



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

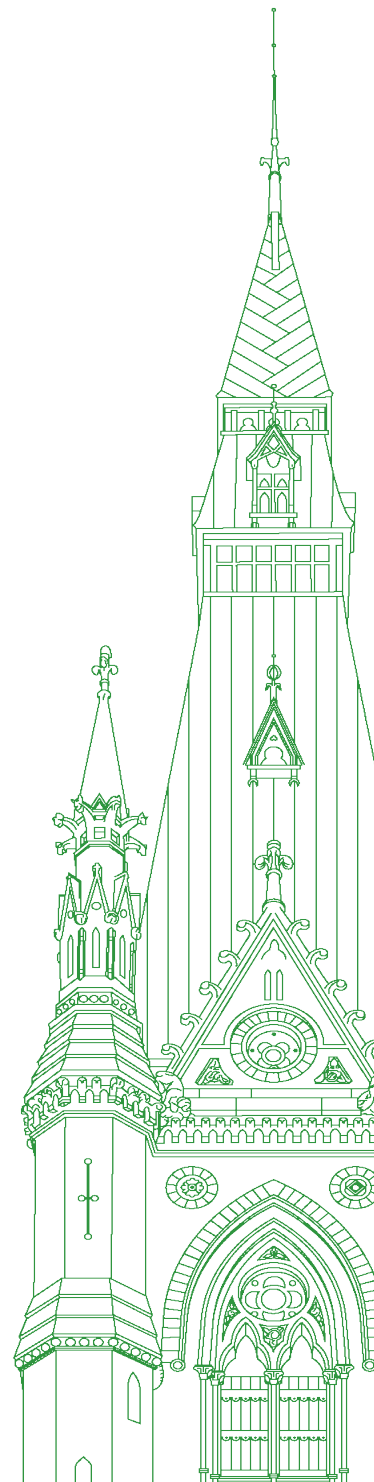
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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 23, 2022

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

● (1400)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: It being Wednesday, I will ask the member for Timmins—James Bay to lead us in our national anthem.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Candies Kotchapaw, who has been honoured in the “Top 25 Women of Influence” and the “Top 100 Accomplished Black Canadian Women”. Candies is an inspiring leader who believes in giving youth opportunities that did not exist for her and in nurturing the tremendous talent that exists in the Black community.

Candies created the organization, Developing Young Leaders of Tomorrow, to provide education, training and mentorship for Black youth. She also created Lead Like A Girl and the Black Diplomats Academy to give Black youth the opportunity to meet government, business and international affairs leaders, to make connections and to get experience. Young leaders from her organizations are already making their mark, attending COP26 in Glasgow and interning in government departments.

Please join me in recognizing Candies Kotchapaw and the extraordinary youth who are already making our community and country a better place.

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BLUE MOUNTAIN FILM FESTIVAL

Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to invite all Canadians to the inaugural Blue Mountain Film Festival taking place June 1 to June 5 in the town of Blue Mountains. The festival will include over 20 international and Canadian films, an industry creative forum and social events, all set in beautiful Blue Mountain Village on the shores of Georgian Bay.

I want to give a special thanks to the great team behind this initiative: Patti Kendall and Marni Moreau, whose idea to create a film fest got the ball rolling; executive director, Helen du Toit, and co-director of film programming, Diana Sanchez, who each bring a wealth of experience from international film festivals; and the incredible advisory team of Daniel Bekerman, Allison Black, Drew Fagan, Jennifer Frees, Tamara Podemski, John Rakich, Sudz Sutherland, Stephanie Azam and Tara Woodbury.

I thank Mayor Soever, the Blue Mountains council and Andrew Siegwart of Blue Mountain Village for their dedication to furthering economic development in our region.

I wish them a happy film fest.

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● (1405)

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Ukrainian community has significant roots in St. Catharines. For generations, the community has preserved a sense of culture and identity, understanding that the history of Ukraine is riddled with instances of Soviet and Russian attempts to destroy it.

When Vladimir Putin began his illegal war in Ukraine, St. Catharines residents, along with the Ukrainian community, stood up to do whatever they could. The outpouring of support continues to grow with many wanting to assist however they can.

St. John's Ukrainian Catholic Church has been filled with needed supplies, and more than 1,000 boxes are currently en route to Ukraine. For those who would like to still assist, monetary donations are needed as the cost of shipping goods is high. Donations can be made in person or online at the church's website.

I would like to thank all the volunteers and residents during this difficult time, and I would like to highlight Irene Newton for her work, not only during this crisis but always, ensuring that the voice of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Canadian community is heard in St. Catharines.

Slava Ukraini.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]***QUEBEC INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY WEEK**

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about Quebec Intellectual Disability Week, which runs from March 20 to 26.

The theme of this year's campaign focuses on leaving stereotypes in the past where they belong. It reminds us that people with intellectual disabilities are still facing prejudice, and that needs to stop. In order to make that happen, we need to make sure that these individuals have all the resources they need to be included and that their loved ones get the help and support they need to assist them.

I want to close by congratulating everyone at the Société québécoise de la déficience intellectuelle, which is celebrating its 70th anniversary. They do an outstanding and very necessary job. I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

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*[English]***PAKISTAN**

Mr. Shafqat Ali (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 82 years ago today on March 23, 1940, thousands of Muslims from all over the Indian subcontinent gathered in Lahore. They had one dream, one vision and one mission. A resolution was passed calling for the creation of a separate homeland for Muslims in British India.

Exactly 16 years later, on March 23, 1956, Pakistan adopted its first constitution during the transition from the Dominion of Pakistan to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, making Pakistan the world's first Islamic republic. Pakistan Day or Pakistan Resolution Day, also known as Republic Day, is a public holiday celebrated annually on March 23 in Pakistan and by the Pakistani diaspora around the world.

I invite all members of the House and all Canadians to join me in congratulating the people of Pakistan on the celebration of these two seminal days in the celebration and creation of Pakistan.

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RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand here today to congratulate one of my constituents upon her retirement at the end of March, Debra Arnott.

As a strong first nations leader with deep roots in the Fraser Canyon, for the last 30 years Debra served the region as the general manager of Community Futures Sun Country. Throughout her tenure, her passion and business acumen bolstered local entrepreneurs and helped them build up economic development in the Fraser Canyon.

I am sure the many businesses in Cache Creek, Ashcroft, Lytton, Lillooet and the surrounding first nations will join me in thanking Deb for her years of service, the relationships she fostered and her endless support for the region. She is a force in our community and will be greatly missed.

I extend my thanks to Debra for all of her hard work seeing businesses through some of the greatest crises we have ever faced, including the Elephant Hill wildfire, the global pandemic, Lytton wildfires and major floods. I congratulate her on her very well-deserved retirement, and I wish her all the best of success moving forward.

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● (1410)

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. Millions began to be displaced, thousands killed and people's lives turned upside down, but Canadians rolled up their sleeves and opened their hearts.

In my hometown of Surrey, I received a call from our local community activist, philanthropist and doctor, Dr. Gulzar Singh Cheema, saying the community wanted to help. Quickly, Kulwinder Sanghera of RED FM and Billa Sandhu of Sanjha TV stepped up and consulted with Alex of the Canada-Ukraine Foundation and, on March 7, did a radio telethon raising over \$300,000 in less than eight hours.

I offer special thanks to all my colleagues in the House who crossed party lines, called, donated and encouraged Canadians to donate, as well as to Jati Sidhu and all the volunteers from RED FM, Sanjha TV and the Canada-Ukraine Foundation who attended calls and processed donations. I am hugely grateful to the people of Surrey for stepping up.

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BUTTONS FOR UKRAINE

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize three young brothers, Jake, Nathan and Owen, in my riding of Newmarket—Aurora, for their compassion and desire to make a positive difference. I am wearing one of their buttons for Ukraine, which they designed and produced to seek donations.

In just two weeks, they raised over \$8,000, with donations being made directly to the Canadian Red Cross to support relief efforts. There is no price on these buttons but people are encouraged to donate what they can in order to receive a button. Jake, Nathan and Owen have asked that these buttons be worn until the war is over in order to honour the sacrifices and the courage of the Ukrainian people.

These young lads can be reached on Twitter at “Buttons for Ukraine” or, if any of my colleagues would like any further information, they should please reach out to my office. These young Canadians never fail to inspire me. Our future in Canada is bright.

COST OF LIVING

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cost of living continues to be a gut punch to my constituents in Brantford—Brant and all hard-working Canadians. Food costs are up 7.4% and gasoline 32.3% in just one year. The housing affordability crisis has become even worse with the biggest month-over-month hike since April of 1983. To add insult to injury, the new NDP-Liberal government is pushing ahead with several tax hikes, including the carbon tax.

What does the NDP Prime Minister have to say to the elderly, young parents and many other members of my riding? They do not want to hear the old speaking points about Canada's recovery and our credit rating. They need immediate relief now. Instead, Canadians can expect new, unprecedented expenses from the NDP-Liberal government that will drive inflation even higher. What nonsense and how irresponsible is that?

It is time for the NDP Prime Minister to stop punishing hard-working families and start making decisions with fiscal responsibility.

* * *

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, access to quality and affordable housing helps to create a stable environment for children by reducing frequent family moves, affecting the stability and well-being of families. I am proud to see the many investments happening across the country to continue to address housing needs.

I want to highlight a good story in my riding of London West, where a recent opening took place of 61 housing units that were built. Thanks to a \$7.5-million investment from the Government of Canada's rapid housing initiative, in partnership with the St. Leonard's Community Services, the units will house families and youth who were either experiencing homelessness or were in shelters, indigenous peoples, individuals coming from domestic abuse, as well as individuals who have been in an emergency shelter or in winter response sites.

The rapid housing initiative and its quest is to help communities in London and across Canada. It is building back better by creating more jobs in the construction and housing sectors, which grows the middle class and gets closer to eliminating chronic homelessness in Canada.

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UKRAINE

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in many ways Ukraine is us and we are Ukraine. Canada has the largest Ukrainian community outside of Ukraine and Russia. We are one in our opposition to illegal invasions. We are one in our shared value that democracy and freedom best serve a country's citizens. We should not describe what is happening there as a war, because a war implies two aggressors. Russia alone has illegally invaded Ukraine and in so doing, jeopardized Ukraine's ability to produce food and Russia's ability to export food because of sanctions that have been rightfully imposed.

Statements by Members

As someone very familiar with agriculture and agri-food, I can say that the agricultural communities of Ukraine and Russia and their systems account for 30% of the world's exports of wheat, 17% of the corn, 32% of the barley and 75% of the sunflower cooking oil. If we lose Ukraine, we lose one of our best chances to preserve world order against an escalating torrent of destructive madness.

Slava Ukraini.

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● (1415)

TAXATION

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are being hit with the highest inflation rate in a generation and costs are skyrocketing. Wages are not keeping up and it is getting harder and harder to make ends meet. From affecting the cost of gas, groceries and everything else, the scheduled carbon tax increase on April 1 will only exacerbate this problem.

The affordability crisis in this country is being fuelled by the Liberal government and now, with the NDP sharing the reins, it will lead to even higher taxes, more debt and less accountability. Canadians are being pushed to the brink and they need some relief. From cancelling the carbon tax increase to scrapping it entirely or providing a GST holiday on gasoline and diesel, there are common-sense solutions that can help Canadians today.

The NDP-Liberal government needs to leave money where it belongs, and that is in the pockets of hard-working Canadians.

* * *

BREAST CANCER

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand in the House today to acknowledge the extraordinary resilience and positivity of my neighbour in Milton, Erin Wrigglesworth. Erin is 42, a wife to Eric and a mother to two awesome kids. She is an awesome school teacher, a very competitive runner and a friend.

In December of 2020, she was diagnosed with breast cancer that has spread rapidly and has been deemed incurable. After receiving this devastating news, Erin did what she always does. She fought. She continues to undergo intense treatment at Princess Margaret hospital, and the Erin's Army GoFundMe has raised close to \$25,000. She has pledged that any money that is left over once she is healthy and cured will be donated to cancer research.

Statements by Members

This is a reminder that even in the face of unimaginable heart-break, there remains great power and hope. That bravery can inspire us all. My thoughts continue to be with Erin and her family and friends. I want her to know that her heroic example, while incredibly difficult, has inspired so many. All of my neighbours in Milton and so many more across this country are with her. We are proud soldiers in Erin's Army.

To Erin, I say keep fighting.

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GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, women in London and across Canada continue to face an increase in gender-based violence. Pleas from women's organizations have gone unanswered and they have been told to wait for a national action plan that is now six years overdue. The crisis is now.

In London we have an amazing resource to support women called Anova. It provides shelter, support, counselling and resources for abused women. It has said that because of the lack of beds, it had to turn away women almost 1,800 times last year, while it also saw an increase of over 53% in incidents of gender-based violence.

The federal government needs to establish sustainable annual core funding, it needs to establish survivor-centred changes to the justice system, and it needs to invest in long-term housing for women fleeing violence. We must face gender-based violence head-on, but these amazing women's organizations on the front line cannot do it alone. They need the government to reject austerity measures, move beyond planning and finally deliver action and the dollars they need to save lives.

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[Translation]

YVES TRUDEL

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, actor Yves Trudel of Varennes passed away on March 11. Many Quebecers knew him for his role as Méo. His friends and family knew him as an honest, learned and sensitive man. His drama students say that his teaching really touched their lives. An inveterate jokester, Yves never missed an opportunity to get people out of their comfort zone and test their perspicacity.

His interpretation of Bob Gratton's scapegoat brother-in-law touched Quebecers and made them laugh to the point where the image of the clumsy mechanic sporting his well-known Ski-Doo toque with a cigar dangling from his mouth is now embedded in Quebec's collective psyche.

This character, however, was about more than jokes and caricature. We must remember that, first and foremost, his purpose was to illustrate the Quebec condition so that we would understand the importance of fighting for our identity, culture and national emancipation.

Thank you to patriot Yves Trudel. Thank you for Méo, and thank you for Quebec.

* * *

● (1420)

[English]

LIBERAL-NDP ALLIANCE

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a majority mandate is won by criss-crossing the country, listening to Canadians and earning their trust at the polls.

People in Regina—Lewvan are in disbelief that the Prime Minister has created his own majority mandate in the shadowy back rooms of Ottawa. Canadians are upset and sending a clear message that they did not vote for an NDP-Liberal government.

Now that the ink is dry on the official agreement, the NDP can stop pretending this dangerous coalition has not existed for years. People want answers. The Prime Minister needs to come clean on how much this majority will cost Canadians. How much did it cost for the member for Burnaby South to once again sell out his party's principles?

This NDP-Liberal government will be the most reckless and expensive in our country's history. People in Regina—Lewvan are already paying too much for everyday essentials such as food and fuel, and with the Prime Minister's deceptive deal, that pain is only going to get worse for Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is difficult for us all to watch the horrific scenes coming out of Ukraine. I know this is especially true for our Canadian Armed Forces members and their families.

As the mother of a son who served on Operation Unifier in Ukraine, I know first-hand the incredible role that our Canadian Armed Forces have played in helping the Ukrainian security forces prepare for this moment, as they fight to defend their country.

Canadians are at once horrified by the senseless violence taking place in Ukraine and inspired by the determination of the Ukrainian army and the Ukrainian people. Canada stands with the people of Ukraine and their courageous president as they defend their country, and it will continue to be there for them.

I thank the members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Canadians were shocked to find out that they are being governed by an NDP-Liberal coalition government: an alliance of high-tax, high-spend and extreme ideology proponents. What Canadians do not know are the details of this agreement. We saw a press release yesterday, but no actual details.

Is there a signed agreement between the Liberals and the NDP and will they make it public, yes or no?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was clear in the last election what Canadians wanted as a priority: action on growing the economy, expanding the middle class and making sure that people can join it, ensuring affordable child care and expanding health care services. All of these things are at the core of what, when we came to power six months ago, we said we wanted to work with other parties on.

I know, because I was there, that when the Conservatives were in a minority government, they did not work with other parties. It is an unusual concept for them, but there is the opportunity that they have today to work collaboratively in Parliament to get things done. That is our objective.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a signed agreement somewhere that they are hiding. Part of the deal struck by the Liberals and NDP creates a new executive committee of the government. This secret committee is made up of NDP and Liberal members, and it excludes the opposition. That is an executive committee of government.

Who is on that executive committee and, again, will the Liberals and the NDP make this agreement public for Canadians and for the House?

• (1425)

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is every opportunity for us to all work together. I think that is exactly the spirit that was expected after the last election. Canadians wanted to see stability. They wanted to see results. They wanted to see us focus on getting things done.

As the member will well know, we continue to have work together on a great number of issues, and that opportunity will continue in the future.

What this means is that Parliament can have stability. Yes, we have differences. Some of those differences are very big, but that does not mean that we should put our partisan differences in front of getting the business of the nation done. That is what this deal is about.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, high-tax, high-spend and higher costs for everything is all that this NDP-Liberal government will be delivering for Canadians. This backroom secret deal will cost Canadians an additional \$200 billion, and that is not even counting the April 1 tax hike that is

Oral Questions

coming. Risky social experiments are not what Canadians need. They need their rent paid. They need food in their fridges. They need gas in their tanks.

Will the Prime Minister tell Canadians how much this nightmare of a socialist secret deal will cost Canadians?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was there for three minority governments with Stephen Harper, and what we saw was a complete railroading of the opposition and no interest in working with other parties. Not only that, but over that period of time we also saw the most stagnant, dead economic growth that the country had seen historically. What we see now is Canada leading in economic growth, leading in job creation and leading in climate action. What we are focused on is working with any party that is willing to work with us to get the business of the nation done.

I would suggest to the Conservatives that there is an opportunity to break from their usual mould, which is attack, attack, attack—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this NDP-Liberal Prime Minister has repeatedly demonstrated his lack of respect for Parliament.

We are learning that, behind closed doors, he has created secret parallel committees to manage budgets, House and committee business, and even bills. These secret committees will have the authority to decide how to tax Canadians, how to spend, how to run deficits and how to impose decisions on the provinces.

Will the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister and his coalition Deputy Prime Minister come clean on this deal?

Furthermore, who sits on these infamous secret committees?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a little rich to hear the Conservatives talk about disrespecting Parliament. They wrote the book on how to trash House of Commons committees when they were in government.

We have been very clear. Canadians elected a minority Parliament, which means that members of Parliament are going to work together. I know that offends Conservatives, but that is exactly what we are doing, for the benefit of Canadians.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the last election.

Ninety per cent of Quebecers rejected the NDP and its \$200-billion spending plan in the last election. The ink is not yet dry on the agreement, but already the Premier of Quebec is saying the new NDP-Liberal government will meet with stiff opposition.

How can the Quebec members of the NDP-Liberal government support an agreement like this knowing it will infringe on Quebec's jurisdiction?

Oral Questions

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives spend so much time fighting amongst themselves that they cannot agree on anything. They just do not understand the concept of two parties reaching an agreement.

They think that an agreement between different parties is like climate change: It does not exist.

What we have done is enhance stability so we can deliver results for all Quebecers and all Canadians. The Conservatives' response is incomprehensible.

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INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec will not let the NDP-Liberal coalition weaken its powers and its ability to make its own decisions as a nation.

All of the parties in the Quebec National Assembly agree on this. Quebec has jurisdiction over issues such as health care, housing and child care.

The Premier of Quebec said, "The Liberal Party and the NDP, two highly centralist parties, want to impose [their vision] on all the provinces. They will fail."

Why is the NDP-Liberal coalition choosing to bicker instead of working together respectfully?

• (1430)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we were looking to bicker, we would ask the Bloc Québécois for some pointers. They are the experts on bickering.

I understand the Bloc Québécois's frustration. We were elected to Parliament to work together and advance the interests of all Canadians on very important matters such as public health care and housing.

That is exactly what we will do, while, of course, respecting provincial jurisdictions. I do that every day in my work as a minister.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when a person is the only one who is right, it is inevitably because that person is wrong.

I will cite the Quebec government again: A big chunk of our revenue goes into federal taxes. That money belongs to us. We are entitled to that money, but it will be without conditions, and we will use it based on our needs.

That is what the Liberals and the orange farm team always forget. It is not their money, it is Quebecers' money. It belongs to them, it is under their jurisdiction.

Knowing that, will they provide for the right to withdraw with full compensation and no conditions?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to bickering, they are the world champions. They are the champions.

How can we ask those who come to the House looking to bicker to understand that people might want to work together? They will never understand.

When we decide to sit down together and work on social housing, it is good for Quebec. Fighting climate change is good for Quebec. Securing better conditions for workers is good for Quebec. Sadly, these things are bad for the Bloc Québécois.

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[English]

TAXATION

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, costs keep going up for housing, gas and groceries, and Canadians are struggling. People are hurting while the ultrarich continue to get richer. Yesterday, the members of the House voted on a proposed tax on the excess profits of oil companies, big box stores and banks that are getting richer off the backs of Canadians.

When will the government take leadership and tax those we need to tax and stop taxing Canadians?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, building a fairer and more inclusive economy that works for all Canadians has been a central focus for our government since we first took office, and we appreciate the NDP's intent behind this opposition day motion. However, let us remember our record on supporting the middle class: providing more pandemic supports for Canadians and businesses with Bill C-2, stopping the Canada child benefit from going to millionaires in order to send more money to nine out of 10 families and investments to combat international tax measures. We will keep focusing on affordability.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a lot of people are struggling. People are being robbed blind at the pumps while the big oil companies are making record profits. Families are being forced to shell out more and more for fruits, vegetables, meat, and all their other groceries, while CEOs are raking in the millions.

It is time for the ultrarich to pay their fair share so that that money can be used to help those who are struggling to pay their bills. When will the Liberals impose a 3% tax on the excess profits of the people who are getting rich off the backs of Canadians?

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

Building a fairer and more rational country for Canadians is at the heart of the federal government's mandate.

We recognize the spirit of the motion that the NDP put forward yesterday. However, it is important to note the progress we have made in making life more affordable for Canadians. We increased support through the Canada child benefit, we raised taxes on the wealthy, and we boosted investments in the Canada Revenue Agency.

On this side of the House, we are going to continue to make life affordable for Canadians.

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● (1435)
[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the end of 2021, Canadian home prices were 19% above the borrowing capacity of medium-income households. By summer 2022, it is expected to reach a level that is 38% higher than what most borrowers can afford. This is despite the fact that the government has earmarked \$72 billion for housing.

When there are no real outcomes we can point to except an affordability crisis, why is the NDP-Liberal government intent on spending Canadians into oblivion?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party in the House faces a leadership problem. It does not even have the term “affordable housing” in its plans. The Conservatives vote against every measure that comes before the House to enable Canadians to access homes.

I hope the hon. member talks to his colleague from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, who said that our government should “pull back” from the national housing strategy. That same member said that we should stop the first-time homebuyer incentive. How dare they talk about home ownership when they want us to pull back from those measures?

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the last two weeks, B.C. crab fishermen off Tofino had 50% of their quota expropriated and given to others without compensation. Maritime elver fishermen had their quota expropriated and given away without compensation last week. The NDP-Liberal marriage ceremony is over and the Tofino honeymoon is on, but it is the fishermen who are being hurt by the consummation of this marriage.

Will the Liberals listen to the NDP-government member for Courtenay—Alberni, who called on his government to fairly compensate fishermen for this expropriation?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Nuuchah-nulth nations are working collaboratively with our government and we are advancing reconciliation with them, recognizing their inherent right to fish, as it is with the moderate livelihood rights of nations with respect to the elver. We are working with industry to negotiate

solutions that are acceptable to all parties as we move forward with reconciliation obligations.

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TAXATION

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Conservatives came to Parliament to talk about giving Canadians a break from record-high gas prices. Yesterday, the Prime Minister came to Parliament to talk about giving himself a break thanks to a backroom deal with the NDP. A GST cut at the pumps would help millions of Canadians struggling with the highest inflation levels in 30 years.

As every member of Parliament is hearing calls from constituents who want a break, will the Prime Minister allow a free vote for his MPs, and if so, will he extend the courtesy to his coalition partners in the NDP?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I filled up at the pump last week and I understand the situation that Canadians are facing. As my colleague knows, the rising prices at the pumps are due to the tragic situation unfolding in Ukraine.

The problem with the Conservative plan is that it would not work. There is no guarantee that Canadians would see a reduction at the pumps. There is nothing to prevent gas companies from absorbing that cost. While the other side is fighting among itself to pick a leader, we are going to focus on affordability for Canadians.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Putin's war machine is funded by Russian oil and gas production and exports. Ukrainians are suffering as a result. The NDP-Liberal agreement includes an ominous line about phasing out public financing for Canada's energy sector. This is music to Putin's ears.

Will the NDP-Liberal government support the expansion of Canada's ethical and environmentally responsible energy so it can replace Putin's oil and gas around the world?

● (1440)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, we have announced that the Government of Canada will ban crude oil imports from Russia until further notice. She also knows that according to the Canada Energy Regulator, over the last couple of years Canada has imported very little crude oil from Russia.

We also realize the impact this is having around the world. We are working with our counterparts. We will do what we need to do to ensure that Canadians are protected and that we support the people of Ukraine.

*Oral Questions***THE ECONOMY**

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax is a punitive, ineffective and unnecessary tax that disproportionately hurts rural and small town Canadians, including seniors. Whether it is the rising costs of living, soaring inflation, interest rate hikes, two dollars for a litre of gasoline or the average home cost doubling, Canadians are feeling the pain and are needing relief now.

With the new NDP-Liberal government cooked up in the back rooms, how much more pain can Canadians expect at the pumps and grocery stores and in their pocketbooks?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know that putting a price on carbon is one of the most effective ways to reduce emissions. If they will not take it from the Parliamentary Budget Officer or the International Monetary Fund, maybe—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I will let the minister restart.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Thank you kindly, Mr. Speaker.

As we all know, putting a price on carbon is one of the most effective ways of fighting climate change. If the Conservatives will not take it from the Parliamentary Budget Officer or the International Monetary Fund, maybe they will take it from the Conservative member for New Brunswick Southwest, who asked his own province to implement the federal pricing system.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the new NDP-Liberal government gives us plenty of reasons to worry, especially about the implementation of Canada's next four budgets.

Canadians are having a hard time figuring out everything they will have to do day to day to make ends meet.

Can the Prime Minister tell us if the new NDP-Liberal government's new colours, orange and red, are an accurate representation of what Canadians are about to go through: hell?

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

Let us look at the facts. We on this side of the House have recovered 112% of the three million jobs lost during the global pandemic. We introduced the child care benefits to help Canadian families. We increased support for seniors. We increased the Canada child benefit.

While the Conservatives are busy fighting over who they should pick to lead them, we will focus on ensuring affordability for all Canadians.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec government tabled what will be seen as a pot-stirring budget yesterday, in which it announced an anticipated shortfall of about \$6 bil-

lion a year in health care because the federal government refuses to co-operate.

Some will call it bickering, but it was simply reiterating the same message that all the provinces have been sending to Ottawa for the past two years, namely that health transfers must be increased to cover 35% of costs, with no strings attached. That is what all the premiers of Quebec and the provinces want, and they are demanding negotiations.

Since the government found time to negotiate with the NDP, will it find time to negotiate with the premiers?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to answer this question.

This gives me the opportunity to remind the House of the \$72 billion we invested during the COVID-19 pandemic to support the health and safety of all Canadians, including, of course, Quebecers, the \$45 billion in Canada health transfers that will begin to flow in just a few days, the \$4 billion announced last year to deal with all kinds of delays, including surgeries and diagnostic tests, as well as the \$5 billion invested in recent years.

If anyone has more questions, I have more answers.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is unanimous. Everyone is asking for increased health transfers with no strings attached.

Quebec and the provinces, whether Liberal, NDP or Conservative, are all in favour of increased health transfers. That is called a consensus.

I am sorry to be the one to say it, but when the government goes up against consensus and unanimity, it is the one picking a fight.

My question for the government and its orange farm team is this: Why pick a fight instead of joining the consensus and increasing health transfers with no strings attached?

• (1445)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc is calling for transfers, and we are sending them.

In the last budget, we announced \$3 billion to support the health and dignity of our seniors in long-term care centres in Quebec, \$1 billion to help the provinces and territories implement vaccination programs over the past few months, and another \$300 million to help pay for the vaccine passport system that they used quite successfully over the past few months.

If I may, I will provide more answers afterward.

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two taxes are increasing on April 1: the excise tax and the carbon tax. The carbon tax increase will basically increase the cost of anything that is shipped or heated. Both will add to the 5.7% inflation. People cannot keep up, yet yesterday, the associate finance minister said that a temporary pause on taxes would not help Canadians at the pumps.

As other jurisdictions have done, will the NDP–Liberal Prime Minister have some empathy for Canadian families and small businesses, do the math, and cancel the April Fool's Day carbon tax increase?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand the affordability challenge that Canadians are facing. Let us remember that inflation is a global phenomenon and that energy prices, supply shocks and the war on Ukraine are causing prices to rise. On this side of the House, we will keep focusing on affordability.

Without our fiscal prudence, Canada's GDP would have declined by a further eight points, the unemployment rate would have risen by another 3.2 percentage points, and we would not have recovered over three million jobs, which were lost at the height of the pandemic.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cost-of-living crisis continues to affect the day-to-day life of the people of Beauce. Record inflation is making it difficult for Canadians to make ends meet.

The price of gas in Beauce has now risen to more than \$1.80 a litre. There is no public transit in my riding, so the impact is even greater.

Will this NDP–Liberal government vote with us after question period to eliminate the GST and help Canadians and businesses take back control of their lives?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge my hon. colleague's question. We realize that Canadians are facing rising prices at the pumps. As my colleague knows, energy prices are rising as a result of the tragic war in Ukraine.

We also know that the Conservative plan would not work because there is no guarantee that cutting the GST would result in a direct transfer to Canadians.

On this side of the House, we are going to rely on real solutions, not on half-baked Conservative suggestions.

[English]

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know who is hurting the economy the most. It is the Prime Minister and his Liberal government, and they now have blind support from the NDP. They have spent the most to achieve the least and have no intention of balancing the budget.

Oral Questions

Since the government was first elected, our great country has gradually lost its wealth and Canada's middle class is shrinking. Now its failure to control spending has driven the cost of living to record heights. When will the NDP–Liberal government give Canadians a break and cancel the planned taxes on April 1?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us set forth some facts. There was \$511 billion invested in Canadians during the height of the pandemic, and more than three million jobs have been recovered since the height of the pandemic.

The inflation that we are experiencing is a global phenomenon. We will keep focusing on affordability. While the Conservatives fight among themselves to pick a leader, we are going to focus on Canadians and putting more money in their pockets.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is presiding over Canada's highest inflation rate in a generation, which has been fuelled by structural deficits that were baked in before COVID, out-of-control spending, monetary expansion, and an ever-increasing carbon tax.

The Bank of Canada recently confirmed that the carbon tax alone is responsible for driving up inflation by nearly half a per cent. Will the NDP–Liberal government commit today to cancelling this year's carbon tax increase and give consumers a break?

• (1450)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, speaking of giving Canadians a break, let us talk about provinces where carbon pricing is being applied by the federal government. In Ontario, households will receive \$745. In Manitoba, they will receive \$830. In Saskatchewan it will be \$1,100, and it will be almost as much in Alberta.

Carbon pricing is working for Canadians to reduce emissions. The Conservatives have no plan whatsoever to fight climate change.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over 3.6 million people have fled Putin's destruction in Ukraine. They are desperately trying to unite with friends and family, and find safety, including here in Canada. Even though older identity documents are supposed to be recognized in the fast-track visa process, Ukrainians with an older internal passport are unable to complete the government's online application process. My constituent is having a hard time getting a visa for his 83-year-old mother.

Will the minister take swift action to ensure older identity documents are recognized through the government's online emergency visa application process?

Oral Questions

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her sincere concern for the well-being of those who are fleeing the unimaginable circumstances in Ukraine.

We have now seen more than 10,000 Ukrainians arrive in Canada since the beginning of this calendar year, and we are going to continue to do more to promote and facilitate the safe transport of people to Canada as quickly as possible. With respect to outdated travel documents, we contemplated this possibility during the program design, and we are working to issue single journey travel documents for those who do not have a valid passport.

I will be pleased to continue to work with any member of this House who identifies problems along the way because, as this system develops for the first time, we want to make sure it continues to operate smoothly to welcome as many people here as quickly as possible.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Ukrainians are fleeing horrific attacks in their country and they are vulnerable. They are seniors. They are mothers with children. The open work permit will not help these people because they may not be able to work. Mothers will need access to day care, and they will need money to pay for it. In many cases, they may not want to leave their children, who have been deeply traumatized.

Canada must provide air and ground transportation to help Ukrainians get to Canada and then support them when they are here. This is urgent. Will the minister commit immediately to financial support for Ukrainians when they arrive in Canada?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her advocacy for the well-being of those fleeing Ukraine. With respect to her point regarding the open work permit, I would like to point out that nearly 80% of those who have applied to come through the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel have also applied for the open work permit, which we have made them eligible for.

With respect to supports for people to get here and once they land, we are working right now with non-profit partners, private sector donors and airlines to sort out some of the very issues she raised in her question. We are working around the clock across ministries, with partners, with provincial jurisdictions, and on the ground in Canadian communities, so we can maximize the extraordinary goodwill we are seeing coming from Canadians who want to do their part.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, rising inflation is presenting real challenges for my constituents in Scarborough Centre, especially seniors on fixed incomes and families with young children already challenged by high housing prices. The rising cost of groceries and other daily necessities is making it harder for families to put healthy and nutritious food on the table for their children.

Could the Associate Minister of Finance please tell us what the government is doing to help families that are having to make difficult choices between healthy food and paying rent?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Scarborough Centre for her exceptional work on this file. Thanks to the historic investments in budget 2021, and thanks to the incredible work of the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, we now have early learning and child care agreements with nine provinces and three territories.

This means that across the country Canadians are already saving over \$5,000 a year. These are savings for families in B.C., Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, and my own province of Alberta. We continue to work hard every day to make high-quality child care affordable for all Canadians.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians who choose to join Ukraine's foreign legion would do so at great risk to themselves. They should not have to worry about being prosecuted in Canada. According to the Foreign Enlistment Act, it is against the law for a Canadian to fight against a friendly foreign state, but the act contains no definition or list regarding who is a friendly foreign state.

Could the Attorney General of Canada clearly state that, for the purposes of this act, Russia is not considered a friendly foreign state?

• (1455)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously we know Ukraine is at war and that we need to make sure we help Ukraine defend itself.

Now, I have been clear, and the travel advisory on Canada's website is clear, that we need to make sure that, if people are in Ukraine, they need to shelter. At the same time, we have been clear since February 1 that, should Canadians be in Ukraine, they should be leaving the country. We have been clear also that Canadians should not go to Ukraine.

That being said, we know this is a personal choice on the part of many Canadians, and I look forward to working with my colleague on this issue.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I hope we will get some clarity at some point on that specific question.

A defining challenge for democracies in many parts of the world is energy security. Fuelling democracy and protecting the international rules-based order requires Canada to step up and do our part to help our partners kick Putin's gas out of their supply chains.

Does the NDP-Liberal government recognize that supplying energy to fellow democracies is critical for global security?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the current situation in Ukraine underscores the importance of energy security of our allies in Europe and around the world. Our country is in a secure position in terms of energy supply, and as Europe works to address the geopolitical and social economic challenges presented by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we are considering all measures to preserve energy supply chains in Canada, and where possible, worldwide.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the operations committee, Public Works admitted that the government might delay the selection of a replacement fighter jet for an additional 12 months, because apparently six years' delay is not enough.

When we asked Public Works if it had received any direction from the Liberal-NDP government to speed up the process in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the answer was a simple nope.

What is the government's plan for our air force in this time of crisis, to go shopping on eBay for more gently used CF-18s?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been strong and consistent in delivering on its promise to replace Canada's existing fighter jet fleet through an open, fair and transparent process. We are delivering real progress and purchasing 88 advanced fighter jets for our Canadian military. This is a rigorous assessment process.

We are going to continue to support the Royal Canadian Air Force in its efforts to keep Canadians safe, with equipment that meets its standards, and we are going to do this in a very responsible way.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister likes to say that Canada is back, but last week I was in Poland at the Ukrainian border and Canada was nowhere to be found.

Thousands of Ukrainian refugees are flooding through border towns like Medyka, where they are given humanitarian aid from around the world, including from countries as small as Uzbekistan. Other nations are doing their part, but Canada has almost no presence on the ground. The only maple leaf one could find was the one on my jacket.

Why is the Liberal-NDP government offering no visible support to the Ukrainian people in their time of need?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of International Development and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I respectfully disagree with the member. In fact, I and other members were actually on the

ground as well, where I visited Poland, Moldova, Romania and other countries involved.

In fact, we not only have a team on the ground coordinating with the U.S.A., the EU and the United Nations, we have been having daily conversations to make sure humanitarian support is getting to the right people.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for nearly four weeks, the Bloc Québécois has been co-operating with the government to help welcome Ukrainian refugees, but now we are fed up.

It is unacceptable that the minister still has not chartered any flights to bring refugee families here. Air Transat has volunteered to help and is just waiting for the green light from the minister. There are other airlines that were given multi-billion-dollar bailouts by the government. The minister needs to ask them to do their part.

Will he finally pull up his socks and start airlifting refugees out this week?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada will provide a safe haven for those who are fleeing Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Canada has welcomed nearly 10,000 Ukrainians since January. Last week, we launched the new Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel to make it easier for Ukrainians to safely come to Canada.

● (1500)

[English]

We are going to continue to work not only to give them permission to apply to Canada but also to do what we can to facilitate their arrival. We are having conversations in real time with private sector players, provinces and territories, and others who could facilitate their arrival in Canada as quickly as possible.

I am going to continue my work on this file until we see additional Ukrainians come, beyond the 10,000 who have already arrived.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that answer is no longer acceptable. Although we are used to hearing hollow answers from the minister in the House, hollow answers are unacceptable to the Ukrainian women and children trapped in Poland without a penny to their names.

Oral Questions

The minister has no right to tell refugees that Canada will help them, only to turn around and say that they need to make their own arrangements to get here. When will the government sign an agreement with the airlines? When?

[English]

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would dare suggest that it is not a hollow answer to the 10,000 Ukrainians who are already in Canada or the tens of thousands more who have applied or who will be welcomed to Canada in the future.

We are having these conversations in real time, including with airlines, including with provinces and territories, including with private sector contributors, including with service providers on the ground. We will work every day to do everything we can to help the people who are fleeing this war. It is the just and honourable thing to do when we are dealing with such a war of aggression.

Canada will play its part, including by welcoming as many Ukrainians who are fleeing this war of aggression as possible.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is so caught up in its new secret alliance with the NDP that it is forgetting to lift public health measures, as the other G7 countries are doing. Being vigilant does not mean being stubborn and inflexible.

When will the NDP-Liberal government reassess the measures still in place at the federal level?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to thank the 30 million Canadians who got vaccinated last year, when thousands of health care workers administered 81 million doses to people who made the effort to go out and get vaccinated to protect everyone around them. We should be thanking them every day.

We would love to declare that COVID-19 is over, like some Conservative members are doing today by choosing not to wear a mask, but it is not up to politicians to decide when COVID-19 is over.

[English]

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a tale of two governments. Provincial governments use real science to make decisions and have lifted their COVID mandates, but here in Ottawa, the NDP-Liberal government relies on political science and refuses to end COVID mandates, making some Canadians second-class citizens. These Canadians cannot fly, cross an international border or keep their jobs in the military simply because they do not want a voluntary vaccine.

When will the NDP-Liberal government follow the lead of the provincial governments, listen to the science and end the federal COVID mandates?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I give congratulations and thanks to Canadians. Let me point to one more number: 135,000. That is the number of avoidable deaths

that we saw in the United States over the last few months. They would have been avoided if Americans had done as well as we did in Canada, which is to vaccinate everywhere. There were 135,000 people who died in the U.S. because of not being vaccinated as we did in Canada.

It is good to again signal our gratefulness to all those Canadians who did the right thing.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. O'Hearn is a 79-year-old senior living in Hastings—Lennox and Addington. He desperately wants to visit his grandchildren in the U.S., but there is a problem. He does not have a computer, a cellphone or an email address. He has no ability to comply with the Canada Border Services Agency's ArriveCAN requirement.

Why is the NDP-Liberal government not supporting fully vaccinated Canadians like Mr. O'Hearn and thousands of other Canadians?

• (1505)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since I like numbers and since I believe the opposition also likes science and numbers, let me quote two more: 1,600 and \$4 billion. The fact that we had vaccination mandates at both federal and provincial levels in the last few months made Canadians avoid 1,600 deaths. There are 1,600 people who are now alive, living with their families, enjoying time with their friends, working and just living, and \$4 billion of costs were averted because of that.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I would like to hear the answers as well.

The hon. member for Sudbury.

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[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands how important it is to support our young people early in their careers. This is especially true when it comes to our next generation of farmers.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food update us on what the government is doing to support knowledge transfer and engage the youth who will shape the future of agriculture?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for working so tirelessly in her riding.

The next generation of farmers will play a critical role in the sector's prosperity, and it is very important that we support them. I am pleased to say that yesterday, we announced the newest group of talented young people who will be participating in the next gen agriculture mentorship program in Saskatchewan. Young Canadians are the ones who will shape the future of agriculture. We all benefit from having them learn from seasoned mentors. With the next gen program, our government is supporting knowledge transfer to get the next generation of farmers on the right track.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last fall, terror struck my community of Vanderhoof. A lone gunman hunted and opened fire on the RCMP. He unloaded over 20 rounds into our detachment. The mental and emotional trauma of that day still remains.

These are men and women from across all backgrounds who believe in our country and our laws so much that they put their lives in jeopardy each and every day, and yet, unbelievably, to this day, five months later, shamefully, no one from the federal government and no one from the Minister of Public Safety has reached out to see if they are okay.

Could the Prime Minister please comment and tell us why he refuses and ignores our community?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend to the hon. member my condolences and those of every member in this House. We thank the RCMP members who go to work every day to protect Canadians and keep us safe.

No one should go work and not expect to come home safely. I appreciate the member's comments in the House today and I will follow up with him.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Kyle Seebach (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal carbon tax is hurting rural Canadians. I hear this every single day.

Laurie, in my riding, says she feels like she is freezing because she has to keep the temperature very low in her home because she cannot afford the cost of propane with the carbon tax on top of it. I am glad the members across think it is so funny that Laurie keeps the temperature so low. It is the kind of answer and response we get from a government that has absolute disdain for people who do not follow its ideological view.

Will the government cancel this increase, or will it tell Laurie to just keep freezing?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the cost of inaction on climate change is enormous. Many members in the Conservative Party stood in this House when there was flooding in B.C. or heat waves,

Oral Questions

saying, "What should we do about climate change?" We are acting on climate change.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Let the minister answer the question.

The hon. Minister of Environment.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, how many members from the Conservative Party stood in this House after the flooding in B.C. and the heat domes that killed so many Canadians and said, "We have to act on climate change"?

This is exactly what we are doing. In fact, the revenue from pricing pollution will go back to the provinces where the money was raised, 90% to families directly and 10% to businesses, municipalities, schools, hospitals and indigenous communities. Under our plan, eight out of 10 families will have more money in their pockets, no matter what the Conservatives say about it.

* * *

● (1510)

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, labour shortages in agriculture and food processing have caused over \$3 billion in lost sales. In Chatham-Kent—Leamington and right across this country, farmers and food manufacturers use temporary foreign workers when Canadians do not apply to fill these vacancies. The industry asked for an emergency worker program, which builds on existing programs, requires no new spending and no new legislation.

How many more billions will the industry have to lose before this NDP-Liberal government acts?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his question. We have the pleasure of working together on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and we know how important temporary foreign workers are to our farmers in Canada, especially in planting season, which is coming along.

We are working on a solution. We have committed to a trusted employer program. Hopefully we will have some news very shortly.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonaville—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, reducing wait times for veterans has been our government's top priority. We are making progress, but we know that too many veterans still wait too long to have their claims processed by veterans affairs.

Oral Questions

Could the Minister of Veterans Affairs update us on what our government is doing to reduce wait times and provide faster service to Canadian veterans?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is true that our investment of around \$200 million has reduced the backlog by 40%, but we are fully aware that this is not good enough. That is why we have invested another \$140 million to make sure that we have the vital staff in place to make sure that we continue to reduce the backlog.

My colleague is well aware that we invested \$11 billion for programs and services for our veterans. We, as a government, will continue to make sure we serve our veterans properly.

* * *

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over one million people with disabilities live in poverty in Canada, and they feel abandoned by the Liberal government. They face costs like medical expenses, specialized equipment and adaptations to housing that is not universally designed.

They deserve support to live in dignity. In six years, the Liberals have yet to table a bill that would finally deliver the support they need. When will the Liberals table a Canada disability benefit act that lifts Canadians with disabilities out of poverty?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no one should live in poverty, and far too many Canadians with disabilities do. Since 2015, we have taken historic steps towards building a disability-inclusive Canada and we have learned that the lives of persons with disabilities have also been disproportionately impacted by this pandemic.

We are committed to reintroducing legislation to establish a new Canada disability benefit that would address the long-standing financial hardship felt by persons with disabilities. I look forward to working with the member opposite to achieve that goal.

* * *

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, on January 28, the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion announced the government's intention to appoint a special representative on combatting Islamophobia.

Last week, on March 19, Canadians saw yet another attack, this time at a mosque in the GTA. We remember Quebec City. We remember London. Racism is alive and well in Canada, and more must be done to combat it.

Could the minister inform this House when the special representative will be appointed?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we acknowledge the reality of Islamophobia in Canada. That is why we have taken concrete steps, including marking January 29 as the National Day of Remembrance and Action Against Islamophobia and

holding a national summit on Islamophobia. We have provided significant resources to community organizations fighting Islamophobia on the ground.

We are committed to moving forward to appoint a special representative to combat Islamophobia. On this side of the House, I want to reassure the hon. member that we will stand with Muslim Canadians all along the way to make sure that we end Islamophobia once and for all.

The Deputy Speaker: That is all the time we have question period today.

• (1515)

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, it dismays me that I need to stand again and raise a point of order. The Minister of Housing stated again that there was no mention of affordable housing in the Conservative platform from the last election. I am seeking unanimous consent to table that plan and outline that we did have a plan to address affordability.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the member have leave to table it?

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

[Translation]

YEAR OF THE GARDEN

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I think you would find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the House: (a) consider that gardens and gardening contribute to the development of the country, our cities and people's lives with respect to health, quality of life, reconciliation, inclusion and environmental challenges; (b) consider that our public, private and community gardens, as testaments to culture and history, are of great importance in our urban landscapes; and (c) designate 2022 as the Year of the Garden on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Nursery Landscape Association and the centennial of the Canadian ornamental horticulture sector.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

I hear none. The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—TAX REDUCTION ON GASOLINE AND DIESEL

The House resumed from March 22 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 3:16 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 Abbotsford relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1530)

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

(Division No. 40)

YEAS

Members

Aboultiaf	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Benzen	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeschen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ellis	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Ferreri
Findlay	Gallant
Génereux	Genuis
Glada	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	MacKenzie
Maguire	Martel
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	O'Toole
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Perkins	Poilievre
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shipley
Small	Soroka

Steinley
Strahl
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer— 115

Business of Supply

Stewart
Stubbs
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Bérubé	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerville
Bradford	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Champoux
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Gaheer	Garneau
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gill
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lamoureux

Routine Proceedings

Lapointe	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lemire	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
McPherson	Mendès
Miao	Michaud
Miller	Morrice
Morrissey	Murray
Naqvi	Ng
Noormohamed	Normandin
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	Pauzé
Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Plamondon	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Serré
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Singh	Sorbara
Spengemann	Ste-Marie
St-Onge	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thériault	Therrien
Thompson	Trudel
Turnbull	Valdez
Van Bynen	van Koevorden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vignola	Villemure
Virani	Vuong
Weiler	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zuberi — 209	

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

PETITIONS

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table a petition signed by a bunch of my constituents.

The petitioners are calling on the government to take more action on companies working abroad that could be abusing human rights and causing environmental damage. They call on the government to bring about the proper regulatory environment so that we can hold those to account who are doing things like human rights abuses, slave labour and things of that nature, as well as environmental damage.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce a petition that stands to fight climate change, protect human rights and support Canada's most vulnerable.

• (1535)

UKRAINE

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on February 24, 2022, the Russian Federation launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, a peaceful, democratic and sovereign nation that did nothing wrong. In the weeks since, we have witnessed an outpouring of support for Ukraine from Canadians.

Today I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents in Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon calling on the Government of Canada to increase its support to Ukraine, including providing more lethal weapons and protective equipment, urging NATO allies to close the skies over Ukraine and providing the provinces with funding to support Ukrainian refugees who wish to come to Canada. This is the greatest geopolitical crisis of our generation. Canada must step up to the plate.

FIREWORKS

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions.

The first is a petition on behalf of 14,000 Canadians who are concerned about the safety of fireworks in our communities and their environmental, human health and animal welfare impacts. The petitioners note the risk of wildfires, pollution and toxic debris and that fireworks are currently regulated by a patchwork approach across provinces and municipalities. They are calling on the government to explore legislative changes around the use of fireworks to improve community safety and well-being.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting the second petition on behalf of Canadians concerned with Canadian companies contributing to human rights abuses and environmental damage around the world.

The petitioners note that indigenous peoples, women and marginalized groups are essentially under threat of harm. They call upon the House to adopt human rights and environmental due diligence legislation that would require Canadian companies to prevent human rights abuses and environmental damage through their global operations and supply chains.

UKRAINE

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition signed by many Canadians who are appalled by the unlawful and unprovoked war against the Ukrainian people. I share their concern. The petition calls upon the Government of Canada to immediately waive all visa requirements and grant visa-free travel to Ukrainians escaping Putin's war.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to table.

Freedom of conscience is a fundamental right clearly articulated in section 2 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I have the honour to table a petition, signed by hundreds of citizens across Canada, calling on Parliament to protect the conscience rights of medical professionals from coercion or intimidation to provide or refer patients for assisted suicide or euthanasia.

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also have the honour of tabling a petition calling on the government to protect and preserve the application of charitable status rules on a politically and ideologically neutral basis, without discrimination on the basis of political or religious values and without the imposition of another values test, and to affirm the right of Canadians to freedom of expression.

I thank these Canadians for their engagement on these important issues.

FIREARMS

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present today.

The first, signed by a number of Canadians, calls on the Government of Canada to take a stand and empower Canadians to be responsible for their own health and safety by removing the prohibition of sound moderators from the Criminal Code of Canada, to allow the legal acquisition, possession and use of sound moderators on firearms by all licensed firearms users in our country, and to call on the provinces and territories to do likewise.

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition, again signed by folks from across our country, calls upon members of Parliament to do everything in their power to prevent, block, organize against and vote against any effort by the government to revoke the charitable status of pro-life organizations in Canada, as we have seen the government be willing to do.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the final petition is that the undersigned, a number of

Routine Proceedings

Canadians, call upon the Parliament of Canada to enshrine in the Criminal Code the protection of conscience rights for physicians and health care workers from coercion or intimidation to provide or refer for assisted suicide.

I thank all of these Canadians who are passionately engaged in the issues facing our nation today.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today on behalf of Canadians regarding conscience protections for medical professionals.

The petitioners note that, during testimony at the Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying, witnesses stated that the protection of conscience should be included in the government's legislative response to *Carter v. Canada*. Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to enshrine in the Criminal Code the protection of conscience for physicians and health care workers from coercion or intimidation to provide or refer for assisted suicide or euthanasia.

I thank these petitioners for their signatures.

● (1540)

VACCINE MANDATES

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a few petitions to present today.

The first one is signed by Canadians from across the country who are seeking to end the mandates of vaccines, as vaccines should never be used as a political tool to wedge, stigmatize or divide Canadians. The petitioners say they are opposed to the mandates and that no one should have to decide between the jab and their job.

The petitioners are calling upon the House of Commons to end the mandates.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present this petition from Canadians across Canada who are opposed to and want an end to the discriminatory practice of gender-selective abortion. These petitioners recognize that Canadians are opposed to this and think that it should be illegal. The petitioners note that several organizations around the world have recognized the damaging impacts of the absence of girls and that, additionally, Canada's health care professionals recognize that this is a problem as well.

Finally, they are calling on the government to enact legislation to end this discriminatory practice.

Routine Proceedings

AGE VERIFICATION SOFTWARE

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I have is from Canadians across the country who are organized to defend the not-for-profit sector. The petitioners are concerned about vulnerable Canadians who are not adequately protected on social media platforms and from online potential exploitation.

The petitioners are calling for the verification of age on the Internet to prevent exploitation. They are calling for meaningful age verification to prevent vulnerable persons from becoming targeted on the Internet.

The next petition is from hundreds of constituents across Canada. They are concerned about sexually explicit material online and its impact on the well-being of women and girls. They recognize that we cannot say that we believe in preventing sexual violence against women while allowing pornography companies to freely expose our children to violent and explicit sexual imagery day after day, which is a form of child abuse. As such, they note that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires Canada to develop means to protect children from these forms of media that are injurious to their well-being.

The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to enact meaningful age verification.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last petition I have to present today speaks directly to Bill C-230, protection of freedom of conscience act, which was introduced by the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek. This petition comes from Canadians who are concerned about doctors and health care professionals who might be coerced to engage or support euthanasia or MAID. They want conscience rights and second opinions to be protected. The petitioners note that doctors deserve freedom of conscience, and they note how the Canadian Medical Association has confirmed this.

The petitioners are calling on the Parliament to enshrine in the Criminal Code the protection of conscience rights for physicians and health care workers from coercion or intimidation so that they do not have to provide or refer for assisted suicide or euthanasia.

VACCINE MANDATES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to present a number of petitions in the House today.

The first petition was signed by folks here in Ottawa a number of weeks ago. It calls on the House and the government to work to end all COVID-19 mandates. I know that my constituents and many others are heartily in support of this petition.

● (1545)

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling is with respect to conscience rights, and it builds on some of the excellent work done by my colleague from Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek.

It recognizes the attacks we are seeing in certain jurisdictions, such as here in the province of Ontario, on conscience rights and the fact that people are being compelled to refer for or, in an “emergency situation”, provide services that go against their conscience. Our party is firmly committed to the principle that people should not be compelled to participate in, or provide effective referrals for, services that go against their conscience.

The petitioners call upon Parliament and the House to enshrine in the Criminal Code the protection of conscience for physicians and health care workers from coercion or intimidation to provide or refer for assisted suicide or euthanasia.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition is in support of Canada's energy sector. It supports economic and security benefits. It says that the government continues to allow refineries to import foreign oil in spite of a struggling oil and gas industry in Canada that extracts and refines the most ethically sourced oil in the world, ultimately resulting in additional environmental impact due to lower standards for foreign oil extraction, which is not subject to the same rigorous environmental assessments and criteria that we have in Canada.

The petitioners call upon the government to immediately put in place a plan for an east-west energy corridor to replace foreign oil so that Canada's source of oil and crude remains in Canada, serving the dual function of economic stimulus and environmental protection.

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling highlights with great concern a commitment from the Liberal election platform saying that it would deny charitable status to organizations that have convictions about abortion that the Liberal Party views as “dishonest”. It is noted that charitable status rules already contain a prohibition against dishonest behaviour, and this particular targeting of groups based on political views is a form of political discrimination. It is the application of another values test tied to charitable status, and it is the politicization of charitable status. The petitioners note as well that this is similar to the discriminatory values test that the Liberals tried previously to associate with the Canada summer jobs program.

The petitioners are calling on the government to protect Canadians' charter rights to freedom of expression and freedom of opinion without discrimination. They call on the House to protect and preserve the application of charitable status rules on a politically and ideologically neutral basis without discrimination on the basis of political and religious values and without the imposition of another values test, and to affirm the right of Canadians to freedom of expression.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition highlights concerns about the government's decision to allow facilitated suicide within the medical system for those struggling with mental health challenges. The petitioners note that the Canadian Mental Health Association says it "does not believe that mental illnesses are irremediable". They call on the Government of Canada to repeal euthanasia where mental illness is a sole condition, and protect Canadians struggling with mental illness by facilitating treatment and recovery, not death.

VACCINE MANDATES

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have just a couple of petitions to present right now from Canadian citizens.

They are immediately calling for the end of all COVID-19 vaccine mandates implemented by the federal government that regulate federal employees, truckers and travellers. They also call for an end to all COVID-19 mandates and restrictions by any entity.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am also presenting a petition on conscience protection for medical professionals, which is necessary for patients to access their right to a second opinion. The Canadian Medical Association said that 24,000 physicians would be willing to do it, so they should have the opportunity to use their conscience rights.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 306, 309 and 311.

[Text]

Question No. 306—**Mr. John Nater:**

With regard to the decision by Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) to recruit social media influencers to promote the National Shipbuilding Strategy (NSS): (a) how many influencers were sent recruiting requests or similar types of communication by PSPC; (b) what formula or rate is used to determine how much each influencer will receive in compensation for promoting the NSS; (c) what is the total budget for the social media campaign; (d) how many influencers have signed agreements with the government related to the campaign; (e) are the influencers required to have any type of disclaimer on their social media post mentioning that they are being paid by the government, and, if not, why not; (f) what are the start and end dates of the social media campaign; and (g) what are the names and social media handles of the influencers who have signed agreements with PSPC related to the NSS, broken down by platform (Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, etc.)?

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the national shipbuilding strategy, or NSS, is a long-term initia-

Routine Proceedings

tive to renew the fleets of the Royal Canadian Navy and the Canadian Coast Guard, build our marine industry and create sustainable jobs in Canada.

Consistent with a commitment to transparency, PSPC continues to seek opportunities to communicate openly and regularly about this important initiative to make Canadians aware of this important work and also position the sector as an attractive career choice. To this end, PSPC sent an email to 40 individuals, associations and organizations associated with shipbuilding to determine if they would be interested in sharing information about the NSS through their blogs, newsletters, publications and social media channels.

There was no intent to provide any form of compensation as part of this initiative. There is no budget associated with this initiative. There were no agreements associated with this initiative.

All content shared with recipients would be clearly identified as originating from PSPC, as is required by the Government of Canada communications policy. The email was sent as part of ongoing efforts to raise awareness of the NSS.

Question No. 309—**Mr. John Barlow:**

With regard to the ongoing consultations by the Canada Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) about the regulations surrounding the maximum size of canned white potatoes: (a) what are the total resources, including labour, involved in the consultation; (b) what is the overall budget for the consultation; (c) what is the timeline for the consultation and subsequent decision; (d) how many CFIA inspectors are assigned to ensuring that canned potatoes are of the regulated size; (e) how many instances of improperly sized canned Canadian potatoes have been found by CFIA inspectors since January 1, 2018, broken down by month; and (f) what are the details of each instance in (e), including (i) the date, (ii) the summary of violation, (iii) whether the violation involved Canadian or imported canned potatoes, (iv) what penalties were issued to the grower or vendor in violation?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the case of this request, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency received a request from a food business proposing to change the grade standards governing the size of diced potatoes packaged in cans. These standards are incorporated by reference in the safe food for Canadians regulations and are subject to the cabinet directive on regulations, which the CFIA is obligated to follow to ensure that a meaningful consultation is conducted to allow any affected parties to register their comments.

More detail on how the CFIA fulfills this obligation can be found in the CFIA's policy on incorporation by reference at <https://inspection.canada.ca/about-cfia/acts-and-regulations/incorporation-by-reference/cfia-incorporation-by-reference-policy/eng/1450356693608/1450356805085#a8>.

Routine Proceedings

The CFIA has technical experts whose work includes maintenance of all Canadian grade standards, and as such, this consultation was conducted as part of the CFIA's mandated day-to-day activities. In this particular case, the narrow scope of the request did not require additional resources beyond normal maintenance of the grade standards to consider this application.

As I mentioned before, since this was part of the CFIA's day-to-day activities in its fulfillment of the cabinet directive, it did not have an assigned budget.

The public consultation period for this request is 30 days. As is standard practice, the CFIA will publish a "what we heard" report to provide a review of the comments. This stage of the process can vary in length and depends on the number and scope of comments received.

Subsequent decisions will be made following the closure of the consultation. As governed by the CFIA incorporation by reference policy, the CFIA will develop a summary of the comments received during the consultation and publish the summary document online. The summary of comments will contain a section on the CFIA's next steps, which may include proceeding with the proposed modification; revising the proposal, taking into consideration the comments received; or withdrawing the proposal and, if applicable, considering other options.

The CFIA targets its oversight activities to those sectors and regulated parties that represent the greatest risks for food safety, consumer protection, and human, plant and animal health.

While all regulated parties are subject to a base level of inspection oversight, appropriately matching the frequency, level and type of oversight activities helps the agency to efficiently and effectively fulfill its mandate while maintaining confidence that safety outcomes for food, plants and animals are being met. In addition to conducting inspections based on prioritization of risk, inspectors are posted across Canada where needed most. Higher numbers of inspectors are posted in areas with higher concentrations of processing plants. There are also a number of inspection staff positions within the CFIA that are responsible for delivering services for more than one commodity.

Verifying the size of canned diced potatoes is not part of a specific food inspection program. However, the CFIA does have inspectors that are trained to complete grade verification of canned diced potatoes, as required, and this represents a small percentage of the work they do, based on a prioritization of risk-based activities. Oversight activities may also be a result of triggers such as responses to complaints or inspection observations during licence verification activities.

The CFIA has the following number of inspectors available to complete grade verification on canned diced potatoes. In Atlantic Canada, there are no establishments that process canned diced potatoes. In Ontario, there are three inspectors. In Quebec, there are four inspectors, and in the west, there is one inspector.

Since January 1, 2018, there have been no instances of improperly sized canned Canadian potatoes found by CFIA inspectors.

Question No. 311—**Mr. Kelly McCauley:**

With regard to the estimated \$1,235.4 million in overpayments of income benefit payments by the government listed on page 147 of the 2021 Public Accounts of Canada, Volume I: (a) how many Canadians received such overpayments; (b) what is the value of the overpayments which (i) has been forgiven, (ii) has been recovered, (iii) has not yet been recovered, but is expected to be recovered, by the government; (c) of the amount that has been forgiven, what is the value that was forgiven to higher income Canadians; and (d) what is the breakdown of (c) by income bracket, broken down by \$5,000 intervals for higher income Canadians?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, actual over and underpayment amounts recorded are disclosed in note 3 of the audited employment insurance operating account financial statements. These figures have been utilized to answer questions included in this request. They can be found in the supplementary statement, section 4; consolidated accounts as of March 31, volume I; public accounts of Canada 2021, Receiver General for Canada, PSPC, Canada.ca; or at <https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2021/vol1/s4/es-ss-eng.html>.

The amount recorded as overpayments in the financial statements is \$754 million and is based on actuals and estimated accruals. This represents potentially 388,000 claimants.

In accordance with the Employment Insurance Act, no forgiveness may be applied to any amount owing as result of an EI benefit overpayment. Writeoffs are approved pursuant to the debt writeoff regulations. Writeoffs are included in note 3 of the financial statements.

Information on amounts recovered is available as part of note 3 of the audited employment insurance operating account. The reimbursement amount is for all debts that exist, so this includes debt established prior to April 1, 2020, and debt establishment during the fiscal year 2020-21. EI benefit overpayment was \$101.5 million.

Information on amounts that have not yet been recovered but are expected to be recovered is available as part of note 3 of the audited employment insurance operating account. The net benefit overpayment receivable and penalties as of March 31, 2021, is \$408.9 million.

In accordance with the Employment Insurance Act, no forgiveness may be applied to any amount owing as result of an EI benefit overpayment. Writeoffs are approved pursuant to the debt writeoff regulations. Writeoffs are included in note 3 of the financial statements. However, income data is not available. Debt writeoffs are a last resort. Employment and Social Development Canada and the Canada Revenue Agency are taking steps to mitigate the impact of repayment obligations on Canadians, especially the most vulnerable.

More information is available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/about-canada-revenue-agency-cra/when-you-money-collections-cra/benefits-overpayment-recovery.html>.

The payment accuracy information shared in the 2021 public accounts of Canada and included in note 10 of the financial statement represents an estimate of “potential” overpayments or underpayments, not actual established overpayments that are being collected. This note is included in the financial statements to provide users with an overview of the operations of the programs and a measure of accuracy of the benefit payments. Specifically, it should be noted that using a monetary unit sampling, or MUS, methodology, the EI payment accuracy review program, or PAAR, estimates the accuracy of EI benefit payments. The quality services division reviews several hundred files each year to identify undetected errors that could result in possible mispayments, which are either underpayments or overpayments. Based on the sampling method, MUS, and the observance and distribution of the mispayments across the sample, various statistics are generated for the primary goal of testing whether mispayments are below the 5% tolerance limit. A goal of 95% accuracy is set as the service standard.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 305, 307, 308, 310 and 312 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 305—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to overpayments made by the Phoenix pay system: (a) what was the total amount of overpayments made by the system; (b) of the amount in (a), how much (i) has been recovered, (ii) has not yet been recovered; and (c) of the amount not yet recovered, how much has been written off by the government due to (i) the six-year limitation period, (ii) other reasons, broken down by reason?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 307—Mr. Earl Dreshen:

With regard to government contracts with Anderson Insight or its principal, Bruce Anderson, since January 1, 2019, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entities: what are the details of all such contracts, including (i) the date, (ii) the amount, (iii) the description of goods or services, (iv) the time period the contract covers, (v) whether or not the contract was sole-sourced?

(Return tabled)

Points of Order

Question No. 308—Mr. Dave Epp:

With regard to the government's decision to allow Zijin Mining Group to acquire Neo Lithium Corporation: (a) what specific concerns or issues about the transaction did the government consider when reviewing the purchase; and (b) for each concern or issue in (a), why did the government determine that it was not significant enough to stop the transaction?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 310—Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:

With regard to applications received by the government in relation to the relocation to Canada from Afghanistan of interpreters or other individuals who assisted Canadian Armed Forces, and their families: (a) what is the number of applications received from Afghanistan, for relocation to Canada, since August 1, 2021; (b) how many of the applications were prioritized as urgent; (c) how many of the applications are supported by (i) retired Canadian Forces personnel, (ii) other Canadian citizens or permanent residents; (d) how many of the applicants were relocated to Canada, broken down by month since August 1, 2021; and (e) how many staff members at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada have been working full-time on processing these applications, broken down by month, since August 1, 2021?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 312—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to the budgetary loan provided to China in the amount of \$365,714,786, listed on page 307 of the 2021 Public Accounts of Canada, Volume I: (a) what interest rate is China paying on the loan; and (b) what are the terms and length of repayment agreed to by China in relation to the loan?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

STATUS OF OPPOSITION PARTY

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my thoughts on the point of order raised by the House leader of the official opposition regarding the agreement between the Liberal Party and the NDP.

Allow me to reiterate some facts. Yesterday, the Prime Minister's Office and the office of the leader of the New Democratic Party issued the same news release to introduce this agreement. The news releases bore the same titles and were identical. They outlined the two parties' firm commitment to working together. The clear message of these two news releases was that they are making a shared commitment.

Government Orders

The part of the agreement that we have a problem with has to do with the more traditional commitments to provide support during so-called confidence votes in exchange for promoting shared projects to centralize powers. The news release also contains some platitudes and inanities like this one: “The agreement will serve to ensure Parliament continues to function in the interest of Canadians.”

From our perspective, Parliament is functioning properly at this time, and we do not think that Parliament was dysfunctional before the last election, which was the pretext that the Prime Minister used to justify calling the election.

What is worrisome for us are the follow-up actions agreed to by both parties that will effectively muzzle the opposition, both in the House of Commons and in committee. The very nature of this agreement is literally baffling.

In order to ensure that the government and the NDP pursue the same objectives in committee and in the House, the two parties have agreed to hold policy alignment meetings in the respective offices of their party leaders, House leaders and whips. This is quite unusual, and it is also suspiciously similar to the alignment meetings normally held by cabinet. What is more, the agreement creates an internal oversight group that will meet monthly to take stock of shared progress and upcoming issues.

In my view, this internal oversight group will upset the balance between the government's responsibility to be accountable to the House and the essential role of the opposition in holding the government to account in a democracy like Canada.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, what is worrisome is not that there is an agreement between the government and the NDP on votes of confidence, but that this agreement literally limits the opposition's ability to perform its role of holding the government to account.

Bosc and Gagnon's *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states at page 40, “The government's powers in this regard are in theory counterbalanced by its responsibility to the House to account for its actions.”

Does this agreement not create a significant imbalance between the government's power to manage the business of the House and the opposition's responsibility to hold the government to account for its actions?

With this agreement, the NDP's status as an opposition party becomes somewhat uncertain given that, according to the definition given by authors Bosc and Gagnon at page 4, the role of the opposition is to oppose the government. This is hardly the case with this agreement.

The agreement between the government and the NDP goes far beyond so-called confidence votes and specifically seeks to limit the opposition's power to express itself on a subject, namely, by the excessive use of measures to limit debate under the following Standing Orders: Standing Order 56, which enables the government, during Routine Proceedings, to give priority to a motion for which it did not give notice, with majority support; Standing Order 57, which enables the government to move a closure motion

and put an end to debate before all the speakers have had an opportunity to speak; Standing Order 61, which enables the government to move the previous question, thus ending debate by expediting the putting of the question; and Standing Order 78, which enables the government to reduce the time allocated to a debate by moving a time allocation motion.

In closing, we have concerns about another aspect of the agreement between the two parties. The agreement states, “In addition to briefings provided by the public service and ministers on policy matters related to the arrangement, including the budget and legislation, the government will ensure public servants remain available to brief the NDP on other matters.”

I could not make this stuff up. We think that this agreement gives preferential treatment to certain parliamentarians and casts serious doubt on the confidentiality of the upcoming budget.

• (1550)

Given the nature of this agreement, I am sure the Chair will agree that there is major cause for concern about the insidious effects that this agreement between the government and the NDP could have on the essential role of the opposition.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his intervention, which the Chair will take into account before making its decision.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1555)

[English]

ECONOMIC AND FISCAL UPDATE IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2021

The House resumed from March 4 consideration of 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, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to see you in the chair. We have not had the occasion to get to know each other very well. You have a lot of respect in the House, and that comes from colleagues of yours in Nova Scotia and colleagues on both aisles of the House. I wish you well in the role.

I am here to talk about Bill C-8. Bill C-8, as we know, would implement certain critical components of the economic and fiscal update that was tabled in December 2021. The government has made clear that this bill is a fundamental priority. I see that our colleagues in the House of Commons have looked at it in detail at the finance committee level and we are now at report stage.

I will take an opportunity here to offer my thoughts. There are so many aspects to the bill; it is quite detailed. However, I think it is best to focus on those areas that speak to concerns that my constituents have had over the pandemic, because the bill is entirely focused on the pandemic and the response to it. I will speak to it in that regard.

Before I do, let me reflect on the experience of the past two years, if I could, in a very brief way. There are many lessons to be learned. There is a lot of analysis that has been done and is yet to be completed. That will be left to historians, among others, to put together. When the history of the experience of COVID-19 is written, we will see a fundamental question at the centre of it: What is the role of government in everyday lives? What is the role of government when emergency strikes, when a crisis hits? That is exactly what COVID-19 represents.

There is a view of governing that was quite popular prior to the pandemic, a current of thought or an ideology, if one likes. It is libertarianism, which counsels that a government's role should be limited at best. Governments should provide for a military, a police force, only basic taxation and the maintenance of roads and other infrastructure. Apart from that, they should get out of the way and let people, as the ideology explains, thrive on their own and let individuals be exactly that, individuals. It offers a very precise understanding of individual rights, but at the same time a very limited understanding of individual rights.

That ideology has been called into question. Some in the House will still embrace it, no doubt, namely my friends and colleagues in the Conservative Party. However, I do not think the ideas of libertarianism stand the test of the pandemic. In fact, what we have seen is an approach to crisis and emergency that makes clear the important and fundamental role that government can and must play in response to crises such as COVID-19. There is no doubt the future will hold other crises. There could be other pandemics in the future. We hope not, but it is very possible. Other crises are bound to strike, and the experience of COVID offers a blueprint of what government can do in response to such situations.

In my community of London, Ontario, one of the larger cities in the country, people rallied around one another. They deserve tremendous credit for the way they came together to address the problem of COVID, with neighbours reaching out to neighbours and people who had never even met making sure that their loved ones were taken care of. I am thinking of seniors, for example, who did not have the opportunity, as it would have been dangerous for them to go out, to get groceries and other necessities. They had neighbours whom they had never met stand up for them and do what was needed. That was an example during the pandemic of unity and of people standing up for one another and with one another.

At the same time, we saw governments at all levels step up. In the case of the federal government, a number of emergency programs were introduced so that people could get by and businesses could continue to exist. This is not speculation on my part.

• (1600)

The former governor of the Bank of Canada, Stephen Poloz, came to the finance committee a number of times. He has made very clear publicly since he left his role, and certainly when he held it, that had it not been for the emergency programs the government introduced, specifically the Canada emergency response benefit, the wage subsidy and the Canada emergency business account, or the CEBA, which provided substantial loans for businesses, the pandemic itself would have overwhelmed Canadian society and the economy. We may well have seen bread lines.

Government Orders

I put the question to the former governor about whether it would have been possible to see bread lines in Canadian communities such as London had it not been for those emergency programs, and he agreed. I invite colleagues to go back and look at what he said then and what he is saying now.

The government has a fundamental role to play, and Bill C-8 speaks to that. As far as Bill C-8 is concerned, there are a number of critical aspects relating to the pandemic. I am only going to speak about three.

First of all, there is the COVID-19 proof of vaccination fund. This would allocate funding for provinces and territories to implement proof of vaccination systems. Funding would go toward helping to pay for the establishment of proof-of-vaccination credential programs established by provinces and territories and also the issuing of proof of vaccination credentials to residents. There is \$300 million allocated for this purpose if the bill passes, and I think it will. It certainly has the support of this side of the House. There is not a member, I think, who does not recognize the importance of helping provinces in this way, because they have also shouldered the burden. We have been there time and again to work with them on important programs such as the one I just mentioned.

Second, there is the safe return to class fund. As we remember, this was originally a \$2-billion fund to help ensure the safe return to school. Under Bill C-8, a further \$100 million would top up this fund to help with ventilation in classrooms, for example, for better air filtration for kids in schools. This is of fundamental importance. Another lesson of the pandemic is that schools, among other institutions, were not well enough equipped to deal with the emergency that COVID-19 spelled, so this funding would go to that very purpose.

Let me finally mention that the bill would allocate funding for helping with rapid test costs. Originally, we saw \$1.72 billion allocated from the federal government to provinces so rapid tests could, first of all, be procured but also distributed, which is fundamental in dealing with COVID-19. Of course, rapid tests do not provide the answer, but they are a tool in the tool box as far as the pandemic is concerned. This is in addition to the \$900 million that was already allocated for this purpose.

I will revise what I said. There is \$1.72 billion in Bill C-8 for this purpose on top of the \$900 million I just mentioned that was already sent to the provinces for this reason.

The point is that COVID-19 itself changed Canadian society. Its effects continue to be felt. Its effects will continue to be felt for years to come. We need to learn about that and will continue to analyze that, but also think deeply about the role of government in everyday life as we continue to deal with and grapple with the impact the pandemic had on each and every one of us.

I look forward to questions.

Government Orders

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in this bill, the Liberals had the opportunity to make life more affordable for Canadians, but instead they are continuing to let the big companies, and the people at the very top, profit from the pandemic without actually paying their fair share.

Why is there nothing in this bill to close the tax loopholes or offshore tax havens? Why do the Liberals continue to refuse to make the richest pay their fair share?

• (1605)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, I would just point to the fact that it was this government that cut taxes for the middle class, which is something we did not see during the era of Reaganomics practised by the Harper Conservatives. It was this government that introduced the Canada child benefit, which is something that has lifted hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty.

It is this government that has put forward a meaningful agenda of tax fairness, and one that will be continued, as we saw yesterday. We will work with our colleagues in the opposition, and namely our colleagues in the NDP. The agenda will certainly, I hope at least, galvanize support throughout the House because we do need greater tax fairness in this country. This government is absolutely committed to that outcome.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was very struck by the tough question from the NDP to the government. It seems like there is some trouble in paradise already between the NDP and the Liberals here, because the NDP signed an agreement to support the government's agenda and now it is already trying to say that the government is not good enough. Maybe this is a harbinger of things to come.

I note, as well, that the member just claimed that the Liberals introduced the idea of the Canada child benefit. Let us remember that, actually, it was Conservatives who introduced the idea of giving money directly to parents for child care. Liberals said they could not give money to parents, as they would just spend it on “beer and popcorn”, but the program was so successful that the Liberals have now tried to rename it and claim that it was their idea.

Will the member acknowledge the Conservative proposals? We have tried to work with the government and get it to do better. It was us who pushed for a higher wage subsidy, after all. The government has now spent so much money, and there have been so many scandals in the midst of that spending, and we have seen more debt run up by the Prime Minister in his time in office than in the entirety of Canadian history up until now.

Is the member concerned about the impact on the next generation, in terms of debt, the deficit, higher prices and inflation?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things there. I do not know where to begin. It will not be a surprise that I cannot agree at all with the member.

First of all, he is a graduate, as I understand it at least, of the London School of Economics, so he will understand, I hope, the basics of parliamentary democracy. The governing side sits here and the opposition sits there, so an accord is not a coalition. That is the first thing that needs to be put to the member. I know he is upset

that parties have found a way to work together, but we will do so on behalf of Canadians.

On the point about the child care benefit that was introduced under former prime minister Harper, that was not a means-tested benefit. That benefit sent millions of dollars, in fact, to millionaire families, and that is not meaningful public policy.

As far as the fiscal issues that he raises, first of all, inflation is not in the hands of the federal government to control, but we are helping Canadians deal with costs. Child care would be an example. We will continue to work on pharmacare and now dental care to make sure life is more affordable, and we will present budgets that are absolutely fiscally responsible. I look forward to the coming weeks to see exactly that outcome.

Certainly, gone are the days of cut, cut, cut, when we saw the Harper Conservatives lead the country into an economic mess that this government has helped to clean up.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, speaking of degrees, I know my colleague is a graduate of Queen's University and Western University, so I assume he is capable of calculating a marginal tax rate.

The Liberals keep talking about their middle-class tax cuts, but they do not seem to understand that when the tax rate is lowered by 1.5% for the tax bracket for people making just under \$90,000, it is the rich who benefit.

Does my colleague realize that, with the Liberals' much-vaunted tax cut for the middle class, a household with two \$150,000 incomes received 50 times the tax relief that a family with two \$50,000 incomes got?

[English]

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to getting to know my colleague across the way. I understand that we both went to Queen's, so that is only a good thing. We could build off of that to hopefully help deal with some of our disagreements, and we disagree on this point.

I only point to the example set by Madam Lagarde, who, in her time with the International Monetary Fund, made clear that the fiscal approach taken by this government was absolutely fair and progressive and put in place taxation measures that benefited the middle class, so that everybody could thrive and find a way forward, in terms of equality of opportunity in this country. We are going to continue to pursue such an agenda.

• (1610)

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, members will have to bear with me today as I am not feeling so good. I think my sickness is caused by this new Liberal-socialist-quasi-communist Canada we are going to live in over the next three and a half years.

I want to start my speech by quoting professor Ian Lee from Carleton University. Dr. Lee came to the finance committee on Monday, February 7 of this year, and he brings a wealth of knowledge of banking and public policy. Here is what he said:

[It's] very difficult to put the [inflation] genie back in the bottle unless you take quite draconian measures.

That's not an opinion or a theory. We can look at the 1970s and where it ended up in 1980, and it took interest rates to 20%... it caused the worst recession in North America since the Depression.

Dr. Lee added that:

[Yes], there are solutions to inflation, but they're very, very painful...

Being a student of history, I hope we do not make the same mistakes of the 1970s by pumping cash into the market when it is not necessary. The economy is back to prepandemic levels, and this is what concerns me. When I see over \$70 billion of new spending injected into the economy at a time when it cannot handle it, this is what will add to inflation, and it will drive the rate up.

I get calls from constituents in Miramichi—Grand Lake saying, “Jake, I can't afford my hydro bill.” “Jake, we can't afford bacon any more.” “I'm choosing between my hydro bill and pharmaceuticals.” I get these calls every day. I even got a call from a student who was worried that her bank account was going to be frozen because she donated 20 bucks to the convoy. These are the types of calls that members of Parliament are getting, especially in Miramichi—Grand Lake, which is a very rural area.

We need to distinguish between what we need and what we want, and focus on spending needs only. This way, we can justify spending in Canada, and we can justify our constituents' tax money during this inflation crisis. The Liberals and the NDP talk about the climate crisis every day. It is in every speech. It is the solution to every problem, yet the Liberals do not talk about inflation and the fact that the cost of living in our country is becoming so unaffordable that people cannot afford the basic things they need to survive in this country.

We need to stop putting the cart before the horse. We need to start producing the goods that people need to buy, which will create the cash in our economy, and not go the other way around by just printing more and more cash and then putting it in the economy without increasing our output of product. All that does is make more dollars chase fewer goods. This is a key contributor to inflation, and I can guarantee members that Canadian citizens in the ridings of all the members in this chamber are experiencing inflation.

This is another example of a tax-and-spend Liberal, and now Liberal-NDP coalition, government. The government is going to say, “Hey, look at all the wonderful things we gave you”, but in reality the taxpayers are paying for it. The taxpayers are paying for these things, with interest, and now there is the added cost of inflation.

Government Orders

When the Prime Minister assumed office in 2015, a typical home cost \$435,000. Now, it is over \$868,000. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Prime Minister. He has now doubled the cost of a home in our country. That is what he has done for his constituents, and that is what he has done for all the people in Miramichi—Grand Lake.

• (1615)

Since the start of the pandemic, the government has brought in \$176 billion in new spending, which is totally unrelated to COVID-19. I think it is relevant to bring this up and get it on the record. The majority of the people I speak with do not believe that it could be possible. They say things like they never heard that on the news and there is no way the government could be allowed to do that. They wonder why they have not heard it on TV or somebody has not reported on it. These are the things my constituents are saying.

My constituents in Miramichi—Grand Lake do not want their grocery bill to increase every single time they make a trip to the grocery store. It is not fair to them. It is not economically feasible. The cost of living in this country is crippling Canadians. They are not able to pay for hydro. Their kids cannot leave the basements of their houses when they are in their thirties to get a home in this country.

Chicken is up 6.2%. Beef is up 11.9%. Bacon is up 19.1%. Bread is up 5%. These are all products that can be produced right here at home in Canada. The writing is on the wall. It is time the government took the time to read it. Canadians do not want inflation to skyrocket like it did in the 1970s. “Justinflation” is real, and we are all paying for it every single day.

Earlier this week, I had the opportunity to ask the economist Dr. Dehejia, from Carleton University, about this very topic. He told the committee, “I certainly don't think that our inflation problem is driven by transitory factors. I think when you look at the reality of it, in fact Mr. Robson mentioned correctly that some three-quarters or more of the basket in the CPI has gone up in price. That isn't just because of the war on Ukraine or oil...supply disruptions from the pandemic, those things...at the margin...would be maybe 1% of our current 5.7% are factors that may disappear. But when the money supply is growing at 14%, 20%, it is basically a monetary phenomenon. We're [all] just printing too much money. So I'd say no, it's not transitory.”

This is from a Carleton University professor, and I have quoted two economists today. Inflation is crippling Canadians.

Government Orders

I do not support Bill C-8 and neither does the Conservative Party of Canada. This is why. We want a Canada where we produce more goods, keep costs down, build more houses and do the things that allow Canadians to have a home, contribute, invest locally and be part of their community. We do not want a Canada that is governed by total and outright socialism by the members across the aisle.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member for Miramichi—Grand Lake the following. When we look at the content of Bill C-8, the funds for vaccines, for HVAC systems in schools and businesses, and what we are doing on the housing front to ensure we address the issue of housing affordability, how can the member opposite not support such measures that benefit his constituents and Canadians from coast to coast to coast?

I think it is almost on the realm of irresponsibility for the member opposite and his colleagues to not support measures that support Canadians, such as funds for vaccines and improving schools, as well as to help educators across this country. I would like the member opposite to address that because we have been there for Canadians since the start of the pandemic. We will continue to have their backs, and the backs of businesses owners, from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Jake Stewart: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, on Monday, at committee, said that there was no housing crisis in Canada and that we had a healthy supply and a healthy housing market. This is the type of hypocrisy that I hear in committee.

I will remind the member of this: He mentioned vaccines. I got an email yesterday from a woman who had to purchase so many mandatory masks during the mandate, which was put in place from across the aisle, and she could not claim them on her income tax. Of course, as the national revenue critic, I get all sorts of emails, but here is a guy who is talking about having the backs of Canadians when he has crippled Canadians with mountains of debt, inflation and now hypocrisy.

• (1620)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague spoke about how hard it is for people right now, and I absolutely and totally agree with him. In my riding of Winnipeg Centre, people are struggling to survive.

However, what I find shocking is that he talks about people struggling to survive a pandemic, yet his party wanted to cut CERB payments from workers, even the frontline workers who kept us fed during the pandemic. They also voted against sick time.

There was a motion put forward yesterday to generate revenue and tax billionaires. What did his party do? It voted against it. The member's party seems to vote against anything that helps people and vote for everything that supports their corporate buddies. Does my hon. colleague support lifting corporations up on the backs of people?

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni on a point of order.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, it is already hard to get women to run for politics. To see this kind of behaviour in the House of Commons, the heckling and the absolute assault coming from the Conservative benches, is absolutely appalling. I would like the member who was yelling at her to apologize.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): I thank the hon. member, but his point of order is more a matter of debate.

That said, all members of the House are obviously asked to keep the tone of debate very respectful.

The hon. member for Miramichi—Grand Lake.

[English]

Mr. Jake Stewart: Mr. Speaker, it is a typical day in the House of Commons to have virtue signalling from the socialist and communist parties here.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Jake Stewart: Here is what I will say. I support the development from—

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): I apologize to the hon. member for interrupting him, but the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot is rising on a point of order.

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, the member from the NDP just used language that is absolutely unparliamentary, and I would ask that he retract and apologize for the language that he just used.

You can ask him what that language was, Mr. Speaker. The member for Courtenay—Alberni can repeat the words he just shared with me, and we will see if the Clerk sees that as unparliamentary.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): I understood the intervention by the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

Would the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni like to speak to this point of order?

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, after the heckling directed at my female colleague, I responded. I do apologize. I called him a misogynist pig, and I should not have done that. It was unparliamentary. I ask that my apology be accepted, and I retract those words to him. It was the wrong thing to do, and I will try to keep myself under control in the future.

However, I do ask for decorum here and that we respect people speaking in the House. A woman should feel safe in this work environment. This needs to be a safe workplace.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni having apologized to the House, I consider the matter closed.

I invite the hon. member for Miramichi—Grand Lake to finish his answer.

[English]

Mr. Jake Stewart: Mr. Speaker, we are trying to debate a bill, and we are dealing with virtue signalling and hypocrisy. I will tell members where it is coming from. It is coming from the government that nobody wanted in Canada, the NDP, the party that is now going to be the government with the real government, which was given a minority. Everyone in Canada knows the stink that is on both of them at this moment, because one is worse than the other.

All we get in here is virtue signalling and total hypocrisy on both sides. I have had enough of that. I hope they realize that, every day that I come in here, I am going to do this job. I am going to promote gas and oil. I am going to promote the things that Canadians need to pay for their economy while the rest of them are going to do nothing.

• (1625)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): 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 Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Natural Resources; the hon. member for Yellowhead, The Economy; the hon. member for King—Vaughan, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-8, and not for the first time. I think one of the things to recall about Bill C-8 from the original debate is just how underwhelming it was as a response to the circumstances that the country found itself in at the time of the fall economic statement, and the circumstances that we continue to find ourselves in. I think “underwhelming” is the word to capture what is going on in this bill.

This is a time when we have heard some talk about this already indicating that Canadians are really facing extraordinary pressure with respect to the cost of living. That is very much true in the case of housing. We saw the beginnings of a Liberal attempt to try to address some of those issues in the housing market in this bill with an underused housing tax.

It is our point of view that there are a number of loopholes with this tax that are going to seriously undercut its effectiveness. We do think it is appropriate to try to undertake policy initiatives that will help relieve some of the pressure on the housing market, but there is a lot more that needs to be done.

Government Orders

Other measures in this bill include money for rapid tests and some money to assist provinces in preparing proof of vaccination documents that will be required from Canadians when they travel to other jurisdictions. Those will continue to be a useful tool for travel until worldwide requirements for vaccination no longer apply. We think it makes sense for the federal government to be there, providing some assistance to provinces in preparing that documentation.

We also think it makes sense for the federal government to continue to source rapid tests and distribute them to the provinces or to provide resources to the provinces to be able to source those things themselves for, as much as many public health restrictions have been lifted across the country, the fact is that COVID is still very much here. There is still very much a possibility of it resurging again in various forms. It makes sense for governments be prepared in case that does happen. Rapid tests will be an important tool in that regard.

While this bill is rather underwhelming, we do not think that is a reason for it not to go ahead. In the fall out of having a rather underwhelming bill and an underwhelming fall economic statement, New Democrats have undertaken to try and get the government to do more of what it needs to do to respond to the real needs of Canadians, such as housing, which I mentioned earlier. That is why, in the agreement that was struck between the Liberals and the New Democrats in the House, we talk about changing the definition of affordability in the national housing strategy, which has too often resulted in public funds contributing to building units of housing that actually are not affordable for many of the Canadians who need government intervention to build units that they can see themselves moving into and being able to pay for month to month. We know that is an issue for too many Canadians. We have heard lots of stories.

I shared a story in the House, I believe it was yesterday, of a gentleman who has a job and was living on his own. He is an adult but had to get his teeth fixed. He had to move back in with his parents because he could not afford the cost of it. He had to borrow a lot of money to have his mouth fixed, and that meant that he could not afford to live independently any more and probably not for some time. Those are costs that Canadians are contending with right now.

Yesterday, we saw a Conservative motion that talked about lifting the GST from the price of gas at the pump. I have heard Conservatives today complain about the cost of gas, not only at the pump but also in home heating. As I said yesterday, there is some agreement there in terms of wanting to be able to provide relief for Canadians, which is why I proposed an amendment to their motion to have the GST lifted off home heating.

Government Orders

That something that would apply not just to those getting oil and gas at the pump, but also to a broader range of Canadians. I hazard a guess that although there are many, many Canadians who drive a vehicle every day, there are many more who benefit from home heating. I think that is a larger category. I think that is fair to say. I have not done the research, I will admit, but I think it is probably fair to say there are more Canadians who heat their homes than drive cars. I am guessing, having just survived another Winnipeg winter.

● (1630)

We felt that was a broader-base measure for tax relief that did not only apply to oil and gas and that would have the advantage of having it be harder for the companies that are charging Canadians for the use of that energy to just raise their prices to make up the difference. In many cases, when it comes to the cost of home heating, that is delivered through a utility. There are usually regulations in place that require those companies to go to an independent body to authorize price hikes.

We are here to talk about those kinds of things. We are also here to get action. We are working towards getting the government to change the definition of affordability under the national housing strategy. We have a commitment now from a government that just nine months ago voted against having a dental care plan to moving ahead with a dental care plan, something that is going to make a tangible difference in the lives of Canadians and that is going to help them afford something that is right now beyond reach.

It is likewise with pharmacare. Again, just within the last 12 months or so, the NDP proposed legislation to enshrine the legislative infrastructure we need for a national pharmacare plan to help provide relief for the cost of prescription drugs. Again, my Conservative colleague who just spoke on this bill earlier referenced the cost of prescription drugs and how hard it is to afford them. We have a real idea for how we can make that affordable. It is not just the NDP's idea, but it is something that civil society advocates have done the research on, have been pushing for for a long time and have shown that not only could we extend service and make prescription drugs more affordable for people but that we could actually do it with an overall savings to the taxpayer in the order of about \$4 billion every year.

Parliament is a difficult place on the best of days, particularly minority Parliaments. People sometimes take comfort, and not just the government but even, I daresay, sometimes on opposition benches, in a majority government because there is a sense of how things are going to go and how they are going to unfold. We have our usual mechanisms for trying to call out the government for their shortcomings in a majority. There are more options in a minority Parliament in the Westminster system, but our duty remains the same, which is to hold the government to account, to try to use our position and our power in this place to get the things done that we said we would endeavour to do, and to shine a light on the activities of government to make sure that it is doing those things and it is doing them well.

We have seen many examples, let alone outside of Canada but also within Canada at the provincial levels, of confidence and supply agreements where certain parties, for the sake of some political sta-

bility and the sake of making progress on items they deem important, agree to a certain level of co-operation with the government of the day, which is not at all a relinquishment of their duty as an opposition party to examine the work of government and to hold it to account.

In question period today, we heard New Democrats asking what I think were difficult questions. Certainly by the government's response they were difficult questions. That is the kind of work we are going to continue to do. We heard questions about the government's failure so far to ensure it is getting people out of Ukraine in a serious emergency, and the bureaucratic hurdles that are making it impossible for people to get out of Ukraine and get to the safety of Canada. Those are things that need to be fixed.

We have an agreement to work on some of the things on which we could find common ground with the government of the day. Bill C-8 stands out as an example of why it was so important to be able to develop tools to push the government to do things it is reluctant to do; things it said it would not do, like a dental care plan; things that it has been reluctant to do, like pharmacare; and then some of the things it said it would do but we all know from our experience in this place that those commitments are not sufficient from the government and so other tools are needed in order to get the government to follow through on the things it said it would do.

That is why I am looking forward, and the proof will be in the pudding. I am looking forward to seeing some real, concrete action and initiatives in the next budget that are far more inspiring than what we saw in the fall economic statement and the subsequent Bill C-8.

● (1635)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to see you in the chair.

When we look at Bill C-8, I am a bit surprised by how forward the Conservative Party has been in its opposition to the bill, given the actual content of the bill. For example, it talks about the purchasing of rapid tests, which were in great demand by the provinces back at the beginning of the year. There was an obligation for the federal government to provide these rapid tests. If it were not for the federal government doing it, there would have had to be another level of government. If not that, then it would be people who might not be able to afford rapid tests.

Could the member provide his thoughts on the contents of the bill, which, one would think, the Conservative Party would have been supporting?

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Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, as I had said in so many words, or just about, in my speech, this bill is far more disappointing in its ambition than in its substance. One of the things that is a bit better about this bill, and something that I worked on with members of other opposition parties, the Bloc and the Conservatives, is a provision for better reporting on the money that has been allocated for rapid tests. That is something that we in the NDP thought was important because the bill would authorize a rather major expense. We have heard from the Parliamentary Budget Officer that the government has been late in filing its public accounts. Therefore, we thought that additional financial reporting was warranted, given the size of the expenditure. I also worked with members of the Conservative Party and the Bloc on Bill C-2, a bill that we opposed, to get some assurances that companies who received the new wage subsidy would not be able to pay dividends to their shareholders if the companies were recipients of the wage subsidy.

This is a place where we come to work. We negotiate with various parties to try to get done the things we promised our electors we would do.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not normally do this on my phone. I just got a message from the Liberal Party. It says to thank the member for his work.

I am just wondering if there is any level of discomfort at any level of debt. Obviously, it feels good to spend money. I know the member said, as a social democrat, that spending is important to him. What is the number, the debt-to-GDP ratio, that he feels uncomfortable with? Is it 50%? Is it 80%? Is it 100%, or are we just going to spend ourselves into oblivion?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, any time we are talking about deficits and public debt, we cannot just talk about spending. We also have to talk about revenue. This is something that is always missing from the conversation when Conservatives want to talk about deficits.

This is why the NDP has proposed a wealth tax on fortunes of \$10 million and over. It is why we proposed an excess-profit tax for large corporations that made more profit during the pandemic period than they had in the preceding years. It is why we continue to speak against tax havens. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has estimated Canadians lose \$25 billion in tax revenues every year through these tax haven agreements. I could go on.

Let us talk about appropriate spending. Let us talk about smart investment. Let us talk about balancing the budget, not only by looking at our costs but also looking at the revenues that we have coming in, as any responsible business would do.

• (1640)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the agreement between the Liberals and the NDP is not the only agreement that was negotiated in the dead of night. The 1982 Constitution, which was negotiated in the middle of the night to the detriment of Quebec, clearly states that health is a responsibility of Quebec.

Can my colleague tell me why the NDP is always ready to help everyone? It is even prepared to help the Liberals have a majority.

However, it is never there when it comes to respecting Quebec's jurisdictions or getting the Prime Minister to sit down with the premiers of Quebec and the nine other provinces to arrange health transfers with no strings attached.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may not recall this because I do not think he was elected at the time. However, on pharmacare, in one of our motions in a previous Parliament, the action we were talking about and wanted the government to do was to convene a meeting with the provinces to talk about how to move forward on pharmacare. The Canada Health Act is a long-standing framework under which the federal government has funded health services, and it is not enough. There is a need to increase the health transfer, including health transfers without conditions.

We are far apart from the Bloc on this, but we are not far away from respecting provincial jurisdiction. We just believe that the federal government can continue to play a meaningful convening role and funding role in health care in Canada.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your role. It is wonderful to see you take part in a fine Canadian federal institution such as the Speaker.

I am pleased to rise again to talk about Bill C-8. It is another massive Liberal spending bill, with little oversight and probably little chance of delivering on what they have talked about. It is almost a Liberal pre-engagement gift to our colleagues in the NDP.

To summarize, the fall fiscal update added \$70 billion in new spending and this is spending on top of that. This is \$70 billion, as I mentioned, that does not even include the Liberals' campaign promises, which will be tens of billions more for their election goodies. This is going to add on top of what we saw in the public accounts, the \$1.4 trillion of debt for the Canadian taxpayers. Think about that: \$70 billion more on top of the \$1.4 trillion that has already been added up until now. That does not even include probably \$100 billion to \$200 billion, depending on which discount rate we use, for unfunded public service pension liabilities and hundreds of billions of dollars more in Crown corporation debt that is not accounted for.

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One of the problems I have with Bill C-8, and I have talked about this a lot in the House and in committee, is the lack of proper oversight for the bills and spending. We have heard the previous Treasury Board president admit to committee that he had not been following the rules. We saw it with the WE Charity scandal. The Treasury Board is required to have, for their submissions, an official language analysis. The Treasury Board, under the current government, decided to ignore it and not require an official language analysis, even though it is right in the rules that it is required. They break these rules in order to benefit their friends at the WE Charity, which, of course, was funding members of the Prime Minister's family.

We saw it with the wage subsidy, with the \$100 billion. We asked the President of the Treasury Board if it had gone through the Treasury Board approval process. It had not. This is, again, the problem we have. The Treasury Board rules are not just suggestions. They are not mere guidelines. These are actual rules. The Treasury Board is supposed to be the gatekeeper, the adult in the room at the cabinet meeting to ensure that Canadians are getting value for their taxpayer money.

What did we see? The Treasury Board said they were not going to look at that and that it was more important to get the announcement out than to do its job. Therefore, \$100 billion did not go through Treasury Board approval.

What did we get? We heard about massively profitable companies making out like bandits. We hear the NDP demanding higher taxes on these companies with excess profits, but it is funny that we never hear them going against their colleagues in the Liberal government to end these massive subsidies and this corporate welfare. As long as we are spending, that is okay. They do not care where it is spent.

We saw that with the Liberals. We saw the Thomson family, one of the wealthiest, the second, if not the top, wealthiest family in the country, receive money in the wage subsidy. Companies like Berkshire Hathaway, worth half a trillion dollars in market cap, a company owned by the Oracle of Omaha, got money from taxpayers in the wage subsidy. Then there is Nike and Rogers. Rogers has \$25 billion to do a buyout bid for Shaw Communications, yet it got money from the government. Chinese state-owned banks and airlines received wage subsidy money.

Of course, what would a government handout from the Liberals be without money going to their friends at Irving? It was not enough that they are getting, probably, a \$100-billion contract for the Canadian surface combatants and hundreds and hundreds of millions more for the offshore patrol ships, yet the Liberals are also giving them wage subsidies.

As for the offshore patrol ships, the way shipbuilding works, the first ship is the most expensive, the second one a bit less expensive and so on, as the company learns and improves productivity. The sixth, seventh and eighth ships should be a lot less expensive, yet, for the government, with Irving, the price is going up. The more ships, the more productive they get, but somehow the ships are becoming more expensive. Again, it is just another handout without proper Treasury Board oversight.

• (1645)

We heard of an exclusive ski club with a \$43,000 membership. We hear the government talk a lot about the middle class and those hoping to join the middle class. How many in the middle class can afford \$43,000 for a membership at a ski club? This ski club had \$13 million for a new lodge, paid \$13,000 in taxes and yet got \$1.4 million from the government for the wage subsidy.

Here are some of the other companies. Suncor energy, much as I love energy companies, with a \$31-billion market cap rate, got money. Bell Canada was another. Couche-Tard from Quebec, with a \$45-billion market cap, got money. Lululemon is another. The money was used for share buybacks and executive bonuses.

Unlike our colleagues in the G7 or the OECD that were also offering wage subsidies, we were the only country that did not set up fencing around who got the money. Britain had a program for wage subsidies, but it banned the use of money for share buybacks and executive compensation. Not this government. "Why?", we asked. Well, it did not go through a Treasury Board program. We asked the Auditor General. Her comment was that the government did not set up the fencing even though it knew it would be more expensive and knew that companies would take advantage of that.

The CRA did not have all the information it needed to validate the reasonableness of the applications before issuing payments. Why is that important? The Auditor General stated that \$300 million in the first tranche of the funding went to companies with a high risk of insolvency. He stated and showed that \$2 billion had gone out to companies that had not filed taxes or GST remittances in years. The CRA knows that these companies have a much higher chance of going into bankruptcy. It is one of its leading indicators of companies going into bankruptcy, and yet the government handed out the money without any oversight. The Auditor General's report stated, "We noted that the subsidy was paid to applicants despite their history of penalties for failure to remit and other advance indicators of potential insolvency." This is the Auditor General. This is not a partisan Conservative MP. Again, why was there no oversight?

I will go back to the poor planning. We have been asking for rapid testing since 2020. If members go back to Hansard, they will see many requests from our health critics over the last two years for more money for rapid testing. Those requests fell on deaf ears.

The government will say, “Well, look, there's \$1.7 billion in Bill C-8 for rapid testing, and there is also \$2.3 billion in Bill C-10.” I am sure that is going to come back as well, so it is \$4 billion. “Big deal”, members are probably thinking, “That's great.” However, in the supplementary estimates (C), which are being deemed reported tomorrow, there is also \$4 billion for rapid testing. Therefore, is there \$8 billion for rapid testing, because that is what the government is asking approval for? Well, no, it is not \$8 billion; it is just \$4 billion. The government has basically said that it messed up, so it is going to duplicate the request to Parliament in order to make sure that it has the money. Honestly, one could not run a lemonade stand with such advance planning, yet this government thinks to run the government that way.

Here is the funny thing. The supplementary estimates (C) will be approved tomorrow for \$4 billion, and Bill C-8, which was brought in a couple of months ago, will actually approve the \$1.7 billion after it is already approved in the supplementary estimates. Again, it just goes back to poor planning by the government.

Also, in Bill C-8, the repayment of the CEBA is being extended for six years. We asked in public accounts if there was no provision for bad loan writeoffs. We were told that there is no provision for loan writeoffs for this money, because there is such little chance of any of it, they were saying, being written off, which is wonderful. However, why then is the government extending payback for a couple more years if the government itself is saying that there is almost no chance of any losses? Again, it just goes back to poor planning by this government.

Bill C-8 all around is a poorly written bill and there are a lot of items that are not needed, which is why we are not going to be supporting it.

• (1650)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his respectful decorum in the House and for his speech.

I have concerns about some of the things he said in his speech. Of course, we do not agree on many things, but he talked about the NDP fighting for and getting supports for workers throughout the pandemic, which is something we are proud and honoured to have fought for. We did want more provisions and more guidelines so that big corporations did not potentially take profits and then pay shareholders, and that is something we did rail against.

The Conservatives cannot point to anything they fought for through the pandemic for workers or for people who struggled throughout the pandemic. We heard them yesterday when they voted against our motion to tax big corporations such as big oil to make sure there was revenue for things like a dental program, but we know they do not support a dental program. They actually do not believe that Canadians need a dental program.

Does my colleague not believe that the super-wealthy who profited from the pandemic should be paying more in taxes to pay their

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fair share and contribute to supporting important programs like dental care?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, one thing we do not believe in is supporting the government and the massive corporate welfare that the NDP is backing.

It was the Conservatives who pushed the government to allow people who were working and also on CERB to make up to \$1,000 without getting their CERB clawed back, and we achieved that. It was the Conservatives who first asked for the increase in the wage subsidy from the paltry 10% the Liberals offered, and I will note that it was the Conservatives who were asking for a GST rebate on the massive record high cost of gas, which the Liberals and the NDP voted against.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that the member from across the way would be critical of this government and its spending and accusing it of spending on frivolous things when he is part of the party that was known for buying \$15 glasses of orange juice and building gazebos in individual ministers' ridings.

Nonetheless, what we are hearing continuously from across the way is some kind of notion that the Conservatives get to wipe their hands clean of participating in the spending that has happened over the last two years. This member voted in favour of it through unanimous consent motions time and time again. They then get up in here and try to lecture us for all this spending when they voted for it. They did not even want to debate it before they voted for it. They did not even want to bother standing up in this House to vote for or against it. They just said that they were good with it by unanimous consent.

• (1655)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy the fantasy world put forward by the member for Kingston and the Islands. Of course, if he had bothered reading the public accounts, and I do not think anyone in the government has, he would see that his government gave \$50,000 to a company to come up with a new flavour for an IPA.

He talks about \$15 orange juice. His government gave \$50,000 to a brewery. I ask everyone in this House, if they had \$50,000 to help Canadians, how many would say that we need a new flavour for an IPA? Only the Liberal government would put \$50,000 for an IPA flavour ahead of the needs of regular Canadians.

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Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Edmonton West did a bit of tracing of what looks like double accounting for the same money for the purchase of rapid tests. It looks to me, and in fact there is testimony in the other place by our Auditor General, that the money found in Bill C-10 and found in Bill C-8 is also in the supplementary estimates. He hinted at this. It looks like \$4 billion twice. I am curious to know how we think we account for that and make sure \$4 billion does not get spent twice on the same rapid tests.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is correct. It is a duplicated \$4 billion, and that is my concern. We have only the word of the government that it is not going to get Parliament's approval twice and only spend it once. I do not trust that the government will do that. I would love to have a government member stand in the House today and say that yes, that \$4 billion will lapse and will not be spent.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is pleasure to rise today and take part in this important debate on the economic and fiscal update. I of course listened with great interest and I always learn a lot from the detailed research that my colleague from Edmonton West does before he makes any interventions in this House. It is very important that we have that perspective, and I thank him for it.

Since the start of the pandemic, we have seen record sums of money spent to address a once-in-a-century and a once-in-many-lifetimes event. It is very important to take stock of how the money was spent, and the effect that the spent money will have going forward is incredibly important.

We have heard a lot over the last few days about the federal mandates. While opposition members, members of the public and members of the media have asked the government why it has not aligned its health restrictions with the restrictions that have been guided in all of the provinces by their chief medical officers of health, we have heard a lot about the stats as they relate to health care.

I think that is really important. While the science does tell us in all of the provinces across Canada, because there is only one science, that it is safe to end the vaccine mandates and safe to lift mask mandates, the information that the government points to speaks to hospital capacity and speaks to screening and diagnosis that has not happened as a result of the pandemic.

We have seen, over the last two years, a 20% reduction in cancer screenings. We know that almost half of patients have had cancer screenings and care appointments either cancelled outright or postponed. When that happens, we have to look at another very important statistic, which is that a four-week delay in treatment increases the patient's risk of death by 10%.

We have this tremendous problem in our health care system. Tremendous amounts of money are being spent by the government. As was laid out by the previous speaker, my colleague detailed some of the areas the government prioritized in terms of spending money. What would it look like for diagnosis and treatment if the government prioritized its spending, in partnership with the provinces, on health care?

We are discussing \$70 billion of cash today. It is printed money and borrowed money. Canadians will pay interest on that money, and it will fuel inflation. What do we get for it? The previous speaker, the member for Edmonton West, talked about the government spending \$50,000 on having someone create a new IPA, a new beer flavour. What could we have done in even one hospital with \$50,000? We are talking about a 10% increase in fatalities when treatment is delayed by only four weeks. I think that is a really important frame. We talk about the effect of this spending on Canadians. That is what it could look like if it was directed in a different way.

The government talks about the room it has to borrow and the room it has to spend, but what is it doing for everyday Canadians? If it is not for share buybacks and not for executive bonuses, what is it doing for everyday Canadians? We know the effect of this rapid spending and the pressure that it is adding onto everyday Canadians' budgets because of the inflation that it is fuelling, and people are making impossible choices.

● (1700)

Heating or eating, that is a call I got in my constituency office many times. People cannot afford their home heating bills. They cannot afford the increased grocery bills. Now we have seen, over the last few weeks, that other global pressures, added to the taxes the government has put in place, are pricing Canadians out of even being able to put fuel in their cars to get to work or to take their children to a medical appointment or a recreational activity. It is really hard to see where the priorities are for everyday Canadians when we look at some of the spending we have detailed.

It has been an impossible two years for Canadians. We see the inflationary pressures that are created. We know that it is debt and interest on that debt that will be paid by future generations. In the next couple of weeks, we are going to see increases in taxes again. The skyrocketing prices in every area of life that Canadians have are unsustainable. We know that it is more than one in two Canadians who cannot afford their groceries. They are cutting back every week. We know that it is families across this country who cannot afford \$1.80- or two-dollar-a-litre fuel.

Our national debt is \$1.2 trillion, and what do we have to show for it? As the chief medical officers of health in 10 provinces across this country are saying we can drop the mask mandates and end the vaccine mandates, two years later, two years after the official opposition asked for it, after Canada's Conservatives called for rapid tests, the government is saying, "Let us buy some rapid tests." I would say the government is a day late and a dollar short, but it is two years late and billions of dollars more than we have to spend.

Canadians are in a tough spot. For many things, necessary spending, necessary commitments were made by the House over that two-year period. Then we can look at the shameful waste and missed opportunities that the government had. Again, I will talk about health care. Prepandemic, hospitals operated at between 95% and 130% capacity across the country. Now the government is saying hospital capacity is at 100%. That is where it was before the pandemic. What is the spending that the government has committed that is going to solve these legacy issues? It is not solving legacy issues.

Pork barrelling, pet projects, executive bonuses and share buy-backs, that is going to be the legacy of all of this spending that members in this place, their children, grandchildren and their great-grandchildren are going to be paying the interest on before we even get to talk about paying the principal on that debt.

We now have the government partnering with another party that has made unaffordable promises and that is going to balloon the spending by hundreds of billions of dollars. Canadians just cannot afford an NDP-Liberal government. Canadians deserve accountability. They deserve a path back to fiscal responsibility. It is the responsibility of any credible government to do that.

We are just not seeing the results for the money that it spent to date. We are not seeing a real plan for the money it is planning to spend going forward.

● (1705)

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address a few things that have been said by the member opposite both now and previously. We have been throwing out numbers on the debt, which the member disagreed on, one being \$1.2 trillion and one being \$1.4 trillion, but it is done in isolation without looking at the percentage to GDP and without looking at what is happening in the rest of the world. We can shock and scare people with those tactics, but I do not think it is constructive.

If we were to look at Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio and our credit rating from Standard & Poor's and Moody's, both of which I feel have a better grasp on economics than perhaps members in this House, we would see that Canada still has a AAA rating and that our debt-to-GDP ratio is around 85%, about the same as Great Britain, but there are 25-plus countries with a greater debt-to-GDP ratio, including Japan, France, the U.S.A., Singapore and many others that have actually increased spending, as we did, to ensure that the debt citizens could not afford to take on and that all economists across the world knew we were going to incur during the COVID pandemic was taken on by the government.

Could the member please explain why he keeps throwing out these scary numbers without putting them into context and without talking about the global situation?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, if the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill is scared by the numbers, so are Canadians. They are scared because they cannot afford to pay their bills. It is great to talk about a AAA credit rating. It is great to talk about how debt to GDP stacks up against other countries, but it does not matter. In this country, whether people live in Victoria by

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the Sea, Prince Edward Island, Victoria, British Columbia, or all points in between, life is getting more unaffordable.

When the government says incredibly ridiculous things like the government has taken on debt so that Canadians do not have to, guess what. It is Canadians who have to pay down that debt. They cannot afford the increased prices of natural gas to heat their homes, propane to heat their homes or gasoline to put in their cars. They cannot afford the increased price of groceries at the store.

Liberals can talk all day long and tire themselves out patting themselves on the back, but Canadians know that the spending by the government is unaffordable and unaccountable, and responses like that demonstrate that they are incredibly out of touch. They think they can say they are better than the guy next door, yet people in this country cannot afford to heat their homes and feed their families.

● (1710)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague to respond to something. The members opposite talked about having this great low debt-to-GDP ratio, but I have to note that they are including money that has been set aside for CPP assets. We are the only country in the OECD that tracks money that way.

According to the IMF, when we take that money out and compare us on an apples-to-apples basis, we are the 22nd worst out of 29 in the OECD and the fourth worst in the G7. I wonder if my colleague would like to address the fact that the government is not being up front with Canadians on the true debt-to-GDP level.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, again Canadians are well served by the member for Edmonton West and his detailed analysis and breakdown of the spin that we hear from the government benches when its members talk about the massive debt it racks up and how they try to dress it up as something that Canadians ought not to be concerned about.

The government continues to spend money and say things, as I mentioned before, like it is taking on the debt so that Canadians do not have to. Of course it is debt that Canadians are going to have to pay back. While it would try to distract and impress Canadians by inflating numbers in a way that is beneficial to its framing, we know just by walking down the aisle at the grocery store, by pulling up at the gas pumps and by getting our home heating bills that the government is absolutely unaffordable, no matter how much lip-stick it puts on the pig.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are in a situation where the fiscal house is on fire. The Prime Minister has run up more debt in his time in office than every previous prime minister, including the last Trudeau prime minister, from 1867 until 2015. Just in time, the NDP has arrived to pour more gasoline on this fiscal fire.

I have been listening to the debate on Bill C-8 today, the government's fiscal plan, if they want to call it a plan. It is a promise to spend more on everything in the midst of an agreement to spend even more with the NDP.

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I was struck, hearing the member for Elmwood—Transcona from the NDP describing the levels of spending in this budget as “underwhelming”. “Underwhelming” is what the NDP is saying about the spending. I know his speech was very hurtful to Liberal members, just after they ink a deal. Imagine being called underwhelming during the post-wedding speeches. So much for the work that is supposed to exist. The NDP, nonetheless, has sold out to agree with this deal with the government, but still it is describing the government's fiscal measures as “underwhelming”.

Let us look at the reality, at the overwhelming level of debt and deficit that we have seen run up by the government in the last six years. The Prime Minister, in 2015, promised in the election three \$10-billion deficits. It is hard to imagine there was a time when a \$10-billion deficit seemed quite large relative to what we had been used to. Up until 2015, there had been a general consensus that outside of extreme events, a global financial crisis—

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): Order. We have a point of order.

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for interrupting my colleague in his speech. We actually have Liberals across the way laughing while this speech is going on, laughing at what the member is speaking about. Frankly, it is hardly funny and hardly funny for Canadians. I hope they would respect the House and actually listen to the member.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): Of course, we ask that all members of the House maintain decorum.

I would ask the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan to continue his speech.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, the member for Kingston and the Islands just assured me that he was not laughing; he was not even listening. It is too bad. He might learn something. I see him chatting over there without a mask, which does not bother me. I think he should be free to choose, but his other Liberal colleagues must be terrified at that reality.

Nonetheless, let us talk about the fiscal situation and the promises that were made by the Prime Minister. In 2015, the Prime Minister said that there would be three \$10-billion deficits and a total of \$30 billion in deficits, and then in the fourth year there would be a balanced budget. The Liberals blew through all of that in year one. They said they were being ambitious in their hopes for the country. Well, I would say that we should measure our ambition by how much we leave to the next generation, not by how little we leave to the next generation. While calling it ambition, the government is creating a situation where my children and their children will have so much less capacity to develop and invest in their own future because they will be paying for the debt that we have run up in such a short space of time. This was the promise made in 2015, broken right away, blown through. Now tens of billions of dollars in deficits per year have become hundreds of billions of dollars of debt and deficit.

The NDP has continually said throughout this process that it is not enough and the Liberals should be spending more. I just listened to speeches from the NDP members, and it is such a baffling philosophy to me. They talk about people who are struggling, but they never jump to the obvious conclusion, which is to let them keep more of their own money and let them spend it on what they want.

The member for Elmwood—Transcona said that he spoke with a constituent who, sadly, had to move back in with his parents as a result of expensive dental work. I would suggest not creating a massive new government program so the government can pay for his dental needs, because he would have to apply to the government, someone would have to be hired to evaluate his application to see if he qualified and we would have to establish thresholds and determine who the money will be paid through and when. Instead of going through that entire process, how about we cut his taxes? How about we spend less money, financed by inflation, so that his money can maintain its value?

Every time I hear stories from members about people who are struggling in this country, it strikes me that those on the left use these stories as an excuse to say we should have more government. More government is not going to help people who are struggling. Why are people struggling? It is because the cost of living is being driven up by high taxes, by inflation and by the fact that the government is financing its out-of-control spending by reducing the value of money that people have.

This is most evident in the case of gas prices. Let us be very clear and honest about why gas prices are where they are. It is because of a policy decision by left-wing parties, Liberal and NDP, that believe the gas price should be high because they want to use high gas prices as a tool to discourage people from driving. The only reason to support a carbon tax or carbon price, whatever we call it, is to discourage people from buying gas by making the costs higher.

Now, of course, the price of gas fluctuates and responds to other events, because absent the tax there is an underlying price that goes up and down. However, a significant amount of that price is determined by the taxation that sits on top of whatever price a private entity would charge. Of course there are fluctuations and of course those fluctuations are shaped by global events, but on top of those fluctuations we have policy choices made by politicians who believe that gas prices should be higher.

What strikes me is that almost nobody in the House is prepared to honestly acknowledge that. I hope that someone here, Liberal, NDP or Green, is willing to say what they honestly, clearly believe, which is that they want gas prices to be high. That is the point of a carbon tax. It is to make gas prices high. However, somehow, they think they can fool people by saying that even though they have put these taxes on gasoline, they would like prices to be lower, and then they blame something else for that fact. Their solution is to have higher and higher taxes and then to create more programs to allegedly treat the affordability problem.

• (1715)

To me, this is like being in a hole and we just keep digging, because the more spending we have, the more programs we promise, the more government intervention we have and the more expansion there is of the state sector, the more that money will have to come from somewhere and the more we are going to see deficit, inflation, higher prices and higher taxes. That in turn is going to make life less affordable. We are in this vicious cycle that is going to accelerate now as a result of this union between the Liberals and the NDP. We are going to see more spending. That is the promise of the deal these parties have made.

Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, when many people are saying that we need to get our spending under control and back off of some of these spending measures and move back toward balanced budgets, the government is agreeing to an extreme NDP economic policy to put its foot on the gas further. My concern about this deal between the Liberals and the NDP is that we are going to end up with the worst of both worlds. Historically what we have seen in the House is the NDP pushing far-left economic policy but sometimes standing with us in trying to hold the government accountable on its ethical failures. Very often, those in the NDP have opposed things like time allocation and programming motions. They have been willing to join with us on requests for documents on things like holding the government accountable over the WE Charity. We have had significant disagreements with the NDP about economic philosophy, but at least we have been able to work together on some issues around protecting Parliament and the functioning of Parliament and on holding the government accountable for significant ethics violations.

However, what we see with this deal is that the government is talking about being able to get a free pass to move its legislation faster without the kind of accountability and scrutiny that are required. It will be expecting the NDP not to hold it accountable on ethical issues and not challenge it on issues regarding access to documents in defence of Parliament. At the same time, we see, without any seeming reluctance, the Liberals diving fully into the radical left-wing economic philosophy of high taxes, high inflation, high deficits and high spending. What we are left with is this picture of an accord that looks like Liberal ethics with NDP economic philosophy, and that is a disaster for this country.

If we must stand alone, the Conservatives will indeed take a stand and fight back against these abuses of Parliament, abuses of process and broken promises to voters, and the escalating damage being done to our economy. We will not solve the affordability crisis through higher taxes, higher deficits and inflation. We will solve it by supporting economic growth driven by individual freedom and individual initiative. That is the kind of philosophy we need. We need support for economic growth driven by individual ingenuity and getting the government out of the way.

• (1720)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, only a Conservative would refer to taking care of Canadians during a pandemic as ultra left-wing ideology. In any event, I find the rhetoric coming from across the way to be absolutely remarkable. This is the same party that three or four years

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ago was criticizing the Prime Minister of Canada for the low prices of oil in Canada. As a matter of fact, members of the Conservative Party, for all of the failings and incompetence they claim the Prime Minister has had, say he was somehow able to affect the global price of oil. Meanwhile, now that oil is where they want it to be in order to extract more out of the ground, suddenly they are saying the price of oil is too high and it is the Prime Minister's fault. He is the reason that people are paying more at the gas pumps.

Can the member explain to the House which Conservative he is? Is he a Conservative in favour of high prices of oil so that we can extract more out of the ground in his home province, or is he a Conservative who supports lower oil prices so that gas is cheaper at the pumps?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, that question was actually below the standards we are used to hearing from the member for Kingston and the Islands. He said that he was not listening to my speech earlier and his question did make that eminently clear.

On the question of gas prices, it is not for me to set the price of oil. It is not for me to say what the optimal price of oil would be. The member should listen to me now at least, but he is not and that is okay.

The issue is that his government is pursuing a policy of intentionally raising the price of gas through a carbon tax. That is the purpose of a carbon tax. What I am saying, recognizing that the price of oil is set by global factors, is let us give people relief at the pump by eliminating the carbon tax, which is the amount they pay to the government on top of the price set by the private sector.

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pausé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would really like to speak about the gas tax, but I am going to choose my words carefully, because I gave my speech yesterday.

The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan said the fiscal house is pretty much on fire. He also spoke of future generations. Yes, I think it is important to think about future generations.

I have a suggestion for putting out the fiscal fire. Last spring, there were measures in the budget to fight tax havens. However, we have heard nothing more about it, and it has completely fallen under the radar. Now, if we were to really fight tax havens, we could happily think of future generations without worrying so much.

What does my colleague think of the government's leadership in the fight against tax havens?

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[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, on the issue of tax havens, I think people should follow the law and we should have rules that are designed to ensure that people who work in Canada are paying taxes on things in Canada. What we cannot control, though, is that when taxes are too high, sometimes people will simply choose to make investments elsewhere. They will choose to live and work elsewhere.

While we do need to address loopholes or points of unfairness that people are taking advantage of in the tax system, we should be looking to make Canada a jurisdiction that is desirable from an investment perspective and desirable from a taxation perspective. In a world of international competition, we cannot get away from the fact that if we do not do that, people will make other choices with their money.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Ted, who is a constituent of mine in Parksville, came to me last week and most of his teeth had fallen out. I have since learned that all of his teeth have fallen out and he cannot eat. He is having challenges. He is one of the 6.7 million Canadians who do not have dental coverage and do not see a dentist on a regular basis.

The member asked what the New Democrats honestly believe. We believe that big oil companies, big box stores and big banks that have profited over a billion dollars should pay more tax. We know the Conservatives believe, according to their leader, that Canadians do not want or need a dental care plan. Ted does.

Can my colleague speak about what he would say to the 6.7 million Canadians who do not have a dental care plan? Does he believe they do not need it?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I do not know Ted and I do not know his situation, but I think what Ted would like most is to have the dignity and ability to have a good job and low taxes. This will allow him to afford to make his own choices with his own money, including being able to attend to those kinds of needs.

We should have significant compassion for those who cannot afford those things, but I do not want Ted and others in his situation to have to go to a bureaucrat and ask for permission to pay for the things they need. I want him to be able to earn and keep more of his own money. I do not know the particulars of his situation, but for people in that situation, I say giving individuals control and autonomy, and ensuring they have resources and that our economy is functioning at a level where they can make those investments in themselves, is a much better way to go.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour to stand in this place and represent the good people of Battle River—Crowfoot.

Entering into debate on Bill C-8, I believe there is some incredibly important context that is required for an understanding of the circumstances our nation finds itself in when it comes to the fiscal realities the government and so many Canadians are facing.

Recently, it was revealed that there is a 5.7% inflation rate. For context, the average wage in this country goes up by somewhere around 2.5%, so the reality is this. By virtue of inflation and the average wage, and I certainly hear from constituents often who are

not getting that 2.5% increase, the buying power of Canadians is being reduced each and every day.

I found it astounding that when I asked a question yesterday in question period, and some of my colleagues continue to ask these questions today, that the Associate Minister of Finance for our country would stand up and say that a tax break on gas, diesel and home-heating fuel would not help. My challenge to all Liberal members who agree with the Associate Minister of Finance would be to ask their constituents whether or not a 5% savings in a province such as Alberta, and more savings for provinces that have HST, would make a difference. I say to all the Canadians who are watching that, if they have a Liberal member of Parliament, they should share with them whether or not the tax break would make a difference when it comes to the reality that so many Canadians are facing, with the increased costs of things such as fuel at the pumps.

This again is important context. I represent a largely rural constituency and the reality is this. We do not have access to a subway. As much as Drumheller, Camrose, Wainwright or Provost would love these massive public infrastructure projects, such as light rail transit and whatnot, these communities of 20,000, 10,000, 5,000 or fewer people do not have an option. The members opposite would suggest they should simply buy an electric car, or simply take the bus. As a representative of a rural constituency, I know that is for sure not the reality of the 10% of Canadians who do not live in major urban areas, and certainly many others who do not have equitable access or easy access to public transportation.

Let me share this observation. I find it interesting. I hear from many constituents who are concerned about the cost of the carbon tax on their daily lives. A carbon tax on their home heating bill, which is in some cases as much as the cost of the gas itself, will be added on April 1. It will be close to 12¢ per litre, in addition to the cost of the commodity itself and the various other taxes. The reality of the carbon tax is this: It is important for Canadians to understand that the Liberals want these prices to be higher. The Minister of Environment stood up again today and said that this was an effective mechanism to address emissions. Okay. The context for what he is saying is this. The more Canadians pay, the better, because it will force behaviour change.

Again, I ask. When it comes to the feedback from the Liberal and NDP MPs and their new coalition arrangement, which let me make very clear Canadians did not vote for, the reality is that the Liberals and the NDP want higher taxes and higher prices for elastic commodities such as the natural gas that heats people's homes, the heating fuel that is required in many first nations communities, and the gas or diesel that is required for people to take kids to soccer practice or commute to work, and for truck drivers or locomotives to deliver the goods that Canadians need.

• (1730)

The reality is that Liberals want those higher prices, so now they are going to talk about affordability and make excuses around how somehow a bit of a break for Canadians will not actually help. The reality is that Canadians know otherwise.

I would just share an inconvenient truth with the new Liberal-NDP government that exists in this country. When it comes to the results of the last election, it was actually the Conservatives who received the most votes. An inconvenient truth again is that it was actually the Conservatives' environmental plan that received the most votes.

An inconvenient truth for the members opposite is that it was the Conservatives' plan, which was highly recommended by economists when it comes to addressing the housing crisis that exists in many areas of this country, that received more votes than the Liberal plan, the NDP plan, the Bloc plan or any of the other parties' plans. That is an inconvenient truth, because the Liberals are desperate to cover up the fiscal disaster that is present within Canada and to further distract from the reality of the situations of the many constituents I hear from who are facing challenges to simply make ends meet each and every day.

We stand here debating Bill C-8. I guess the one bit of solace, when it comes to the reality of being faced with the new NDP-Liberal government, is that this is basically what we said would happen in the context of the last election. We said that a vote for the NDP was a vote for the Liberals, although the media and many Liberals said it would not happen. In fact, the leader of the NDP said that it would not happen. The true colours have now shone through.

I have advice to all NDP members watching. If they look throughout the history of coalition agreements, they will see it rarely works out for the coalition minority partner. History has a pretty strong precedent in that regard. My suggestion is especially to the backbench of the Liberal Party. I certainly hear from constituents that they are encouraged that a few of those members are starting to stand up against the authoritarianism that has been represented in the front bench and the Office of the Prime Minister. The constituents simply ask that these members stand up for the people they represent, whether it be on issues related to COVID, affordability, housing or agriculture.

In listening to some of the talk about agriculture, as a farmer myself, I agree and appreciate how important food security is. With the situation in Ukraine and energy security, we have a situation developing that could be absolutely disastrous for global food security. This is directly related to so many of the issues we are faced with here, yet the Liberals would do something like suggest a 30% reduction in the fertilizer required to grow the food that is needed to feed the world. It is this sort of absurdity that, although the members opposite like to gloss over some of those realities and facts, certainly has a massive impact.

As I come to the conclusion of my speech, we have seen the carbon tax reality impacting Canadians. We have seen the out-of-control spending, and more dollars chasing fewer goods, and the reality it has on impacting Canadians' buying power for things such as groceries, fuel and housing. We see the devastating impact of a government that puts more credence in big announcements and carefully

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worded press releases than in actual, carefully crafted monetary policy for a G7 power.

So often, we see the challenges our country is facing being simply dismissed, ignored, or in some cases ridiculed by a now NDP-Liberal government. It truly needs to take a moment and consider carefully the implications of the massive expenditures, and massive direction that Canadians certainly did not vote for, in terms of a functional majority within the House of Commons.

These are the things that need to be considered as we debate these important issues within the people's House—

• (1735)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): If we want to have time for questions, it is time for them now.

The hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot is a very eloquent orator. I will give the member that. Sometimes, I am not too sure about some of the substance, but his voice does carry in the House. We can hear him.

Obviously, in a parliamentary democracy, Canadians vote. They send us here to represent their interests. For the last two and a half years, we have had their backs. We will continue to have the backs of Canadians, day in and day out, as we exit COVID-19 and the pandemic.

In reference to Bill C-8, there are many provisions in the bill for affordable housing, for vaccines, and for helping businesses and schools with their HVAC systems and their ventilation systems. There are many measures in Bill C-8 that would assist the hon. member's constituents, his businesses and the wonderful folks who get up every morning and work hard every day. There is also an improved tax credit for educators.

Can the hon. member not at least admit that there are many provisions here that would assist his constituents, and that the members of the official opposition should actually vote for Bill C-8?

• (1740)

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I just have a note before I answer the substance of the member's question. My constituents speak often about how they would like the Liberal government to get out of the way for them to be able to prosper and for things like our agricultural and energy sectors to be able to prosper. They want us to be a country of “yes” again, to be a country that allows major infrastructure projects, and to be a country that allows economic development that is uninhibited by the heavy hand of bureaucrats in Ottawa.

I would quote the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who recently said, “It appears to me that the rationale for the additional spending initially set aside as stimulus no longer exists.”

It was not me who made those statements initially. That was the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who is somebody who thinks long and hard about Canada's monetary policy.

*Private Members' Business**[Translation]*

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I agree with him that the increase in the cost of living is deplorable for the people in his riding and those in mine. We need to find a way to help our constituents with the rising cost of rent, food, gas and so on.

In my opinion, slashing the carbon tax is not the solution, and it is not a good idea either. In Quebec, we have the carbon exchange, which is working well.

For the other provinces, the tax that was imposed increases people's bills by a few dollars a month, but they can recoup that money through a tax refund. Will eliminating the carbon tax generate enough money to help our constituents? I do not think so.

I think that we should go after the money in tax havens rather than eliminating the carbon tax, since that tax is a good measure to help combat climate change. Does my colleague agree?

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, the simple answer to the member from the Bloc's question would be yes. Let us have a meaningful effort to actually make sure that those who are illegally avoiding taxes in this country are discovered and prosecuted and, wherever possible, that those funds are recovered.

When it comes to the record high prices that Canadians are facing at the pumps, whether because of the carbon tax, although I disagree with the carbon tax and its policy and Albertans vehemently disagree with the carbon tax and its policy, I think the member from the Bloc would agree that it should be up to a province to make that determination for its citizens. It should not be a big-handed, bureaucratic, heavy initiative determined in the hallways of offices in our national capital city. It should be the people of—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to interrupt the hon. member because it is 5:43. The hon. member will have about a minute left to continue answering questions the next time the bill is debated.

It being 5:43, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC) moved that Bill C-241, an Act to amend the Income Tax Act (deduction of travel expenses for tradespersons), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, I will start by saying what an absolute honour this is. I am feeling completely privileged beyond belief. This is kind of mind-boggling, because while it is one thing to get to the House, it is another thing to be fortunate enough to be so early in Private Members' Business. It really, truly, is quite a remarkable day, and not just a remarkable day for me, but perhaps for close to a million trade workers across Canada.

I would like to first say thanks to the folks of Essex, who elected me to represent them. Without their support, I certainly would not be in this place today bringing forward this private member's bill.

Secondly, I would be very remiss if I did not say thank you to Tomi Hulkkonen. He is from UBC Local 494 from Windsor. When I ran for the very first time to represent Essex, he asked me to bring this private member's bill forward. Apparently, he has been working on this for some 11 or 13 years.

I gave him my word that, if indeed I was elected, and if indeed I was up early enough in the PMB process, I would bring forward this bill, so I am proud to bring it forward. I am proud that I could actually keep my word to Tomi.

My bill, the people's bill, the trade worker's bill, Bill C-241, is an act to amend the Income Tax Act, specifically to add a deduction. This would not be tax credit but a deduction of travel expenses for tradespersons. I also like to call it the "fair travelling tradesperson's bill".

It is a very, very simple bill. It really is. It talks about three things. The bill reads:

where the taxpayer was employed as a duly qualified tradesperson or an indentured apprentice in a construction activity at a job site that was located at least 120 km away from their ordinary place of residence, amounts expended by the taxpayer in the year for travelling to and from the job site, if the taxpayer

- (i) was required under the contract of employment to pay those expenses,
- (ii) did not receive an allowance in respect of those expenses that is not included in computing the taxpayer's income for the year, and
- (iii) does not claim those expenses as an income deduction or a tax credit for the year under any other provision of this Act

Throughout this process, I have spoken to a number of trade associations, a number of trade unions, the managers and the leaders of such, and I have yet to find one that does not completely endorse this bill, which tells me that there is a huge void that needs to be filled. It also tells me that we have been walking by an opportunity to support trades and tradesfolks.

By 2025, Ontario alone will need an additional 350,000 tradespeople to fill the current need. As is often the case, tradespersons can be expected to travel long distances from one job to the next, far from home. With inflation at a 30-year high and during the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, this bill is a common-sense proposal for hard-working Canadians.

When it comes down to it, this legislation is basic fairness for tradespeople. I made a commitment to the tradespeople in my riding to bring it forward, and that is exactly what I am doing.

In my opinion, this bill is, quite frankly, so simple. I want to tell a few stories of the folks that I have been speaking to along the way, because I really believe that their stories bring out the magic of what this bill will do for everyday Canadians and their families.

First and foremost, I want to speak to Canada's building trade unions. They have been very good in helping me navigate through, or stick-handle through, if one is a Canadian hockey player, I suppose, what exactly was needed.

● (1745)

CBTU represents members who work in more than 60 different trades and occupations and generate 6% of Canada's GDP. Their industry maintains and repairs more than \$2.2 trillion in assets. Their work is not just done on site, but in facilities that provide modules or other components that are incorporated into the larger structures they work on. Once those structures are built, they are employed in renovation, maintenance and repurposing.

It goes on to say, under "Getting People to Work", and this is a really neat one. This is really an important point:

Depending on private and public investments, at different times certain regions will have more employment opportunities than others. These conditions lead to a necessity for skilled trades workers to temporarily relocate or travel long distances for projects to meet the needs of the market. As projects are completed, workers will then return to their permanent residence....

...With families to support, temporary relocation costs can prove too burdensome for workers, contributing to increased reliance on programs like Employment Insurance and exacerbating labour shortages in certain regions.

As the Canadian economy transitions to net zero, the federal government needs to implement travel supports for workers in the traditional oil and gas sector.

It goes on to talk about addressing inequality in the Income Tax Act. It says, "In its current form, the Income Tax Act is an inequitable tax policy." This is a very important point:

Today salespeople, professionals and Canadians in other industries can receive a tax deduction for the cost of their travel, meals and accommodations when traveling for work. The same option is denied to skilled trades workers who work on jobsites that are in different regions or provinces from their primary residence.

I have a few stories, and these are real stories, that I received in emails.

The following is an example of an apprentice. His name is Theo. He states, "As a carpenter apprentice, I travelled from Windsor to Timmins, Ontario, for several months in order to work at construction projects in remote parts of northern Ontario. I spent thousands of dollars of my money on gas, food and hotels, and I was not able to get any assistance for it. I also put a lot of kilometres on my car in this time and it wore out and depreciated a lot, which affected my ability to get ahead. I gave up a lot of time from family and friends in order to work. There is a lot of work opportunities in remote parts of Canada and a tax deduction on travel expenses would help apprentices like myself to travel to better work opportunities." I love the word "opportunities". He continues, "I hope that this bill passes and that all members of this Parliament support Bill C-241."

Another email states, "Canada provides excellent opportunities for construction workers on projects that are often far away from places they call home. Canada has been built by skilled trades people that have left families and communities to travel to opportunities to work on projects that may not be available close to home. Canada is experiencing record labour shortages and it is crucial that Canada's assets with the workforce mobility removes the barriers to travel that currently exist." That was from Tomi Hulkkonen, president of the Essex and Kent Building Trades Council. He went on to

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say, "Please note that the Carpenter's Union, Local 494, fully endorses this bill, as well as is willing and able to speak on this bill if asked if it goes to committee."

This was a cool one. It says, "So, do we have a labour shortage in this country?" This was sent by another gentleman whose name is Russ. He writes, "I say we currently have a shortage of political will for fairness and mobility for the Canadian skilled worker. Today all of this can change if you vote yes to support the Canadian skilled worker in this non-partisan bill, which I fully stand behind and support. Your constituents have elected you to do the right thing for this country and contribute to our society, both ethically and morally. We are not asking for a payday or a handout. All we are asking for is fairness. Our country can have the skilled workers needed if the shackles regarding mobility can be released for the Canadian skilled worker."

● (1750)

I have just a couple more.

Jaret is an electrician from Windsor with two young boys. He has been forced to travel across Canada, leaving his home province of Ontario, in order to provide for his family. If the stress of being away from home is not enough to deal with, imagine not being around to guide one's children while they are growing up. With all that added outside pressure, it would only be sensible to allow construction workers dealing with the same issues to be able to write off their travel expenses.

Peter, the executive director of the Construction Labour Relations Association of Manitoba, says, "You well know all major infrastructure construction projects in Manitoba's history have always relied on workers travelling from another province to supplement Manitoba's skilled tradespersons labour supply. The same can be said for every province across Canada. Promoting mobility by eliminating the current travel expenses for our construction trade workers is simply sound economic policy with a strong sprinkling of common sense. On behalf of the many construction contractor employers who I represent, I am dedicated to working with you and Russ and others who will support this critical and timely national incentive."

I could continue with more testimonials, but I know my time is running short.

As we heard today in the House, the price of fuel, the price of hotels, the price of food and inflation all lie on the backs of the very tradesfolks who are building and have built this country, and they will continue to be the builders of this country in the future. To put that extra burden on them is absolutely unfair.

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This is a fair bill that would leave money in the pockets of tradespeople and give back to the skilled trades, which have been walked past for many years and ignored. These workers are expected to travel across Canada to build our bridges, to build our roads, to build the homes that we all know we have a major shortage of in this country, and to keep our electric system moving. It really should be a no-brainer to, at the very least, send this bill to committee to be studied.

The neat thing about this bill is that it covers tradesfolks from coast to coast to coast, from St. John's, Newfoundland, to across Canada. It would not just help one area. It would help the entire country. If it looks like I am smiling a little today, it is because I am kind of excited to introduce a PMB, but the second reason I am smiling is that we have a major opportunity to do something huge for Canadians and for our skilled trades workforce. We can truly give them the support they not only deserve but need going forward.

As my time comes to an end, there are two last things I would leave members with. I suppose if there was ever a time for all parties to come together, become completely bipartisan and know what we are doing is right, it is now. Yes it can be studied, but knowing that what we are doing is right kind of puts a smile on my face.

I will leave one last thought. I do not know of any member in this place who does not get reimbursed for or write off their travel expenses. If that is good enough for members of Parliament, then it should darn well be good enough for the tradesfolks.

• (1755)

Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a quick question with respect to the presentation given today, and I do appreciate it. It is great work, and I do support the direction that the member is taking with the bill and I am hoping to see it sent to committee.

You mentioned travel—

• (1800)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would ask the hon. member to address his question through the Chair.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Speaker, I have a quick question for the member with respect to travel.

The member mentioned travel, but how about tools? We have a maximum deduction for tools listed under the CRA. Is there any thought given to adding to this private member's bill to include not only travel but tools of the trade as well? That could be anything from big vehicles and machines all the way down to the hammer, screwdrivers and things that tradespeople use on a daily basis. Is there any thought given to include that in this private member's bill?

Mr. Chris Lewis: Madam Speaker, it is ironic that the member brings that up, because it has been brought up to me a number of times in my discussions here over the last couple of years, and that has been asked for. The truth of the matter is that, although I am a person who loves to ask for the world, I was trying to keep it simple to get something passed to help tradespeople out. By all means,

when the bill goes to committee, if the member would like to make a suggestion for that, I am all ears. Whatever we can do to help them, to move the trades forward, I am all about that.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, indeed, the hon. member is in good form today. He seemed very excited to present his bill. In fact, he sounded very much like a New Democrat, and I will tell members why.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

An hon. member: Take that back.

Mr. Matthew Green: Madam Speaker, I will tell members why.

The New Democrats, in 2006, first introduced this bill under Chris Charlton, and then again in 2008, in 2013 and in 2021. In fact, my private member's bill is very much like this one.

I will ask the hon. member, who has been in such good form with strong New Democratic talking points, why is it that, in determining the distance, he made it a further distance of 120 kilometres rather than the 80 kilometres that we have prescribed year and year again?

Mr. Chris Lewis: Madam Speaker, on the question of why I moved it from 80 kilometres to 120 kilometres, I heard somebody say “inflation”, which is why I could not help but laugh. However, at the end of the day, it goes like this: I am open to discussion at committee, and I am open to ideas.

Why did I think of 120 kilometres? Typically speaking, depending on where one lives, some have access to a major highway and some do not. I thought it would be about an hour and a half from home. It seems to me that if I am an hour and a half from home, which is three hours of travel every single day, I am probably going to want to stay out of town.

If I can get the support of the NDP, heck, I will call myself an NDP for one day for that.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order.

The hon. member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I do not have a question for my colleague, but I would like to congratulate him.

We are often critical of bills that do not suit us, but when they do and they make sense, it is important to acknowledge that.

I am pleased, just as my NDP colleague pointed out earlier, to see that the Conservative Party, or at least the Conservative member for Essex, has suddenly discovered the virtue of standing up for workers.

It will be my pleasure to work with him on Bill C-241. I will have the opportunity to say more about that in my speech later.

*Private Members' Business**[English]*

Mr. Chris Lewis: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague. There was no question, but it certainly sounds as if there is at least an appetite and potentially a flavour to move the bill forward, and that means a lot.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague and indeed my neighbour, and I congratulate him for introducing this private member's bill.

We have talked a lot in the House about labour and labour shortages, and it is a no-brainer to link a potential change here to addressing that. I would like to give my hon. neighbour the opportunity to comment on how he feels the impact of the bill would play out on labour shortages, particularly in the trades sector and indeed help our whole construction industry and other industries.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Chatham-Kent—Leamington, who is my neighbour and my friend. Our ridings match up, and this is a huge envelope of opportunity for local trades. I know it would be beneficial.

[Translation]

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure, a great honour and a privilege to rise here in the House on behalf of the people of Halifax West.

• (1805)

[English]

It is always a privilege, a pleasure and an honour to rise here on behalf of the residents of Halifax West. I am pleased to rise today to debate Bill C-241, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, deduction of travel expenses for tradespersons. I want to thank my colleague for bringing this important issue forward.

We committed in our platform to move forward with introducing a labour mobility tax credit to allow workers in the building and construction trades to deduct certain eligible travel and temporary relocation expenses and give them a tax credit on a yearly basis. I am proud of that commitment, and I do hope to see progress on it soon.

I want to take this opportunity today to reiterate the great value of the skilled trades for Canadians. Skilled trades workers literally build our cities, homes and communities. They master their craft, upgrade their skills, train the next generation of their trade and help fill our labour gaps while providing for their families.

[Translation]

We think the best way to address the skilled labour shortage and help small businesses grow is to invest in our tradespeople by giving them a tax break on travel expenses for work.

[English]

I am pleased to continually champion and highlight skilled trades and the wide variety of career options, which are in high demand. We need people of all backgrounds to choose these trades to fuel our economic growth and recovery. The people of my communities in Halifax West know that very well with all the new construction in our cities and in our neighbourhoods.

There are many ways to encourage people to enter the skilled trades. We can use our place in public life to highlight the value of the trades. We can make it easy to learn how to get into a trade. We can provide appropriate supports for those who want to pursue training, and we can invest to improve and expand the opportunities available, including for under-represented groups of Canadians who should also see a future for themselves in the skilled trades. Our government, I am proud to say, is doing just that. I will note that this is work that I was so proud to be involved in during my time as Nova Scotia's provincial minister of labour and advanced education.

To highlight the value of skilled trades workers and the supports available to build a successful and fulfilling career in the trades, our government recently launched an advertising campaign to promote the skilled trades as first-choice careers for young people and diverse populations. The campaign website, Canada.ca/skilled-trades, provides Canadians with information about what the skilled trades are, how to become a tradesperson and what financial supports are available to them while in training.

Two years ago, we announced the Canadian apprenticeship strategy, which paved the way for a new apprenticeship service. It will help first-year apprentices in eligible Red Seal trades get the hands-on experience they need for a career in the skilled trades. I also know first-hand from my days as a provincial minister of the great support and funding the Government of Canada provides to provinces and territories to help them raise awareness about careers in the trades.

Our government is investing nearly \$1 billion annually in apprenticeship supports through grants and contributions, loans, tax credits, employment insurance benefits during in-school training, project funding, and support for the Red Seal program. That is a major investment and part of that is programs like the union training and innovation program.

Last week, I visited the Building Trades Advancement College in my riding to announce funding through that program to two local skilled trades unions. In fact, they brought this bill forward to me, which is why I am happily rising today to speak to it.

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I was there with the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, District Council 39, and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 625. I was fortunate to see first-hand how federal dollars were being put to work securing the equipment and materials that our skilled trades workers need to upgrade their skills and train the next generation of workers. This included a spider crane, a scissor lift, electric conduit benders and many other pieces of equipment and training stations that this funding helped provide. That is one of many ways we support our skilled tradespeople and their livelihoods.

● (1810)

All this is to say that I will use my position here to stand up for the skilled trades, advocate for skilled trades workers and help to celebrate the trades generally to those considering what to do with their futures.

In addressing the bill today, we all know that the nature of the construction industry requires skilled trades workers to travel to project locations as they arise. Sometimes there is not enough work locally and travel is a necessity to pay the mortgage and put food on the table. The people of my province and my region understand that necessity well, although I have to note how far we have come in terms of our success, growing our own local economies and giving people the opportunity to stay and earn a living in their own communities.

When tradespeople have to travel to work and when expenses are not covered by their employer, they have to pay out of pocket for their travel expenses. Those costs can run high and at times make it prohibitively expensive to travel for a work opportunity. In fact, Canada's Building Trades Unions reports that 70% of building trades workers have had to pay out of pocket for work-related travel expenses.

For other Canadians, the Income Tax Act allows for a tax deduction for the cost of their travel, meals and accommodation when travelling for work. However, currently that option is not available to skilled trades workers who work on job sites in different regions or provinces from their primary residence. That is a discrepancy that calls for a policy solution. The status quo effectively penalizes people who are willing, ready and able to work and whom we need to build back our infrastructure, improve housing supply, address local labour shortages and support our recovery. We have an opportunity to correct that here and to put more money in the pockets of workers. This type of support is something that skilled trades workers support. It is one of many ways we can make working in the skilled trades more attractive.

In debating this bill, I do have a few questions. Some of them may have been raised in the questions leading up to this.

First, the bill would allow tradespeople and indentured apprentices to deduct from their income amounts expended for travelling where they were employed in a construction activity at a job site that is located at least 120 kilometres from their ordinary place of business. That distance is greater than some other proposed minimum distances and it certainly is greater than the one proposed by Canada's Building Trades Unions. I look forward to receiving more detail on the rationale or thinking that was used in selecting that number.

Second, I note that the bill does not contain precise definitions, perhaps most notably, of travelling expenses. We need to see greater clarity here because we know workers do not end up paying for just their transportation. They sometimes have to pay for accommodations, meals, etc. Therefore, I look forward to more clarity on that.

Third, I note that the bill does not include safeguards that contain its scope and cost. For example, there is no minimum period of relocation and no cap on the number of trips or on the amount of expenses that can be deducted in a year. I look forward, when the bill comes to committee, to hearing testimony from witnesses and so on to get a bit more clarity on that part of the bill as well.

Overall, I do appreciate what the member's bill is trying to achieve. Providing skilled trades workers with tax relief for the necessary travel that they must do for work is an important step that we can and must take. I expect that our government will move forward with a new labour mobility tax credit for workers in the building and construction industry. It would be an additional tool to support our hard-working tradespeople. I look forward to seeing this bill when it comes to committee.

● (1815)

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to the Bloc Québécois's position on Bill C-241, which was introduced by my colleague from Essex. Let me start by saying that I think this is a very interesting bill.

Whenever we debate a bill, people get the impression they have to read through a lengthy tome in an attempt to understand all the clauses and the ins and outs. It scares them. In this case, however, the bill is less than a page long, so I think we can all take a good look at it. Short bills can sometimes be very efficient and within everyone's grasp.

This bill would amend the Income Tax Act to allow tradespersons to deduct from their income amounts expended for travelling long distances for work. This is an interesting idea.

Specifically, the bill amends subsection 8(1) of the Income Tax Act to apply to a taxpayer employed as a duly qualified tradesperson or an apprentice in a construction activity at a job site located at least 120 km away from their ordinary place of residence. The taxpayer must also be required to pay those expenses for travelling to and from the job site and cannot be reimbursed for them.

On the face of it, all this makes sense. That is why the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of Bill C-241.

This bill was recommended by Canada's Building Trades Unions, which represent half a million workers. It is worth noting how interesting it is that this bill is supported by the labour movement, because it is rare to see a Conservative member introducing a bill that the unions are happy with. We will take it while we can.

In Quebec, which is what the Bloc Québécois is interested in, one in 20 jobs is in the construction industry, which is no small thing, since that equates to about 260,000 people. This bill could certainly cover other sectors, and many people will be able to deduct part of their expenses for travel over long distances. Basically, it will be very beneficial for them, and they will be very happy that a bill like this passed.

A deduction for travel expenses is not something unusual or unheard of. As others mentioned earlier, parliamentarians get to deduct their travel expenses, such as accommodation, meals and mileage, when they travel long distances. We benefit from that. It would not look good for us to tell others that they are not entitled to this, and it would send a rather odd message.

Other categories of workers receive the same kind of treatment, including salespeople who work on commission and certain professionals who get these same benefits. However, tradespersons are still not entitled to this benefit, which is surprising in 2022.

Construction sites are often located hundreds of kilometres from their homes. I am thinking specifically of two tradespersons I knew quite well and still know quite well because they are part of my family. I am talking about my two grandfathers.

My paternal grandfather worked as a plumber on construction sites for years. He worked on the Olympic Stadium, military bases and office towers. He did plumbing work on many different construction sites during his career, but he was not entitled to this kind of deduction. I am sure that he would have loved to have such perks.

People working on a job site far from home often do not see their families for many hours or even days at a time.

• (1820)

Also, having to incur that kind of expense to get to the job site can be demotivating. In a tight labour market, when people are struggling to find work, some people might decide it is worth paying for gas in order to travel 200 kilometres to work, because they need the job.

At the end of the day, it is also a matter of fairness. It costs them a lot of money to do their job. Not all employment contracts provide money for people to travel and do their job. Some employers will agree to provide accommodation or meals, while others will pay for mileage, but that is not the case for everyone. I think we need to give this opportunity to those for whom this is not the case.

I mentioned my grandfather. Back in his day, this might have allowed him to go and work on sites much further away. He was not able to do so, because he wanted to stay relatively close to home.

I could also talk about my other grandfather, who was also a tradesman. He worked as a lineman for Hydro-Québec for years at

some very remote sites. In fact, I think he worked on just about every large dam in Quebec.

This could also benefit people from large urban centres who move to regions where there is often a shortage of expertise or a labour shortage. When a major construction site is launched in a region, and between 5,000 and 10,000 workers need to be hired all at once, this cannot be done with a snap of the fingers. In bigger cities, however, more workers are often available and are easier to find nearby.

Conversely, people who live in the regions, who want to be able to stay there but would like to have access to jobs or contracts in large urban centres, may need to take the travel factor into consideration. Staying in the region is therefore obviously an obstacle for them.

In short, I think this is good for everyone. It is just as good for workers in the regions as it is for workers in major cities. It is good for both big and small projects. Things obviously often need to move more quickly with big projects and, in this case, it would be more visible.

Another point is that there is a labour shortage right now. Because there is a shortage of workers, some businesses in the regions might be looking to hire workers but not finding any. Some construction projects might not get done or might take longer to be completed.

Having additional motivation in the form of this tax deduction would encourage people who would not normally accept these types of jobs to sign a contract. They will go because this tax measure makes it worthwhile, because they will get assistance and because we are acknowledging that taking on this job will come with expenses.

It is interesting because this plays a role in the current context of the labour shortage. There is a need for workers, and we have to find incentives for people to accept contracts. All the better if we can find ways to help them make that decision.

We can also consider those people who accept a contract that takes them very far away from their family for a long period of time. It is already a major sacrifice to not see their family for days or weeks at a time, to miss out on time with them and to be on their own. I think getting a little bit of assistance is fair compensation for travelling.

Other countries provide a similar incentive. For example, the United States has a tax deduction for tradespersons. It is a good example of a market that is quite comparable to ours, so I do not see why we would decide not to implement it here.

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I think that inflation is something else we need to consider. People are talking about it more and more. Inflation is high. Prices are rising. Our first thought when this happens is that groceries are getting more expensive, so it is costing more to feed ourselves. Restaurants that took out loans during the pandemic lockdowns will have to raise their prices if they want to be able to pay down their debt. Otherwise, some of them will not survive. Hotels were closed, so accommodation costs will increase as well. The price of a litre of gas has gone up a lot, so travel expenses are also going up.

• (1825)

If we could help workers by letting them deduct all these expenses, it would also be a big help.

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I feel the need to begin my comments by recapitulating the words of the hon. member for Essex, who shared that he would happily call himself a New Democrat to get this PMB passed, if even just for a day.

I am glad it is in the Hansard. As I shared in my question to the hon. member for Essex, the New Democratic Party has been in the Hansard on this very bill five times since 2006. I am going to take a moment to recapitulate. The first was in 2006, Bill C-390, under the always honourable Chris Charlton, and then again in 2008 as Bill C-227, introduced by Chris Charlton, and in 2013, as Bill C-201, again by Chris Charlton. When Chris Charlton retired, she handed it over to a working-class hero from Hamilton, the always honourable Scott Duvall, who introduced this same bill in 2021 as Bill C-275.

I have the honour, being from Hamilton, to continue the working-class values of our city and our party by introducing Bill C-222. The hon. member for Essex was in fine form, using his newly found New Democratic talking points to sell this very bill in the House. I give the hon. member for Essex the benefit of the doubt, because the hon. member for Essex was not elected in 2013 when this bill was last introduced under Bill C-201, but when it was up for vote in second reading, it was the Conservative Party with a majority that crushed this bill.

We have had 15 years of work on this bill. We have had six years where the working-class people of this country could have benefited from these types of tax considerations. The hon. member is quite right when he says he wants for working-class people what we have in the House as MPs when it comes to writing off some of our travel expenses. I would go one step further, and I would suggest that all MPs in the House ought to carry the same spirit by wanting for others what we ourselves have in here when it comes to dental care and pharmacare and pensions.

Here we are. The challenge we have is that the newly found New Democrat, in his New Democratic talking points, showed the disconnect that he has with the building trades because the example he gave in his answer relating to the distance, using his county of Essex, suggesting that an hour and a half travel is about 120 kilometres, tells us that he has never spoken to skilled tradespeople in southern Ontario. If he had, he would know that people from Hamilton could sit in traffic for three hours just on their way to Toronto, which is 60 kilometres away.

He is quite right that skilled tradespeople have fought for this over decades. Let us be clear. He was right when he says this is a bipartisan and non-partisan issue. This is not a win for the Conservatives who found their new working-class values under their previous leader. I will remind them, though, that their previous leader from Durham, in 2014, did vote against this, as did their interim leader, as did the hon. member for Carleton. All of them voted against this. Why now?

I would put to the House that it is because the Conservative Party uses working-class issues and working-class people in the same way that one would use a pair of old dirty sneakers. They only bring them out when it is time to cut the grass, to pretend that the grass is green on the other side, when it is clear that this bill comes up short by lengthening that distance and excluding so many people from areas like my city and Hamilton Centre.

I am going to take my time, but I am going to give credit where credit is due, which is in the organized labour of the Ontario building trades council, of the Canada's Building Trades Unions, of the Hamilton-Brantford building trades council, the people I work with, people like Pat Dillon, who for his entire career worked on this, for 20 years, and in fact was successful under their previous leader to have this implemented into darn near all the platforms.

• (1830)

Following in the spirit of the New Democratic Party, we saw willingness from the government side to finally give lip service to this. Why it failed to act on it until now is beyond me, but in the spirit of moving things forward to improve the material conditions of working-class people in this country, I am happy we are here. Our Parliament works better when we work together for working-class people.

To Pat Dillon, and Pat's retirement, I suspect that many members from all parties showed up to honour Pat in that moment. Let today be his victory. Let future votes on this be his victory, when hopefully we get to a place where this bill covers all the aspects that it needs to cover. Let this be the victory of Mark Ellerker, from the Hamilton-Brantford Building Trades Council, who I have had the privilege of working with since my time as a city councillor. He has always fought with the building trades, not just for organized labour but for unorganized labour too, because the notion that what is good for the manager or the salesperson in tax considerations absolutely must be a tax fairness question that is applied to all working-class people, whether it is for their travel expenses or their tools, which was a very appropriate point brought up by members on the government side. I encourage the government's side to bring these types of real considerations for working-class people into their legislation, into their throne speeches and, most importantly, into their budget.

Lastly, I want to once again thank my good friend, Stuart McLellan, from IBEW Local 105. We would have long conversations about the ability for workers to travel where they do not have to do that calculus. The truth is that not all collective agreements have within them travel expenses. The ones that do not are limited by them. They have to go out of pocket.

Let us be clear about one thing. It is not MPs, it is not entrepreneurs, it is not CEOs or big developers who create value in this country. Value in this economy is only built by working-class people. It is taken by the ultrawealthy. In this respect, when we talk about those members who are being considered in this space, and they talk about how 120 kilometres might look like an hour and a half to them, those members should sit in traffic from Hamilton to Toronto, or from Montreal to anywhere, for that matter. They should know that travel time is not just a tax expense that can be written off. It is time away from family. It is a sacrifice that has to be made as a worker in order to put food on the table and to pay the rent.

Let us get this bill right for Pat. Let us get this bill right for Mark and Stuart, and for all of the incredible working-class people across this country who truly put value in this economy and are truly building this country.

With that, to my temporary and honorary member of the New Democratic Party, I congratulate him on his private member's bill and I am happy to stand and see that be reflected in the Hansard today.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have tremendous respect for the member for Hamilton Centre, so I ask him to take this in the good spirit it is intended. That was the angriest agreement I have ever seen in my life, but I know it comes from a great sense of deep passion in the member. We appreciate his support and look forward to discussions in committee. If we can improve this bill, obviously we will.

I have a couple of notes to make. I would like to thank the acting speakers for filling in for the Speaker. I would like to wish the Speaker all the best going forward, as his health struggles are public. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Speaker. We know he will pull out strong and continue to be a great Speaker in the House.

I would like to enter into the substance of our discussion today, and that is Bill C-241, which was put forward by my friend and hon. colleague from Essex. I would like to start by saying he is extremely well raised. He has two great parents in Kim and Helen, so a shout-out to his parents, because without them we would not have the member for Essex and this legislation. I thank Helen and Kim very much.

Let us talk about Bill C-241. I want to start by providing some context for this legislation. We are, undoubtedly, facing an affordability crisis. One of the chief drivers of this affordability crisis is inflation. What we really have is an inflation tax. We are actually in the midst of one of the largest tax increases in Canadian history.

Through spending, both necessary and unnecessary, and increasing spending going forward, we have run greater and greater deficits. In fact, we have deficits larger than we can finance without

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the help of the Bank of Canada. Through the Bank of Canada, \$400 billion has been put into our economy. It is a basic axiom of economics that when we have more of something, and in this case 400 billion dollars' worth more, it devalues it, and that has the effect of increasing the price on everything else.

Canadians across this country are facing an affordability crisis. Then we add on top of that the carbon tax. I had the privilege of asking the Governor of the Bank of Canada what the inflationary impact of the carbon tax was. Strangely, he did not know the answer right off the top of his head. That is something I would have thought he would have been aware of. However, he was kind enough to provide a written response, where he said that fully 10% of the inflation we are facing today is because of the carbon tax.

It is in that context that I would like to discuss Bill C-241. Everyone is facing challenges, and perhaps none more than the workers and the people the member for Hamilton Centre spoke so eloquently about. They are the folks who are struggling up, sometimes from the bottom rungs of the economic ladder, and who are struggling to hang on. They are hoping to get up to that next level to get to the middle class. When we look at Bill C-241, it is those people, among others, that this legislation is going to help.

What would this bill do? It would put skilled trades employees on equal footing as giant corporations. As self-employed individuals, it would allow them to deduct the expenses associated with travel to their job sites. This is the exact treatment a corporation would receive. If a corporation paid for this travel, it would get to deduct this expense. However, through an oversight, which is what I will generously call it, tradespeople have been disadvantaged and do not get that same right.

Tradespeople are literally building our communities brick by brick. They are the ones who are putting in HVAC systems. They are the electricians who are wiring our world. We would literally be in the dark and the cold without their skilled trades, so why should we be disadvantaging them?

We need more skilled trades. As the member for Essex said, we will need a minimum of 350,000 new skilled tradespeople just in Ontario alone in order to meet the growing demand. We need to attract more people to this field. It is great work, but it is hard work.

The work means that one does not often go to a standard office. People do not go to the same place to work every day, because once a building is built, it is built, and it is time to move on to a new project. These are not located right next to their houses, and they do not have the option to relocate next to that project.

● (1835)

We have individual tradespeople, whom we increasingly need more of. We have people who are the salt of the earth working every day to build our community. What have we done to them? We have disadvantaged them economically just because of the way they choose to arrange the legal status of their work relationship. If they chose to be self-employed, they could deduct things. As an employee, they cannot. This is the very definition of inequity.

Adjournment Proceedings

With the time I have left, I would like to go over a couple of stories. One of them is about Mitch. Mitch is a young electrician's apprentice doing a great job wiring commercial buildings all over the province of Ontario. He is currently living in his parents' house in the basement. He cannot afford a house because the cost of housing has doubled. When I talked to him about this legislation, he said it would be fantastic because with gas at \$1.70, driving 200 or 300 kilometres away from his parents' house every day is quite expensive, and he is not able to save for a house. This bill might give him the opportunity to do so. We would make a difference in people's lives.

I would like to talk to members about Tommy. He is an HVAC apprentice who is working to gain experience. He wants to gain his Red Seal. He said to me that he drives 150 kilometres to work and does not mind it because hustling and hard work are what our country was built on. He knows that is what he has to do to get ahead. However, with the recent change in gas prices and the expenses of life, he is close to losing hope because he is not establishing the goals he sought for himself. It is not his fault. He is working hard. He is doing what we have all told him to do. It is just that the price of everything has gotten so expensive. This would be a break for Tommy, and he is excited about this legislation going forward.

The other individual I would like to talk about is Dennis Fedrigoni. He is the owner of Fed Air Systems, a commercial HVAC company in the wonderful city of Vaughan. He does HVAC all over the province, so the gas bills for his employees are absolutely astronomical. He is asking for a break not so much for himself, although he certainly would appreciate it as it would allow him to hire more skilled people into his business, but for his employees, who are struggling to get by.

I am really pleased by the fact that it appears as though all of the parties are signalling their support for this legislation, which I think is terrific. This is a common-sense solution. This is an area where politics should not get involved. We should not be looking at parties, whether they are NDP, Conservative or Liberal. I deeply believe that every one of the 338 of us wants to do what is right. We want to do what is best for Canadians and Canadian workers.

I thank the House. I look forward to this legislation getting to committee. Once again, I thank Helen and Kim for raising such a great son.

• (1840)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the invasion of Ukraine by the Putin regime

demonstrates the urgent need for the government to take security more seriously, and one key element of that security is global energy security. Nations need energy in order to attend to the basic needs of their people. It is a fact of modern life that we cannot live without energy.

Energy is not just an economic issue; it is also a security issue. Nations need secure access to energy and will be forced to compromise collective security interests as much as necessary in order to guarantee that access. While many Canadians take energy security for granted, other free democracies are in a very tenuous position when it comes to reliable access to energy and already have to consider uncomfortable trade-offs. Some of our democratic partners in the Asia-Pacific region rely on energy that comes from the Middle East and is transmitted through the South China Sea, introducing multiple points of potential disruption. Many of our European allies rely on Russian gas.

Countries struggle to take necessary steps to protect their security or deter aggression, fearing that their vital supply of energy will be impacted. While severe energy-related sanctions could further devastate the Russian government's economic capacity to wage war against Ukraine, the community of free nations has struggled to apply such sanctions because of their current dependency.

Tough energy-related sanctions would be a game-changer in this conflict, shortening the war and saving many lives. We must work in particular to end the dependency of our European partners on Russian gas. We should act quickly to kick Putin's gas out of the free world. Canada should fuel democracy by providing our European friends with a conflict-free and reliable alternative, and one that is, in many cases, better for the environment than the other options available.

In response to our call to urgently address the issue of European and global energy security, the NDP-Liberal government has said no. On Monday they voted against our motion to push urgently to expand energy infrastructure to confront this problem.

In the process they make three arguments. They say that now is not the time to be talking about this issue; they say that we should be focused on renewables; and they say that we cannot build the energy infrastructure fast enough anyway.

I totally reject the idea that the current crisis is not the time to be talking about solutions to the crisis. We should be talking about concrete acts of support and solidarity that help Ukraine and deprive Russia of its capacity to wage war. It is absurd to think that we should sit on our hands and mouth solidarity without doing the hard work of talking about concrete solutions that will save lives. Reducing European dependency on Russian gas and supporting European efforts to improve energy security is one example of a concrete solution.

I am all for renewables, but the current reality is that the science and the capacity is not there for Europe to simply flip a switch to renewables. Europe can take an all-of-the-above approach, developing its renewable capacity while working to displace Russian gas in the short term. The current limits on renewable capacity are why European countries continue to rely on Russian gas today, and also other fossil-fuel-based sources, such as Polish coal. Let us expand Canadian energy exports to Europe to provide a good alternative to the status quo as renewables continue to develop.

The final excuse, the excuse that we cannot build energy infrastructure fast enough, is particularly absurd, because delays in building vital energy infrastructure are entirely a problem of the government's making. The Liberals cancelled approved projects. They complicated the review process through Bill C-69. They piled conditions on the energy east pipeline that had never existed before. They appointed a strident law-breaking anti-pipeline activist as environment minister and they repeatedly attacked confidence in Canada as a destination for energy investment, and now they are acting surprised with the consequences.

I agree that it takes too long to build a pipeline in this country, but let us fix that problem and let us recognize the urgency of the current situation. Canadians understand that energy development is an economic and a security imperative. The government should stop making excuses and finally get to work supporting that development.

• (1845)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Northern Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for raising this very timely issue, one that obviously relates to the Putin regime's unprovoked assault on its neighbour.

I do not think words can capture the tragedy that has befallen Ukraine or the treachery of the perpetrators. What really matters is what we do and not what we say. As the member knows, our government has worked shoulder to shoulder with allies to punish Russia with crippling sanctions. That includes banning Russian oil and gas imports. We also joined others in supplying lethal and non-lethal military equipment to help Ukraine's heroes fight off this invader. We are part of the response to a humanitarian disaster that has caused millions of people and families to flee their homeland. That effort includes opening our doors to any Ukrainian who wants to settle temporarily or permanently in Canada.

The member opposite wants to focus on an important aspect of this conflict. I am referring to how it has shaken global energy markets, sending prices skyward and causing stress for Canadians go-

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ing about their daily business. This crisis has also exposed the danger facing European nations. They have depended very heavily on gas from a manipulative and bullying supplier, so I agree with the member that Canada, as the world's fourth-largest oil and gas producer, has an opportunity and an important role to play.

The member knows that the International Energy Agency has released a 10-point plan to sharply reduce Europe's dependency on Russian gas before next winter. That includes encouraging Europe to seek alternative conventional energy sources, and steps have been taken to boost supplies from existing suppliers like Norway, Algeria and Azerbaijan.

Members know that the vast majority of our oil and gas exports go south of the border. Our pipeline and rail infrastructure is set up to help fuel the world's most successful bilateral economic relationship. Our government supports private sector initiatives to expand opportunities overseas. We only have to consider our role in supporting the TMX expansion and the LNG Canada project. Both are aimed at serving Asian markets. As we know, there are no LNG project proposals on the Atlantic coast that are mature enough to offer practical solutions in the near term, but we never rule out options. We are always open to be there to support Canadians and to support our allies.

However, our government has spoken to producers and provinces about ways to expand oil and gas exports to the United States. This will help America, now the world's largest LNG exporter and the biggest destination for Canadian crude oil exports. This will also help alleviate some of the pressure that we have seen in Europe and the pressures that will come to bear on Europe.

The International Energy Agency's 10-point plan also urges Europe to move more aggressively to alternate energy sources like solar, like wind, like bioenergy, which all are things that our government has been promoting as well. We agree with and we strongly support the European Union's plan to quadruple hydrogen use by 2030 and we believe that Canada could eventually be an important hydrogen—

• (1850)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I would simply put it to this member that if the government takes energy security seriously, I do not know why the Liberals voted against our motion on Monday, which was precisely about recognizing the energy security dimension here and the need to move quickly to address those gaps.

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The member made no mention of Bill C-69 in her response, nor the fact that the government has intentionally prolonged the review process and created an environment in which it is very difficult for the private sector to come forward with projects. She said no LNG projects are currently being put forward on the Atlantic coast. We would like to see more of these projects proposed by the private sector. That would only happen if the government recognizes that the policy conditions it has created are very unfriendly for energy investment.

Will the member address the problems with Bill C-69? Will she commit to urgently looking at the need to change the policy environment to restore confidence by creating the conditions that will attract that energy investment to this country and allow us to move forward quickly?

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, I think the member needs to know that we are about doing things that are real and that are sustainable, and that are not about playing politics with this issue.

I want to urge the member opposite to consider this highly credible agency's advice and remember that, just a few months ago, British Columbia was the latest province to experience the devastating and deadly consequences of climate change. Even today, in Paris, I want to quote what the U.S. energy secretary said. She said, "Even as we seek to stabilize fossil energy through to market, we have to act upon the urgent signals that the world is sending us, that Mother Nature is sending us: a big, flashing 'Code Red' on humanity."

That is exactly what our government is doing. We are responding to the crisis that we are currently in, but we are also responding to the climate crisis. What has been happening in Europe and in the United States just reinforces the predicament that we are in as a country and that we need to transition—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Yellowhead.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, on February 1, I mentioned to the Minister of Finance how the overall food price increase from 5% to 7% is becoming a concern for constituents in my riding. I also raised the concern of how the price of food in Alberta is expected to be higher than the national average in 2022.

In her reply, the Minister of Finance said that inflation is a global phenomenon driven by global challenges. My question was about the overall food price increase in Alberta, not the global concern of inflation. Unfortunately, the minister did not respond to my question. Instead, she talked about early learning and child care. Although this is good for families with children, this does nothing to support seniors or young couples without children.

When it comes to our everyday basics such as food, clothing and housing, and more specifically costs to heat our homes, the Liberal government has made life more expensive for Canadians through its policies. I am speaking about how the carbon tax is being charged multiple times for the same products, such as for farmers growing grain, truckers hauling it to processors and then going to distributors, to grain finally ending up on grocers' shelves, where

even customers are charged a carbon tax on their fuel to get their groceries.

I am aware of what the carbon tax is supposed to accomplish, which is to lower the carbon emissions we create daily. The issue is that when it was first proposed, it was supposed to be used as an incentive for Canadians to upgrade their windows and doors, add more insulation to their homes or purchase an energy-efficient furnace, all to reduce their utility bills.

When the government first introduced the carbon tax, it started putting pressure on Canadians. Since then, the Liberal government has continuously raised the carbon tax and is planning to raise it again on April 1. How do we expect Canadians to make their homes more energy-efficient when they can only afford to either pay the carbon tax or make their homes more energy-efficient? They cannot afford to pay both.

Many constituents in my riding, especially seniors with fixed incomes, have reached out to me regarding their natural gas and electrical bills. They have all expressed their concerns on the added carbon tax that was charged to their entire bill and not to the gas or electricity they used. The carbon tax added to their overall bill is not fair because this means they are paying on franchise and distribution fees, rather than on what they actually used.

On February 9, I reached out to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and informed them that the added carbon tax is unaffordable and unfair to consumers, especially when the carbon tax portion of their bill is larger than the actual natural gas or electricity they consume. The response of the Minister of Environment and Climate Change was that the people of Alberta were "better off with the system we've put in place than without it." How are the people of Alberta better off with this system, when they have all reached out to me and expressed their concerns and frustration for the added carbon tax on their entire utility bills?

The government will say that it is okay, because it is giving back more to Canadians than what they are being charged. However, based on the public accounts, the government pocketed \$136 million above what it actually returned to Canadians. The Liberal government is making the cost of living for Canadians more expensive when it actually pockets \$136 million of Canadians' money.

In order to lower carbon emissions, Canadians need to make their homes more energy-efficient, but they cannot afford to do so because of their high utility bills. It is doing nothing to improve our environment, and this is why the government's policies are hurting Canadians.

• (1855)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I and our entire government are fully aware that many Canadians are feeling the effects of inflation, including higher prices for groceries and heating. The response that the minister gave was simply to put it into context.

Of course, Canadians are seeing price increases at the grocery store, but this is due to circumstances entirely out of our control. We are actually, at the moment, facing unprecedented global inflation, because the world economy is reopening after the pandemic, because there is a war at the moment at the very foot of Europe. Ukraine is known as the breadbasket of Europe for a reason, and the war is absolutely having an impact on food prices around the world.

I would also like to remind the member opposite that Canada's inflation remains lower than the OECD average. It remains lower than the G7 average and lower than the G20 average. We here in Canada and as a federal government are doing our utmost, and the numbers prove it, to protect Canadians from this global inflationary pressure.

[Translation]

I would also like to remind the House that economists from the Bank of Canada and the private sector believe that inflation will remain a little higher for a little longer than originally expected. However, they expect it to progressively drop to a target of 2% over the next two years. I think it is important to remember that.

What is more, I would like to remind my colleague that it is thanks to the federal government that Canadian workers were able to continue receiving their pay cheques during the pandemic. The reason we put so many programs in place was to ensure that Canadians could keep putting food on the table.

It is because of our support and our avoidance of austerity policies during the pandemic that Canada is seeing a rapid and resilient recovery right now, with growth of 6.7% in the last quarter.

• (1900)

[English]

Our recovery plan is targeted towards growth and job creation initiatives that will help boost supply and increase space for the economy to grow without the risk of higher inflation in the future.

My colleague also referred to what he called the “carbon tax”, but we on this side refer to it as “the price on pollution”. I would like to address that specific point by saying that the climate action incentive does fully compensate Canadians for that additional tax. Any surplus that the government, as my colleague said, “pocketed”, would not come from the pockets of Canadians but from businesses. I will also highlight a number of specific programs that we have recently put in place.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada supported emergency food programs, such as the emergency food security fund, the local food infrastructure program and the surplus food rescue program. Building on an investment of \$250 million to support local initiatives to fight food insecurity, we announced, in budget 2021, an additional \$140 million through the emergency food security fund and local food infrastructure fund to support organizations working to enhance healthy and nutritious food for Canadians.

As members can see, our government is absolutely seized with this issue. We have already worked to address the cost-of-living increase, and we will continue to do so.

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Mr. Gerald Soroka: Madam Speaker, once again, I would like to thank the member for not addressing my concerns.

The point that I would like to make is that inflation has increased by half a per cent just because of the carbon tax, which has already been proven at 0.4%. Also, the carbon tax is being charged on the entire utility bill and not just on the amount of gas or electricity consumed. Once again, that was not addressed.

The next thing I would like to talk about is how bills have increased in price by anywhere from \$200 to \$400 per household, and I am talking monthly, when it comes to electricity or natural gas. When we start adding that up over 12 months, we are dealing with a \$3,000 to \$4,000 increase, and the minister spoke about only giving about \$1,800 back. That is actually costing twice as much as what is being rebated. Therefore, the member is misleading the Canadian public in that regard.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, I will not engage the member's insulting comments at the end of his address. I would say, however, that we have put in place a number of other programs that I would draw his attention to, including for food security in the north. There is \$163 million to expand the nutrition north Canada program and there are additional programs for food policy in Canada. I believe he did address food prices in his question.

I would point out that homogenized milk cost \$1.46 per litre in 2019 and in 2022 it was \$1.63 per litre. That is an increase but it is a small increase. Chicken was \$7.50 per kilo in 2019 and is now \$8.04 per kilo. Canadians still have access to an abundance of food choices and access to some of the most affordable—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The hon. member for King—Vaughan.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have been representing the citizens of King—Vaughan for less than six months and it is already apparent that our country's immigration system is seriously broken. Every week, residents call my office to share with me the challenges they are facing, which include not only significant delays in response times and lengthy wait times, but unacceptable bureaucratic red tape that is negatively impacting their lives. Constituents tell me they are unable to reach immigration services by telephone, and when they do get through they are placed on hold for at least two hours. Simple routine updates take up to six months.

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These families simply want to be reunited with their loved ones. It is heart-wrenching to know that this is an issue affecting so many families and individuals across the country. The media recently reported that there is a backlog of almost two million immigration applications. That is almost two million people waiting for citizenship and residency or seeking refugee status who are forced to wait significant periods of time just to make any headway in our system.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has said it is ready to help everyone, but it is apparent that it cannot even manage those to whom it has already made promises. People in need are left behind, families remain separated, businesses are hurting and labour shortages are costing our economy. Newcomers and Canadians deserve to know how long it will take to clear up this backlog.

What is frightening is that this enormous backlog existed long before the Russian invasion of Ukraine occurred. This means that the new influx of refugees from Europe will further impact our already fragile system. The government has made bold promises to Ukrainians about their future in Canada, but how can we be sure that those seeking to flee Russia will not meet the brutal fate that some did in attempting to escape the Taliban? The Government of Canada promised to bring in 40,000 Afghan refugees, but so far only 8,500 have arrived. What is being done to guarantee that Ukrainian refugees will not face the same painful delays the Afghan people faced?

We do not have any more time to waste. Families are being left in war zones, people are being separated from their loved ones and children are growing up without their parents because of the same failed promises from the government, which says one thing and does another, leaving more and more people behind. We need immediate action from the government to significantly improve the immigration system.

What is the minister going to do to fulfill the promises his government has made, and what is he doing to get rid of this enormous application backlog?

• (1905)

[Translation]

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for King—Vaughan for her question. I am pleased to respond to it.

With the border closures and worldwide travel restrictions, the pandemic created unprecedented challenges for our immigration program. Despite these challenges, Canada was still able to finalize a record number of entries last year by processing an unprecedented number of landings.

In 2021, we processed over half a million applications and welcomed more than 405,000 new permanent residents, which represents the most newcomers in a single year in Canadian history.

[English]

The minister and I heard the deep frustrations held by those who are trying to come to Canada to reunite with their families. These delays and long response times for application updates have put

lives on hold. We sympathize with these families and understand the difficulties they face. That is why IRCC is taking immediate action to reduce the application inventories that have grown over the span of the pandemic.

At the end of last year, we saw that the permanent residence backlog was down by 29,000, that the family class inventory was down by 9,200 and that the processing standard for new spousal applications had returned to the service standard of 12 months. These are not just numbers. These are people being given the chance to start a new life in Canada and visit their loved ones. These decreases in inventory are partly thanks to the recently announced measures that build on the work that we have already completed when it comes to modernizing our immigration system and improving client experience by reducing wait times and offering a more transparent process.

To recap, IRCC recently hired an additional 500 new processing staff and have pivoted to digitizing applications. Earlier this year, we also officially launched a permanent residence tracker for spousal sponsorship applications and are in the process of releasing another online processing tool to give accurate estimates of wait times. These will cut out much of the back and forth between clients, MPs' offices and IRCC officers, which will ultimately result in more time to process the applications in our inventory.

With the easing of border measures, we anticipate an increase in visitor visas and that is why we have prepared ourselves by modernizing our immigration system. IRCC continues to develop strategies to ensure that we are able to process all new visitor applications received after September 7 of 2021 in a timely way. We will continue to process older applications, which may require more time.

We are also working to deliver the best possible client experience for all those who use our services, both in Canada and abroad, but we know we can do better and we must continue to look for ways to do so. I want to assure applicants that we continue to work as hard and as quickly as possible to reduce the processing times. Just this year alone, the department will again finalize more than half a million applications.

Canada has never been a more attractive place to work, study and live, and we are seeing tremendous interest from people around the world who wish to call Canada home. We want to ensure this trend continues and that is why we need to transform our immigration system. We need to ensure Canada remains competitive with other countries for the world's best talent, and we will do so by delivering the best—

• (1910)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for King—Vaughan.

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Mrs. Anna Roberts: Madam Speaker, my staff go into work every morning to listen to the heart-wrenching stories of these immigrants and it brings them to tears. I am concerned not just for the people who are trying to get answers for their loved ones in Afghanistan and Ukraine who want to come here to save their families. It is also a mental health issue for our staff because they are the ones who have to listen to these stories. They are the ones who have to say they cannot help people and hang up. They do not want to be those people. They want to be the people who say that our government is here to help them.

Twelve months is not acceptable. We need to do better and I am hoping that the government will make sure that it incorporates new procedures that will speed up the efficiency of all departments.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, as a local MP, I have certainly heard the frustration, like my hon. colleague, of

those who are trying to come to Canada to reunite with their family. As I said, we sympathize with these families and understand the difficulties they face, and we have made a commitment. We are on track to bring more than 40,000 Afghan refugees to Canada. We are close to 10,000 already. As for the war in Ukraine, we have opened a new tool, actually, that will facilitate a safe haven in Canada for those who are fleeing the war zone.

I can assure the member that with the modernizing of our system, we will achieve our objective.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:13 p.m.)

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