Morrison
Morrissey	Motz
Murray	Muys
Naqvi	Nater
Ng	Noormohamed
Normandin	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Poillievre	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rood
Ruff	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schiefke
Schmale	Seeback
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shields	Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Small	Sorbara
Soroka	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stewart
St-Onge	Strahl
Stubbs	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Thompson
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Uppal
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Van Popta
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Villemure
Virani	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Weiler
Wilkinson	Williams
Williamson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zimmer	Zuberi — 334

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1540)

[English]

CANADA NATIONAL PARKS ACT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-248, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act (Ojibway National Urban Park of Canada).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present this bill that would establish an Ojibway national park. It is the culmination of years, almost a decade, of work to bring this legislation forward. The proposal is to bring an Ojibway national urban park together with the properties of Ojibway Park, Spring Garden Natural Area, Black Oak Heritage Park, the Tallgrass Prairie Heritage Park, the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve and Ojibway Shores, a vital 33-acre green space and the last remaining undeveloped national shoreline in Windsor-Detroit.

It is the home of over 130 endangered species. It is also very important as an environmental hot spot, being across from the United States and leading into southern Ontario and the rest of Canada. If connected, this will provide around 900 acres of parkland that will be very important, not just for the residents of our community but also for many people across the country, as national urban parks are strong and good pieces of infrastructure for our future.

I want to thank the drafters of the legislation through the legislative service processes. They did astounding work to get this done and I am very grateful and very excited about this opportunity. This is about positive politics and I am really pleased to be able to be part of this process and this vision, not only for our community but also our country.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

ENCOURAGING THE GROWTH OF THE CRYPTOASSET SECTOR ACT

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): moved for leave to introduce Bill C-249, An Act respecting the encouragement of the growth of the cryptoasset sector.

She said: Mr. Speaker, right now, Canada should be attracting billions of dollars of investment in the fast-growing cryptoasset industry. Right now, we are seeing government officials discuss and set policy related to cryptoassets. At the same time, many officials and lawmakers are not deeply familiar with what cryptoassets are, how they function or their big potential for economic growth.

To be a world leader, Canada needs to ensure cryptoasset experts and investors are telling us what policy they need or what policy they do not need. The bill would require the Minister of Finance to formally ensure their voices help lead policy development. It would also require the minister to develop a framework using their expertise that would ensure Canada attracts investments and talent related to cryptoassets while protecting those who work with them.

The bill would create a mechanism to formally engage the expertise of cryptoasset innovators and investors in policy development and create a framework for growth.

This effort is the first of its kind in Canada and I am pleased to introduce it today. I thank everybody who has been involved in it, including the drafters, and I look forward to working across party lines in this innovative area of policy to make this effort happen.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

● (1545)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-250, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (prohibition — promotion of antisemitism).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce my private member's bill, an act to amend the Criminal Code in order to prohibit the promotion of anti-Semitism. I would like to thank my colleague from Thornhill for sponsoring this important bill.

From early 1941 to the spring of 1945, six million Jewish children, women and men were murdered in a state-sponsored genocide we now remember as the Holocaust. Holocaust distortion, denial and anti-Semitism must be confronted with the strongest opposition and condemnation. Ignorance fuels intolerance. We must continue to teach the truths of the past. Education is the safeguard of history. We must face history with courage and boldly call out and confront intolerance whenever it exists. The passage of this bill would protect the truth.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CONSERVATION OF FISH STOCKS AND MANAGEMENT OF PINNIPEDS ACT

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-251, An Act respecting the development of a federal framework on the conservation of fish stocks and management of pinnipeds.

He said: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents in Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, I am pleased to present my bill, an act respecting the development of a federal framework on the conservation of fish stocks and management of pinnipeds. Conservation efforts by commercial and recreational fishers have been ineffective in the rebuilding of fish stocks, and we are now faced with an ecological disaster.

Pinnipeds, a group of marine animals that include seals and sea lions, have populations that are now two to five times higher than

Routine Proceedings

historical levels. In coastal Canada, they consume 50 times more fish than our fishers harvest. Should this bill pass, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans would create a framework to manage pinnipeds through consultation with indigenous groups and other industry stakeholders, as well as Canadian and international scientists, to restore balance to our marine ecosystems.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CHILD HEALTH PROTECTION ACT

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-252, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (prohibition of food and beverage marketing directed at children).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to introduce my bill today, which proposes to amend the Food and Drugs Act by restricting the marketing of food and beverages high in sugar, saturated fats or salt directed at children. Studies have shown that even before COVID-19, 90% of food and beverage ads for such products were viewed by our children on TV and/or online. We can only imagine how much more dire the situation has become over the past two years.

Eating and drinking such foods and beverages is linked to increased health risks including obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes and cancer. A healthy population, including healthy children, is not only key to reducing the likelihood of serious health problems but contributes to a healthy economy. This issue of concern has been previously debated in this chamber and is being reintroduced, for the time has come to protect our children, ensure that their health is no longer compromised and support parents across the country as they help their children develop healthy eating habits and food preferences.

I look forward to the support and ultimate adoption of the bill.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

● (1550)

BANK OF CANADA ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-253, An Act to amend the Bank of Canada Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to sincerely thank my colleague, the hon. member for Carleton, who has been warning about the dangers of inflation for some time now, which is very relevant to my bill.

My bill is called the Bank of Canada accountability act. Right now, the Bank of Canada has a special exemption from the purview of the Auditor General. The Auditor General is not able to conduct the types of audits that he or she does over other government departments and agencies.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Bank of Canada has massively expanded the money supply in Canada. As a result, we are seeing runaway inflation. In addition to buying government bonds, the Bank of Canada has also purchased corporate bonds, and what this bill would do is grant the authority to the Auditor General to conduct the typical types of audits, in addition to performance audits, so that we can have a better picture of what the bank is doing. This would ensure that the bank is ultimately responsible to Parliament.

Our trading partners around the world already do this. The United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand all have their auditor generals perform this type of function over their central banks. It is high time that we expand the accountability and transparency measures of the Auditor General to include the Bank of Canada.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

PETITIONS**KAZAKHSTAN**

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the petitioners are highlighting the fact that protesters have come to the capital city speaking out against government tyranny, and they are deeply concerned about measures that make life less affordable. The government has labelled these protesters as terrorists and used various intimidation tactics, including torture and giving police a shoot-to-kill order. I am talking, of course, about the situation in Kazakhstan, where the government has released data claiming that at least 225 people are dead and over 4,000 have been injured. Human rights organizations have reason to estimate these numbers are understated.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to condemn the human rights violations perpetrated by the Government of Kazakhstan, demand the release of political prisoners and human rights activists, like Bekizhan Mendygazyev, and join the EU in its application of targeted sanctions against high-ranking officials.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am presenting highlights the Chinese Communist Party using the arbitrary detention of Canadian citizens as a bargaining chip through hostage diplomacy. There has been great relief in Canada about the release of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor. However, it is important to know that over 115 other Canadians are still being detained in China. In particular, this petition highlights the case of Huseyin Celil, a Canadian who has been detained in China since 2006 for speaking out about the

Uighur genocide. The Chinese government refuses to acknowledge Mr. Celil's Canadian citizenship and refuses him consular services.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to demand the Chinese government recognize Mr. Celil's Canadian citizenship and provide him with consular and legal services, to ensure Mr. Celil's unjust detention is a priority for the Canadian government, to appoint a special envoy to work to ensure Mr. Celil is released and to work with the Biden administration and other allies to seek the release of Mr. Celil.

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are halfway through the Beijing Olympics and Canadians want to ensure that Parliament continues to hold the Chinese Communist Party to account with respect to human rights.

The case of Peng Shuai reminds us that athletes are just as vulnerable to acts of repression and violence by the CCP. Surveys show that seven out of 10 Canadians are worried about the health and safety of Canadian athletes.

The petitioners want the Canadian government to take stronger measures with respect to human rights violations by the Chinese government, in particular against the Uighurs, and use the Magnitsky act to sanction individuals involved in human rights violations.

● (1555)

[*English*]

HONG KONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition I am tabling, also about human rights in the PRC, highlights the situation in Hong Kong. It notes that Canada needs to be committed to free and fair trials, judicial independence and the rule of law. There have been increasing violations of fundamental human rights in Hong Kong.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to facilitate access to Canada, and applications to come to here, for those who have not committed any crimes in a real sense but have been convicted of political offences in Hong Kong; to affirm its commitment to render all national security law charges and convictions irrelevant and invalid in relation to paragraph 36(1)(c) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act; and to ensure that anyone convicted of any other political crime is also able to come to Canada.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fifth petition I am tabling is in support of Bill S-223. The bill would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ taken without the consent of the person whose organ it is, and would create a mechanism by which someone could be deemed inadmissible to Canada because of their involvement in forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

This is an important human rights bill. The petitioners are hoping that this is the Parliament that finally gets an organ harvesting and trafficking bill passed.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to table a petition signed by over 100 Canadians, including many from my own riding of Halifax. The petitioners call upon the government to reduce emissions and fossil-fuel subsidies, create green jobs for affected workers and invest in public transit, along with a number of measures, to address the climate crisis in Canada.

It is my duty and privilege as their member of Parliament to give voice to their views, and I trust the government will give the petition due consideration.

CANADA POST

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to stand in the House today to introduce a petition from the people of Savary Island, in my riding. The reality for the folks in this small community, which has 100 people who are there full time, is they still do not have access, since 1980, to Canada Post. Right now, people from this area have to take a boat in, and it is quite a journey.

We need to make sure that mail is accessible everywhere in this country. I look forward to hearing the government's response.

QUEEN JULIANA PARK

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to present a petition that is rather urgent. It comes from residents of the Ottawa area, and it relates to the decision by the City of Ottawa to build the new Civic Hospital on the grounds of Queen Juliana Park. I wish I could do justice to the petition, but I have to summarize.

Queen Juliana Park was established in the city in honour of the 7,600 Canadians who died in the liberation of the Netherlands, and of course in honour of Queen Juliana, the Dutch queen. Now 750 mature canopy trees are slated to be removed from this park. It is literally from a Joni Mitchell song: They are going to pave paradise and put up a parking lot. Acres and acres of prime forest area, important biodiversity, are to be removed.

More than 8,000 Canadians have signed a different petition prompted by Change.org. The petitioners are very concerned that due process was not followed and consultations with the public were abbreviated. Previous consultations had pointed to a different location. The National Capital Commission had recommended that the hospital be built on land at Tunney's Pasture.

Routine Proceedings

To summarize, the petitioners call for the original recommendation of the National Capital Commission to be reinstated as the ideal site to preserve Queen Juliana Park and the entire Central Experimental Farm as green spaces. The panel, which was composed of numerous luminaries, recommended a public inquiry, to be led by the Province of Ontario, on why the NCC site recommendation was so quickly and secretly set aside.

● (1600)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present.

The first petition is from constituents in my riding who are speaking out against the potential negative impacts of TC Energy's proposed pumped storage project at the 4th Canadian Division Training Centre at the base in Meaford. The petitioners are calling upon the Government of Canada to stop it.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from petitioners who are concerned about the Chinese Communist Party's arbitrary detention of Canadians, as we have seen recently. There are still over 100 Canadians in detention. In particular, the petition highlights Huseyin Celil, a Canadian who has been detained in China since 2006. The Chinese government is refusing to acknowledge his Canadian citizenship and has refused him consular services.

Specifically, the petitioners are demanding that the Chinese government recognize Mr. Celil's Canadian citizenship and provide him with consular and legal services, that this unjust detention becomes a priority for the Canadian government, that the government appoint a special envoy to ensure his release and that the government ultimately work with the U.S. administration and other allies to seek the release of Mr. Huseyin Celil from detention by the Chinese Communist regime.

[*Translation*]

OLD AGE SECURITY

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition today that was signed by my constituents in Sherbrooke. They are calling on the House of Commons to change the name of the old age security program to use respectful language that better reflects the values of our government, such as "seniors' pension" or "seniors' pension program". Being 65 years old is no longer associated with the term "old age". I thank the people of Sherbrooke for their dedication to this issue.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

VACCINE MANDATES

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from citizens from across Canada. These Canadians are seeking to end the mandates, as they say the mandates have caused division across Canada. The petitioners are standing in solidarity with RCMP officers, border security officers, postal workers and truckers as they fight mandates. The petitioners say they are opposed to COVID vaccines and want to ensure that people are not forced to decide between the jab and the job. The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to remove all mandates immediately.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition with regard to the Chinese Communist Party's use of arbitrary detention of Canadian citizens as a bargaining chip through hostage diplomacy. Though it is a relief that Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig have finally been released from the Chinese detention and hostage-taking that lasted over 1,000 days, the Government of Canada must not forget that over 115 other Canadians are still being detained in China.

The petition highlights the case of Huseyin Celil, a Canadian who has been detained in China since 2006 for speaking out against the Uighur genocide. The Chinese government refuses to acknowledge Mr. Celil's Canadian citizenship and refuses to give him consular services.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to demand that the Chinese government recognize Mr. Celil's Canadian citizenship and provide him with consular services and legal services, ensure that Mr. Celil's unjust detention is a priority for the Canadian government, appoint a special envoy to ensure Mr. Celil's release and work with the Biden administration and other allies to seek the release of Mr. Huseyin Celil.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition. The petitioners are calling on the government to take a stronger stand against the egregious human rights violations being perpetrated by the Chinese Communist regime, including recognizing the ongoing Uighur genocide. They call for the imposition of Magnitsky sanctions against perpetrators of these human rights violations.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Chinese Communist Party uses the arbitrary detention of Canadian citizens as a bargaining chip through hostage diplomacy. It is certainly a relief that Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig have finally been released from Chinese detention after more than 1,000 long days, but the Government of Canada must also not forget that more than 115 other Canadians are still being detained in China.

This petition highlights the case of Huseyin Celil, a Canadian who has been detained in China since 2006 for speaking out about the Uighur genocide. The Chinese government refuses to acknowledge his Canadian citizenship and is refusing him consular services.

The petitioners have a number of calls to action for the government to take. They want the Government of Canada to demand that the Chinese government recognize Mr. Celil's Canadian citizenship

and provide him with consular and legal services, ensure that Mr. Celil's unjust detention is a priority for the Canadian government, appoint a special envoy to ensure Mr. Celil's release and work with the American administration and other allies to seek the release of Mr. Huseyin Celil.

● (1605)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this place to present a petition from concerned Canadians who acknowledge that it is clear the Communist Party of China is doing everything it can to whitewash its record. The petitioners ask for the government to take action to bring forward Magnitsky sanctions against the Communist regime, ensure there is accountability for its actions and specifically acknowledge the plight of the Uighur people and the genocide that is being committed against them.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Chinese Communist Party uses arbitrary detention of Canadian citizens as a bargaining chip in diplomacy.

Though it is a relief that Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig have finally been released from Chinese detention after 1,020 long days, the Government of Canada must not forget that over 115 other Canadians are still being detained in China. This petition highlights the case of Huseyin Celil, a Canadian who has been detained in China since 2006 for speaking out about the Uighur genocide. The Chinese government refuses to acknowledge Mr. Celil's Canadian citizenship and refuses him consular services.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to, one, demand the Chinese government recognize Mr. Celil's Canadian citizenship and provide him with consular and legal services; two, ensure that Mr. Celil's unjust detention is a priority for the Canadian government; three, appoint a special envoy to ensure Mr. Celil's release; and four, work with the Biden administration and other allies to seek the release of Mr. Huseyin Celil.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ECONOMIC AND FISCAL UPDATE IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2021

The House resumed from February 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-8, An Act to implement certain provisions of the economic and fiscal update tabled in Parliament on December 14, 2021 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a true honour for me to stand in the House on behalf of the residents of my riding of Davenport to speak to Bill C-8, an act to implement certain provisions of the economic and fiscal update, which was tabled in the House by our Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance on December 14, 2021.

This is an important piece of legislation. It is a bill that includes a wide number of critical supports that workers and businesses need to help them continue to tackle COVID-19, such as support for provincial and territorial health care systems with vaccines, more ventilation in schools and rapid tests. It also includes several tax measures, such as tax credits for businesses that are purchasing ventilation supplies and teachers who purchase school supplies to assist with virtual learning.

Since the beginning of this pandemic, keeping Canadians safe and healthy has been our federal government's top priority. Canadians have sacrificed so much over the past 23 months to protect themselves and their communities. When this pandemic is finally over, our national government will ensure that the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic underpin Canada's pandemic preparedness to make sure that Canada is always ready, moving forward. In the meantime, there are things we need to do now to continue to keep Canadians safe and to support our recovery.

I will focus my remarks on four key areas of the proposed bill: improving ventilation in schools and community buildings, rapid antigen tests, the small businesses air quality improvement tax credit, and the COVID-19 resilience stream.

Regarding improving ventilation in schools and community buildings, as members know, the COVID-19 pandemic has been difficult for families and educators, with school closures followed by varying degrees of reopening. With students across the country now back at school, and the continuing impact of the omicron variant, we need to make sure our children and teachers are in a safe environment. Improvements to school ventilation are an important component of that. That is why today's legislation proposes up to an additional \$100 million to provinces and territories through the existing safe return to class fund, as well as \$10 million to first nations for on-reserve schools.

We are also giving the provinces and territories the flexibility they need to spend the funds on the ventilation-related improvements they deem most important. This includes repair or replacement of heating, ventilation and air conditioning units; increasing maintenance of existing systems, to ensure optimized operation; and other interventions that bring in more outdoor air or result in

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cleaner air, such as the installation of operable windows or portable air filtration units.

As members may recall, the safe return to class fund, which was originally announced in August, 2020, provided \$2 billion to provinces and territories for their efforts to ensure a safe return to school and to protect the health of students and staff. The fund is helping provinces and territories by supporting, for example, adaptive learning spaces, improved air ventilation, increased hand sanitation and hygiene, and purchases of personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies. In my riding of Davenport, 18 schools have benefited from this fund, which is amazing.

Additional funding that we are proposing in the bill we are discussing now, Bill C-8, would if approved provide the complementary funding provinces and territories continue to need as they work alongside local school boards to ensure the safety of students and staff members throughout the school year.

As our economy continues to recover and grow, parents should be able to fully return to work and trust that their children are learning in a healthy and safe environment. School is critical for children's development, their mental health and their future success.

I will move on to rapid antigen tests and ensuring they continue to be available to Canadians and to businesses. They will play a key role in helping to keep Canadians safe as we continue to find our way out of this pandemic and move into a post-COVID economy.

● (1610)

Throughout the pandemic, our federal government has continued to ensure that provinces and territories can make decisions based on public health advice and not budget limitations, as we work together to keep students, teachers, staff and families healthy and safe during this unprecedented school year. For example, we have provided over \$3 billion in direct transfer payments to the provinces and territories for testing and contact tracing through the safe restart agreement.

In addition, the federal government has made significant investments in building testing capacity within the provincial and territorial health care systems, having purchased and shipped over 80 million rapid tests to them at a cost of over \$900 million. With the continuing demand for rapid tests, Bill C-8 would allocate an additional \$1.72 billion to the Minister of Health for the procurement and distribution of rapid antigen tests to provinces and territories, as well as directly to Canadians. With this initiative, and funding through the safe return to class fund, the federal government is helping to keep students and their teachers safer.

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Moving on to the small businesses air quality improvement tax credit, we know that federal government support is not restricted to the classroom. We remain committed to also helping businesses and organizations improve their ventilation and air quality in order to keep Canadians safe. Proper ventilation makes indoor air healthier and safer, and helps to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Many small businesses are on the front lines of the pandemic. They are enforcing vaccine mandates, installing protective barriers and making sure workers and visitors are safe. Many want to make further improvements to their indoor air quality, but investing in equipment to improve ventilation can be very costly.

With Bill C-8, the federal government is proposing a refundable small business air quality improvement tax credit of 25% on eligible air quality improvement expenses incurred by small businesses. This will make it more affordable for them to invest in safer and healthier ventilation and air filtration. Businesses would receive the credit on eligible expenses incurred between September 1, 2021, and December 31, 2022, related to the purchase or upgrade of mechanical heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems and the purchase of stand-alone devices designed to filter air using high-efficiency particulate air filters. The credit is up to a maximum of \$10,000 per location, and \$50,000 in total.

Eligible businesses would include Canadian-controlled private corporations and unincorporated sole proprietors. The credit would also be available to eligible corporations and individuals carrying on business through partnerships. By helping businesses invest in better ventilation today, the government is helping to keep Canadians safe now and in the future.

Finally, regarding the COVID-19 resilience stream, we know that Canadians of all ages, children, seniors, young parents, amateur athletes and more, are gradually returning to community spaces such as arenas, swimming pools, libraries and community centres, but these buildings also require ventilation improvements. Building on the \$150 million to improve ventilation in public and community buildings announced in 2020, the 2021 economic and fiscal update announced an additional \$70 million over three years for Infrastructure Canada to support ventilation projects in public and community buildings such as hospitals, libraries and community centres. Funding will be delivered through the COVID-19 resilience stream of the investing in Canada infrastructure program.

In conclusion, I can assure the House that the government will continue to work with provincial and territorial partners to provide a healthy school environment for students, teachers and staff members in this challenging time. We will continue to do whatever it takes for as long as it takes to beat COVID-19 and protect Canadians and Canadian businesses through this crisis. That is why support of Bill C-8 is so important, and I urge all members of the House to swiftly pass the bill so we can ensure that all these measures are implemented as quickly as possible.

• (1615)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will read a quote from a January 12, 2022, article. It states:

Last week, [the] Prime Minister...promised the Liberal government would send provinces 140 million rapid tests. That would be four times the number of rapid

tests the federal government provided in December — enough for every Canadian to have one a week...

But as residents wait for testing, some provinces have flagged that shipments have been slow to arrive.

This was an issue almost a month ago, and I am wondering if the member can explain why the government is so late to the game. We were asking for rapid tests a year ago, and they have still not arrived today.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure rapid tests arrive in our provinces and territories in a timely manner. I know most provinces and territories have stockpiled many of our rapid tests and have been distributing them as they receive them.

I heard an announcement this morning that Ontario has received a lot of rapid tests from the federal government. It is starting to hand out those rapid tests in pharmacies and grocery stores. It has come up with a game plan. I have great faith that rapid tests will continue to flow as quickly as possible from the federal level down to the provinces and territories.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the member for Davenport spoke a lot about the need for schools to provide a healthy environment with good ventilation. She clearly cares about children and youth.

Another way to improve living conditions is to provide healthy housing, social housing, low-income housing and co-operative housing. The government could take such initiatives, which would also help narrow the wealth gap.

Why is this not covered in Bill C-8? I think the bill fails to address this issue.

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, the member knows the national housing strategy is a major piece of legislation and is a key policy piece of great importance to our federal government. It will continue to be a priority for our government to invest in moving forward, not only from a social housing and affordable housing perspective, but also from a housing affordability perspective.

It is one of the key things we heard during the most recent election, and it continues to be top of mind for all Canadians. I can assure the member it will continue to be a priority. We will continue to make sure we focus and come up with solutions, so every Canadian will be able to have a safe, affordable and accessible place to live.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Davenport for her statements related to supports for small businesses. In my district, I have heard from small businesses that are suffering. Affordability is at an all-time low. It is a true crisis for small businesses, which are shutting down left, right and centre.

How does this bill, Bill C-8, protect businesses from going bankrupt when all it does is present, at current, a tax relief for businesses that have installed ventilation?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, we are all worried about small businesses in Canada. They are the heart and soul and the foundation of our economy in this country.

We will continue to provide supports, including what is included in Bill C-8, for small businesses. There is quite a bit of investment in the bill that would allow small businesses to be able to upgrade their ventilation systems, with up to \$10,000 for that. That is a significant investment.

It will continue to help to improve the air quality and improve the ventilation for both the staff and the customers coming in. We have been there for small businesses, and we will continue to be there for small businesses moving forward.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said it is time for the government to stop spending money, like the \$100 billion in the latest budget. I believe the Parliamentary Budget Officer is an independent officer of the House of Commons. What does my colleague think of the PBO's recommendation?

[English]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, we have, over the last almost two years, experienced an unprecedented pandemic. In order to make sure that we stabilize our economy, in order to protect Canadians and in order to ensure a solid economic foundation from which our businesses can pivot into a post-COVID economy, we had to spend a significant amount of money. Over time, we have actually adjusted and targeted more of our investments. We continue to target our investments. We will continue to do so until we are in a post-COVID world.

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everyone has a story, and I have been hearing a lot of sad stories lately. The story I hear most often from Canadians is that people think they are losing control of their lives.

It is not just the pandemic. This story is also about 30-year-olds living in their parents' basement because they cannot afford the \$800,000 price tag on a typical house in Canada today. They have done the math, and they know they may never be able to buy a house.

Their story is even sadder when they see big investment firms and the very wealthy raking in money the government printed and buying houses and real estate in their communities, then renting

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those houses to renters who may never be able to own their own home.

I talked to a young woman. She started a business in the winter of 2020. Again and again, governments shut her business down. Her entrepreneurial dream was killed by government policies.

I have talked to immigrants who come here with degrees in medicine or engineering but cannot work in their profession because of bureaucracy at the local level.

I have talked to indigenous people who want to use their natural resources to create jobs and lift their young people out of poverty, but who have been prevented from doing so by governments.

I have also talked to indigenous people who want to be able to own their own home, but who cannot because of rules imposed by Ottawa, by a system that prevents this from happening.

Finally, I have heard stories from Canadians who were targeted for their personal choice. I myself am vaccinated, and I encourage others to do the same, but I understand that other Canadians have made a different choice.

Before we insult them, maybe we should listen to their side of the story. Maybe they had a bad experience with medication, or a doctor gave them the wrong medication. Maybe they have an unrecognized medical condition. Maybe they had experiences in other countries where governments lied to the public for nefarious reasons, and now they are suspicious every time a government tells them to do something for their own good.

The thing to do would have been to listen to the stories of Canadians who have hesitations, to have the humility to say that we understand that they are scared and we are here to answer their questions, and to try to change their mind because they are still part of our Canadian family. Instead, our government took the insulting position of attacking those very people.

Despite his own record of racism, the Prime Minister wanted to insult others, people he does not even know. He tried to get truckers fired, people who work in a truck all alone for 22 hours a day. These people are being targeted by a vaccine mandate even though they might be the least likely to come into contact with others. That is why the protests happened here on Parliament Hill.

● (1625)

However, there is something positive. Freedom is on the march. We see it across the country. In Alberta, at midnight, the vaccine passport was lifted. We saw—

● (1630)

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Mirabel on a point of order.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, this debate is about Bill C-8. I am wondering if my colleague from Carleton is off topic.

The Deputy Speaker: Members must do their best to stay on point in their speeches.

The hon. member for Carleton.

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Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, freedom is never pertinent to the Bloc Québécois.

The same thing is happening in Saskatchewan. The premier announced that he was going to eliminate restrictions and the vaccine passport. The Quebec premier made an announcement about health measures. Prince Edward Island is also starting to give its citizens their freedoms back.

Now we are even hearing Liberal members starting to rise and speak against the government's partisan approach against Canadians. Two courageous members spoke out against the Prime Minister's approach and in favour of Canadians' freedom. I am therefore asking the government to start giving Canadians back their freedom, to eliminate mandatory vaccination, to allow public servants to return to work and to let every Canadian to take back control of their lives.

Our objective should be for Canada to be the freest country in the world so that each Canadian is the author—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean on a point of order.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I understand that my hon. colleague is giving a pre-election speech for the leadership race, but the House is currently studying Bill C-8.

Freedom is important to the Bloc Québécois. That is why we want Quebec's independence.

The Deputy Speaker: Once again, I remind hon. members to keep their comments relevant to the bill before the House.

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the Bloc Québécois is afraid and is trying to silence me. That is a good sign.

We are going to give Canadians their freedom back and make them the authors of their own stories. That is the approach we will take as Conservatives.

[*English*]

Everybody has their story, and the story that I am hearing right now is that people feel like they are losing control of their lives. There is the young couple living in their parents' basement, even though they are 30 years old, because they cannot afford an \$800,000 house. They are calculating that they may never be able to own a home.

There is the immigrant who has come here as a doctor, but is blocked by bureaucracy from ever doing that job or getting a licence to practise. There is the first nations community that wants to harvest its resources to lift itself out of poverty, but is being blocked by government gatekeepers.

More recently, there are the countless small businesses that have been flattened by endless lockdowns and rules that often seem to have no link to science, and there is the trucker, who has been dutifully putting the goods and services in our communities, on our shelves and on our kitchen tables and is now called names and prevented from doing his or her job by a Prime Minister who is not interested in listening.

I am vaccinated and I encourage others to do so, but every person has their story. People have their reasons. They might be medical reasons or cultural reasons. They might even have had an unfortunate medical experience with prior prescriptions that has prevented them from making that decision, but that decision must be theirs. Their bodies belong to them. They are masters of their own decisions.

Instead of listening to these people, the Prime Minister has insulted them, called them names and left them with no choice but to engage in legitimate and peaceful protest. If he wants to put an end to those protests, if he wants to actually reunite the country, then he should do what others have begun doing, because freedom is on the march in this country.

Saskatchewan, Alberta, Prince Edward Island and Quebec are beginning to lift these restrictions. At midnight in Alberta, the vaccine passport came to an end, and people across the country are showing their support for restarting freedom in this country, including two of the Prime Minister's own members of Parliament.

Let us get these restrictions out of the way. Let us open up our economy. Let us bring back freedom. Let us make Canadians the authors of their own stories again.

• (1635)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I note that when the member was speaking, he talked about the protest outside being a peaceful protest.

What we do know is that many non-peaceful types of activities have been occurring. As a matter of fact, a number of his Conservative colleagues have also called out what is going on outside as an occupation.

I am curious if the member wants to comment as to whether or not he agrees that we should be asking those who are outside to leave now that they have made their point, or if he thinks that what is going on outside is totally legitimate and should continue in its current form.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I do not want any of this to continue. In fact, the truckers themselves have said they will not stay here one minute longer after the Prime Minister ceases to impose measures against the freedoms of Canadians.

As for the member insulting the people who have spoken up, I encourage him to listen to his own member of Parliament, the member for Québec, a Liberal MP who said he went to the protest and saw a very kind grandmother who demonstrated for her grandkids. She looked and sounded nothing like a white supremacist, nor did the Black, Sikh and indigenous Canadians I saw demonstrating on my way to Parliament Hill these last two weeks or in Quebec City this last Saturday.

I have enough respect for my fellow Canadians not to engage in these easy and absurd labels.

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech. I would never want to silence him. I hang on his every word when he gives a speech in the House. He is one of my favourites.

Now, he and I do actually agree on one thing. The government's handling of this crisis has been a disaster. We agree on that. There has been no leadership; that much is clear. I agree 100% with my hon. colleague on that.

While my hon. colleague was taking selfies with some of these protesters, some of his Conservative colleagues in the Quebec caucus were calling for an immediate end to the blockades in Ottawa.

I want to know whether my colleague stands behind his selfies or whether he agrees with his fellow caucus members.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. My position is that I am in favour of freedom. I want to end the blockade that this government and the other governments have forced on Canadians. That means putting an end to the vaccine mandates, giving the legitimate public servants who were fired over their vaccination status their jobs back, and repealing the vaccine mandate for the truckers who deliver our groceries and other goods.

Giving Canadians their freedom back will put an end to all of these protests and will help us start to make Canada the freest country in the world.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, allow me to congratulate the member for Carleton on his upcoming coronation as leader of the Conservative Party.

The irony here is that these lockdown protests have caused some of the worst lockdowns in the last two years. The member referred to unhappy stories. I have a few too. I have unhappy stories from workers and businesses in downtown Ottawa that have been unable to go to work or to open. I have unhappy stories from truckers who are stuck at Coutts and stuck in Windsor because of these protests, workers who are trying to move goods across the border and provide necessary supplies to our communities.

Will the member for Carleton speak up for those people to make sure that their unhappy stories are listened to by the rest of his caucus, and will he encourage these protests to end?

• (1640)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, one person is responsible for this mess, and that is the Prime Minister. He caused this mess by attacking Canadian citizens and taking away their freedoms.

The rest of the world is moving on. Other countries all around the world are lifting restrictions. Provinces across the country are doing exactly the same, but we have this holdup. The Prime Minister is hunkering down and, out of spite and personal pride, is refusing to lift these unjustified and unscientific restrictions. If he would only do so, then the truckers could get back to work and the other protesters could go back to their lives and everything in Canada

would get back up on its feet and we could get back to working on giving people control of their lives.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: 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 Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Housing; the hon. member for Brantford—Brant, Pensions; the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, Veterans Affairs.

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I feel like a baseball player who steps up to the plate after somebody has hit a home run, but I will do my best to follow the hon. member for Carleton.

It is my honour to rise today and speak to Bill C-8, which is the economic and fiscal update implementation act of 2021. The bill touches on several different topics, but I would like to focus on a few critical elements related to farmers, housing and what this bill represents overall.

For farmers, this bill quite simply is an acknowledgement that the government's approach has been wrong. It recognizes the harm of its carbon tax on farmers, but there is just one problem. The remedy does not go nearly far enough. Instead of discounting the carbon tax at the point of sale, the government is attempting to introduce a complicated rebate method. It puts an additional burden on farmers to collect their receipts, and at the end of the year they will get a fraction of what they paid in carbon tax back. A tax credit is not good enough. Farmers deserve much more than that. What is the science-based justification for treating diesel and gas differently from natural gas and propane?

I hope that all members in the House understand exactly how important farmers are to this country. When we live in cities and do the majority of our travelling by plane, if we take a look down what we see are beautiful farms covering the countryside. For many rural communities across this country, farming was the reason they sprang up, and it is the reason they continue to exist today.

Farming is one of the things Canada is known for internationally. Let me quote the Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance, which states, “Canada is the fifth largest exporter of agricultural and agri-food products in the world after the EU, U.S., Brazil, and China”, and “over 90% of Canada’s farmers are dependent on exports”.

Our farmers are competing with farmers from around the globe. It is a global industry, and farmers across the country, including in my riding, check the prices of global commodities, which help them determine and decide what to plant. They then follow international news to inform them of the best times to sell their products. A drought in Germany means farmers know their canola is likely to rise due to supply and demand factors.

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When the carbon tax was initially announced, farmers were concerned. They knew they could not raise prices like other industries can. There was no way they could reduce the amount of fuel they were using, and increased costs come directly from their bottom line. That means they reduce the amount of money farmers can take home to their families at the end of the year, and the amount of money farmers have available to pay workers.

If it was not clear, farmers use a lot of fuel. A large tractor can hold 400 gallons of it. Thankfully, the minister understood that taxing diesel and gasoline was a non-starter, but that is not the only fuel that farmers use. Propane and natural gas are critical to farming. Natural gas and propane are cheap and efficient ways to heat and cool large buildings for many farmers, whether these are the shops they do repair work in or the places where livestock live in the cold winter months. These fuels are vital to selling most crops because of how farmers dry their products. Before something like corn can be shipped to market, it must be within a specific moisture range. It costs thousands of dollars to dry every month.

Last night, I spoke with a few farmers in my riding. They think this bill is quite clearly not doing enough. They sent me a copy of a few bills. I have a copy of a bill with me here. Just for the month of October to November, a natural gas bill for the farmer was almost \$58,000. The carbon tax on that bill was \$13,000. That is an unbelievable additional cost added to the monthly cost of operating that farmer's enterprise. Another farmer, Will, in my riding spends \$40,000 to \$50,000 some months on fuel.

This huge expense to farmers is why the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has been calling on the government to rethink the carbon tax application to farms. In March, the federal government needs to understand this, and to work to lessen the negative impacts of the carbon tax on the ability of farmers in Ontario to compete in both domestic and international markets. They may have asked for our understanding because it appears the government does not understand how much damage this is doing. That is perhaps why the Minister of Agriculture felt it was appropriate to say that the carbon tax was not significant for farmers after it was introduced.

• (1645)

I would like to point out that, like the carbon tax, it is a common theme with the government to not listen to Canadians when developing policy choices.

This is where I would like to thank my hon. colleague, the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South, for all of his work on the farm carbon tax file. He said the tax was crippling agriculture. Without his work, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food may have continued to believe the carbon tax was insignificant. The member for Northumberland—Peterborough South called for an exemption to the carbon tax and put forward a bill to do just that for natural gas and propane, but with an unnecessary election called, that bill died with the last Parliament.

The tax credit proposed is complicated, it is onerous and it does not make it equitable with other fuels. There is an excellent solution here to help the farmers. It is quite simple and it is not in this bill. The solution is to provide a full exemption at the point of sale.

A similar criticism can be directed at the government on the proposed tax on vacant properties with a national annual 1% tax on the value of non-resident, non-Canadian-owned residential real estate that is considered to be vacant or underused. That is very complicated.

In the last election, housing was a major theme. Our party, the Conservatives, put forward a plan to limit and ban foreign investors not living in or moving into Canada from purchasing homes for a two-year period. This plan was well received. Really what we are asking for is a two-year pause to let everyone take a break so we can curb some of the off-the-record demand we see for homes that are driving the prices up for everyone else.

When we talk about housing, the government likes to point to a commitment to bring in a beneficial ownership registry, but like many Canadians, I am skeptical that the government will deliver on this commitment. It is absent from this bill and the government has a long history of promising something and failing to deliver.

The bill represents a disconnect that seems to have taken hold of the government. It is a disconnect between government spending and the consequences of that spending. The only policy solution the government has is to spend more money. That is the only solution that it has proposed over these last two years. In fact, it is the only policy solution it has proposed since 2015, since coming into government.

When COVID first arrived, it was unprecedented. Although I was not in this chamber at the time, I was pleased to see all parties working together for the benefit of Canadians to make sure businesses, families and all of us had the support we needed to get through the pandemic.

However, that time has passed and experts are warning the government to stop the rampant spending and pointing to the effects that spending has on inflation. We need a credible, fiscal plan with a focus on growth, not on redistribution, that acknowledges the risk that additional spending represents to Canadians.

I believe the buck has to stop somewhere. The House cannot keep signing off on billion-dollar pieces of legislation without a plan to find some savings or a plan for how to pay for it. There needs to be a debate where we can find savings to offset some of these new expenditures, which might be worthwhile. That is the very least the government could do. In fact, I would propose that the government, for every new spending measure it brings forward, finds an offset savings somewhere else.

This mountain of debt is not the legacy of COVID that we wish to leave for our children. They deserve better than this.

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• (1650)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was only a couple years ago we heard the Conservatives stand up and give a lot of speeches about the carbon tax, saying it was bad. Then they minted a brand-new, shiny leader. It was not that long ago he was inside the chamber where the position they campaigned on was that they were in favour of a price on pollution. That is what they said. Somewhere they had a flip and they are now in favour of it. Based on the discussions and the debate so far on Bill C-8, they are like a fish out of water and they are flipping and flopping all over.

Is it the member's opinion that the Conservatives are going back to their Reform ways and adopting a policy position against the environment in support of not having a price on pollution?

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if it was just luck, but I am quite happy to answer another question from the hon. colleague, as he asked a question of me on my last speech.

Talking about carbon tax is really cold comfort to a farmer who is paying \$13,000 a month in carbon tax. Where is that money coming from? I would like to ask this member about the farmers he has spoken to. This is what we are talking about, the impact of a carbon tax on a farmer.

It is important to recognize that some of these individuals and business owners cannot afford to keep spending and paying the tax increases. Therefore, we on this side of the House are going to continue to stand up for farmers and fight against a carbon tax that does not work.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I heard him say that the government is spending too much and needs to look at where it can cut back.

I have a suggestion for him.

The government spends billions of dollars a year on oil and gas subsidies even though it has very ambitious climate targets to reduce greenhouse gases by 40% to 45%. It will never meet these targets if it continues to subsidize the oil industry.

What does the member think about that? Does he agree that the government could cut the subsidies to the oil and gas industry?

[English]

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Speaker, when we are talking about subsidies to the oil and gas industry, we need to have a much more fulsome and honest debate about what represents a subsidy. The truth is that the oil and gas sector represents a significant economic driver for this country and has provided much of the wealth, economic progress and productivity that we have seen in this country over the last generations.

I would propose, in addition to considering all spending measures, that it has been over 10 years since the government has done any kind of review of its spending through any kind of efficiency review. There is plenty of money for the government to look at to

see where we can find savings to spend on the priority areas. As I mentioned, there might be some really good priorities that we should be funding, but we can find the savings for that, going forward.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the things, as the seniors spokesperson for the NDP, that I have been fighting for that I did not see in this fiscal update was an actual commitment to the seniors who lost their GIS because of the clawback by the government. The most vulnerable seniors, working seniors across this country have lost everything in some cases.

I am talking to seniors who have lost their homes and are living in vehicles. I have talked to seniors who cannot afford medication. I heard a story not too long ago about a senior who could not afford healthy meals and could not afford their diabetes medication and, as a result, lost their life because of this GIS clawback.

I wonder if this member could speak to that and his feelings about what we need to do to treat the seniors of this country more respectfully.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for all of her hard work on this topic and making sure that it is rightly addressed.

This was a mistake by the government, in a fairly complicated system, that imposed on seniors a difficulty in terms of the GIS clawback. I definitely support the proposals put forward in the House to right that wrong. However, it should be done very quickly, and it needs to be done immediately and not wait until June or July.

• (1655)

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to respond to the government's economic update, formally called Bill C-8. I have had the opportunity over the last few weeks, since the House came back, to address a few of the important economic situations that I feel is putting our country under enormous strain right now.

I will use my time to talk about two key themes that I am hearing about repeatedly, over and over, and it is not just among constituents in my riding. It is a loud and clear message coming from every part of this country.

I will start with housing. When the Liberal government came to power in 2015, the average cost to purchase a home in Canada was \$435,000. If we fast forward to today, we are getting to the point of nearly \$800,000 on average. That is an 85% increase in housing prices over six years, 25% in many areas in the last year alone. Many people say, or the government will argue, that this is an international phenomenon. That is absolutely not true when we look at the degree and the severity of the housing crunch our country faces. Bloomberg has reported that Canada has the second-worst housing bubble in the entire world.

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We localize that. Part of our job is to bring the stories and examples from our communities here to the floor of the House of Commons. In question period, I highlighted the situation we are facing in Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, the area in eastern Ontario I am proud to represent. I am grateful to the Cornwall and District Real Estate Board for keeping statistics. They show we have basically doubled the housing crisis in the Cornwall area over the course of the last five years. We saw one month's average price was over \$400,000.

One real estate agent told me that this is not uncommon. Supply continues to be a major challenge. Who wants to sell their home? Yes, money can be made, but where else will people go? Supply is a challenge and pricing on that everywhere is a challenge. The number of bids on one house was 13 bids in four days. Talk to any real estate agent, and they expect that problem to continue into this year and beyond, unfortunately.

One thing I want to do is to put on the record some of the feedback I have heard in my riding. We talk about housing prices, which impacts people getting into home ownership. I have heard a number of examples of 30- to 35-year-olds living in their parents' basement with a full-time job trying to save up to buy a house. If they can afford the mortgage, they cannot afford the risk of the mortgage rates going up in the coming years.

One of the other things we need to make sure of when we are talking about housing, a key aspect of our quality of life, is the rental market as well. Rental prices are rising across the country, including in my community of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, be it in Winchester, Cornwall, Lancaster, Morrisburg or any point in between. Supply is very low and prices are going up astronomically. A property manager told me this week that there was a three bedroom rental for \$1,400 a month plus utilities. I do not know if it was a house or an apartment, but they had 127 applications in one week. This is not sustainable.

People will ask us what we can do at the federal level. At the federal level we have been advocates of finally tackling money laundering in this country. Canada has a reputation, which is growing and not diminishing, of being an opportunity for money laundering in our real estate market. We need to ban foreign investment very clearly in this heated market.

Another constructive idea is this. As opposed to banning investment in the real estate market completely, foreign investment should be directed to building apartment rentals and units to help that market as well.

● (1700)

The government's economic approach to this is wrong. It says what it is going to do is spend billions and billions more dollars to give people more money to have equity to buy a house. The economics show this is the wrong way. All it is going to do is further inflate the housing market. When we have 17 people bidding on a house and they know they can maybe get more assistance, it is going to take that \$400,000 average in the Cornwall area and make it over half a million, I am sure.

The optimism in our housing market in this country has never been lower. It has started, it is here now and it will be continuing

because of the bad pieces of legislation and fiscal policy the government is proposing. The government put \$400 billion of new debt, cheap money, into the market. We see a direct correlation with the time frame of that and the negative effect it has had on our housing markets.

I also want to talk today, as we talk about economics and fiscal updates, about how this should be a happy time, an optimistic time, in our country right now. We are seeing countries around the world present plans and updates to get past this pandemic, open up, get rid of mandates, provide a plan and give people optimism, from an economic and fiscal perspective and from a mental health perspective.

Look at where we are in this country today. In every single phone call I take, the tone and temperament in this country is getting worse. The Prime Minister's language and rhetoric is unacceptable. People are more divided, more angry, more bitter and are getting increasingly pessimistic about the tone and dialogue in this country at a time when it could be the opposite.

I am proud to say I am vaccinated. People have heard me in the House and on social media encourage people to get vaccinated. It is a positive that we are one of the most vaccinated countries in the entire world. Millions of people have gotten booster shots and in February 2022 cases are going down. We are going in the right direction. People should be hearing from the Prime Minister a plan to lift mandates. When it comes to travel, we are the only G7 country that has the outdated testing practices in place. People are getting more frustrated and more pessimistic.

We should be presenting a plan and a timeline and giving hope, like numerous other allied and similar countries around the world are doing. We can look to the south and see Democrats and Republicans alike, as well as governors, giving hope and optimism, showing a light at the end of the tunnel, telling people it is getting better, giving them some relief with regard to their mental health and getting people back to work.

We have a paralyzed political environment in the country because the Prime Minister decides, if people want to open up, if they want to get back to normal, if they want to live their lives and get their freedom back, to tarnish everybody and say they are racist or they are misogynist or some other disrespectful comment.

I am hearing over and over again back home that this needs to end. We are a wonderful country. Everybody I speak to is proud to be Canadian, but they are extremely frustrated by the lack of leadership and the tone that is coming from the Prime Minister. As a matter of fact, as opposed to what everybody else is doing in terms of opening up and giving that optimism, still on this table is a Prime Minister who, through the words of his caucus members, two of whom have rightfully and thankfully stepped forward, is doubling down on division and spreading, I believe, further disunity in the country.

They are actually talking about an interprovincial mandate for truck drivers. What does that mean? It means putting it in place at every single border, in every single province of this country.

Read the room. The science is not there and Canadians are not there. I oppose this legislation. I oppose the direction the government is taking. I will stand up to make sure we get back our freedoms, get opened up and finally get back to normal once again. It has been long enough.

• (1705)

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought I could agree with a lot of aspects of the hon. member's speech. We need to work on housing across party lines.

However, near the end of his speech, I started hearing the rhetoric we constantly hear from the opposition. He is labelling the leader of this country as the one who is cranking up the rhetoric, but I would argue it is really coming from the other side. Canadians are onside with getting vaccinated. If we were not united, we would not have the great numbers we have. Canada has done so well through this pandemic, and it is because of the leadership that has been shown by the Prime Minister and by this government.

Would the member not agree that Canadians are on board with health measures, that Canadians want to be safe and that Canadians want consistent messaging from their government?

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we are one of the most vaccinated countries in the entire world. That should mean that at this point in the game, with the science and the data that are available to us, we should be opening up and getting back to normal. People should be getting back to work.

What people see is a deliberate strategy to politicize the pandemic, to give fear, to stigmatize people, to make it appear that we cannot open up, and we hear it not from me or from the opposition, but from the Liberals' own benches.

I will say it again: Read the room. Canadians followed the health advice. They have been double- or triple-vaccinated. They followed the rules and they are seeing what is happening around the world, which is opening up, getting back to a semblance of normalcy and getting past COVID once and for all. The time has come to start doing that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I just loved my hon. colleague's speech. I believe he spoke from the heart. He was very sincere. One of the things he talked about was division. I have to agree with him on that. Because of this government's policies, we are seeing a lot of division right now all across Quebec and Canada.

However, one thing we all agree on is what was left out of the economic update: health transfers. I think my colleague will agree with me. The feds did not increase health transfers even though 85% of Canadians want them to, even though the premiers of Quebec and all the provinces and territories want them to up health transfers. Everyone, including all the opposition parties here, wants higher health transfers. There is nothing in there about it.

Government Orders

My colleague talked about leadership, but I have not heard from any Conservative Party members yet that they support the request by the premiers of the provinces and Quebec to raise transfers to 35%.

Will my colleague be the first member of the Conservative caucus to show some leadership and tell me he supports Quebec and the provinces' request to boost health transfers to 35%?

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from the Bloc for that intervention and comment. I agree with him.

I laughed in the House the other day as we were talking about this legislation. A member on the government benches said they had had 35 meetings with premiers across the country in the past couple of years. The premiers' number one ask for the entire time was a permanent increase to health care transfers to allow them to build up surge capacities that we need, not just during COVID, but in the winter months every year.

One thing that has been near and dear, going back to my days as a mayor in our region, is long-term care. We need to be making more capital investments in improving quality of care.

I will agree with the Bloc Québécois that we need permanent significant increases in our health care transfers. The government has done everything but promise that. That is the number one demand of provinces; the government is far from it. Again, at this point in the game, that should be the core and foundation of what should be in an economic and fiscal update. It is not.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated the member's comments on the supply of housing. What I especially want to emphasize is the supply of housing that is affordable.

We are so far behind. The federal Conservative and Liberal governments over the past 30 years got out of the affordable housing game. We are 500,000 units of affordable housing behind where we should be, and the NDP has put forward a proposal that we need to build those 500,000 units now.

I am wondering if the member can say the Conservatives support us, because it is affordable housing that we really need, housing that everybody can move into to have a roof over their head.

• (1710)

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I was involved in municipal politics for years and I know that housing supply is a municipal and provincial jurisdiction. However, I agree wholeheartedly that we need to increase housing supply in this country. That will help with affordability.

Government Orders

We hear NIMBYism all the time: We need to get stuff built, just “not in my backyard”. I also say part of the challenge that we need to tackle nationally, provincially and municipally is the BANANA acronym of “build absolutely nothing anywhere near anything” and the CAVE mentality of “citizens against virtually everything”.

We need to start working together at all levels around transit planning, around all these different factors. That will help to raise the private sector affordable housing supply. It is the number one thing we can do, and I appreciate the member's intervention on that point.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-8, an act to implement certain measures included in the fall economic and fiscal update.

This debate comes amid a real crisis of leadership in Canada. We know the Prime Minister called a summer election that Canadians did not want, and by cleverly sowing enough division and fear in just the right places, he managed to squeak out another minority government with the same willing partners in the Bloc and the NDP. He claimed that the 2021 election was necessary because we were at the most transformational moment since 1945, and that he would need a new mandate to implement a bold new agenda befitting a grand historical moment. Once elected, with the same partners who were already giving his government a free hand to do anything he wanted, what did the Prime Minister do that was so transformational that it required an election and a fresh mandate? He did absolutely nothing. He waited weeks before making a few tweaks to his cabinet. Then he waited a few more weeks before finally reconvening Parliament, delivered a bland, recycled Speech from the Throne, and eventually, the week before Christmas, tabled what he was still referring to as the fall economic statement.

What was in this much-delayed update? What worthy, once-in-a-lifetime transformational programs required a new mandate from an election to implement? We saw absolutely nothing. The statement was a continuation of the same trajectory the government has been on both since and before the COVID crisis began. The fall economic statement shows that the government is continuing down the path that it has long walked of out-of-control spending, higher taxes and continuing inflation that threatens to trigger a spiral of higher prices for consumers, higher interest rates, higher mortgage payments for consumers and higher debt service costs for governments, which will eventually mean higher taxes and service program cuts. This is the trajectory we are now on and it began long before COVID.

Canadians are facing an affordability crisis. Inflation is now the highest it has been in decades. Families can expect their grocery costs to increase by \$1,000 this year. For millions of Canadians, this means hard choices about what they will do without. The vast majority of Canadians do not have an extra \$1,000 a year to spend on groceries. Before the pandemic, nearly half of Canadians were virtually broke after paying all of their monthly obligations, and they simply cannot absorb higher food costs.

There is the cost of home heating. This is an absolute life necessity in Canada. Nobody in Canada, not even on the west coast, can simply tough it out in the winter and just put on a sweater when it gets cold. When it does get cold, and it gets bitterly cold in every part of Canada, Canadians need reliable and affordable energy to

heat their homes, and the government slapped an ever-increasing carbon tax on home heating costs for millions of Canadians.

Transportation is also more expensive; gasoline is more expensive. This is also due in part to the carbon tax. This cost affects everyone, whether they own a car or not, whether they drive or take the bus. It makes driving to work more expensive, it makes bus passes more expensive and it puts pressure on municipalities, which have increasing costs to operate police, fire, ambulance, waste collection and transit vehicles. These higher costs have resulted in higher property taxes or cuts in services, and this will continue.

Nowhere is the increased cost of living and inflation crisis more obvious than in Canada's housing market. A true crisis in affordable rent and home ownership has deeply taken root in Canada under the current government. It became much worse during the COVID crisis, and this bill does not give hope to would-be homebuyers or renters. In fact, it is a continuation of the very policies that have pushed home ownership out of reach for young families.

COVID has had a devastating effect on the Canadian economy, resulting in a significant drop in GDP and massive job losses, yet the price of residential real estate has gone up, and not just by a little. The Canadian real estate market saw the most spectacular run-up in home prices ever seen. The average price of a Canadian home went up 30% in the middle of an economic contraction with massive job losses. How could that possibly happen? Was there a massive collapse in other asset classes to offset a rush of money into residential real estate? No. Stock markets also enjoyed a spectacular run during COVID, so where did the money come from?

• (1715)

Can there now be no doubt that massive deficits, facilitated and enabled by central banks that massively expand the money supply by buying the government's debt with newly created money, inflate the value of assets without actually creating any real wealth? It is Justinflation.

Government Orders

This bill, with its deficits and the absence of credible fiscal anchors or an acknowledgement of the inflation crisis, is a doubling down on the previous fall economic statement and last year's budget. There is nothing to give Canadians hope for a future where there will be affordable homes, manageable costs for basic necessities, relief from taxes or the better public services they want and need.

There is nothing in this statement to give Canadians confidence that their leaders are prudent managers of the nation's finances. In fact, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has pointed out that the government's own stated rationale for the billions in additional spending contained in the update no longer exist. The PBO has also pointed out that since the pandemic began, billions of dollars have gone into non-COVID new spending programs.

Furthermore, beyond the dollars and cents, the PBO has pointed out that the government is struggling with basic fiscal transparency. The PBO stated:

This year both the Annual Financial Report and Public Accounts were published on December 14, 2021, the latest publication since 1993-94. Comparatively, Canada was among the last of the G7 countries to publish their financial accounts for the 2020-21 fiscal year.

The PBO goes on to point out that the federal public accounts are published later than most provincial and territorial public accounts and that "Canada falls short of the standard for advanced practice in the International Monetary Fund's [fiscal] reporting guidelines".

In some respects, these quotes from the PBO about basic competence and transparency might be the most disturbing part of all. For six years, the government has been increasingly paralyzing the country with incompetence.

We watched a government just shrug off payment systems that do not pay, procurement systems that do not procure and create regulatory systems designed to kill projects. It dithered for years with a non-decision on Huawei, jeopardizing national cybersecurity. It defied parliamentary orders. It has presided over the resignation of eight generals, one clerk of the privy council and a governor general.

Now we are adding the inability to file timely fiscal reports to the incredible litany of muddled and incompetent government. Today, as we debate the implementation legislation for the fall economic statement, Canada is as divided as it has ever been. The government has long pitted east versus west, urban versus rural, and now the vaccinated against the unvaccinated. The government operates under an "us versus them" mentality that has finally and courageously been called out by one of their own this week.

To conclude, I will not support this bill. It is a matter of confidence in the government, and I have none.

• (1720)

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague talked a lot about the housing issue but has not mentioned anything about how supply has decreased during COVID-19. He talked a lot about government spending but has not talked about why that spending was necessary.

I would like to know which of the benefits the member would have liked to see cut. Does he not agree with the business supports?

Does he not agree with supporting seniors? There are measures in this bill as well that would help curb the buying of homes and residential properties. Does he not agree with that?

Inflation is not just a problem here in Canada but is a global problem right now. The supply chain is the main reason for causing this problem. I would like the member to give me his comments on that.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, there is a lot there, and I will do the best I can with the time I have.

To start with the last point, yes, indeed there is inflation in other parts of the world, but in no other advanced economy is it like it is in Canada. This is a Canadian phenomenon compared with our peer countries.

On housing, yes, indeed supply is an issue. We have seen nothing from this government to meaningfully address supply. It is quite the opposite. We have a continuation of regulation, and that goes to other levels of government as well, but certainly there are supply issues here. However, what the government has done is inflate the entire asset class with its deficits that were facilitated through the creation of new money, which I addressed.

With respect to programs, yes, indeed we supported all of the support measures that were necessary to combat COVID. However, as the member might have noted in my speech, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has pointed out that the criteria for the stimulus portions, and the government's own rationale for them, have disappeared, yet the expenditures remain.

Finally, I would like to thank the member for participating in the debate. It is nice to see somebody besides the member for Winnipeg North and the member for Kingston and the Islands actually doing their job and speaking in the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pausé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Calgary Rocky Ridge denounced the Liberal government's lack of innovative policies or programs. Last spring's budget included measures to crack down on tax evasion, but nothing came of it. There is nothing about that in Bill C-8.

Would ambitious measures to deal with tax havens not give people the hope that my colleague was talking about and restore their confidence in the government's finances?

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. This government has spent a lot of air time during committee meetings, and occasionally in the chamber, paying lip service to the problem of money laundering in Canada, which is a very serious problem, and we see it in the real estate industry. It is not a new phenomenon, but it is one that this government has failed to adequately address. I would agree with the member on that point.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just saw on Facebook that in Rivière-du-Loup, in my riding, the price of gas is \$1.66 a litre for regular and almost \$1.90 a litre for premium. That is unprecedented in Canada.

My colleague referred to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who has said that it is time to stop spending money and that it is not getting us anywhere because inflation keeps soaring.

I would like his opinion on that.

[English]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member completely, and I am sure that in his riding most people rely on personal vehicles for transportation to get to work and back. There is no subway system in the member's riding, so the inflation impact, particularly on transportation, is a real problem for working people in Canada, and the PBO's concerns were well noted on the out-of-control spending.

- (1725)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we are debating a bill related to the fall economic update. I think we have to realize that the situation we are in right now is the context in which we are debating this bill.

I have never seen our country more divided in my time in office, and I have never seen us in the kind of national crisis that we are in right now. We are now in year three of COVID. Every one of us in this House and every member listening has constituents who are tired, who are facing mental health crises, who want stability and certainty, who have lost jobs, who are trying to find labour. We have a big problem in this country right now. We are seeing civil unrest.

I just feel that the legislation that the government is putting forward right now and the tone that the government is taking with these problems are not treating these things seriously. It is really easy for us to just assume that Canada is always going to be this place of wonderful, vibrant, inclusive pluralism that sees constant economic growth, but we cannot make that assumption. It actually takes work and it takes effort, and that effort is not deep political polarization and it is not making political hay out of crisis situations; it is actually trying to work with each other to come up with solutions. This bill does not recognize that point right now.

My constituents are seeing out-of-control cost of living increases. I was just at the grocery store last night in my community, and I watched a woman pick up a container of chicken breasts and then put it back. She picked it up again and then she put it back. She

picked it up again, and then she put it back and walked away. That is happening across demographics. People do not know if they can afford to pay for basic necessities, and this has changed in such a rapid period of time.

This bill does not address that, because we are not addressing the underlying causes of inflation. We are not addressing the continued deficit spending that we have seen over the last couple of years during the pandemic. I really think that now is the time for a new approach. I believe we should not be debating any new budgetary measures without having a plan to end pandemic restrictions.

I understand why we looked to restrictions at the very start of the pandemic. I think we did that for several reasons. The government needed time to figure out what COVID was, particularly as we were watching the body bags pile up in different parts of the country. There was a desire to try to contain COVID. We now know that is not possible. COVID zero is not possible. It is not a thing. We have to learn to live with it.

Restrictions were supposed to buy us time to get vaccines and therapeutics. We have both. Thank God we have both. Restrictions were supposed to incent people to get vaccinated, and very many Canadians have been vaccinated and have been boosted, and I want to thank them for that. However, I would argue that after six months under many of these restrictions, the people who have not been vaccinated to this date have probably made a choice, and frankly, the political rhetoric around vaccination that we saw during the federal election campaign did nothing to help raise vaccination levels. All it did was divide our country further.

My last point is that restrictions were ostensibly put in place to buy politicians at all levels of government time to build up capacity in our very broken health care system.

On the first four points, we do not need restrictions anymore to do those things. On the fifth point, to build up capacity and deal with Canada's broken health care system, restrictions are not going to do that; only political will gets that done.

- (1730)

This bill misses the mark, and I would like to see the federal government immediately put forward a plan to end pandemic restrictions. I think that would take the temperature down across the country, and it would also serve to give us a starting point to think about how we are recovering as a country from what has been collective trauma across our nation. That needs to be the starting point.

Government Orders

The thing this bill does not address, which it really should have, given the amount of spending in it, is that point number five I just mentioned: how we are addressing Canada's broken health care system. I know a lot of this fourth round of restrictions was to do with worry about whether a few hundred emergent patients suffering from COVID would overload our ICUs across this country. I know health care is provincial jurisdiction. The federal government also has a convening role in a national crisis to ask provincial governments how we can help, how we can fix this problem and how we can support the doctors and nurses, who are rightly asking for solutions from all of us.

We cannot point fingers at each other across levels of government and then expect Canadians to continue to sacrifice through restrictions and continued impingements on our freedom. We cannot keep expecting to divide Canadians, so I really hope the government will turn its attention to those types of forward-looking measures, when it comes to moving into a state of endemic management for COVID, figuring out how we can unite each other and figure out how we can have common ground and understand one another, rather than just using political rhetoric to try to drive wedges.

I hope the federal government somehow uses its convening role to see how we can support the provinces and fix our broken health care system so this does not happen again. I hope the federal government commits to ensuring these types of restrictions we have seen over the last couple of years are not normalized and that we put safeguards around when the federal government can actually use these, so that Canadians are not sort of sitting in a state of suspended terror or uncertainty on when they are forward again. I hope the federal government actually puts some resources into ramping up the pandemic warning system. We should not have to be relying on data from the WHO and other areas. We should be having our own data to be able to figure out how we can best manage our borders.

There are so many things we could be doing, but I feel this bill is a continuation of the status quo in the middle of a national crisis, rather than saying how we get out of that crisis and heal the rifts from the collective trauma our nation has gone through, and then focusing our efforts on rebuilding.

The last few days and weeks have been difficult on every Canadian. I have gotten so many emails and calls from people of all political stripes and proclivities panicked and worried about the future, and it is our job here to give that stability and that sense of hope moving forward. I watched question period today, and we all have to do a lot better.

The interim leader of the Conservative Party of Canada asked the Prime Minister to meet and has proposed a meeting across party lines with all the party leaders to figure out not only how we can move forward and how we can ensure that critical infrastructure is not being blockaded, but also how we can ensure that pandemic restrictions are removed. These are both reasonable to move forward, and they are what we are here to do. That is our jobs. We cannot keep trying to take a side one way or the other and try to think something is going to happen. There has to be an acknowledgement of an issue on both, and I do not see that happening here.

This is less of an admonishment and more of an encouragement to all of my colleagues who are listening today, and to anyone who is listening at home. If we do not start taking these things seriously, we are going to keep seeing this spiral and disintegration. So many different generations have worked so hard to build our country up, not tear it down. It is our job here to make sure we do so.

With that, I encourage my colleagues to work together across party lines to come up with solutions, take the temperature down and invest in our future.

● (1735)

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I found my colleague's speech to be quite interesting.

First, I am a person of faith as well, and she thanks God for the rapid tests and vaccines this country has now procured. I know she was a big critic on whether we would be able to do all of those things.

I would say that we should be thanking the government for being able to manage in such difficult times. We were able to procure more than enough vaccines for our country. I know that this member was basically demanding that the government provide rapid tests to all the provinces. We did so. This fiscal update provides all of those measures. It provides for ventilation in schools.

It asks, and we did ask, the provinces what they need. They needed funding to create vaccine passports at the time. They needed supports for their businesses. This fiscal update would do all of those things.

I am a little tired of hearing, from the opposition, these extreme ideas. At the very beginning of the pandemic, the opposition members were saying to shut down all borders immediately. Now they want us to open—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill the opportunity to answer.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, I just want to thank my team and my caucus for standing behind me for over a year as I stood in the House as the official opposition critic for health. In the role of the opposition, during that time, we held the government to account. When we were not getting vaccines and other countries were, every day we were in the House, asking questions as to when they were coming, as well as in committee meeting after committee meeting. That is the role of the opposition: to put pressure on the government to make sure that it is delivering results for Canadians. In a functional Parliament, that is what we should be doing.

I want to thank my colleagues in the Conservative Party for lifting me up during some tough times, and lifting my team up to get that job done. I am proud to say that.

Government Orders

My colleague spoke in the past tense about measures that the government had taken, such as vaccine passports and these things. We have to be talking in the future tense. We have to be saying where we are, going forward. We cannot be looking in the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to give more opportunity for questions.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to see you in that chair.

I thank my hon. colleague from Calgary Nose Hill for her speech. She was extremely critical of the government's lack of leadership and vision when it comes to health.

I wonder if she could comment on what proposals she would make if she were sitting on the government side. Is it not time to provide funding to the provinces?

There is a historic shortfall. Over the years, health transfers have declined from 50% to 22%. As a compromise, Quebec, the provinces and the territories have unanimously requested an immediate increase to health transfers to cover 35% of costs.

Would my colleague support this measure?

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, who is always bright and good to work with. We need to have a much more robust response from the government on addressing Canada's broken health care system. Funding is certainly a large component of that. We need to make sure that the provinces are adequately funded.

We also need to look at some of the significant learning that has occurred, and at the cracks that have been exposed in our health care system throughout the pandemic with a level of honesty and determination in order to fix it. We cannot sweep these problems under the rug.

The Conservative Party of Canada had several ideas, in the last election, of what we needed to do. In the spirit of bipartisanship, I look forward to working with members of all political parties to see how we can fix this because we—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): One last question, the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know that the member for Calgary Nose Hill and I agree on a number of things. We agree that my riding makes very good wine, and I agree with her that Canadians are struggling to get by.

There are Canadians who are not struggling to get by. Those are the billionaires of Canada, the ultrawealthy. Could the member comment on the NDP's idea that it is time for the ultrawealthy to pay their fair share, so that the tax burden of Canada is not on the shoulders of those who are struggling to get by?

Would she agree that we need a wealth tax on the ultrawealthy, so that we can make sure the costs of the pandemic are shared equitably?

● (1740)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for raising one of the key economic engines of his riding, the wine industry. I certainly know that our party has several ideas for tax relief, around the escalator tax, to incentivize growth in that sector.

I believe that all Canadians, particularly low-income Canadians right now, should be afforded some measure of tax relief, but particularly low-income Canadians to ensure that they can make—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House once again.

How do we begin to go over the country's finances under the Liberal government? There is always so much spending and it is impossible to keep track of it all. It can give someone a headache if they try to keep up with it. Many of my fellow Conservatives are doing a great job of going through these spending items, showing how a lot of them do not make any sense and helpfully explaining how to handle Canada's finances more effectively to get a better deal for the taxpayer.

I think it needs to be said, as a general comment, that in difficult times it is actually more important, not less, to make sure that we are managing our finances carefully and with close attention. The government must not act like it received a blank cheque from Canadians. However, when we are dealing with unusually large amounts of money, and when our minds are easily distracted by the news and events surrounding us here in this country, the temptation is always there to fall into a spending spree and make impulsive decisions without clearly thinking about the future and the ramifications of the decisions we make.

Everybody knows by now that we have entered a time of soaring inflation and supply chain shortages. Maybe it took an extra while for the Liberals to acknowledge it, because the warnings were coming from the official opposition, but they got there eventually and recognized that it was more than "Justinflation".

To a degree, some challenges were expected during all the uncertainty and real disruptions to do with COVID and two years of lockdowns. That is the sort of thing that has been affecting countries around the world, which has been the government's favourite talking point for a little while. However, it is not the perfect excuse that the Liberals are trying to make it out to be. Their mandate for truckers crossing the border, for example, at a time when supply chains are fragile with moving goods, is only one of the latest examples of their wrong-headed and unbalanced policies. We are already behind 18,000 truckers, and the mandates are only further exacerbating that issue. The Prime Minister's inflammatory and extreme rhetoric has also not been helping. However, I am not so much speaking on national unity today. It is the economic side of these problems that is the focus of debating the bill in front of us right now.

As far as handling COVID is concerned, the Liberals really have been normalizing lockdowns in practice. They have gone along as if it was a fallback or default position. Sometimes it seems as if they are stuck in the spring of 2020. The Liberals did not listen to feedback inside or outside of the House about supporting the provinces, strengthening their health care funding and providing all kinds of preventive measures as requested. The Conservatives demanded that they maximize all the incentives for businesses to hire and for more people to keep working, but now we find ourselves with ongoing labour shortages across different sectors. We are not out of the woods yet.

Even though we do need to be prepared for the worst-case scenario, it is still concerning to see the government announce a local lockdown program when it has consistently lacked a balanced approach. It would be one thing if the government was caught off guard by a crisis and had trouble finding its way, but with the Liberals and their economic update, it is about so much more than just COVID. Our finances were not in good shape before 2020 because of the same government's mismanagement. We started off weaker than we needed to be, and it is obvious that the Liberals have not learned anything and are not willing to correct the course.

Over the last couple of years as a member of Parliament, I have had the chance to work on a few committees. In each of them, I have seen the same pattern up close. The government will make announcement after announcement for our future economy yet to come, while it does not hesitate to actively undermine our strongest sectors in the current economy. We cannot go on spending as much as we are if we do not have a strong economy to back it up.

When we ask them practical questions about the most basic details of their dream economy, there is not an answer, because questioning them on it just kills the mood. The Liberals are shooting our country in the foot and asking questions about it later, but it is okay, as there is a buyback program for the proverbial gun anyway. They will happily bring in new restrictions on people's lives through taxes and new laws, but they do not seem to care as much about making sure that ordinary life can function in their new utopia.

First, they brought in their carbon tax, with no regard for the disproportionate impacts it has on rural areas, like the ones I serve, and the most vulnerable populations, even though their regulatory review admits it. It specifically singles out seniors living on a fixed income, but also single mothers, who are most at risk of experienc-

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ing energy poverty. As the carbon tax continues to escalate, The Liberals are looking to pile on the clean fuel standard, which has another carbon pricing mechanism attached to it. These people are only going to feel more and more crushed by the burden of the government's tax-heavy approach.

However, there is no need to worry because they say they are preparing our economy for the future. They promise a boom for industry with electric vehicles and biofuels in Canada. Again, without a plan, it sounds too good to be true.

● (1745)

A couple of days ago in committee, I followed up with the Minister of International Trade on a potential problem under CUSMA. Since coming into force in July of 2020, we have had a window of time to prepare for a requirement to regionally source 75% of lithium for EV batteries with minimal impacts on tariffs. If we are unable to do so there will be a massive increase in tariffs. With or without them, we could easily fall behind in this new industry, which appears to be crucial for the government's direction. What if it does not work out as well as expected?

I asked the minister about it a year ago. She did not seem to know what it was, and with no clear answer since then I decided to bring it up again this week, one year later. I am still not sure if the minister is actually aware of it and it is hard to get anything done if one does not know what one might have to deal with.

When it comes to new mines or resource projects in this area, industry has clearly said that the Liberal government's own impact assessment process is getting in the way and causing delays. The timelines for approval take way too long and it does not have to be this way. Our Canadian economy depends on resource development, the energy industry, specifically oil and gas, as a major contributor for work and wealth, but it is the same Liberal legislation, with an activist environment minister, that would aggressively shut it down while preventing the projects it will need to replace it.

If the Liberals want to keep spending away, where will the money come from? This is not the only way Liberal policies are working at cross-purposes either. Ever since the Liberals first floated their idea of reducing fertilizer emissions by 30%, producers and industry have been deeply concerned that this would follow the European Union's model of restricting the total amount of fertilizer used. It went with a 20% hard-cap reduction on fertilizer usage. This could cause huge losses for crop production.

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Following its efforts, I raised this issue multiple times and the government has not ruled it out here in the House of Commons. Last fall, Meyers Norris Penny released a commissioned report on the estimated impact of such a policy in the coming years. By 2030, according to the report, losses of crop yields for corn, canola and spring wheat could total tens of millions of tonnes, costing up to nearly \$48 billion to the Canadian economy. For Canadian agriculture, which is already a leading example of environmental efficiency and sustainability, this would be nothing short of devastating.

Considering the estimated number of losses to crops, this would also create new problems for trade exports and disruptions to domestic or global supply chains. Price pressures with reduced supply can easily combine with inflation to make it worse. What makes it even worse yet is this. Part of the Liberals' plan for their new economy for the new future is going to be biofuels. We all know that both corn and canola are the main crops we are going to be growing for biofuels going forward. According to this report, the number of bushels that are going to be produced is going to massively drop and we are not going to be able to meet this demand to fuel the future set out in the Liberals' plan.

Do members know what the government's response continues to be to all of this? It disagrees with the report, which is fair enough, except it has not even done its own impact studies or clearly laid out to farmers and producers what it is going to do. I was glad to hear it is looking at options besides heavily reducing fertilizer, but the main issue I am trying to raise today, and in the past, is that it continues to refuse to rule out the hard cap for the use of fertilizer. This whole time the government could have reassured us by saying it is not going to happen, but here we are again. It will not do it.

The Liberals need to think twice about ruining their own plan for biofuels where there is going to be even more demand for canola. How will it work for our producers who are having a harder time growing it underneath this new regime it is putting in place? The input costs are already through the roof, both for seed, fertilizer and spray. Machinery costs are also through the roof. Somehow I do not think they understand the practical realities and decisions that our farmers have to consider. The government already is not taking the concerns about land used for food versus fuel seriously, but now it wants to play with the idea of restricting fertilizer.

Despite all the uncertainties right now with inflation and supply chains in our economy, Canadians can be sure of at least one thing. The current Liberal government has been and will continue to be a disaster for our economy. It really could be so much better if it would only listen.

• (1750)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned the economy during his remarks. I would remind him that, prepandemic, this government had presided over an economy where unemployment was at a 40-year low and our debt-to-GDP ratio was declining. During this pandemic we have been there to support businesses. Our job numbers are strong, as is our GDP, notwithstanding the challenges there.

What I want to ask the member specifically is this. When I look at the Hansards from 2020 and 2021, he made a lot of mention of blockades and the economic impact they were having in his part of

the country, and indeed elsewhere in the country. I have yet to hear the same type of language from him as sometime in 2020, calling for the protesters to go home. I have yet to hear that language.

I will go on record right now to say it is important that the protesters go home, not only those here in Ottawa but also those in Windsor and in Coutts. Will the member take the opportunity to do the same thing on the record right now for his constituents and all Canadians?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, back in 2020, one of the main issues was inaction from the government, and we have inaction again when it comes to this blockade, just like we did back then. It refused to act, let it go on and on, hoped that it would take care of itself and the pandemic basically took care of it, so it did not have to do anything back then. Today we are looking for the government to actually acknowledge the concerns that Canadians have. These hard-working everyday Canadians are bringing it to Ottawa and putting it right in front of the Liberals, so they cannot ignore it. They are not listening.

Canadians want to be heard, and that is what this is about. They want to hear what the government has to say, so I would ask that it listen, just like we were asking it to do back in 2020.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands for his speech.

He began his speech talking about lockdowns and vaccination. I totally agree with him. However, I would like to point out that if the provinces had received the health transfers, the situation might not be as serious as it is today, and perhaps the country would be less divided.

In Senneterre, in my riding, the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue had to cut overnight ER services and the obstetrics department. What people have gone through is simply unbelievable. Long-term care homes have been devastated.

The Conservative Party seemed to have lots of plans during the election campaign. From the member's perspective, what is the best plan for ensuring that health transfers are made to the provinces as planned, including an increase to cover 35% of costs?

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, we had a campaign that called for the increases in transfers to provinces. Prior to the pandemic, we heard many health experts say that capacity was one of the biggest issues that we faced. We were consistently operating between 95% and 110%, and there was no real plan back then to address that. We still do not have a plan from the government on how to address that going forward.

That is what Canadians are looking for. Throughout this debate, and with what has been happening with COVID, they wanted to see a plan from the government going forward. With this budget update, there is no clear plan to address the shortcomings that have been identified over the last two years.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, during the member's speech, he made a reference to the fertilizer reduction strategy. It is something I have taken a great interest in during my time as the NDP's agriculture critic over the last four years. I want to get his comments on the National Farmers Union. It says that Fertilizer Canada has produced a simplistic self-serving model that does nothing to illuminate the actual path that farmers must follow to reduce emissions in line with the requirements of our international commitments. The union also said that its report provided no useful insights on how farmers can contribute to our low-emissions future.

Reducing fertilizer is, of course, going to help farmers' bottom line. Does the member agree that there are other paradigms farmers can follow to achieve the same yields, but with less fertilizer usage? It just requires a collective effort and more research on how to do so.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands has 15 seconds for his response.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, further research is always going to be a big part of it going forward. We have a great agricultural program at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. Innovation is going to be a big part of it, but again, at the end of the day, the government has laid out a biofuels strategy, and farmers need canola and corn to be able to meet that. The number one way they are going to meet that is through increasing the yield potential of those crops. Fertilizer is how to do it.

In particular, nitrogen is one of the elements these crops use and it is one of the things they are going to try to target. That is what the European Union targeted with its reductions, but those crops need it the most. The two—

• (1755)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The time has expired.

[*Translation*]

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the motion.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded vote, please.

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the division stands deferred until Thursday, February 10, 2022, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, if you canvass the House, you might find unanimous consent to call it 6:44 p.m. so we can get to the take-note debate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is now the late show, to adjourn.

Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

HOUSING

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was pleased to hear the parliamentary secretary say that he is prepared to take notes on this very important adjournment proceeding.

We have heard a lot about the housing affordability crisis in Canada. The cost of everything is ballooning. The cost for Canadians to afford a house is slipping out of their hands. That dream of home ownership is getting further and further away for young Canadians. Thirty-year-olds are living at home or stuck in the cycle of renting and are not able to save up for a down payment, as the price of a home has doubled while the Liberals have been in government.

However, it is not just the price of homes that has gone up. We know that the price of feeding our families will go up by an average of \$1,000 per family this year. The list of individual items and how much they will cost with this increase is too great to go into, but it includes chicken, beef, dairy, fruits, vegetables, heating our homes and putting fuel in our cars so we can get to work and medical appointments. In rural ridings like mine, people do not have the option of taking public transit, for the most part.

We need a government that is committed to making life more affordable for Canadians, one that does not say inflation is a global problem while pointing to how our inflation stacks up against that of other places without doing anything to address the issue here. Telling Canadians that inflation is a global problem does not do anything to address the rising cost of everything for folks across this country. Folks are stuck in that cycle, stuck living in their parents' basement because they are trying to save up money to afford a down payment.

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The price of the average home went from \$435,000 when the Liberals took office to more than \$800,000 today. That is over a six-year period. With \$400 billion of printed cash pumped into our economy just last year, we know we are in a situation where too many dollars are chasing too few goods, and it is raising the price of everything.

I hear the Liberals on the other side heckling, “Why stop now?” Well, I will tell them why. It is because this out-of-control, undisciplined spending is putting us in a situation where the only people who will be able to afford a home are folks from overseas who are parking their cash in our housing market, waiting for homes to inflate in value and then flipping them to the next investor. There are empty homes owned by non-residents sitting vacant as an investment vehicle and Canadians cannot afford to get into our housing market.

My question for the parliamentary secretary is very simple. What is the government prepared to do right now to make housing more affordable for Canadians?

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government's main objective is to help Canadians deal with the challenges they are currently facing.

This means that we are working on putting an end to the pandemic once and for all and doing everything we can to keep life affordable. One way to do that is to make housing more affordable.

Every year we have been in office, we have made historic, long-term investments in affordable housing. Our recent throne speech was no exception. Whether it is building more housing every year, increasing the number of affordable housing units, or ending chronic homelessness, the government is committed to working with its partners to deliver concrete results.

For example, the housing accelerator fund will help municipalities build more and better housing more quickly. Cities can use the funds to attract more investors and planners, offset land purchases and build the infrastructure required for new housing. This will do much to make housing more affordable for everyone across the country.

We recognize that buying a home is especially hard for young people in this country and that the housing market is also creating wealth inequality between the older and younger generations.

We want to help. We are bringing in a more flexible first-time homebuyer incentive program, as well as new rent-to-own programs. We are also reducing closing costs for first-time homebuyers.

Today, I only had time to talk about the programs we announced recently. However, in the past year alone, we have participated in hundreds of announcements welcoming families to their new homes. This was made possible thanks to the national housing strategy, a \$72-billion, 10-year plan that will give more Canadians a place to call home.

I will close by saying that our government is making substantive and long-term investments in housing because we believe that everyone deserves a chance to succeed and thrive, and we are working hard to make that a reality. Everyone deserves a roof over their head.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, in hearing the name of the great riding of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, I have to take a moment to recognize the tremendous work of my provincial counterpart, the Hon. Steve Clark, who has served ably as Ontario's minister for municipal affairs and housing.

Minister Clark has been a champion for affordable housing in our community of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes and across Ontario. Minister Clark has been part of the call for the Liberal government to come good on the \$490 million that is owed to the Province of Ontario for housing and homelessness supports in this province.

Strong Conservatives like Minister Steve Clark, and like this Conservative team in this place, will continue to fight to make sure housing is affordable and that Canadians and Ontarians can recognize that dream of home ownership, and they are going to make sure they streamline the process to do that.

• (1805)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, our government is aware that the cost of living is going up for Canadians. The cost of housing in particular is a major concern.

We are committed to building a stronger, healthier housing system that benefits everyone in Canada, especially the most vulnerable. We are already seeing significant progress thanks to the national housing strategy, and we made even more commitments in our throne speech. We are bringing strong leadership, a solid plan and unprecedented investments to the table.

I now call on my colleague and all members of the House to do their part. I urge them to go back to their ridings and work with people in their communities to ensure that they take full advantage of all the new programs available under the national housing strategy.

[English]

PENSIONS

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Madam Speaker, recently I asked the Deputy Prime Minister when the Liberal government would reverse its CPP tax hike. Instead of assuring people that the government is doing something about this, she said that we were all mistaken and that Canada's economy is robustly recovering from the COVID recession. The government is tone deaf.

The reality is Canadians are paying an extra \$1,000 in grocery expenses and \$700 for a CPP tax hike and face a 30-year high inflation rate and record-high gas prices. It is a fact that nearly 200,000 Canadians lost their jobs this past January. That is 200,000 more families now questioning how to pay their bills while the Liberal government continues to praise itself.

The Deputy Prime Minister and her colleagues are repeating the same talking points that are designed to frustrate rather than assist hard-working Canadians. I asked my constituents to share their thoughts about the finance minister's response, and here is what a few thought.

Kody wrote that he is a single dad who makes \$28 an hour. He lives in my riding and has to live with a friend because he cannot afford a one-bedroom apartment at \$1,200 a month. He calls on the government to end "Justinflation".

Wayne wants the Minister of Finance to try living as a senior who has to cover the bills and buy groceries at the same time. He says that seniors planned for their old age, but not with all these extra taxes.

After watching many repetitive answers from the finance minister and her Liberal colleagues, Patti commented that she thinks she speaks for many taxpayers and voters when she says these Q and A periods are nothing more than poorly done theatre. Most of the time the Liberals respond with off-topic babble.

Marie's thoughts are similar. She says that she would actually be surprised if the finance minister answered a question, and if she did, she would buy a lottery ticket.

Another constituent, Mike, suggests that the system is broken, as there is never an answer. He asks why we would waste our time asking or even bringing up a question when the Liberals never answer a straightforward question and nothing ever gets done. He also suggests that if ministers tried to live on CPP and old age wages like our Canadian seniors, they would start paying more attention to the problems that people are facing.

Amelia shared her concerns and would like to know why the Minister of Finance cannot ever answer a good question from the Conservative Party, and why she diverts to answering with all the wonderful things the Liberals have done or are in the process of doing that have us in the concerning situation we are in now. She continues, saying that high inflation, the housing crisis and buying fossil fuels from corrupt countries that have human rights issues are the top three issues in her opinion. Next would be \$10-a-day child care. If our health care and senior citizen care is not in check properly, what makes the Liberals think they can make sure other vul-

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nerable groups, such as children, would be properly cared for? She sees a big mess there as well.

I would like to thank Amelia for her thoughtful comments. These are indeed important questions that are constantly ignored by the government.

Another great comment I received was from Kevin, who is in favour of dropping the CPP hike. He emphasized that the carbon tax is killing us, adding thousands of dollars per year to every family from the pump to the supply chain, and is raising prices everywhere.

I would like to thank all of my constituents who shared their thoughts, concerns and questions with me. Their phone calls, emails and comments help me better advocate for them in the House.

Will the government ever listen to Canadians, end the sugar-coating and start answering the tough questions on point?

• (1810)

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know the pandemic continues to affect the daily lives of Canadians, and I am hoping to give some real answers for that member opposite so he can get back to his constituents.

Canada's economy has made significant progress since the worst part of the pandemic. We all know that challenges remain. Elevated inflation is one of those challenges. This particular challenge is a global phenomenon driven by the pandemic and the logistical difficulty of reopening the world's economy. Although Canada is not immune to these challenges, inflation in Canada is below the G7, the G20 and the OECD averages.

That said, we understand that rising prices have a real impact on Canadian families. This is why our government is helping Canadians afford the cost of living with sizable, structural investments in early learning and child care, as well as in housing. This is part of our plan to grow a more resilient economy, a stronger middle class and to ensure pathways to success for everyone. In fact, our government has been focused on the issue of affordability since forming government in 2015. Our policies have lifted 1.3 million Canadians out of poverty, which lowered Canada's poverty rate to historical all-time lows.

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I am thrilled that, over the past few months, Conservatives have opened up to talking about affordability for Canadians, but unfortunately, their actions tell a different story. When we lowered taxes for the middle class, twice, and raised them for the wealthiest 1%, Conservatives voted against it. When we created the Canada child benefit, which is indexed to inflation, Conservatives voted against it. When we legislated the climate action incentive, which gives the average family in Alberta \$981, Conservatives voted against it. When we provided seniors over 75 a one-time payment of \$500 this summer, Conservatives voted against it. The hon. member should let Wayne know about that. When we put forward a plan and the funds to create a national early learning and child care plan for Canadians, Conservatives voted against that too.

When we strengthened the Canada pension plan to ensure Canadians can count on a safe, secure and dignified retirement, the Conservatives opposed that plan too. The Canadian pension plan, or CPP, is one of the three pillars of the retirement income system in Canada. It covers virtually all workers in Canada except Quebec, which administers its own plan called the Quebec pension plan, or QPP. The CPP replaces a basic level of earnings for contributors upon retirement, disability or death. In 2016, Canada's federal and provincial ministers of finance, as joint stewards of the CPP, reached a historic agreement to enhance the pension plan.

The deal will boost how much working Canadians will get from the CPP when they reach retirement. Ultimately, the enhancement will increase the maximum retirement pension by about 50%. It will also increase the survivor and disability pensions. This represents a major step forward in improving retirement outcomes for Canadian workers and reducing the uncertainty that many Canadians feel about being able to save for their retirements.

Quebec subsequently adopted the exact same changes for its provincial pension plan. To fund these enhanced benefits, annual CPP contributions, and QPP contributions for that matter, are being increased modestly over seven years, which has been happening since 2019. A stronger Canadian pension plan means a more secure retirement for all Canadians, and I am sure the member for Brantford—Brant can appreciate that.

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, the cost of living crisis affects all Canadians. Everyone has experienced it when filling up their gas tanks, paying utilities or buying food. A recent Angus Reid Institute poll reported that nearly 60% of Canadians are having a difficult time feeding their families. As I indicated earlier, there is an extra \$1,000 more in groceries in 2022 alone, as food prices surge.

This is another failure of the Liberal government. Their economic negligence is now clearer than ever.

When will the Liberal government stop making statements that favour their ideological agenda and start listening to and providing targeted and timely financial relief to everyday Canadians?

• (1815)

Mr. Terry Beech: Madam Speaker, I think I maybe gave eight examples of targeted relief to targeted Canadians, and that member's party voted against all of them.

Canadians make contributions to the CPP based on their annual earnings, up to a maximum amount. The amount in 2022 was \$64,900, up from \$61,600 in 2021. It is important to note that anyone earning less than \$61,600 in 2022 will not see their total contributions to the CPP affected by the change in the maximum annual pensionable earnings. It is important to note that the enhancements to the CPP addresses important challenges faced by working Canadians.

It is also important to note that the CPP is self-financed by employer and employee contributions. As such, freezing the contributions will mean the increases would come at a cost to Canadian workers. It would mean reducing future benefits for Canadians who are currently working and, in particular, younger workers who are working today. I do not think anyone wants that.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

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

Veterans and their families are being left behind by the Liberal government. When they rise in the House on this issue, representatives of the government are quick to state that they have made historic investments and done more than any government has done to invest in veterans. With the greatest of respect, they seem to have convinced themselves that by throwing money at the problem they have dealt with it fully and that, while there is more work to do, most of the issues have been addressed.

Unfortunately, I would like to talk about where we are today, not where we were a few years ago and not where we were in 2015. Currently, there is a backlog of 30,000 disability benefit claims on the books at Veterans Canada. The current average wait time for a processed claim is 40 weeks. Unfortunately, the average is skewed because some cases, the simple ones, are solved quickly. If they have complex cases, veterans who were prepared to lay down their lives for this country are waiting as long as two years. They are waiting two years for hearing aids that somebody desperately needs, or waiting two years for funding for physiotherapy related to injuries.

This is what the government considers good enough. Let us not forget that it was the Prime Minister who said, "veterans are asking for more than we can give". The government has known about this problem for years. We have had reports from the Veterans Affairs committee, the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the Veterans Ombudsman all giving concrete recommendations on how to fix this. Why has the problem not been solved yet? I simply do not know.

Is there a political will to solve this crisis? It has been a constant passing of the buck from one Liberal to the next, not seeing fit to address anything more than the status quo. What worries me most is that the government is going to cut over 300 disability benefit adjudicators in March. These are people who were hired to address the very backlog that prompts me to rise in the House today.

In an Order Paper question, I asked the government what would happen to the backlog of claims from April, 2022, to January, 2023, if these cuts happen. These are the numbers the Liberals provided of an estimated backlog. It would be 26,600 on April 1, 2022. On July 1, 2022, that would rise to 29,900. On October 1, 2022, it would rise to 33,200, and on January 1, 2023, it would rise to 36,500.

If these cuts happen, the backlog will get worse. The minister knows that and the government knows that, yet they are still failing to act.

I have one simple question for the government. Will it commit, here and now, to extending the 300 staff past March, yes or no?

• (1820)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, since the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo asked, in essence, a two-part question, let me offer this two-part response.

First, on the matter of caseworkers, as my colleague puts it, I believe this refers to temporary employees who were hired by Veterans Affairs Canada to form what the department calls spike teams. These teams were created from the 350 additional full-time staff who were hired in 2020 for two years as part of VAC's strategy to address the long-standing issue of processing times for disability benefits decisions. Employees on the spike teams were hired and trained starting in June 2020, and since January of last year they have been making decisions on disability benefit applications, thereby accelerating the process for veterans.

Coupled with other changes VAC made to its systems, these new teams helped the department reduce the number of pending applications to its lowest point since September 30, 2019, and reduce the number of applicants over the service standard to its lowest point since March 2019.

I can confirm that the department has so far received approval to extend some 168 spike and surge resources beyond March 2022. It is also worth pointing out that, as of April 1, 2022, veterans residing in Canada who apply for disability benefits for a mental health condition as well as those who have already applied will automatically immediately qualify for mental health benefits coverage. VAC is also improving case management supports, which go a long way to helping veterans adjust to and cope with a disability as they transition into post-military life and enter the civilian workforce.

Some steps the department has taken include using temporary funding for additional case managers; implementing guiding support that sees Veterans Affairs agents work with veterans who have moderate needs so that case managers can focus on veterans whose cases are more complex; bringing in screening tools to improve VAC's ability to identify veterans' levels of risk, needs and com-

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plexities to make sure they are provided supports that match their needs; and finally launching a new case management access tool, which reduces the administrative burden for case managers, allowing them more time to work directly with veterans and their families.

Regarding my colleague's second question about the unspent funds, I am surprised to learn the member of Parliament is unfamiliar with demand-driven funding. VAC's benefits are demand-driven, so no matter how many veterans come forward they will receive the benefits. These are based on estimates, and the process guarantees that, whether a veteran comes to VAC this year, next year or beyond, the benefits will be available. Money returned remains accessible the next year to fund veterans programming, based on demand.

I would like to also take this opportunity to emphasize, having served for a number of years on the opposition benches and seeing the treatment of veterans by the former Stephen Harper government, I have no problems doing a comparison of what this government has been able to accomplish and the number of resources we put into our veterans, compared to the previous administration. For many years we called for things such as reopening offices, including in my home province of Manitoba, where Brandon VAC offices were shut down.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, with respect, I do not believe my question had anything to do with unspent funds. I did not ask the hon. parliamentary secretary anything about unspent funds. I asked about backlog numbers. I am not sure why we are getting a prepared answer, when I did not ask that question.

• (1825)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: You asked for it previously.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, the member may say I asked for it previously. I am talking about right here and right now. It is incumbent on the parliamentary secretary, with respect, to answer the question I actually put forward to the government. I am going to ask very specific questions, and I would invite the hon. parliamentary secretary to deviate from the prepared remarks, because we saw where that got us this time.

He spoke of 168 people when it came to surge funding. I am not talking about those 168. We have numbers that will rise if those 168 are kept but the 300 are cut. Will he commit today, on behalf of the government, to maintain those 300—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member does not understand that the purpose of the late show is to follow up on a question posed in question period. The minister's response, which I was more than happy to deliver, was to expand upon what the member had originally asked. Someone can come to the late show and say they have a number of questions to ask, but it would be nice to advance them prior to posing the questions. I have no problem providing answers from my perspective at any time. I do not require speaking notes.

I can tell the member opposite, as I started to at the very beginning, that Conservatives often have a problem. They have this way of manipulating the numbers in an attempt to make the government

look bad. In fact, I would suggest to the member that, if he actually did his homework, what he would find is that this government has invested billions, or hundreds of millions, of dollars in our veterans over the last number of years. We understand—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is it for today.

The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:26 p.m.)

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Mr. Desjarlais 1943

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