



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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CANADA

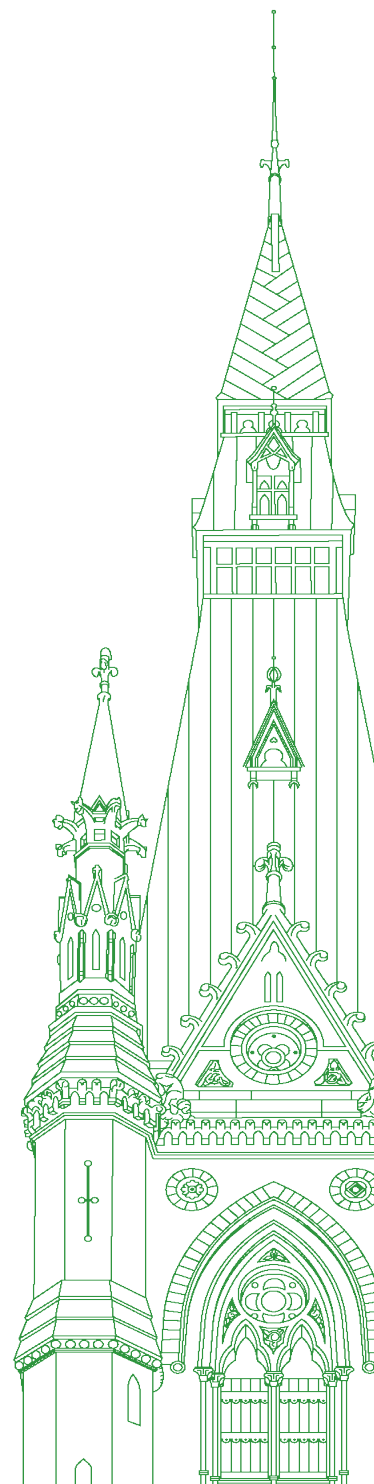
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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 28, 2022

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

● (1100)

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

ROYAL RECOMMENDATION FOR BILL C-237

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, February 28, the Chair encouraged members who would like to make arguments regarding the requirement for a royal recommendation with respect to Bill C-237 to do so as soon as possible. I would like to make some arguments. I will be brief.

Bill C-237 amends the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act to provide that a province may withdraw from a federal program in an area under the legislative authority of the province if, and only if, the province itself has a program whose objectives are comparable to those of the federal program. The province that withdraws is to be paid the same amount of money it would have received had it participated in the federal program.

By the same token, it amends the Canada Health Act, but only for Quebec. I will not reiterate the arguments that the bill's sponsor, the member for Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, so eloquently laid before us on March 1, but I fully agree with everything he said. Like him, I feel that Bill C-237 does not require a royal recommendation because it does not change the amounts transferred to the provinces, how funds are divided among the provinces, the end use of the funds or the executive's power to determine whether a province has a comparable program that justifies withdrawing from the program.

I would like to add a few points for the Chair to consider.

Section 54 of the Constitution Act, 1867, grants the power of initiative in tax matters to the Crown as follows:

It shall not be lawful for the House of Commons to adopt or pass any Vote, Resolution, Address, or Bill for the Appropriation of any Part of the Public Revenue, or of any Tax or Impost, to any Purpose that has not been first recommended to that House by Message of the Governor General

It clearly states, “any purpose”. The same term is used in Standing Order 79.

Over the years, the Chair has had occasion to clarify the scope of that term. According to page 838 of *House of Commons Procedure*

and *Practice*, third edition, the Chair has ruled that in order for a private member's bill to proceed without a royal recommendation, its objects, purposes, conditions and qualifications must not be significantly altered.

My colleague from Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel introduced a series of bills comparable in scope to Bill C-237 that did not have royal recommendation.

On March 22, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons presented two cases where the Chair had ruled that the bills required royal recommendation. These two bills have something in common. In both cases, the change in the conditions and qualifications opened the door to potentially increasing the amount of spending. In the case of Bill C-490 introduced in 2007, it is clear. In addition to increasing the guaranteed income supplement, the bill set out that a person could retroactively receive the benefits for all the previous years they were entitled to receive them but did not apply for them.

The change in conditions and qualifications significantly increased the amount of spending. The Chair was absolutely right in that case to require royal recommendation.

The government also brought up the example of Bill C-243, introduced in 2016, which was similar. It provided for a pregnant woman to obtain employment insurance maternity benefits before giving birth if her work posed a risk to her health or her pregnancy. It is true that the weekly benefit would not change. It is also true that the maximum number of weeks of benefits would not change either, but a third of new mothers do not draw the maximum number of weeks because they return to work before using them all.

We can assume that a significant number of women would draw maternity benefits for longer if they started to receive them a month, two months, or even three months sooner. Thus, the changes to the employment insurance eligibility conditions that were set out in Bill C-243 had the potential effect of increasing the amount of spending.

● (1105)

Therefore, it was logical that a royal recommendation be required for that bill.

Private Members' Business

That is not the case with Bill C-237. There is no possibility whatsoever that the bill will result in new spending or that its purpose will change. The government is suggesting a very broad interpretation of the royal recommendation. It is suggesting that when a bill with financial implications changes a condition or a qualification, it must be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

If that were the case, a bill to change the colour of a form would also require a royal recommendation because it would change the condition for access to a program, even though it would not change the amount or the purpose, which are the terms used in the Constitution or the Standing Orders. That is definitely not the spirit of the Standing Orders, as in future it would not be possible to make any amendments whatsoever to any budget bill.

In closing, in the Chair's interpretation of what constitutes a significant change when a bill amends the conditions and qualifications associated with spending, I suggest that we look to the terms used in both the Constitution and the Standing Orders. Does it change the amount of the expenditure? Does it change the purpose of the expenditure? If it does not change one or the other, it should not require a royal recommendation. In that sense, I believe that we should be able to vote on Bill C-237 at all stages, even if the Crown were to refuse to grant a royal recommendation.

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

[English]

It being 11:08 a.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

PROTECTION OF FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE ACT

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC) moved that Bill C-230, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (intimidation of health care professionals), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise today to begin the debate on my private member's bill, Bill C-230, the protection of freedom of conscience act. This bill revives my private member's bill, which died on the Order Paper, from the last Parliament, with some slight modifications.

I would be remiss if I did not once again acknowledge that this bill is built on the hard work and determination of former members of Parliament. The first bill proposed to address this issue was introduced by the late Mark Warawa in 2016. His bill did not proceed because of the government's introduction of Bill C-14. After Bill C-14 was passed into law, my former colleague David Anderson introduced his private member's bill, Bill C-418, during the 42nd Parliament. However, that bill also died on the Order Paper when the general election was called in 2019.

I would like to thank all those who have been championing this issue for many years and their willingness to work with me. Experts

throughout Canada have provided information and advice, while thousands of grassroots Canadians voiced their support for protecting our fundamental freedoms. I would also like to thank the Library of Parliament for its timely, diligent and expert research, which helped inform this proposed legislation.

For the purposes of this debate, I think it is important to understand conscience. There are numerous definitions of conscience, but they are consistent in defining it as an individual's inner sense of knowing the difference between what is right and wrong and allowing that knowledge to guide their behaviour. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, under the heading of "Fundamental Freedoms", in subsection 2(a) states that everyone has the fundamental freedom of conscience. In this way, Bill C-230 is straightforward. It seeks to add two new offences to the Criminal Code of Canada. I will read the summary so members will know what they are:

This enactment amends the Criminal Code to make it an offence to intimidate a medical practitioner, nurse practitioner, pharmacist or other health care professional for the purpose of compelling them to take part, directly or indirectly, in the provision of medical assistance in dying.

It also makes it an offence to dismiss from employment or to refuse to employ a medical practitioner, nurse practitioner, pharmacist or other health care professional for the reason only that they refuse to take part, directly or indirectly, in the provision of medical assistance in dying.

This bill is a response to calls from disability rights groups, first nations, the Ontario Medical Association, legal experts and many medical and mental health professionals to protect conscience rights. It ensures that medical professionals who choose not to take part in or refer a patient for assisted suicide or medical assistance in dying will never be forced or coerced to violate their freedoms as stated in the charter.

Previous Parliaments have passed laws that created the unintended consequence of doctors and medical professionals being forced to participate in providing a patient's death, regardless of whether they believe it is in their best interest. Bill C-14 and Bill C-7 created a federal standard for medical assistance in dying and assisted suicide but not for conscience protections.

By way of background, sections 241.1 to 241.4 of the Criminal Code of Canada deal with the provision of medical assistance in dying. These sections are in part VIII of the code. It deals with offences against the person and reputation, which include offences such as homicide, kidnapping, assault and many more. Subsection 241(1) of the Criminal Code still makes it a criminal offence to counsel or aid in a suicide. It reads:

Everyone is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term of not more than 14 years who, whether suicide ensues or not,

(a) counsels a person to die by suicide or abets a person in dying by suicide; or

(b) aids a person to die by suicide.

When creating the exemption allowing for MAID, the government had to create an exemption to this prohibition on counselling or aiding in suicide. This then leads to the untenable claim that the Criminal Code already protects the conscience rights of medical professionals.

• (1110)

Some claim that the clarification clause, section 241.2 (9) of the Criminal Code, somehow protects conscience rights. It states:

For greater certainty, nothing in this section compels an individual to provide or assist in providing medical assistance in dying.

While I understand why some would want to think it protects conscience rights, I believe they are sadly mistaken. While I appreciate and support this inclusion in the Criminal Code, it only addresses one side of the coin. This clause only confirms that the Criminal Code is not the source of compulsion to participate in medical assistance in dying.

For the Criminal Code to have any teeth on this issue, it should articulate that it is an offence to compel someone to provide, or assist in providing, medical assistance in dying against their will. Compelling someone to participate in MAID can and does happen, which is why I have brought forward this legislation and why it needs to pass.

Regarding jurisdictional questions about this bill, as I mentioned earlier, this bill proposes that two new offences be added to the Criminal Code of Canada to address intimidation, dismissal from employment or refusal to employ a medical professional. This is similar to section 425 of the Criminal Code, which addresses the same actions taken by an employer to compel employees with respect to belonging to or organizing a union. I would suggest that if it is appropriate to have section 425 in the Criminal Code, it is reasonable to include the amendments I am proposing.

I would also submit that it is inaccurate to argue that conscience rights legislation somehow interferes with the role of the provinces while, at the same time, believing that the legalization of medical assistance in dying does not. Ensuring that conscience rights are protected is the responsibility of Parliament and of the Government of Canada, which is why I introduced this bill and why it should be passed.

Additionally, provinces can introduce their own conscience rights legislation for medical professionals. For example, Manitoba has passed simple and clear legislation in this regard, and I would encourage all provincial legislatures and parliaments to follow Manitoba's example.

While the text of this bill focuses on the conscience rights of medical professionals, this legislation also serves to protect the right of patients to receive a second opinion. What do I mean by this? If all doctors are forced to propose MAID as a treatment option to their patients, this one-size-fits-all approach would give Canadian patients less choice, not more.

Additionally, individuals who object to MAID would be deterred from entering the medical profession altogether. Patients would no longer be able to seek a second opinion for their end-of-life care. In this way, conscience rights for medical professionals not only pro-

tect medical professionals and their patients, but they also protect our health care system.

Private Members' Business

Without conscience rights, doctors are constrained to provide, or refer their patients to receive, medical assistance in dying, regardless of whether it is their professional opinion that it is in the best interest of the patient. This concern for the patient's best interest does not mean that a medical professional objects to medical assistance in dying in all cases, just that in his or her opinion it is not an option that should have to be offered in every case. This became especially pertinent to the medical community with the passage of Bill C-7.

To highlight the impact of the removal of the safeguard that death be reasonably foreseeable, I would like to quote from a recent column published online in Policy Options magazine which states the following:

Many injuries and physical illnesses are indeed accompanied by temporary depression and suicidal thinking. For example, research demonstrates increased risk of suicide for two years after a spinal cord injury. This suicidality overwhelmingly ends with adaptation and recovery support. Offering death to anyone during a period of transient increased suicidality is, in our view, unethical and violates the standard of medical care by which physicians must abide.

The fact that the newly expanded law may facilitate death in those circumstances of increased suicidal thinking is, in and of itself, problematic.

• (1115)

Some have tried to frame conscience rights as the rights of the patient versus the rights of the doctor. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Health care is fundamentally about the doctor-patient relationship. For example, take the psychiatrist who supports MAID in certain circumstances, but in a certain case has spent 15 years counselling a patient who suffers from bouts of depression and suicidality. For 15 years, they have built understanding and trust. What would happen if that patient, suffering from a bout of suicidality, should demand assisted suicide? Under current law, that psychiatrist would be forced to refer that patient to someone else so he or she could die. They must do this, despite knowing that the suicidal thoughts are temporary and that otherwise the patient is joyful and loves his or her life. Ending that patient's life would be wrong, but the psychiatrist's hands are tied. This should not be what passes for medical care in Canada.

Some might claim that there are safeguards in place to prevent such tragedies, but I would ask them if they are absolutely sure. With the passage of Bill C-7, many safeguards for medical professionals were removed. We are talking about ending a human life. There is no room for uncertainty when a life hangs in the balance.

Private Members' Business

Additionally, should the first line of safeguards not be the expertise of the medical professionals who know their patients best? If those medical professionals do not believe death is the answer, should we not at least consider if they are right? However, this then leads to the concern some raise that protecting the conscience rights of medical professionals will block access to those who truly want it. I would suggest this is both misleading and nothing but baseless fearmongering. Medical assistance in dying and assisted suicide are readily available throughout all of Canada. There are information phone lines, hospitals staffed with willing medical professionals, even email addresses to help set up appointments. In a word, MAID has become the status quo. It is available.

The Canadian Medical Association also stated clearly that conscience protections would not affect access because there were more than enough physicians willing to offer MAID. Therefore, common sense should tell us that the charter rights of medical professionals are breached when they are forced to either offer or refer assisted suicide or medical assistance in dying. Surely, we have the capacity to both ensure access to MAID while still protecting the fundamental charter right to freedom of conscience.

Finally, some have suggested that medical professionals should leave their morality at the door. I do not believe we want this to happen. For example, we would all want and expect doctors to be bound by their morals if they were offered a bribe to move someone up on a waiting list. If we hold our medical professionals to a higher standard, we cannot then tell them to ignore their personal moral standards. Further, while discussing the issue of conscience rights with a doctor, she told me that, in the absence of conscience protection, the group with the most to lose are the patients, and they are the ones we are trying to help. This bill protects the doctor-patient relationship by ensuring that doctors and other medical professionals are always able to recommend and provide the care they believe is best for their patients. Patients need this bill to pass. Canada's medical professionals need this bill to pass.

Over the past two years, we have seen just how important our health care system is and how critical the medical professionals who work in that system are to Canadians and our way of life. We need to create a work environment for medical professionals that protects them, supports them, and encourages them to continue in the critical work they do.

In closing, I encourage all members to support passage of the protection of freedom of conscience act.

• (1120)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, leaving aside that this bill is likely within provincial jurisdictions regulating medical professionals, or professionals in general, and leaving aside it makes medical assistance in dying more difficult to access, I guess my question is in regards to other professions.

As a lawyer, and there was another lawyer sitting behind the hon. member, I was required to provide referrals to any client who came before me who I had a conflict with, or who I did not want to deal with. Law, like the medical profession, is a highly regulated profession. Why should doctors have that advantage over other profes-

sions when their patients' rights to access medical assistance in dying are at stake?

• (1125)

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I reject the premise that Canadians' access to MAID is at stake.

I just made the case that there is access to MAID in many circumstances in every province. I am a strong believer in the distinct jurisdictions of the federal and provincial government in Canada. That is why the bill that I have introduced respects the role of the provinces in the provision of health care and does not interfere with that in any way.

As I noted in my speech, the bill amends the Criminal Code, which falls under the jurisdiction of the federal government. I would encourage all provincial legislatures and Parliament to consider enacting protection for freedom of conscience acts.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am not convinced by the argument about the basic premise of this bill.

For example, in Quebec, we have a law that protects freedom of conscience for all professionals. Anyone who is a member of a professional association in Quebec has the opportunity to exercise their freedom of conscience and require it be respected.

I am a social worker and a member of the professional association of social workers. I have been a support person for people who chose to receive medical assistance in dying. I can assure the member that, in Quebec, any professional who does not feel comfortable supporting a person who made this choice can easily refuse to do so. The same thing applies to doctors.

Can my colleague explain to me what more this bill, which in my opinion infringes on Quebec's jurisdiction, does for people who want to die with dignity in Quebec?

[English]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, one of the most common threads we heard throughout the testimony from experts on Bill C-7 was that there was a need for national conscience rights.

The committee heard from patients rights groups, lawyers, disabilities rights experts, medical ethicists, indigenous leaders, imams, rabbis and priests, as well as individuals who provided testimony of their own personal experiences, which are very different than the one that the member spoke to.

I have also received emails from physicians from across the country who are deeply concerned about their ability to continue practising as a result of, and from those who have experienced, intimidation and coercion to participate in the provision of MAID.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to ask the member about the Ontario Court of Appeal ruling of May 2019, in the case of the Christian Medical and Dental Society of Canada versus College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

In this case, the court very clearly said that the obligation to provide a referral to procedures physicians might personally object to, including abortion, gender reassignment surgery and medical assistance in dying, was found constitutional because patients have a right to access information and to access health care services.

When the courts have decided quite clearly that the referral is not a matter of conscience, why is the member proceeding with this bill?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, obviously support for legislated conscience rights protection varies between associations and colleges, as well as from province to province.

I would just point out that paragraph 42 found that there was no direct evidence that access to health care was a problem caused by physicians' religious objections to providing MAID.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak this morning with respect to Bill C-230, an act to amend the Criminal Code, intimidation of health care professionals, which was introduced by the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek. I want to acknowledge that I am speaking today on the traditional unceded lands of the Algonquin people.

The stated goal of Bill C-230 is to protect an important right: the right to freedom of conscience and religion, which is guaranteed by section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is a laudable goal, but one that I do not think the bill achieves. The bill proposes to create two new criminal offences that seek to protect the right of health care professionals, including medical practitioners, nurse practitioners and pharmacists, to object to taking part in the provision of medical assistance in dying to provide services according to their conscience.

First, it proposes the creation of a new intimidation offence that would prohibit the use of coercion or any intimidating behaviour to compel a health care professional to participate, directly or indirectly, in the provision of MAID. Second, it proposes the creation of an employment sanctions offence that would prohibit employers from refusing to employ, or to dismiss, health care professionals solely because they refused to participate directly or indirectly in the provision of MAID.

• (1130)

[Translation]

We certainly all agree that it is imperative that the right to freedom of conscience and religion be protected, not only for health

professionals in the context of medical assistance in dying, but for everyone in Canada.

[English]

This is central to ensuring that we are able to live our lives, both personally and professionally, with equal rights and dignity. However, I do not believe that the proposed Criminal Code amendments are necessary to protect this central right, so I must oppose the bill.

The proposed intimidation offence, which would prohibit the use of coercion or intimidation to compel a health care professional to participate in MAID, largely duplicates existing Criminal Code offences. For instance, in section 423, the Criminal Code already prohibits the use of violence, threats of violence, intimidation or attempts at intimidation to compel any person to abstain from doing anything that they have a lawful right to do, or to do anything that they have a lawful right to abstain from doing. Criminal Code section 346 also makes it an offence to extort someone, which is to use threats, accusations, menaces or violence to induce, or attempt to induce, that person to do anything or to cause anything to be done. These are both indictable offences and are punishable by maximums of 14 years imprisonment and life imprisonment, respectively.

The existing offences of intimidation and extortion apply in all circumstances, including in the context of the provision of MAID by health care professionals. I believe that these offences provide sufficient protection for health care professionals who do not wish to participate in the provision of MAID.

The proposed employment sanctions offence would prohibit employers from refusing to employ, or to dismiss, health care professionals simply because they refuse to participate in the provision of MAID. This is a valid and important objective, but I urge us to reflect on how such a provision may encroach on provincial and territorial jurisdiction.

As all members of the House are aware, MAID falls under the shared jurisdiction of the federal government, which has jurisdiction over criminal law, and of provincial governments, which are responsible for the provision of health care. However, with the exception of federally regulated sectors, employment-related matters generally fall within the responsibility of the provinces and territories. As such, employment concerns may be more appropriately addressed by the regulation of employers at the provincial and territorial level. Irrespective of jurisdictional issues, I also wonder whether criminal law is the right tool to use to address employment issues.

I am also mindful that, even though the preamble of Bill C-230 suggests that it seeks to respond to circumstances in which practitioners are required to make effective referrals for MAID, the bill would not address that issue because the professional orders that establish those policies would not be captured by the proposed employment sanctions offence.

Private Members' Business

We must remember that the MAID legislation simply permits the provision of MAID. It does not compel anyone to provide it, whether directly or indirectly. In fact, it contains a provision explicitly clarifying that “nothing in this section compels an individual to provide or assist in providing medical assistance in dying.” This can be found in subsection 241.2(9).

I am not aware of any evidence that suggests that health care professionals are being coerced or intimidated to provide MAID. I wholeheartedly believe that the criminal law already offers protection to anyone who may be coerced to participate in MAID. I would also like to remind members that the criminal law should be used sparingly.

I would also like to note that the proposed offences would offer protection only to health care professionals who object to taking part in the provision of MAID. They would not apply in circumstances where a health care professional may wish to provide MAID but is coerced or intimidated to abstain from providing it. I have to question why we would resort to creating a new criminal offence to protect one health care professional's freedom of conscience but not another's.

Canadians have varied opinions on MAID, depending on their personal circumstances, beliefs and experiences. Despite these diverse views, public opinion research consistently demonstrates strong support for MAID. Our MAID laws recognize the importance of permitting access to MAID as a means of relieving intolerable suffering for competent adults. The laws recognize that those who wish to access MAID should be able to do so, and available statistics show that many Canadians choose to receive MAID.

Since the first legislation in 2016 up until the most recent data released by Health Canada covering 2020, there have been 21,589 medically assisted deaths in Canada. The vast majority of persons who have received MAID had cancer as their main underlying condition, followed by persons who had cardiovascular conditions, chronic respiratory conditions and neurological conditions. This trend is consistent with the leading causes of death in Canada, which list cancer and heart disease as the number one and number two causes of death, respectively. These can be found in the Second Annual Report on Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada 2020.

MAID is a complex and deeply personal issue that engages fundamental rights and interests, both for persons contemplating MAID and for the health care professionals who choose or choose not to participate in the provision of MAID. MAID is anything but straightforward, and we must continue to work together to find appropriate and effective solutions to balance the rights of persons to access MAID with the rights of health care professionals to provide quality care and service in accordance with their conscience. I appreciate the spirit of this bill, but I continue to have real concerns that it would appear to be an improper use of the Criminal Code. I must therefore oppose it.

• (1135)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, the bill we are debating today has to do with protecting the freedom of conscience of health care professionals and practitioners when it comes to medical assistance in dying.

I think we should base our debate on the approach that Quebec took on this matter back in 2010. Quebec studied this issue from 2010 to 2014. The debates were non-partisan. The process allowed for all points of view to be heard and compiled. The focus of the debate was human dignity.

When talking about end-of-life care, we must not forget that the way to protect human dignity lies in freedom of choice. No one can claim to be acting in a patient's best interests if that patient is not allowed to make their own decisions. What is interesting about the Conservatives' bill is that they want the state to be less involved in the economy but more involved in our lives, especially when it comes to death, which is one of the intimate decisions a human being will make.

It is not the state or Conservative members who are going to die in place of the individual, the person who is dying, the patient, so why are they trying to interfere in this decision?

This bill is pointless, and I say this because subsection 241.2(9) already stipulates that no one can be compelled or forced to provide medical assistance in dying against their will.

As I just mentioned, the Quebec legislation should guide us in our debate here today. Section 31 of the Quebec legislation stipulates that medical practitioners cannot be forced to participate directly or indirectly in MAID, and I quote:

A physician practising in a centre operated by an institution who refuses a request for medical aid in dying for a reason not based on section 29 [which sets out all the conditions that a doctor must meet before deciding whether to provide medical assistance in dying] must, as soon as possible, notify the executive director of the institution or any other person designated by the executive director and forward the request form given to the physician, if that is the case, to the executive director or designated person. The executive director of the institution or designated person must then take the necessary steps to find, as soon as possible, another physician willing to deal with the request in accordance with section 29.

This means that a patient who is dying and highly vulnerable should not be burdened with having to take the steps I just mentioned. The bill the Conservatives are introducing today would do just that. It would force these individuals to take those steps at the most vulnerable time of their lives, when they are dying or about to die. However, medical practitioners can refuse to participate directly or indirectly in MAID.

As we heard during the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights' study of Bill C-7, some practitioners, citing freedom of conscience, are currently refusing to abide by the Collège des médecins du Québec's code of ethics and forward the request. In other words, they are ignoring the request, which they are not allowed to do.

• (1140)

In Quebec, conscientious objection is defined as follows: “Health professionals must not ignore a request for medical aid in dying. However, a doctor may refuse to administer medical aid in dying because of his or her personal values. The doctor must notify, as soon as possible, the executive director of the institution”.

That is the issue. The Conservatives have introduced a bill to add a provision to the Criminal Code that would make what they call intimidation in health care facilities an offence.

This would be a situation where a health care professional dealing with a family supporting a dying patient—a father, a mother, a brother, a sister—offers end-of-life options without ever mentioning medical assistance in dying. That is the kind of scenario we are talking about.

Quebec was a leader in this area and contributed to advancing the legislation, but there is still a lot of resistance on the ground when a patient requests medical assistance in dying. That can manifest in various ways. The surprising thing is that this resistance stands in stark contrast to what I consider the essence of Quebec's legislation, which was to integrate end-of-life care into the palliative care continuum.

In the current debate, there is one side advocating for palliative care and another advocating for medical assistance in dying. Quebec's legislation did not fall into the trap of such unnecessary division. Palliative care should be accessible, and the continuum of palliative care can give rise to a request for medical assistance in dying. A request for MAID emerges when a patient is given the opportunity to make a free and informed choice.

A person's dignity must not be defined by how they die, and it cannot be compromised because death is considered to be distasteful. To respect a human being is to respect their dignity, and that means respecting their independence and capacity for self-determination until their last breath.

The law enshrines the principle of self-determination throughout our lives, especially when it comes to medical decisions. No one can interfere with my person without my free and informed consent. Why then, at the most intimate moment in my life, would the state interfere in my life and take away my right to self-determination? I can only make a free choice if the practitioner is able to offer me all the choices, including access to palliative care, palliative sedation, and medical assistance in dying. This is a decision that only a dying person can make.

These types of bills and debates take us away from far nobler objectives. There is nothing new here to crow about; it was already set out in the legislation.

I would like members to understand why the Bloc Québécois will oppose this bill. We oppose this bill because at present, in Quebec, some people requesting MAID in a hospital are not being admitted to a palliative care unit. It is shameful that people at the end of their lives must live their last moments in a place that is far from peaceful and far from what is recommended as appropriate for dying with dignity. Why oppose that?

Private Members' Business

• (1145)

We must focus our efforts on having a continuum of care, working to ensure that palliative care is as available and accessible as possible in all forms, whether at home, in hospices, or elsewhere. A request for assisted death must be viewed not as a failure, but as a success in accompanying an individual towards death.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP):

Madam Speaker, I am pleased though a bit surprised to be speaking on Bill C-230. Less than a year ago, on May 27, 2021, we were in the House debating Bill C-268, the very same bill from the very same member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek. While I am a bit in awe of the member's ability to place so highly in the random draw for Private Members' Business in two successive Parliaments, I am also at a bit of a loss to explain why the member would squander her luck on this bill.

There are two reasons I say this. As MPs we get limited opportunities to place bills directly before the House. I had that opportunity in 2013, and I used it to put forward Bill C-279, which sought to add gender identity and gender expression to the list of prohibited grounds for discrimination in the Canadian human rights code and in the hate crime section of the Criminal Code. Though many thought it unlikely, the bill did pass the House with support from MPs from all parties. It took a lot of work to put together that coalition of MPs. While my bill followed a somewhat tortuous path, there was always a path forward and it became law.

I wonder why it is that having heard so clearly, in speeches less than a year ago, that there was limited, if any, support for this bill outside her own party, the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek has brought it back again. Since there is nothing to indicate any change of circumstances or any change of heart, this bill will go nowhere this time as well. Failing to bring forth a bill that might have some prospect for passing or reintroducing this bill instead of bringing forward a new bill presenting ideas not already debated here in the House leads me to call reintroducing this bill, at best, a missed opportunity.

The second reason I have for declaring the reintroduction of this bill a lost opportunity has to do with the bill itself. This bill picks up a tiny portion of the extensive and important debates on medical assistance in dying that took place on Bill C-14 in Parliament in 2016 and again on C-7 in the last Parliament. It seeks to take one small and very debatable point and turn it into a wedge issue in the House.

Private Members' Business

We are waiting for the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying to get down to work on outstanding important and critical issues around medical assistance in dying, but as that committee has yet to get under way, I want to take this opportunity today to restate the principle that has guided New Democrats through these debates.

We believe that medical assistance in dying is an important tool for helping to end unnecessary suffering for patients facing end-of-life issues and for avoiding the unnecessary suffering of their families, who have to accompany them on this journey. This is the reason New Democrats will always defend the right of access to information about MAID and access to the service for all those who qualify for assistance in dying and choose to proceed.

In the debate on Bill C-7, many issues arose concerning the challenges Canadians face at the end of life, some of which Bill C-7 addressed directly and some which have not yet been addressed. Two important concerns were front and centre, and these, for me, were the most important. The first was to help alleviate unnecessary suffering by eliminating the waiting period, which was a cause of great concern for patients who feared loss of capacity before they could complete the waiting period and thus make them ineligible for medical assistance in dying and forced to consider suffering.

The second was a change allowing a waiver of final consent. This is a provision I know quite well, personally, as a friend of mine chose to go earlier than she would have liked because of a brain tumour and her fear that she would lose capacity to consent at the last moment and, in doing so, have to continue making her family suffer.

A second challenge was also debated in Bill C-7. How do we preserve as much autonomy as possible for Canadians who are dying? Most of the issues related to this still have to be dealt with at the special joint committee. This includes questions of advance directives, the question of access to MAID for those with mental illness and for mature minors, and whether protections for people with disabilities from being pressured to seek MAID are adequate. I remain frustrated with the delays in dealing with these very important issues. The bill before us is not one of those.

A third challenge that came up in the debate on Bill C-7 was access to services at the end of life. We learned there are a great many gaps in services in our Canadian health care system for those who are facing death. There are gaps in diagnostic and treatment services depending on where one lives, whether it is a major city with excellent facilities or a rural and remote area. We learned of important gaps in palliative care.

However, instead of addressing these challenges, the challenges of autonomy and the challenges of access to services, Bill C-230 is about something else altogether. What this bill would do is override a patient's right to access information about and to have access to legally provided medical services, based on the personal beliefs of a service provider.

• (1150)

Let me put that in plain language. Let us suppose there are a variety of treatments available to a patient. It does not really matter in this case what they are. If a medical professional believes that one

of them should not be available, this bill says there is no obligation on that professional to make sure patients find out all the options available to them. Professional organizations, like colleges of physicians and surgeons, and colleges of nurses, have found this to be unethical behaviour, so they require doctors, to varying degrees, to refer patients to someone who is supportive of those services and who is available to provide those services.

This requirement to refer exists in its strictest form in Ontario as the right of patients to an effective referral, meaning a referral to a health care professional who is available, capable and willing to provide that service. This has been upheld by the courts as a reasonable compromise between the rights of patients' access to medical issues and the conscience rights of service providers. That is the main reason I cannot support this bill. If passed, it would result, on a very real and practical basis, in the denial of access to necessary health services for many Canadians.

Many communities have a very limited number of doctors and if one of those doctors, or even more than one of those doctors, is unwilling to let their patients find out about medical assistance in dying, then we are condemning those Canadians to suffer at the end of life in ways that other Canadians would not have to suffer. No health care professionals are in fact required by law to participate, and that is why I find titling this bill "intimidation of health care professionals" disingenuous at best. Is requiring a referral actually participation in medical assistance in dying? Clearly it is not, and trying to torque a requirement to provide information into participation helps no one understand the real issues of conscience involved in medical assistance in dying.

An equally important reason for opposing this bill is the dangerous precedent that this bill would set. Its role as a potentially precedent-setting bill has already been noted by anti-choice advocates who have been vocal in their support for this bill. They recognize that it would provide a precedent for denying referrals for access to contraception and abortion services, and I want to point out that denials of service and denials of information are very real in our existing Canadian medical care system.

This bill would also be a very bad precedent for current attempts to deny transgender minors the counselling and medical services they need to affirm who they are. Without access to services that others may think are inappropriate, this will leave families with trans minors struggling to find the information and support that their kids really need. If this kind of precedent is allowed, medical professionals would not have to provide a referral to someone who would be providing a medically necessary service.

As I approach the end of my comments today, I cannot end without mentioning yet another unfortunate precedent set in this bill, and that is its use of inflammatory language. I have no doubt, as I said in my question to the sponsor of this bill, of her personal convictions and their strength. However, as sincere as they may be, the language used in this bill conjures up a spectre of the use of violence to intimidate medical professionals, something of which there is absolutely no evidence of happening in Canada. Invoking the spectre of violent intimidation is certainly not conducive to an informed debate on the real issues that are in question here.

I will close my comments today by restating that, on principle, New Democrats are opposed to any legislation that would limit access to Canadians seeking information about or the service of medical assistance in dying. No matter how strong the beliefs others may hold, this right exists to access medically necessary services. There is no doubt that the end of life is a difficult moment for all families, and medical assistance in dying, I still believe, is an important way of ending unnecessary suffering both for patients and families at the end of life. I would not like to see anyone denied access to information they need to make a choice that protects their own autonomy of how their lives end. At this point, let me salute the health care professionals who assist patients and their families through this very difficult process.

Once again, I lament the tendency of not just this member but, indeed, many Conservative members of the House to use private member's bills for scoring political points and sharpening divisions in the House—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Randall Garrison:—instead of looking for opportunities to work together for the common good of Canadians.

• (1155)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to the next speaker, I want to remind members to afford the respect of the House to others when members have the floor. It is really important to have that respect. I am sure that members do not want to be interrupted when they are speaking.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of Bill C-230, the protection of freedom of conscience act, introduced by my friend, the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek.

The bill before us is much-needed legislation to protect the charter rights of medical professionals who conscientiously object to providing or otherwise participating in medical assistance in dying. I want to commend the member for her steadfast leadership in championing conscience rights and for bringing this bill back to the House, as she introduced a similar bill that died on the Order Paper in the last Parliament.

Medical assistance in dying raises profound legal, moral and ethical questions. The trial judge in the Carter decision, which struck down the Criminal Code prohibition against physician-assisted death, stated, “The evidence shows that thoughtful and well-motivated people can and have come to different conclusions about

whether physician-assisted death can be ethically justifiable.” This is true of patients, and it is true of medical professionals.

Private Members' Business

Medical professionals have a duty to do what is in the best interest of their patients and to provide the best possible advice based upon their judgment and experience, all of which are grounded on moral and professional convictions. In the case of medical assistance in dying, there are professional, moral and ethical considerations of the highest weight.

In the Carter decision, the Supreme Court predicated its decision on two things: a willing patient and, as importantly, a willing physician. At paragraph 132 of the Carter decision, the court said that nothing in its pronouncement would compel medical professionals to participate in MAID. The court went further in stating that, “However, we note...in addressing the topic of physician participation...that a physician's decision to participate in assisted dying is a matter of conscience and, in some cases, of religious belief.” In other words, again, it requires a willing patient and a willing physician.

Now, there are those who would say that this legislation is redundant, that it is not needed, and that in terms of medical assistance in dying, conscience rights of medical professionals are already protected. They would point to the pronouncement in Carter. They might also cite Bill C-14, which includes a preamble that expressly recognizes conscience rights as well as a “for greater certainty” clause in the Criminal Code, which simply provides that “for greater certainty, nothing in this section compels an individual” to provide MAID.

While the intention of Parliament was to protect the conscience rights of medical professionals when Bill C-14 was debated and passed—and I was there for, and actively participated in, that debate and the study of that bill at committee—in practice, conscience protections and the rights of medical professionals are not being respected across Canada. There is a gap, and that is why, when Bill C-7 was studied at the justice committee, we heard from medical professionals who expressed serious concerns about pressure and coercion in providing MAID.

Government Orders

• (1200)

Indeed, the Ontario Medical Association wrote to our committee and specifically called on the committee to amend Bill C-7 to provide greater conscience protections for medical professionals, given that the “for greater certainty” clause, although better than nothing, simply does not have teeth. It is not enforceable. In that context, while the Criminal Code does not compel a medical professional to provide MAID, there is nothing in the Criminal Code that specifically protects medical professionals when they are pressured or coerced to provide MAID. This bill addresses that gap and would close it by establishing two targeted offences; namely, it would make it an offence to intimidate or coerce a medical professional with regard to providing or participating in MAID, and secondly, it would make it an offence to dismiss or refuse to hire a medical professional solely on the grounds that they object to participating in MAID.

While this legislation would protect the rights of medical professionals, it must also be emphasized that this bill would just as much protect the rights of patients. The bill would protect the rights of patients by protecting the physician-patient relationship. It would do so by safeguarding the ability of medical professionals to provide their best advice and judgment, free of pressure and free of coercion, to a patient who is considering medical assistance in dying. It would protect patients by protecting their right to a second opinion. There can be no second opinion, or at least a guarantee of a second opinion, in the face of coercion or pressure to provide medical assistance in dying. There can be no second opinion when the only choice offered to a patient is medical assistance in dying as a result of pressure and coercion.

The need to safeguard the patient-physician relationship, which this bill works toward achieving, is all the more needed in the face of the radical expansion of medical assistance in dying in Canada with the passage of Bill C-7, which removes critical safeguards, including the criterion that death be reasonably foreseeable and opens the door to medical assistance in dying for persons who are suffering solely from a mental illness, even though it is never possible to predict when someone who is suffering from mental illness can get better. It is never possible to predict irremediability in the case of a solely mental illness. As a result of the removal of those critical safeguards, vulnerable patients are put at greater risk.

When the conscience rights of medical professionals to exercise their best judgment are protected free of intimidation and coercion, the rights of patients are equally protected. This is a timely, targeted and necessary piece of legislation that would protect the rights of medical professionals and their charter rights and the rights of patients. I urge its passage.

• (1205)

[Translation]

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS*[Translation]***ECONOMIC AND FISCAL UPDATE IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2021**

The House resumed from March 25 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. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, historically, the powers that be have always used crises as an opportunity to build an increasingly unitary government and spread its tentacles. The so-called Canadian Confederation has always been predatory and oppressive.

This was true after the Patriotes rebellion of 1837 and 1838 was quashed by the Act of Union, which was sanctioned following the recommendation of the fundamentally racist Durham report. It was true after the world wars, when taxes that had officially been called temporary became permanent.

It was also true after the 1980 referendum on sovereignty-association, with the unilateral repatriation of the Constitution, which Quebec still has not signed. It was true after the 1995 referendum, when the government unilaterally cut provincial transfers. I remind members that Ottawa used its new surpluses to create a plethora of programs, while Quebec was forced to slash funding for public services.

It would have been really naive of us to believe that the government would not use the COVID-19 crisis to spread its tentacles into new areas it had no reason to be in.

Budget 2021 gave us a taste of that by setting up a structure of federal intervention in areas under provincial jurisdiction. The Liberal-NDP alliance, the new ultracentralist coalition in power, will be more successful than ever at cloaking its subjugating and imperious ambitions in progressive language.

The 1% tax on underused housing owned by foreign developers proposed in Bill C-8 is a prime example of that.

I want to make one thing clear. This is a good idea in and of itself. I had the opportunity to talk about it a few weeks ago, and I said that it is a good idea on paper, in principle, because it seeks to prevent speculators from buying and selling based on the ups and downs of the market. There is no doubt that real estate speculation is a real problem right now, given that the housing situation is on the brink of disaster.

It should be noted, however, that Ottawa has been shirking its responsibility to provide appropriate funding for the construction of social and affordable housing since the 1990s and that those cuts deprived Quebec of 80,000 housing units. That little dig at the federal government aside, the tax on real estate speculation is a good measure, even if it is a very minor one.

However, just because an idea has the potential to address a legitimate problem does not mean that the federal government should violate Quebec's sovereignty and interfere in its jurisdictions. That is why we are calling this tax the "invasion tax".

On February 17, 2022, constitutional expert Patrick Taillon explained to the Standing Committee on Finance that this idea comes with some serious negative consequences.

The ultimate goal of this so-called invasion tax is to set some parameters surrounding the right to housing, which is an explicit and exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces, and the government wants to do so without any prior consultation or agreement with the provinces.

I remind members that successive governments in Ottawa have boasted about engaging in co-operative federalism, which is a chimera. The concept of co-operative federalism has taken on several names over the years, but it is actually asymmetrical or open federalism. This would not be my choice, as I would opt for independence over unco-operative federalism. This is a particularly centralizing direction for federalism.

Mr. Taillon explained that if this legislation is meant to regulate the right to housing, then it is likely unconstitutional. The pith of the bill goes beyond the jurisdiction of Parliament; it is a provincial jurisdiction.

Ottawa used its usual creativity to try to find a way around the division of powers that it has an obligation to respect, so this is an attempt to disguise a regulatory measure that falls under Quebec's jurisdiction as a tax measure.

• (1210)

This is the very first time that Ottawa has dared to interfere in the area of property taxes by seeking to penalize non-resident, non-Canadian second home owners. If this bill is directly related to the housing act, then we must conclude that it is unconstitutional.

It goes without saying that no one here is challenging the government's right to impose new taxes. If the primary goal is not to generate revenue but instead to limit or discourage certain behaviours related to real estate speculation, then this is more of a regulatory measure than a new tax, and it must be associated with an area of jurisdiction, in this case housing, which has always been governed by the provinces.

Without an agreement with Quebec and the provinces or their collaboration, a federal property tax would compromise the fiscal balance, which I would politely describe as already being fragile. Why would we let Ottawa borrow a tax tool that is not its own from the various local authorities, namely the municipalities and school boards, that need this tool themselves?

That imbalance will only grow in the coming years, especially given rising health care costs that Ottawa is still refusing to finance appropriately. It is important to emphasize that the Parliamentary Budget Officer's Fiscal Sustainability Report, which was released in June 2021, confirmed that the federal government still has financial flexibility, in contrast to the provinces, which have none and are in fact facing long-term viability problems. This really is not the time to be interfering in their business.

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History has made it very clear that, once Ottawa gets its hands on tax fields, it never lets go. Been there, done that. Take corporate income tax, for example, which was a supposedly temporary measure brought in after the First World War, or personal income tax, another supposedly temporary measure brought in after the Second World War.

This property tax sets a dangerous precedent because Ottawa will inevitably have to set up various delegation of authority tools and infrastructure to manage it. This tax does not work like other federal taxes, so it will require new systems. As Mr. Taillon explained, once the mechanism to administer property tax is in place, it will be hard for Ottawa to resist the urge to look for more good ideas to fill that space.

Given the new ultracentralist coalition in power, I think I am entitled to feel that this will inevitably hurt the provinces, municipalities and school boards.

My political party proposed a single amendment to address this issue. We tried to find a compromise by proposing that the property tax measures apply only if the province agrees. That would just make sense, but unfortunately, the Bloc Québécois's amendment was deemed out of order by the Liberal committee chair, without even being debated. That is too bad.

In conclusion, taxation powers are directly connected to political sovereignty. In usurping an exclusive jurisdiction of the Quebec state, the federal regime is becoming more and more oppressive and Quebec is losing its agency and its power. Independence has its price, to be sure, but dependence is even more costly. This invasion tax is yet more evidence of that.

• (1215)

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about similar worries that I have about the continued centralization of government, and he talked about housing, which I am hearing a lot about in my community. The Conservatives have a solution: Motion No. 54. It is asking the federal government to abandon its failed first-time homebuyer initiative, which has only helped 15% of its target.

I wonder what the member thinks about supporting that motion. Also, what is he hearing from young people in his community? I am hearing that young people are starting to give up on the dream of home ownership. Could the member please comment on this important initiative?

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, needless to say, the housing system is in crisis. My colleague and I agree that there is a problem and that the solution being proposed is not the right way to go.

Government Orders

However, I think our political parties disagree on whether a real estate speculation tax should be imposed. I personally am in favour of this principle, but I simply think it was introduced in the wrong legislature.

I think my colleague also agrees with me on centralization.

However, our party differs from the Conservatives on another point. The Bloc believes that funding for housing needs to be completely overhauled so that it is not just private developers who benefit, but also community organizations, non-profit organizations and housing co-operatives, because they are the ones that know the real needs.

I also want to point out that the funding still needs to be rolled out. Ideally, that money would be sent to Quebec, and Quebec would take care of it. However, the federal government's withdrawal has deprived Quebec of roughly 80,000 housing units since the 1990s. As long as we pay taxes to Ottawa, we have a right to expect a fair return on our investment.

• (1220)

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke a lot about jurisdiction. I wonder if he is aware that the Supreme Court of Canada has declared that health care is shared jurisdiction in this country. I wonder if he is aware that the words “health care” do not appear in the Constitution at all. I wonder if he is aware that the only power given to the provinces in our Constitution is the establishment and maintenance of hospitals. Finally, I wonder if he is aware that the Canadian health care system, which Quebecers and all Canadians treasure so much, would not exist without federal legislation that established five conditions for the transfers of funds.

This is the system that he and the Bloc Québécois want more money for from the federal government. Is he aware that this system is dependent on federal jurisdiction, which ties the money to conditions?

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I am perfectly aware. There is a lot to read and study in the Constitution, which Quebec never signed.

It is also clear that delivering health care is a provincial responsibility, that the legislation governing health transfers to which my colleague referred is not being respected and that adequate funding is not being provided.

I thank my colleague for asking me whether I am aware of all this. My answer is yes, of course.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to add to my New Democratic colleague's thoughts. Canadians, as a whole, recognize and want to see a national government that truly cares, provides for them and is there in a tangible way with regard to health care. That is one of the reasons we have been advocating for national health care standards.

Would the member not recognize that even people in Quebec, along with other Canadians in all regions of the country, want to see a national government play a role in long-term health care and mental health? Would he at least acknowledge that as a fact?

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, Quebec has no lessons to learn about establishing a public and universal system. It has been a pioneer in the field. The system is poorly funded, actually underfunded. That is the problem.

That being said, if the rest of Canada is prepared to live with Canada-wide standards or programs and the provinces agree, then let it be on condition that there is always a right to opt out with full compensation, no matter the reason. Accordingly, a province that disagrees, like Quebec, should be able to opt out, take the money, and say that it will adjust its programs appropriately, the way it wants to do it.

[English]

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure, as always, to rise in the House to represent what I feel are the views in my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, in eastern Ontario, in response to the government's economic plan. Since it tabled this legislation, which we have been debating over the last couple months, last week's circumstance of the surprise but unsurprising deal between the NDP and the Liberals blew up the fiscal framework, several parts of which are in the bill and are going to be in subsequent budgets over the course of the next couple of years.

This specific piece of legislation has \$70 billion in new inflationary spending. One thing I say to constituents very often when we are talking about support for and the funding of various programs is that it is very easy to say that we are going to fund programs A, B, C and D. That is the motherhood and apple pie of our job. The difficult part, which I believe Canadians are paying more attention to, is the financial situation and stability that our country faces.

Every single dollar in this bill, if not every single part of it, is new debt and deficit to our Canadian treasury. Canadians hear the statistic, as confirmed in the bill, that our national debt is now \$1.2 trillion and growing, and one of the things we hear about is ideas. Parliament is for proposing ideas, and we are all here to make life better for Canadians. However, like in many of these bills, discussions and debates, putting the paid-for aspects on the Canadian credit card, for lack of a better term, is not talked about by the NDP and Liberal deal.

I have to laugh as I say that. As an aside, we ask if it is a coalition, an agreement, a friendship, a pact or a Kumbaya. Whatever it is, there is a framework and deal when it comes to the fiscal policy of this country over the course of the next few years. I would argue that from a technical perspective, the parties have a right in Parliament to come up with this agreement. I will not deny that. However, I think there is an ethical challenge here in terms of the openness and transparency of it. Millions of people voted for the NDP and did not vote to give the Liberal government, when it comes to committee or other measures, a free pass. Alternatively, there are many people who voted for Liberal candidates across the country who did not agree, on top of already having a deficit, to billions and billions of dollars of additional money.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer, who does great work, has had a couple of great reports that I think show a few things when it comes to the fiscal framework proposed by the government and NDP team. When it comes to the proposed stimulus spending, the PBO said, "It appears to me that the rationale for the additional spending initially set aside as 'stimulus' no longer exists." He also said, "Yes, they can" in response to being asked if government deficits can contribute to inflation.

Given the bigger picture here when we look at the economic situation and this economic bill, there is a clear contrast between us on the opposition side as Conservatives and this proposed bill from the Liberals and the NDP. There are a few things I want to talk about in my comments today that provide the contrast. Other ideas are better solutions for moving this country forward, getting back to normalcy, getting our fiscal house in order and addressing many of the growing challenges and situations I am hearing about in my riding and beyond.

Housing is an example. I have spoken nearly every time I have risen in the House for the past couple of months about the growing crisis, not only in the housing market but in the rental market in the city of Cornwall, the united counties of SDG and parts of Akwesasne as well. That is a microcosm of what is happening nationally.

What is in this legislation is not a ban on foreign buyers, which was promised. We believe they should be banned for two years. That could help cool the market, particularly in larger cities.

One of the other things we talked about, and a new motion coming up is proposing ideas on it, is the government's proposed fiscal policy when it comes to housing and the first-time homebuyer shared equity program. It has been an abject failure, number one because of the participation numbers in it. The idea that the government would help give shared equity to Canadians to buy their homes may be admirable at face value to some, but all that is going to do is further inflate an already expensive housing market.

• (1225)

If we provide an extra \$100,000 or \$200,000 to help people afford a home, all that will do is to let sellers know, when there are 13 or 14 people bidding on a house in the city of Cornwall, that they have an extra \$100,000 or \$200,000 more in leverage to inflate the market. This is more government debt and more government printing. It is not actually lowering prices and making home ownership more affordable. It is increasing debt and increasing prices and not addressing the fundamental aspect.

Government Orders

I have to call out another slap to Canadians, which is the bonuses that were given at the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which were released a few weeks ago. CMHC is an organization that has a literal mandate to make sure Canadians have housing affordability. I do not need to summarize where we are with that in this country. Housing prices, nationally, have doubled. In our riding, housing prices are over \$400,000. That has doubled in the past five years of this housing crisis.

The very benchmark of the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation is to make housing affordable. The absolute opposite has happened. For more people, the dream of home ownership and affordability is out the window, but CMHC, the Liberal minister responsible for housing and the Liberal government gave \$40 million in bonuses to employees at the organization. That is a slap in the face to the 30-year-old who is living in their parent's basement because they cannot afford their dream of home ownership and who cannot afford rent because we do not have supply. I do not know what shows more of the contrast in what we are doing.

The cost of living and inflation is at a 30-year high, the highest in nearly my entire lifetime of 34 years. At the rate we are going, when we get there, we will set another record in the coming months.

When we talk about contrast, I say each time that our job as opposition is to hold the government to account on what they have proposed but also to put our money where our mouth is. If we were on the other side of the aisle, since this is Parliament and we can propose ideas, what would we do?

I have to say, I have been very proud of my Conservative colleagues over the course of the last couple of weeks. They have highlighted a few issues that, I believe, provide a direct contrast with the plans proposed by the Liberals and the NDP.

First of all, we need to get opened back up. We need to end federal mandates, vaccine mandates and travel requirements. We have heard from employers, and we have heard from the travel and tourism industry, that they are very nervous about the year ahead. Based on where the science is at, not where it was two years ago, but here today at the end of March 2022, we can lift those mandates and get our country opened up. We can be back for business. We can be welcoming international visitors safely and smartly and get our economic engine firing at 100% again.

We lost that battle. We proposed that idea and, again, the Liberal and NDP coalition, friendship, team, pack or whatever we call them, did not agree with that.

Government Orders

Last week in our opposition day motion, which was one of the days last week, when we had the debate and then the vote right afterwards, was something we tried to put on record and did get on record. Unfortunately we were unsuccessful, again because of the other parties, but we talked about the high price of gas and many other goods in the country.

There are two things here. Number one is that we asked for a break on GST on fuel. I came into Ottawa last night from the riding. I stopped in Monkland to fill up with gas. It was over \$1.70 a litre. I know there are a lot of people in Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry who have to drive to work. There is not a subway or LRT option in Monkland or Iroquois or Crysler. I do not think there is one coming anytime soon. Driving a car to get to work or to go to hockey practice is essential when living in a rural area.

We called for a gas tax break. It was voted down. It would not solve the affordability problem, but it could have given some tax relief at a time when Canadians truly need it.

The other problem we have to confront, which the government is not doing through their economic policies, is that the carbon tax is set to increase again later this week. We are saying that, if we are not going to give a break to Canadians at the pumps when prices are high, at least do not increase taxes on everybody on April 1. That was declined.

In a democracy, there are going to be contrasts. Our contrast is quite clear. We understand the cost of living. We understand the need for relief for Canadians. When it comes to housing, we have a fundamentally different approach.

For those reasons, again, I do not support the economic and fiscal update tabled by the government. I have a feeling that with the new deal between the Liberals and the NDP, I do not see ourselves doing so in the coming years either. We will see, here on the floor of the House of Commons, further constructive ideas from Conservatives.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have nothing against the idea of taxing vacant property, especially foreign-owned property, as the underused housing tax proposes, since that helps calm the overheated market.

However, this is the first time the federal government is so directly and so heavily encroaching on provincial jurisdictions—and even municipal ones, in this case.

Does my colleague not believe that instead of encroaching so blatantly on the jurisdictions of other levels of government, the government should instead sit down with the main stakeholders and determine the best way the federal level can help in this particular file?

• (1235)

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Bloc Québécois for his question and his intervention.

[*English*]

In this section, there is a 1% tax on vacated homes. I would use as an example, in the province of Quebec, perhaps the city of Montreal, where housing prices are in the millions of dollars. With no disrespect to the 1%, that could be into the tens of thousands of dollars. I would argue that it does not disincentivize some people, if they are those who can afford to spend \$3 million or \$4 million to buy a home and leave it vacant. We have asked at different committees what that correlation would actually do to cool the market. It remains to be seen.

What I will offer is an alternative, and I will agree with my colleague. Working with provinces and municipalities, we need to look at banning foreign buyers who are in it for profit and investment from getting into the system. I believe that tool, which is not included, could actually cool the market more than what is being proposed in this legislation.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to talk a bit about the gas tax situation that my colleague referred to. It is a very serious one.

First of all, one of the things that this chamber did do was pass a petroleum monitoring agency. That was passed in this chamber, and it was actually funded. After that, the Harper administration then cancelled it. We had a transparent, independent body to enforce it, similar to what they have in the United States where we actually see rack pricing announced every single week. Therefore, they can track the price of refinement to the pump.

That was one of the big problems about the proposed Conservative motion. There was no guarantee that this would be passed on to consumers. Why did the Conservatives get rid of the petroleum monitoring agency? Why do we have less transparency and accountability for gas pricing than our American neighbours, who enjoy such a privileged system versus us here, especially when many of the Conservatives want to have some type of similar standard regulation?

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, I will say two points on that.

Number one, it is one thing to monitor and track pricing, pricing changes and the correlations between them. There is a difference between that and our proposal, which would have lowered the price and taken the GST off fuel as an option, particularly when prices at the pumps are very high. It would have been a tangible, direct way to give back. That is number one in terms of providing relief.

The second item I would argue, and it is our proposal, is to not increase taxes. They do not need tracking or monitoring to know that on April 1 the carbon tax is going to go up again, and it will go up every April 1. We are saying we can pause that. We could stop that increase. The Liberals and the NDP have the opportunity to not increase taxes on April 1. We could talk about speculation and markets and look at observing. We could talk about concrete ways we can actually lower the cost of living and the price of fuel for Canadians during these challenging times.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House and talk about the priorities of Oshawa. I get to speak to Bill C-8, an act to implement certain provisions of the economic and fiscal update.

However, first I want to say that we are living in unprecedented times. Last Thursday, I was in Oshawa at the 401 rally for Ukraine. Who would have thought that, in our lifetime, we would be seeing a war in Europe? Certainly our thoughts and prayers are with our friends and families in the Ukrainian community, in Ukraine, Canada and Oshawa. We have more uncertainty with our supply chains, our food, our energy, and it amplifies Canada's weaknesses and lost opportunities, especially in Canada's traditional strengths in energy and food supply. Who would have thought if we had made different decisions, Europe's position could be different right now? However, we did not make those positive decisions.

We have more uncertainty. Who would have thought that the Canadian Prime Minister last week was admonished and condemned in Brussels at the European Parliament for headlines around the world? The Prime Minister was called out for engaging in a dictatorship of the worst kind by EU parliamentarians, who warned us about the path of our country and how the Prime Minister handled the truckers in the Emergencies Act. We have more uncertainty. Who would have thought that we would have this NDP-Liberal coalition to deal with the economic crisis, a deal that really puts fear into the hearts of Canadian taxpayers?

That brings me to my speech today and why I cannot support the bill. It does not address the needs and priorities of Oshawa. The bill has seven parts, and none of these parts addresses the needs of Oshawa, but what does it do? It increases spending by more than \$71 billion, and that was before the NDP-Liberal secret deal. It means \$71 billion more of inflation.

Now our national debt is \$1.2 trillion. Who would have thought? Now the NDP-Liberal government is asking for another blank cheque, and frankly, we know this is going to pass because the NDP, as the Prime Minister says, are now going to be supporting "Justinflation". I would say they are going to be supporting just incompetent spending.

Oshawa's priorities are housing, our seniors and opioids. My office is right across the street from the Back Door Mission, a mission that helps Oshawa's most vulnerable. It has ballooned. We see young people who cannot afford rent and housing, and seniors who cannot afford groceries and gas. In Canada, with all our natural resources in energy, who would have thought that gas would be up 33%, and natural gas and heating would be up 19%? Who would have thought an average family of four would be spending \$1,000 more per year this year for groceries? The price of chicken is up

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2%. Beef is up 11.9%. Bacon is up 19.1%, and bread is up 5%. Who would have thought in Canada, one of the most blessed countries in the world, under the Liberal government, Canadians cannot even afford the basic necessities?

Last week I spoke to a constituent whose name is George. He needs affordable housing. He is paying \$875 per month for an attic apartment, but he is over six feet tall. He has to hunch all day to get around his apartment, and he cannot afford anything more than \$600 per month. He is on disability, but he cannot find anything else.

There is no surprise when the Liberals took office in 2015, the price of a house was \$435,000. Now it is \$810,000. Who would have thought in Oshawa the average house price would be over \$1 million? It is up 25% since last year. How can a young person ever afford a home? How can a senior afford to stay in their home? Who would have thought that in Canada, with more land than almost any other country in the world, housing would be so far out of reach for young people? The Liberals just are not listening.

As the previous speaker said, Conservatives are offering solutions. Motion No. 54 was for the Liberals to abandon their failed first-time home buying initiative. We are also launching a housing task force to find solutions, but the country is going in the wrong direction. How are the Liberals going to pay for all this unaccounted spending? The Liberals and the NDP only know one way and that is to increase taxing. With the NDP deal, who are the rich in Canada?

● (1240)

Who would have thought the average home would be worth over a million dollars? According to a CMHC report, the government is suggesting a new tax on homes worth \$1 million to \$1.5 million. Surprise, surprise. That would be a 0.2% tax per year. On a home worth over \$2 million, it would be 1% per year, which on \$2 million would be \$20,000 more in taxes. For the average homeowner in Oshawa, that would be \$2,097 per year or \$174 per month in new taxes. How can they afford that?

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According to Bloomberg, Canada has the second most inflated housing bubble in the world. Canadian families must spend two-thirds of their gross monthly paycheques for an average home in Toronto or Vancouver. Who would have thought that Demographia would calculate Toronto as the fifth and Vancouver as the second most unaffordable market in the world? The federal government could do something about it. It has jurisdiction for banking rules, mortgage insurance, money laundering and monetary policy. Unfortunately, it is not moving ahead with solutions. It does not want to do anything. It is the party of the WE and SNC-Lavalin scandals. Do members remember Jody Wilson-Raybould, Jane Philpott and the billionaire's island?

Throughout my speech, members have heard me say, "Who would have thought", a few times. Who would have thought the current Liberal government could do so much damage in such a short period of time? That is what I am trying to answer, because Conservatives have warned Canadians about this since day one of the current Liberal government. Do members remember the promise on day one of only small deficits and balanced budgets by year four? The Liberals never came close to balancing a budget, even before COVID-19. They never even intended to.

During the election, the Prime Minister admitted that he does not pay attention to monetary policy and does not even think about it. He likely does not even understand it. What he does understand is modern monetary theory and woke economics: spending forever and printing money forever. This shows no respect for the taxpayer, for the savings of hard-working Canadians, for young people trying to get ahead or for the Canadian dream of home ownership.

Conservatives warned that electing a PM who admires the basic dictatorship of China would be a problem for our democracy. Members should just look at the mandates. They should look at the truckers and the Emergency Act. He is budgeting \$1.5—

• (1245)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. I have a point of order from the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I know that it is the custom of the Speaker to allow members to not stick to a topic slavishly, in this case Bill C-8, but I wonder if the hon. member will talk about it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Obviously, the hon. member recognizes that there is some latitude in the speeches that are before the House. I want to remind members when they are giving their speeches to make sure they make reference to the subject that is before them.

The hon. member for Oshawa.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, unfortunately, the member was not listening to my speech. I did talk about the housing issue and the issues that are important to Oshawa. I think they are probably important to her community as well.

Canadians want leadership. The Prime Minister basically said that, even for Canada, Canadians have no core identity. He said he wants to be the first post-national state, and that would be problematic.

We in Canada do not agree with the Prime Minister. We have a proud history and traditions. In our anthem we even say that we are the true north strong and free. That means something to us and is part of our core identity, whether the Prime Minister thinks so or not. We have to focus on the things that bring us together. Electing a party that focuses on identity politics and on our differences instead of on these core values that bring us together would cause problems. We see a Prime Minister who likes to blame the other. He calls Canadians names, such as racist, misogynist and white supremacist. He calls Jewish MPs Nazis. He takes away Canadians' right to work for education. He punishes those who disagree with him and accuses Canadians of having unacceptable views.

The division we see today is a direct result of the government's actions, inactions and the politicizing of things that should not be politicized. We have the best country in the world. We just need sound, honest leadership and we can recover from these problems. Our best days can be ahead of us if we get the right leadership.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is a lot I suggest the member needs to get a better understanding of. Bill C-8 is all about supporting, and continuing to support, Canadians through the pandemic.

Unlike the Conservative Party, we believe the pandemic is still here and caution still needs to be taken. On the whole leadership issue, and whether there is a lack of leadership, I would ask him to maybe reflect on his own Conservative caucus, especially when the Conservatives have made it very clear that they believe all mandates should end, effective today.

I am wondering this. Could the member provide the Conservative rationale on why the Conservative Party here in Ottawa believes all mandates should end today?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, my colleague's question gives us the opportunity to say that the science of today supports it. Every single province and territory, and countries around the world, are opening up and getting rid of these mandates.

It just shows how out of touch the Liberals and their NDP colleagues are with Canadians. Canadians want to get back to work. They want to have the Canadian dream of home ownership, getting a job and getting an education. These mandates are stopping that from occurring.

What we need to do in this place is focus on the needs of Canadians and not the needs of government. We have to pay attention to the needs of Canadians. That is what I am talking about today. I am talking about listening to people on the ground and making sure that we have solid policy so we can come out of this recession as the best country we possibly can. I honestly believe Canada is the best country. We just need good leadership.

• (1250)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like my colleague from Oshawa to tell us what the Conservative Party will do about federal interference in property taxes. Does he agree with that?

The Conservatives' position is often ambiguous. I remember that the former leader of the Conservative Party, the member for Durham, congratulated the government on creating a mental health portfolio, when we know full well that this is a provincial jurisdiction.

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member. With the federal government, and now with its alliance with the NDP, we are going to see a more centralized and more authoritative government. We are going to see a government that is going to be dictating to provinces in areas of provincial jurisdiction in ways that are not going to be helpful to the average Canadian on the street.

The member talks about health care, real estate and property taxes. The real estate market in his riding is different from the real estate market in my riding. It should be addressed more locally and more regionally.

I think the Bloc and the Conservatives are on the same side here. We need to make sure the government does not become the government that the European Union parliamentarians warned us of. We need to hold it to account.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives like to talk about working people, but when it is time to act they side with CEOs. They opposed extending EI for workers and kept stock options for rich CEOs. Canadian workers and communities are hurting. Inequality is skyrocketing and Canadians expect the rich to pay their fair share of taxes, yet the Conservatives are nowhere to be found on this.

Why do the Conservatives prefer to protect the rich instead of making them pay their taxes?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, that will show a difference between Conservatives and the NDP. Of course, the NDP always wants to tax the rich. If my colleague listened to my speech, who are the rich the NDP is starting to go after?

The new CMHC report shows that a million-dollar home is an average home in Oshawa. The NDP and Liberals just want more and more taxes. What we would like to do, as Conservatives, is create jobs, because jobs are the best opportunity. It is a future where Canadians can afford home ownership, if they have solid jobs and a solid way forward.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to have the opportunity to speak in the House again with respect to Bill C-8, now at report stage. I would like to start by sharing that I intend to continue to support Bill C-8, as will my colleague for Saanich—Gulf Islands, which she shared when she spoke last week. The bill has much in it that we both continue to appreciate, such as funds for rapid tests, money for ventilation for

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schools, and delays on loan repayments for small businesses at a time when they need those the most.

With respect to the Conservative motion that is proposing several amendments, I do not intend to support them because they would remove many of these same items, including the school ventilation improvements, the ventilation tax credit for businesses and a tax credit for school supplies for teachers. That being said, I do want to raise a red flag that my colleague for Saanich—Gulf Islands and several others have raised with respect to the allocation, or even a double allocation, of funds. As she shared, I expect this was done with the best of intentions, but it is also important for us to be mindful of it.

In Bill C-8, there is \$1.72 billion allocated for rapid tests. There is also \$2.5 billion for rapid tests in Bill C-10. Last Thursday, in the supplementary estimates, we approved the allocation of another \$4 billion for rapid tests. As the Parliamentary Budget Officer has called out, it seems to be that there is at least, if not double spending, a double allocation of this \$4 billion for rapid tests. Certainly, with respect to Parliament reviewing this legislation, we both see it is important to address this, so that there is some measure to ensure that those funds are only spent once.

With the rest of my time with respect to Bill C-8, I would like to talk about what I see as the ambition gap in this legislation. In the fall economic statement, and in the legislation to bring it forward, there is so much more that could have been done to really meet the moment we are in.

I will start with the housing crisis that many colleagues have spoken about. In Kitchener, it is significant. There has been almost a 35% increase in the cost of housing in the past year alone. On Friday afternoon, I spoke with a neighbour of mine. Nick is a young person who shared with me, as many others have, that not only does he not expect that will he ever be able to buy a home, but when it comes to staying in Kitchener he does not expect that he will continue to be able to afford rent. He was just so concerned. That is as a result of a market that has increasingly become commodified. This is a market designed to provide a commodity for investors, when we should be focused on homes being places for people to live in.

In Bill C-8, as members know, the underused housing tax is being introduced, but it has also been diluted from what we know has worked in other jurisdictions. Vancouver is an example. In Vancouver, it is a 3% tax that applies to everyone. As a result, that measure has started to have an impact. It has reduced the number of vacant homes by 25%. It has reintroduced 18,000 units back on the market and it has generated tens of millions of dollars for affordable housing.

We can compare that with what we know is in this legislation. Not only is it not 3%, but it is down to 1%. I think there are fair questions to be asked about whether, even if it was broadly applied, a 1% tax would meaningfully change the behaviour of those who have begun to commodify the market and pull housing off the market simply to speculate on its value.

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It is not only that. We also have exemptions everywhere: on every citizen, every permanent resident and every Canadian corporation. The list goes on and on. I think there are fair questions to be raised. Certainly, on its own, it would not be enough, but would this measure meaningfully shift and be a helpful contribution? At this time, in terms of ambition, this could have been the housing economic statement. It could have been the time we said that we have great ideas that have worked before, such as co-op housing, for example. Back in the 1980s, when we invested in co-op housing, we were able to build thousands of new rental co-op units.

● (1255)

Of course, when that is not in statements like this, it is less and less the case today.

It could have also been the time when we could have said we were going to put in meaningful measures to move away from the blind bidding process and move toward investing in public and subsidized housing with really bold and visionary measures to make progress on the housing crisis. If they are not here, I aspire to seeing more in the budget that we are expecting over the coming weeks.

In terms of this ambition gap, at a time when this House has affirmed that we are in a climate emergency, should not every economic statement focus on taking substantive, transformational action on the climate crisis? I certainly believe that to be the case. In Bill C-8, of course, the word “climate” is not mentioned even once. Instead, we see talk of more and more subsidies for oil and gas. Sometimes they are introduced under different names. The most recent one we are expecting is a new tax credit for carbon capture and storage, a tax credit that some are estimating could be worth up to \$50 billion in this new subsidy for a solution that has already been subsidized significantly over past decades and only leads to 0.001% of reduction in global emissions.

As so many academics and scientists have called out, this is not a climate solution, so we need to be mindful of both what is not here as well as what could have been here and should be here going forward. We could take that \$50 billion and invest in proven climate solutions, such as incentivizing homeowners to move forward on retrofits to their homes and businesses. Whether it is electric vehicles or high-speed rail, we could be mobilizing funds at the scale of a green new deal and at the pace that scientists tell us is required, and not to hold on to some faraway net-zero 2050 but to address what the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change tells us is required, which is the possibility of 1.5°C being the highest increase in global average temperatures at a time when we are already at 1.1°C. Yes, this is an emergency. As a result, I wish every economic statement we see in this House would have a stronger focus to give us the best chance of ensuring that our nieces, nephews, kids and grandkids have the possibility of a safe climate future.

Finally, I will close with respect to another gap in ambition, and that is with respect to mental health. We know the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health, the Royal Society of Canada and so many in my community and across the country are calling out to address the significant gaps in mental health. We know there are significant wait times for young people in particular. As is the case for so many challenges we face today, this situation

was present before the pandemic and has only been accelerated and made worse. This was another opportunity missed to increase the amount of health transfers from the federal government to equip provinces and territories to have the resources they need. If we are going to say the words “mental health is health”—as we all should, because it is true—then we should also be allocating the funding to ensure that we follow through and that across the country the resources are there to treat mental health as such.

In closing, I will continue to support Bill C-8. While I am disappointed that the ambition is not there for some elements, that does not take away from the fact that there are measures and funding that would go a long way in my community, and I want to continue to see those measures advanced.

● (1300)

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member spoke about some of the things that he wished were in the legislation. I want to speak about something that I wish was in his speech.

The government has spent tremendously on all kinds of different programs that have added billions and billions to our debt. In fact, our accumulated debt has more than doubled under the Liberals' watch.

I would ask the member if he feels that this spending can continue and if he has any comments at all, any thoughts, on debt and the debt of the country, or if it could just go on forever, in his opinion.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, it is an important question from the member for Saskatoon West, and I appreciate that he asked it.

Absolutely, we need to also be looking at where we can increase revenues. This is why I spoke about the vacancy tax. That is exactly the kind of approach that could bring in revenue to build co-op housing the way we used to; if we did not spend \$18 billion in subsidies to oil and gas and if we introduced a wealth tax. Those are the funds we could use. It is important to also talk about revenues as well as spending.

Certainly I would agree with the member that we need to ensure that we can pay for some of these meaningful transformational investments, but budgets are really about priorities, and if we had our priorities in place, we would have the funds to ensure we could follow through on some of these transformational investments.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made reference at the beginning of his comments that Bill C-8 is all about ongoing support for Canadians, both directly and indirectly, in going through the pandemic. I want to highlight one area, which is with respect to rapid tests.

When the demand exploded for rapid tests back in December 2021, there was a huge need for the federal government to acquire and purchase additional rapid tests, and in a very short window we were very successful in our procurement of literally millions of rapid tests for circulation among provinces, territories and I believe even small businesses in certain ways. I wonder if my friend could provide his thoughts on why it was so important that we have legislation of this nature to enable us to get things such as rapid tests for Canadians.

• (1305)

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, I will start by acknowledging that before I was here there was plenty of work done in this place to ensure that rapid tests were procured. For my part, the last time I spoke on Bill C-8, I talked about the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce and how it has been calling out over past months on the part of businesses that needed a greater number of rapid tests.

I want to again clarify the comments I made earlier. I really appreciate that we need to ensure continued funding for rapid tests, particularly at a time when we are not through the pandemic and when we need to be doing more on vaccine equity around the world in places where new variants can continue to emerge because more has not been done. Certainly I will continue to support measures to ensure that rapid tests are readily available, as businesses and folks in my community have been calling for.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to ask the member about the lack of foresight for Via Rail and the mixed messages the government is sending right now. Amtrak in the United States got funding for the first time ever to actually increase trackage, including connecting into Canada. What are the member's thoughts on the higher-speed rail that could go through the Quebec City corridor, and why would this government have mixed messages right now when Amtrak is historically investing, including crossing the border at Windsor?

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Windsor West for his question and for his advocacy, and that of others, with respect to not only high-frequency rail but high-speed rail.

We have had studies in southwestern Ontario that showed both the business case and the massive opportunity when it comes to reducing emissions from transportation, which is the largest emission source in Ontario. I think the most recent study was in 2016. If we are going to make progress, we need to make sure that rail is faster, more convenient, more readily available and a more attractive option than building Highway 413, for example.

I am looking forward to continuing that advocacy with the member and others. We also need to make sure that we hold the government to account with respect to not privatizing Via Rail as concerns about that continue to be heard in this place.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to speak in the House again.

Today is March 28, 2022, and we are debating the government's fall economic update, an update that was given in the House in December of 2021. Yes, we are actually debating budgetary measures that this government introduced over 100 days ago. In that time, Canada and the world have changed. With COVID, we saw omi-

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cron come and go, provincial lockdowns and vaccine passports established and removed, and we are now learning to live with the virus. In Ottawa, we saw the use of the Emergencies Act to call on police forces to crush peaceful protesters under the jackboot of the Prime Minister's basic dictatorship, and another dictator is currently using his war machine to crush our friends in Ukraine.

What are we doing here in this House of Commons? We are debating legislation that, among other things, would allow the government to get rapid test kits for COVID out to the provinces. Well, maybe somebody should tell the government that everyone already has rapid tests—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I think that members need to be somewhat careful. In terms of what is appropriate to say and what is not appropriate to say, what it says in Beauchesne's, sixth edition, is that it depends on the context in which something is said. For example, what is happening in Ukraine today is horrific. Describing President Putin as a dictator and then classifying the Prime Minister of Canada in the same line as a dictator might be stretching it.

I would like to emphasize that maybe some members might want to be a little more cautious in making statements in the House that may be highly inappropriate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will take the information under advisement and look that up. I think this is more a point of debate, but I will certainly do a bit of a follow-up and come back to the House if need be.

The hon. member for Saskatoon West.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, ironically, the very next line in my speech is that “the government really knows how to waste time”. I think that was just a great example of it right there.

I want to assure colleagues that I am not going to waste the time of my constituents in Saskatoon West. I am going to dive into this piece of legislation and speak about why I am voting against it. Then I am going to talk about what matters to the economy of Saskatoon West, which is agriculture and energy, and why this fall economic legislation should have focused on those drivers of our economy.

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I need to tell my constituents why I oppose this legislation. I invite all Canadians to go to page 36 of the fall economic update to understand how damaging this legislation is for our country. The government's own figures show that once this legislation passes an additional \$28 billion in debt will be added in the fiscal year ending this week. For the next fiscal year, which starts on Friday, this legislation will increase the debt by another \$13 billion.

The government thinks this is a non-event with nothing to see here, but the Canadian Taxpayers Federation has a debt clock that shows our debt. Did colleagues know that the Liberals broke that clock? It did not have enough digits. The clock shows our debt is increasing at \$4,500 per second. That means in the minute and a half that I have been speaking, our debt has increased by \$400,000. Every 10-minute speech by the Prime Minister adds \$2.7 million to our debt. Last year's deficit added well over \$300 billion. This year's deficit will add another \$150 billion and next year is half of that again.

How do governments come up with this extra money? They issue bonds and print money. All economic theory will tell you that printing money increases inflation. History teaches us this same lesson. It could be the hyperinflation of Weimar Germany or the stagflation of 1970s America. Twenty years ago it was the Asian flu, and 10 years ago we had South American governments that were defaulting and becoming bankrupt. Time and time again, when governments print money it results in inflation. Inflation hurts Canadians, especially seniors and those on fixed incomes.

Another effect of money printing is rising house prices. Property prices skyrocket, requiring larger and larger mortgages and putting homeowners under financial stress. That is exactly what caused the 2008 housing crash and the Great Recession. I think most Canadians understand that government spending causes inflation. I think that Canadians also understand that only the Conservative Party can fix the mess caused by the Liberal government. We will fix this one. We will rein in government spending. We will unleash the power of our entrepreneurs and risk-takers. We will multiply the advantage of our resource sector. We will restore confidence in Canada again.

In Saskatchewan, agricultural policy is economic policy, and Bill C-8 does not mention this. Even though I represent a fully urban riding, I know the importance of agriculture to the economy of Saskatoon West. Plus, we all need food and most of us enjoy it too.

There are two main growing areas on this planet. The first is the great plains of North America, which stretch from northern Saskatchewan all the way down to Texas. The second are those in eastern Europe. Putin's unprovoked invasion and war in Ukraine is destroying the second-largest wheat growing area in the world. We have not seen a disruption of eastern European food supplies on this scale since the Holodomor under Stalin, when that brutal dictator stole the crops of the people and starved millions of Ukrainians to death. Now that we are counting on Saskatchewan and the great plains to feed the entire planet, our farmers will step up to the plate. There is no doubt that Canadian farmers have the capacity to make up the shortfall, but there are problems that our farmers face.

I sat at the environment committee, and I focused on farmers' issues and the harm that the NDP-Liberal government's policies were

doing to our farmers. First and foremost is the carbon tax. This tax is adding massive input costs. Fertilizer and fuel for planting machinery is adding significantly to each bushel of wheat. Output costs are going up as well. Fuel for harvesting machinery and transport costs by trucks and train are adding even more dollars of cost per bushel of wheat.

To help mitigate this for our farmers, I asked the environment minister at committee if he would recognize Saskatchewan's carbon capture system as equivalent to the federal system. His answer was, "That's certainly the intent." True to form, he then reneged and imposed his own separate system of federal costs on Saskatchewan farmers. The result is more inflation on the price of food.

We will certainly grumble over the massive inflation price increases, but we are a rich country. The people who will suffer the most are in Africa and Asia, the most vulnerable people on the planet. I guess, in the minds of the small cabal of NDP-Liberal politicians that have a power lock on this House, mass starvation is a low price to pay for a carbon tax.

● (1310)

Let us look at the NDP food policy. As I have said, Canada is a global agricultural superpower, but the NDP do not recognize this. Indeed, the NDP's policy statement says the opposite. It says, "We'll work to connect Canadians to farmers with initiatives like local food hubs, community supported agriculture, and networks to increase the amount of food that is sold, processed and consumed in local and regional markets."

We might ask what is wrong with that. A Saskatchewan farmer produces tens of thousands of bushels of wheat, and he is not going to sell that at a farmers' market. How many Canadians do members know who mill their own wheat into flour and then transform that into bread and pasta? If it were up to the NDP, all we would have are community gardens in urban settings that grow food like a few carrots and cabbages. There is nothing wrong with community gardens, but they only feed a small group of Starbucks-sipping people, whereas the Conservative Party has a long history of unlocking Saskatchewan agriculture.

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It was under Prime Minister Harper that we eliminated the Canadian Wheat Board, allowing farmers to finally market their own crops. We also gave plant breeders the right to give our farmers access to the most modern crop technology available. All these measures were opposed by the NDP-Liberals. The people in my riding of Saskatoon West need to ask themselves whether the NDP really has an agriculture policy that benefits our province and them.

In Saskatchewan our energy and mining sectors are the two other drivers of economic activity that are not really addressed in this legislation. Last month, I spoke to the importance of these sectors to our province. Energy is 26% of the economic activity in Saskatchewan. In my riding alone, 40 businesses are directly involved in primary energy extraction. Our province produces an average of 500,000 barrels of oil per day, or one-fifth of all the oil consumed in Canada every day, and additionally we have 1.2 billion barrels of oil in reserve.

How is this oil transported? Some of it goes through pipelines, but much of it travels on railways. The NDP-Liberal government has done everything in its power to kill pipeline projects that would safely move oil and natural gas to refineries or tidewater. Conservatives, on the other hand, understand the need for pipelines and the need for Canadian energy.

Right now there is massive global demand for Canadian oil and natural gas due to the war in Ukraine. The price of oil is as high as it has ever been. Russian liquefied natural gas has been cut off from Europe. Our allies in the U.S. and Europe need our energy. President Biden has instead turned to the dictators and despots of Venezuela, Iran and Saudi Arabia for this energy. Why? It is because the NDP-Liberal government is keeping its ideological blinders on and not seizing on this opportunity to move our energy to market.

The people of Saskatoon West have faced a host of issues these past years, while suffering under the yoke of the current Liberal-NDP government in Ottawa. This current legislation promises to add to the crisis of JustInflation. The Bank of Canada admitted earlier this month that the carbon tax is directly contributing to this inflation, which has raised the cost of groceries an average of \$1,000 a year. For many people that is simply out of reach, especially as they make trade-offs as the prices of gasoline, clothes, rent, mortgages and other necessities experience record high inflation as well.

There is a strong contrast between NDP-Liberal policies that will pickpocket people and redistribute their money to special interest groups, and the Conservatives, who will allow people to keep their money and let them decide how they want to spend it. Do we want our taxes to rise, or do we want tax cuts to help Canadians struggling to get by? Do we want income splitting? Do we want unrestricted access to EI and CPP payroll taxes to make up government policy shortfalls, or do we want to have rates that keep politics out of those funds? Do we want to pay tax when we sell our houses? Do we want tax rates that are set by G20 bureaucrats or by people in Canada?

I could go on, but my constituents get the point. NDP-Liberals will tax and spend and drive inflation through the roof. Conservatives will always be there to make life simpler for Canadians.

• (1315)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there must be some very interesting discussions that take place in the Conservative caucus, from the extreme right to the more moderates. I can tell members I am totally amazed by the degree to which the member will talk about why the government needs to cut back, and it seems to be at all expense.

Surely the member would recognize we have gone through a pandemic and that there was a need to spend billions of dollars to support small businesses, individual Canadians, seniors, people with disabilities, students and many different volunteer organizations. Does he believe that money was well spent, or if it were up to him, would he have made significant cuts in those areas? Did the government go wrong in spending money in those areas?

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, there are so many ways to answer that question, but I think I am going to focus on this: Did we need to spend money during the pandemic? We did. Was that money well spent, as the member asked? I would say in many cases it was not. I have seen many examples of organizations that received more money than they needed and businesses that received more money than they needed. We have lots of examples of people who were not even in Canada, inmates and all kinds of things. There was a tremendous amount of money that was not spent correctly.

At the end of the day we have to be very careful with Canadians' money, because this is the fundamental thing: It is not our, us in this room's, money. This is Canadians' money. This is money they earn and spend, and we have to be extremely careful and prudent in how we spend that money. When we put ourselves into debt, we are putting Canadians into debt, and we have to be extremely careful on that as well.

• (1320)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with care to the member for Saskatoon West's speech and a couple of things seem to be missing. One was any concern about the impact of growing inequality in Canada. Yes, we have a rising cost of living, but it impacts some much harder than others.

Does the member share his interim leader's opinion that things like dental care are not needed or wanted by Canadians?

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, on the issue of dental care, a lot of Canadians have that coverage. Certainly there are some groups that would benefit from that, and that is why we believe that a targeted approach to those who need it is much more prudent.

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However, we have to be very careful about how we spend money. We have to use extreme caution in committing to programs that are going to put debt onto our children and our grandchildren that we are going to be paying for and the costs of which are going to be growing and growing over time. We have to be extremely careful. We have to be wise in how we spend our money.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am concerned that the member for Saskatoon West suggested in his speech, and he is not the first member in his party to suggest, that Ukraine, or the United States or the EU, has asked Canada to build pipelines. That is not the case. Building pipelines takes many years in this country even if they had the green lights, which they do not. What they have asked for is an increase in supply in the short term and the International Energy Agency has asked for an aggressive plan for reducing demand through such things as cutting the speed limits by 10 kilometres per hour across industrialized countries around the world, improving access to public transit and maybe even making it free.

Would the member comment on the timelines involved to urgently help Ukraine and not put forward the fallacious argument that we need to build more pipelines?

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, this really highlights how some MPs lack the ability to understand how the world works and how business works. We do not have to mandate things. We do not have to tell companies or countries to do things. We have an opportunity. We know there is an opportunity to supply oil and natural gas to the world. The world is asking us for this. We need to supply that.

If we allow the market to work as it is supposed to, we would have pipelines that are supplying that oil and supplying that natural gas, taking the opportunity that is there in front of us and creating jobs, creating wealth and creating tax revenues for this country. Because some of us in the room do not understand how the real world works, we get confused and we try to impose things and all of a sudden things fall apart and we are lacking and missing out on opportunities that we could have for the residents of Canada.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, anyone who has shopped at a grocery store, filled up a car, eaten at a restaurant or paid a home heating bill, as I am sure many of us have, is well aware that the cost of living in Canada is in fact going up. It is more expensive than ever. For many Canadians, the burden is overwhelming. That is what I am hearing from the constituents of Lethbridge. They are feeling the pinch in a big way, but what is disheartening is that it did not need to be this way.

We have a problem in this country. We have a really big problem. That problem used to have one name, but now it is meshed together with a hyphen: the NDP-Liberal government. Its policies and the utilization of those policies have an effect on every single Canadian every single day. From coast to coast, Canadians are speaking out about the concerns they have with regard to the expense of living.

Today we are discussing the main estimates, which is a document that outlines a whole lot of spending. The new coalition government has brought this bill forward to seek authorization from Parliament to spend more than \$190 billion. Wow. It is easy to speak in abstractions and generalizations, but we have to hone in

and talk about the very people who are represented by this piece of legislation. When we do that, we see that the people have a voice that is largely being ignored by current policies.

The NDP-Liberals love to talk about how much they stand for all Canadians. Well, it is not the Canadians who disagree with them and have a different opinion or a different mindset. They are not valuable. They treat Canadians as victims in need of a big government. They do not look at Canadians as capable, hard-working, innovative and creative problem-solvers who are able to achieve success. Instead, the government struggles with a saviour complex. It needs to be needed. It wants to keep the people beholden to it; otherwise, it feels powerless. Numerous policies and handing out massive amounts of free cash keep the Canadian people enchained to the government. It is a form of slavery. It is cruel.

Today's government spending becomes tomorrow's taxes, but tomorrow has arrived. It is called inflation. It is here. The Prime Minister promised to grow the middle class, but in reality his policies are making it more difficult for Canadians to get ahead and make ends meet. Many have come into my office with their heating bill in hand, some even with tears in their eyes because they are overwhelmed by the cost of heating their homes.

Charlie and Emma are two who come to mind. They are seniors with a fixed income. Single moms have come in and talked to me about the costs incurred by filling up their vehicle with gasoline in order to go to work or take their kids to soccer practice or dance. Joe recently came in and had a conversation with me about paying school tuition. He wanted to know if there was anything I could do to help because he actually does not have the money to afford his tuition and eat this month. He has to make a choice. Families are having to weigh whether or not they can afford nutritious food for their families or whether or not they can drive 200 kilometres to see an ailing loved one. Ladies and gentlemen, this is the reality. It is not figurative. It is not theory. This is the reality.

Child poverty is increasing. Hundreds of kids in my riding go to sleep every night with empty stomachs. They wake up in the morning and go to school hungry. My region is one of the most severe in the country.

These are not made up stories; this is real life. These are people being impacted by government policy. To add insult to injury, the government will now move ahead with its punitive tax hike. The carbon tax will rise by 25% on April 1. It is no joke. It is confounding to think that when we face some of the highest costs of living, the government wants to impose yet another tax increase. The Prime Minister has claimed that it is all done for the sake of modifying people's behaviour, as if Canadians have a choice as to whether or not they are going to heat their homes or rural Canadians can choose whether or not they are going to drive to work. Wake up.

• (1325)

Let us talk about farmers for a moment. God bless them. Seriously, God bless them, because we are entering into a time in history when we need them more than ever. Instead of celebrating them and their incredible contributions to this country, the government is choosing to punish them. We are talking about men and women who actually contribute to environmental care through carbon sequestration, science and innovation, yet the government is going to be punitive. It is going to punish these individuals for feeding the world, for taking care of the environment and for stewarding the soil, the land, the air and the water. It is ludicrous. If the carbon tax really is about changing behaviour and about making the environment a better place, then farmers should be rewarded, not punished.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I know that hon. members are anxious to take part in the debate and to ask questions and give comments. However, I would ask members on both sides of the House who have been participating while this member has had the floor to please hold on to their thoughts and comments so they can give them at the appropriate time.

The hon. member for Lethbridge.

• (1330)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, when my Conservative colleagues and I raise concerns about how expensive life is getting, the government responds by saying, yes, but it has spent so much money and has cut so many cheques. It says, “You get some money. You get some money. You get some money. You all get some money.” It is as if spending money is the measure of success. Since when? Show me the metrics. Show me how government cheques are making life better than a paycheque. They cannot because there is no evidence. It is to the contrary.

When the Prime Minister took office, a typical home cost \$435,000 in this country. Do members want to know what it costs now? It is \$810,000. That is 85% inflation in just six years. Thirty-year-olds are stuck living in their parents' basement without a lot of hope for their future. Home ownership is out the window. Seniors cannot afford groceries. Workers cannot afford to put fuel in their car. Natural gas for home heating is up by 19%. I know it might be uncomfortable for the NDP–Liberal government to face this, but these really are the numbers. We do not live in an idealistic world. We are beyond the realm of theory, folks.

Since the start of the pandemic, the government has brought in \$176 billion in new spending that is unrelated to COVID. The Liberals try to claim that all their spending is somehow making our lives better because COVID made them bad, but \$176 billion was spent just for political reasons, folks.

What is the solution? How do we move forward? Well, it is with less government and more Canada. One of the primary responsibilities of government is to facilitate an environment of economic prosperity. This does not mean running our country into the ground through debt and taxation. No, it means putting policies in place that empower the people. Canadians want to be able to provide for themselves by earning a paycheque. However, instead of allowing them to have autonomy over their finances and their livelihoods,

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the government is butting in by taking money, putting it through bureaucracy, scraping a little off the top and pushing it out the other side. It does not make sense. Instead of promoting prosperity apart from government, the Prime Minister seems keen on ensuring that the only way Canadians can support themselves is with a government cheque. It is wrong.

The NDP–Liberals often accuse this side of the House, which is the true opposition, of being too political when we question this type of stuff, but we are not the only ones doing so. The Parliamentary Budget Officer recently reported, “It appears to me that the rationale for the additional spending initially set aside as ‘stimulus’ no longer exists.” It no longer exists, folks, which means stop the spending, stop printing money, stop pushing this country further and further into debt and stop punishing Canadians.

It is not a leader, a political party or the government that is going to restore economic prosperity and future success for this country. It is the Canadian people. This country needs individual Canadians to rise up and strive to reach their greatest potential. For this to happen on a mass scale, we need the government to get out of the way. The Canadian people are the problem-solvers, solution-makers and wealth generators this country needs. When each of us chooses to pick up our load and carry our responsibility forward, the entire nation advances. Let us empower the people.

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

Mr. Speaker, prior to the member speaking, something absolutely remarkable happened in the House. A Conservative member of Parliament stood up in the House and referred to the Prime Minister as a dictator and then went on to talk, in the next sentence, about other dictators in this world, like Vladimir Putin. Not only is that an incredible disservice to the people of Canada, but think of what it means to the people of Ukraine to somehow suggest that the Prime Minister of this country is a dictator and to compare him to Putin and the incredibly audacious things he is doing to the people of Ukraine.

I am wondering if the member can comment on whether she agrees that the Prime Minister of Canada is a dictator in a democratically elected Parliament. We had an election just six months ago. Does she agree with the rhetoric that came from the previous member?

• (1335)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, I just did a quick review in the dictionary. According to the Oxford dictionary, a dictator is a “ruler with total power over a country, typically one who has obtained control by force”. There are many Canadians who would hold the view that this applies to the Prime Minister of Canada. It is up to the Canadian people to determine that, and they will be determining that in the next election.

Here is the problem with Liberal logic. The Liberals like to make other people responsible for a problem that is not their own. I am not the one who made the statement in the House. Why am I being forced to answer for it? The Canadian people will answer for it in the next election. Bye.

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Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, I will wait until my colleagues stop talking as there is quite a lot of chatter.

I admire the member for Lethbridge. However, I find it difficult to follow her logic. In her speech, she stated that spending money is not a measure of success. I agree with her, especially when it comes to oil.

I can tell her that the government bought a \$21-billion pipeline, that another \$30 billion in support was given to the oil industry during the pandemic and that, year after year, Export Development Canada gives about \$15 billion to the oil and gas industry. We know that \$78 billion was redirected to this industry in 2018 alone.

Does my colleague agree that we are far from being successful and that this is a waste of taxpayers' money?

[English]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, there are those in the House who like to use these false talking points that the oil and gas industry is highly subsidized and is propagated by the government. It is the other way around. This industry is helping fund some incredible infrastructure within our country, such as hospitals, roads, bridges, recreational centres and high-paying jobs for moms and dads so they are able to take care of their families.

Let us talk about another thing here, in addition to all of that. Let us talk about the fact that oil in this industry has the highest environmental standards in the world when it is developed here in Canada. Hold on. Let us talk about another thing. Let us talk about the fact that it is ethically produced. We have ethics in the country, folks. It is amazing. The same cannot be said for Saudi Arabia. The same cannot be said for Russia. While the government would prefer to prop up those true dictatorships, I certainly do not support that.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while there are a number of issues that many of us would have with what we have just heard in the House, from misrepresenting the carbon footprint of Canada's oil and gas industry to the state of the pandemic, I want to focus on a talking point that the Conservatives love to use: their defence of working people. Every time they have the chance to actually act, we see the opposite. They voted against extending EI supports and sided with CEOs on keeping their stock options. The reality is that Canadian workers and communities are paying the price of crushing inequality. Canadians expect the rich to pay their fair share of taxes, yet the Conservatives are not on that page alongside them.

Why do the Conservatives prefer to protect the rich instead of making them pay their fair share of taxes?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member for her new role within the government.

Regarding the rich, first let us define that. What does that mean? Is that an individual who makes \$100,000 a year? Is that an individual who makes \$300,000 a year? How about \$1 million or \$10 mil-

lion a year? What is “the rich”? What exactly are we talking about here, folks?

Here is the problem. Most often, the NDP-Liberal government, when it uses this term, is actually talking about those individuals who are incredibly creative, who are incredibly innovative and who have moved forward to take a risk, invest their capital and create jobs for Canadians. It is amazing.

The Prime Minister would like to call these individuals fat cats and tax cheats, but I like to call these individuals entrepreneurs, job creators, wealth generators and Canadians worth celebrating.

• (1340)

The Deputy Speaker: We did get a little off-base in our timing here of what questions and answers really should have been. I want to make sure. There are a lot of interruptions here. Let us try to keep things to something sensible, and have good questions and good answers as we have all around.

Continuing debate, the hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today representing the people of North Okanagan—Shuswap as I speak to 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. That was three and a half months ago, and 21 months after the first COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns.

Much has changed in the past months since this bill was introduced. When I look at sections of this bill, I cannot help but question why the government has been so slow to respond to the pandemic and provide Canadians, and provincial and territorial governments, with the support they need.

In part 1 of this bill, we see one section proposing the introduction of a new, refundable tax credit for eligible businesses to claim ventilation expenses incurred to improve air quality. Why did it take 21 months for the government to offer this support to Canadians and workers?

Part 2 of this bill proposes to implement a 1% tax on the value of vacant or unused residential properties directly or indirectly owned by non-resident Canadians.

Part 4 of this bill authorizes payments to be made out of the consolidated revenue fund for the purposes of supporting ventilation improvement projects in schools. I hope we can all support measures to protect students, teachers and school staff, but again, why did it take 21 months for the government to propose this measure?

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Part 5 of the bill authorizes payments for the purposes of supporting COVID-19 proof of vaccination initiatives. I ask everyone not to worry. I believe that within this too little, too late bill, there may be a timely response in part 6, as it authorizes the Minister of Health to make payments of up to \$1.72 billion for rapid COVID-19 tests.

I do not want to get too excited about this proposal. I would like to know how many rapid tests Canadians will receive for this proposed \$1.72 billion, so that all members may have a sense of what the cost per unit is that the government has negotiated. We still do not know what the cost per unit is that we paid for vaccines. Perhaps someone on the government's side could provide this information in today's debate, because my constituents and I, and many other Canadians, would like to know.

We are now months beyond the introduction of this bill and many more months beyond the point in time when Canadians, families, employers and schools needed timely, improved ventilation and access to rapid testing. Both as a Canadian and as a member of the House, I have to say that the government and its leader have let Canadians down. Why did the government wait until December 2021 to table these proposals?

When it was apparent that the Prime Minister would not recall Parliament for some time after last year's unnecessary election, I initiated consultations with representatives of indigenous, provincial, regional and municipal governments in my riding of North Okanagan—Shuswap to receive their perspectives on the needs and priorities of the communities we represent.

This bill could have helped Canadians and those communities as they worked their way through the challenges of COVID-19 had these proposals been tabled sooner. Rapid COVID-19 test kits could have helped to prevent the spread of COVID-19, especially in workplaces. Supports for improved ventilation systems could have also made workplaces safer for workers, and schools safer for students, teachers and other staff.

Unfortunately, like much of the government's response to the threats facing Canadians and the global community, this bill was too little, too late. Over 18 months ago, Conservatives were calling on the government to make rapid tests available to Canadians so that family members could see aging parents in care homes.

● (1345)

We called for more rapid tests so parents could have an alternative to keeping their children in isolation, home from school and out of other activities. People have missed work and businesses have closed because workers had to isolate, not knowing if they were positive or not. Others have lost their jobs and may not be able to return. All of this has impacted the hard-working residents who live in those communities I mentioned.

The timely provision of rapid tests could have saved jobs and businesses, and here we are today debating \$1.72 billion for COVID-19 tests, over a year and a half after they were needed. How many family members have suffered anxiety, stress and mental health issues because they did not have timely access to testing? This is a number we may never know, but it is safe to say it is a significant number. I believe we all hope that the people in our

communities will never endure those anxieties and uncertainties again.

Much of what I am speaking on today is about preventive and pre-emptive steps the government should be taking in order to avoid higher costs and to confront damages after they have been inflicted. In many of the consultations with the community leaders I mentioned, there was a common theme: the need for timely preparation for and prevention of known and likely threats and disasters, whether it be enhancing protection perimeters of communities against threats of wildfire and enhancing flood protection systems, or building more reliability into transportation and infrastructure, such as the Trans-Canada Highway from Chase, B.C., to the Alberta border. Residents and communities expect and need their federal government to be proactive and invested in prevention. Time is of the essence.

As for part 2 of this bill, does anyone in the House actually believe the 1% tax on absentee foreign owners will address skyrocketing housing costs in B.C.? Since 2016, the price of an average home has ballooned from \$476,000 to over \$811,000 today. This increase has been propelled by more factors than foreign buyer pressure alone. The government must take the necessary steps to look at this in its entirety, and the housing crisis, and develop proposals for a holistic response to deal with it. Increasing real estate prices are part of the inflation wedge that is expanding the gap between Canadians already in the market, who have housing access, and Canadians still trying to raise a down payment while clinging to the shrinking hope of owning their own homes.

I pray that it is not too late to curb the rising inflation for young people, such as my constituent Ryan, who lives in Vernon. He and his family are desperately trying to save for a down payment to purchase their own home instead of renting part of a home from their parents. Like many communities across Canada, communities in the North Okanagan—Shuswap need increased housing inventory to meet the needs of residents, especially those at low and medium income levels.

When I look at this bill, I am also disappointed that the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance failed to recognize the need for enhanced mental health supports. With all of the money her government has printed and spent over the past two years, one would expect some recognition of the mental health needs of Canadians, but this bill has none.

I would be remiss if I did not say that I speak today not out of personal concern for myself, but out of the concern I have for the young people of today and future generations who will be left to pay the interest on the debt the government is amassing under a short-sighted leader who only looks at today or the next election rather than at the long-term future of Canadians.

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I call on the government to change its ways and embrace the notion of prevention. In the months and weeks leading up to the pandemic, the government ignored warnings from the Department of National Defence and the National Research Council. Prevention can save costs. Prevention can save lives.

In closing, I would like to thank the elected representatives across the North Okanagan—Shuswap, who I work with on an ongoing basis for the benefit of the constituents we represent, and the people of the North Okanagan—Shuswap.

• (1350)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for Canadians watching at home, Bill C-8 was the fall economic update. We are almost through March right now. There are important measures in this legislation that matter to farmers. I know my hon. colleague has farmers in his area, in the interior of British Columbia. There are elements around rapid testing. There are a lot of different measures in this bill that matter, and it is the fall economic statement.

Can the member tell the House when he expects the Conservative Party will actually stop speaking to this bill and let it be called to a vote so we can get those measures to Canadians and to his constituents accordingly?

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, the member asked when we will stop speaking to the bill. I would never encourage members of the House to stop speaking about a bill as significant as this, with billions in spending, no accountability and coming from a government that let the priorities pass on for months before it even introduced it. Therefore, I will take no lesson from this member about when we should and should not speak about a bill.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I must admit that I had a bit of a hard time following my colleague's speech. He is worried that the government is not taking care of the debt for future generations. I think that is important too. He talked about the housing crisis and said that the tax on unused properties in Canada is inadequate. I completely agree with him.

I often hear the Conservatives criticizing what the government is doing on the housing file, but I do not hear them proposing a whole lot of solutions. In a study a month or two ago, Scotiabank, which is supposedly one of their friends, said that there is a shortage of 1.8 million housing units in Canada to address the crisis.

My colleague pointed out that housing prices have doubled since the Liberals took office, but accessibility also includes the availability of more housing. What solutions does the Conservative Party propose to address this shortfall of 1.8 million housing units in Canada?

[English]

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that there is a drastic shortage of affordable housing, and housing of any sort, across this country. That is because people have flocked into the housing market as an investment. They have not seen the investment in rental housing being as productive as it used to be, so we have seen a reduction in rental housing in some areas. In consultations with elected representatives in my riding of North Okanagan—Shuswap a couple of years ago, I learned it had been decades

since there was a fourplex built in one community because of zoning issues. These are issues where we are all going to need to work together with all levels of government to identify what it is we can do to create more housing for Canadians. It cannot be simply government alone.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to follow up on that, the hypocrisy is that, in the past, governments, the Liberals and the Conservatives, talked about government getting out of the way of getting action on things, including housing and so forth. The 1% tax is not seen as sufficient, so regarding inventory, what exactly would the Conservatives be involved in? What would they encourage and what specific things would they do with respect to the private sector? I think that is important. Some of the party members are saying we have to get out of the way and others are saying we have to do more than this, so what exactly would they do more of?

• (1355)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, obviously housing is top of mind for many members and, I think, for Canadians right across this country. Incentivizing the construction of residences, whether single-family or multi-family apartment buildings, is where the federal government can make a difference regarding that growth in new inventory that is desperately needed across the country.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the government's fall economic and fiscal update.

To better understand the economic pressures that Canadians are facing, we need to look at the data. We have the highest rate of inflation that we have had in a generation. My children are all adults now and do not know what inflation is. It is at 5.7% at the moment, and that means that, on average, everything is going to cost every Canadian citizen almost 6% more today than it did a year ago. If we look at industry-specific statistics, it is much more challenging than that.

For any young families in my riding of Langley—Aldergrove, part of metro Vancouver, who are prospective first-time buyers, the news is not good at all. Single family houses are up 42%, condos are up 39% and townhouses are up 35%. Frankly, it is becoming unrealistic for young families to even believe they are ever going to own a house.

I was talking to Alison in my riding just the other day. She and her husband are both earning quite a bit of money. They have managed to save up a really good down payment. They pre-qualified for a mortgage. They are doing everything right. About a year or a year and a half ago, they got into the market to bid on a townhouse. They lost out to a higher bidder. They tried again on a second townhouse. The same thing happened, and they lost out to a higher bidder. They did that 10 times in a row. The tenth time, they bid way over asking price thinking that they would for sure get it. Again, they were outbid by a higher bidder.

I was talking to Alison and she asked what they were doing wrong. I said that she was not doing anything wrong and that she was doing everything right, but that there were economic forces at play that were beyond the ability of ordinary Canadians to deal with.

This is what the Vancouver Sun said just this weekend about this topic:

Young, educated, urban Canadians have [many reasons] to be angry...with Ottawa for the ways it has worsened the housing crisis.

[The Liberal government] has three times campaigned, with apparent earnest emotion, on promises to provide affordable housing. And each time, [it] has reneged.

Canadian housing is now 100 per cent more expensive than when [the Liberals] first took office in 2015.

That is the legacy of the Liberal government, that housing prices have doubled in the time it has held office.

One of the failed programs of the Liberal government is the first-time homebuyers incentive. That is the program that says the government would own a piece of the equity stake in the home of any first-time homebuyers who use the program. Happily, very few people have actually used the program. I was talking to a mortgage broker who works in my neighbourhood, and he explained to me why the program is a failure. It just does not work, certainly not in my riding where houses are as expensive as they are.

Mortgage Professionals Canada, a very credible organization, has said this about the housing affordability crisis: "If we had historically equally considered the demand-side and supply-side policies, we probably would be in a far better position".

I would just summarize this part by saying this: Is it not a fresh idea that we are going to look at basic economic principles? That is where the government has failed.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for his intervention. There will be about six and a half minutes left when he gets back to this matter.

During the last couple of Statements by Members, it has been getting pretty noisy in the chamber. I am hoping that members could keep their conversations outside in the lobbies, and as they come in, they could listen to these great statements that members are giving.

Statements by Members

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

NGOC BÉ HUỖNH

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, a short time ago, it was Rare Disease Day. I want to bring scleroderma, also called systemic sclerosis, to the attention of the House. This rare autoimmune disease impacts over 40,000 Canadians.

One of those people was Ngọc Bé Huỳnh.

She was studying to become a doctor before war broke out in her country. She evaded Communist soldiers, she fought off pirates, and she survived two years in a refugee camp before being welcomed to this country. She was grateful to be here, but it was not easy. She did not speak English or French, but her indomitable spirit was not going to let her fail. She learned English. She went to college and she retrained as an electrical assembly worker, becoming the first in her factory to be a female line worker.

Ngọc Bé Huỳnh was her name. Others knew her as Belinda Vuong. I simply knew her as mom.

We do not know much about scleroderma. We know it predominantly affects women and that it relentlessly attacks the body. Life expectancy is three to 15 years. My mom lived with it for over 18 years. She passed away this morning after her courageous battle.

To my mom, who raised me to stand in my truth, to focus on doing right and to help as many people as I can: [*Member spoke in Vietnamese*].

[English]

I thank my mom. I love my mom. I will miss my mom.

* * *

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to recognize Dennis Levesque, a proud veteran and community leader, on his well-deserved retirement.

Dennis worked over the last 45 years to create meaningful change in our communities and country. After serving in the Canadian Armed Forces for 37 years as a senior officer, instructor and helicopter pilot, he was awarded two Command Commendations and retired as a lieutenant-colonel.

Dennis then worked at Sts. Peter and Paul Residence in my riding of Scarborough North, where he served as chief administrative officer for eight years. Sts. Peter and Paul was founded in 1980 as a Ukrainian seniors residence that today serves a diverse community of elders.

Statements by Members

I would like to not only wish Dennis a happy and healthy retirement but also acknowledge the incredible work at Sts. Peter and Paul. Let us all continue to stand in solidarity with our Ukrainian community here in Canada and around the world.

Slava Ukraini.

* * *

[Translation]

LABEL FOR CREATORS IN CAP-SANTÉ

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in addition to having 40 of the most beautiful villages in Quebec, Cap-Santé, the major centre of Portneuf in my riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, is known for its artists, artisans, agriculture and heritage, as well as its amazing old-fashioned Christmas market.

I would like to share with the House one of this municipality's recent initiatives, which is worthy of note. I am referring to the creation of the Créations d'origine cap-santéenne, or COCS, label. I invite my colleagues to visit the COCS Facebook page, which is a place where all the city's creators can come together. Joining forces to promote their local brands and showcase products and services is an excellent way for these creators to better define their identity, local characteristics and uniqueness. It further strengthens the already close ties of this extremely talented community.

I thank them for once again putting our beautiful region of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier on the map.

* * *

[English]

REVEREND GEORGE LESLIE MACKAY

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise in the House today in memory of a great Canadian who played a major role in fostering the beginnings of our relationship with Taiwan.

Reverend George Leslie Mackay arrived in Tamsui in 1872 as a missionary, an educator and a medical practitioner.

Reverend Mackay contributed greatly to education and public health in Taiwan. He founded the Oxford College, which is now known as Aletheia University, where he lectured on many subjects, including Bible studies and medicine. His work within medicine, while very basic, had major positive impacts for the people in Taiwan, so much so that even today his name is synonymous with medicine in Taiwan and many hospitals bear the name of Reverend Mackay.

It has been 150 years since Reverend Mackay landed in Taiwan to begin his work, and 150 years later the relationship with Canada remains strong. In times like this, we must rally together with our friends, showing support for our democracies and common visions of peace and stability worldwide.

We, as a nation, are honoured to continue this friendship sparked so long ago and will continue to nurture it and stand strong together for our people, for democracy and for peace.

• (1405)

[Translation]

PATRICE VERMETTE

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the city of Longueuil and Quebec in general are hotbeds of exceptional talent.

We witnessed that yet again in spades at yesterday's Oscars. Patrice Vermette, a resident of my riding, won the Oscar for best production design for his absolutely stunning work on *Dune* by Quebec's Denis Villeneuve, another awesomely talented member of Quebec's film community.

This was Patrice Vermette's third Oscar nomination. From his Longueuil living room, in the midst of the pandemic, he brought his considerable talent and signature style to bear on translating Frank Herbert's epic masterwork into magnificent images.

Filmmaker Denis Villeneuve has worked with Mr. Vermette for 10 years, and he describes Vermette as a rare, singular talent. I congratulate Patrice Vermette on this extraordinary accomplishment, and I thank him for putting Quebec on the map in such a dazzling way.

* * *

RÉJEAN POMMAINVILLE

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House to celebrate the life of a man who left his mark not only on Ontario's agricultural community, but on the Franco-Ontarian community as a whole. Réjean Pommainville was a dairy producer, a passionate farmer, a champion of Franco-Ontarian culture and an advocate for his agricultural community.

Réjean served on the Ontario Federation of Agriculture board of directors for nearly a decade and was involved with the federation in various capacities for over 40 years. He was also passionate about preserving cultural heritage and spent hours working on preservation at Village Gagnon and even on his own farm, where he built a general store, a small church, a saloon and, of course, a prison. Réjean brought a strong work ethic as well as a sense of humour to everything he did.

I extend my deepest condolences to his wife, Barbara, his children, the Pommainville family and his friends.

* * *

[English]

SPACE TECHNOLOGY HALL OF FAME

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to recognize a lifetime achievement for Dr. Harry Ing, founder of Bubble Technology Industries, or BTI. His company, located in Chalk River, has been selected for induction into the prestigious U.S. Space Technology Hall of Fame.

*Statements by Members***AGRICULTURE IN ABBOTSFORD**

BTI produces a small device for measuring neutron radiation called a bubble detector. In use for over 30 years in thousands of applications, the technology has been deployed on over two dozen space missions to assess radiation risks in space. The bubble detector is used to monitor radiation in hospitals, power plants, manufacturing facilities and nuclear submarines. It was also used to protect emergency responders after nuclear incidents at Fukushima and Chernobyl. Currently, BTI is pursuing new opportunities to search for water on the moon and to protect astronauts from radiation.

Congratulations to Dr. Harry Ing, vice president Lianne Ing, head of research Dr. Martin Smith and everyone at Bubble Technology on their induction into the U.S. Space Technology Hall of Fame.

* * *

NAUTICAL SKILLS COMPETITION

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Master Mariners of Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador division, recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of the nautical skills competition, a fun, competitive and challenging event for the next generation of seafarers.

My province and the ocean are inseparable, and with events like these, our leadership in both the marine industry and the global ocean economy is growing like never before. I am also proud to say that my family's connection to the sea runs deep, from my grandfather's schooner to my cousin's longliner. Now I am very proud of my son, Paddy, as he works toward his master mariner designation in our country's Arctic waters.

I want to extend my sincere congratulations to all the master mariner student participants and to the institute's associate VP and the remarkable team. It was well done.

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● (1410)

ACADEMY AWARDS

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to celebrate Ben Proudfoot, a filmmaker from Halifax, who took home the Oscar for best documentary short at last night's Academy Awards. Ben's winning film *The Queen of Basketball* tells the often overlooked story of Lusia Harris, the only woman to be officially drafted by the NBA, the first woman inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame and the first woman to score a basket at the Olympics.

In his acceptance speech last night, Ben said, "If there is anyone out there that still doubts whether there's an audience for female athletes...let this Academy Award be the answer".

Throughout his career, Ben has used film to shine a light on trailblazing women, such as Heather Lawson, the first woman trained as a stone mason in Canada, and astronomer Jocelyn Bell Burnell for her work on the discovery of pulsars.

Speaking of pulsars, today people in Ben's hometown of Halifax are over the moon with pride. I invite all members to join us in congratulating him on this remarkable achievement. I send my congratulations to Ben.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Abbotsford has a proud tradition of agricultural excellence. With the most productive soil in Canada, my community produces much of the food that finds its way to the tables of Canadians.

Abbotsford is the blueberry capital of North America, with almost a third of our cultivated land reserved for the growing of berries. Nurseries, greenhouses, dairy and poultry barns dot our landscape. In fact, we have become the breadbasket of B.C. and also claim the most farm gate sales per hectare in Canada. Our chicken and egg producers deliver a secure supply of premium, quality products to kitchen tables every day.

However, our farmers are not immune to environmental challenges. This past November, we experienced a once-in-a-lifetime storm that spawned massive flooding across Abbotsford. Our farmers experienced catastrophic losses of crops and livestock. Despite these challenges, they are bouncing back.

To the farmers of Abbotsford and across Canada, I give a big "thank you" for the contribution they make to a healthy and prosperous Canada.

* * *

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members know that Sault Ste. Marie is a kind, caring community. Throughout our history, Ukrainians have contributed to our city's growth and development, and Saultites have been rallying in support of Ukraine for the past few weeks.

The march for Ukraine sovereignty last week was a multi-religious march where our local faith leaders from many religions organized and came together. More than 500 people showed up to pledge their support and demonstrate their solidarity for Ukraine.

I have received numerous phone calls from constituents pledging housing, food, work and more for refugees coming to Sault Ste. Marie. I am working closely with our local partners at the Ukrainian church, city hall and community organizations to ensure that we have an action plan, infrastructure and a hub for resources to support and welcome Ukrainians with open arms.

Saultites are once again showing their love, compassion and community support for refugees and displaced people, and we will be prepared to welcome as many Ukrainians as possible. We will continue to find ways to support refugees and will be prepared for whatever comes our way.

Slava Ukraini.

*Statements by Members***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of representing the fine women and men of 4 Wing stationed in Cold Lake.

The Prime Minister has delayed selecting future fighter jets for over six years, and Conservatives have been pushing to select the F-35s to replace the old F-18s. In fact, we need to increase our defence spending to 2% of the GDP to meet our NATO commitments and support our armed forces. We have first-rate soldiers relying on increasingly second-rate equipment, and this government should have addressed the issue before we were in crisis.

The Prime Minister and his Minister of Foreign Affairs seem to believe that we can lay down our arms and accomplish our foreign policy goals through the power of convening and moral authority. Well, I think we saw at the European Parliament how seriously the world takes this government's moral authority. I hope that the government will wake up, make the necessary decisions of investments to modernize our armed forces and stop resting our foreign policy goals on the Prime Minister's personal brand. Our country, and the women and men who defend it, deserve better.

* * *

44TH PARLIAMENT

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Canada's latest celebrity marriage, the Prime Minister's new bride has given him the gift of time to plan an exit strategy without electoral embarrassment while ignoring the voice of Quebec.

Given this government's history of broken promises, NDP members should remember the warning about not trusting Liberals bearing gifts. This Trojan horse wedding is designed not to deliver pharmacare and dental care but to show the irrelevance of the NDP. The Prime Minister may not yet have served the divorce papers on this relationship, but I can assure members that he has already drawn them up. In this marriage of convenience, the losers will be the Canadian people.

* * *

● (1415)

TREATMENT OF CANCER

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week I celebrate 10 years in remission from cancer. Ten years after my last treatment and hearing the words, "Your scans are clear", I stand here in this House as grateful as ever.

I am grateful to Dr. David Hei and the incredible team at the Carbone Cancer Center. I am grateful to Dr. Jacques Corcos and the incredible team at the Segal Cancer Centre. I am grateful to my parents and the family and friends who called, visited and supported me. I am grateful to my incredible wife, who day in and day out, month in and month out stood by me through it all, and I am grateful to be here in this House today.

[Translation]

I also rise to remember all those who were not as lucky as I was, all the family members and good friends, young and old, who fought just as hard but did not survive.

Finally, I rise to send my best wishes, on behalf of the House, to all those currently fighting this battle with all their might. I want to tell them not to give up and to keep going. They can do this, and we are with them all the way.

* * *

*[English]***JACK VERHULST**

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last year my community lost an incredible social justice activist and a mentor of mine, someone who knew there was no greater obligation than to look out for your neighbour and community.

Jack Verhulst was a child of war-torn Nazi-occupied Holland. Growing up, he knew the hardship, poverty and fear of war. Jack understood the importance of peace, security and compassion and brought those lessons with him when he emigrated to Canada in the early 1950s.

Jack was a truck driver, a farmer and a union man. He joined the NDP because of founder Tommy Douglas. Jack admired Tommy's integrity. There was not a more dedicated campaigner. Jack was a riding president and candidate, but Jack was most known as a legendary fundraiser. There was no saying no to Jack, though some may have tried.

We all miss him, but none more than his wife Tina; his children Maryann, Maurice and Rita; his grandson Dylan; and, of course, the riding association of Perth-Wellington. They were his strength and inspired his passion for fairness and equity. That is what Jack worked to achieve, and that is what we in the House must continue to strive for. I send my thanks to Jack.

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*[Translation]***DRUMMOND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY**

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Drummond chamber of commerce and industry, the CCID, is celebrating its 120th anniversary this year.

Drummond is one of the most prolific entrepreneurial centres in Quebec. Are members aware that the expression "one person's loss is another's gain" does not apply in Drummond?

That is because one person's gain is everyone's gain in Drummond. This even applies to success: When one person succeeds, everyone succeeds.

Whenever a new business is created or a new store opens its doors in Drummond, the entire community, led by the CCID, is swift to offer its full support, encouragement and backing to ensure it becomes another success story.

The CCID is proud of its history of supporting business people who go on to make an impact across Quebec and around the world. Now more than ever, the CCID is positioning itself as an essential tool for the economic development of our region, which is the most welcoming region for business people of all backgrounds.

I would like to congratulate the current president of the CCID, Marc Tremblay, and the board of directors, and I want to recognize the hard work of executive director Alexandra Houle and her entire team.

I hope the Drummond chamber of commerce and industry will be around for many years to come.

* * *

CANADIAN MEN'S SOCCER TEAM

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we witnessed a historic moment last night. The Canadian men's soccer team qualified for the 2022 World Cup with a crucial 4-0 win over Jamaica.

Congratulations to the entire team, which was led by the talented Alphonso Davies, Jonathan David and Cyle Larin. The perseverance, determination and mutual support shown by the team, especially following Alphonso Davies' myocarditis diagnosis, are a reflection of our Canadian values.

I also want to congratulate the team members behind the bench, especially head coach John Herdman. As a former coach, I know first-hand the sacrifices and efforts they have had to make to guide the team to the top.

This victory will have a big impact on the popularity of amateur sport across Canada, just as it will on the soccer club in my region, the Venturi de Saguenay, led by Maxime Pepin Larocque.

We will be watching Canada's team, and we are behind them all the way. We hope they will make us proud, as the Canadian women's team did.

Go, Canada, go.

* * *

● (1420)

[English]

NATIONAL CITIZEN SCIENTIST CORNERSTONE AWARD

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Alzheimer's impacts so many of our families, friends and neighbours. It is a terrible disease. Anthony "Tony" Ng was able to see the signs of dementia develop in his father years ago. When he saw those signs developing for himself, he joined the Toronto Memory Program. This year, he is a recipient of the National Citizen Scientist Cornerstone Award. It is an award that recognizes clinical trial

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volunteers who personally have made an extraordinary effort to support local Alzheimer's research.

He is supported by his wife Kathie in this work, and they are described as medical research heroes. I thank Tony for everything he is doing to advance Alzheimer's research.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me share a personal experience.

On Saturday I went grocery shopping with my wife, as we do almost every week. Several people stopped me in the aisles to tell me one thing: Everything costs more now, milk, cereal, meat, coffee, absolutely everything. Add to that the price of gas, currently at \$1.85 a litre in my riding, Mégantic—L'Érable.

People are worried about this new NDP-Liberal government. They can no longer make ends meet. Instead of negotiating his political future behind closed doors, can the Prime Minister tell us how he plans to help feed Canadian families?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives keep talking down the Canadian economy and spinning economic fiction.

Let me share a few facts. First, Statistics Canada released data showing that our GDP is growing by 6.7%. Second, our economy has seen the largest growth in the G7. Third, next year, our economy will be the fastest-growing in the G7. Fourth, our GDP is now back to pre-pandemic levels. Those are the facts.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I invite my colleague to come grocery shopping with me and to talk to people. Second, the Conservatives proposed a simple solution last week and that is to temporarily stop collecting GST. Third, everyone knows that eggs, milk and cereal do not magically appear on store shelves. They are transported in trucks that run on gas that is now more expensive. Those are facts.

Fourth, not only did the NDP-Liberal government vote against our proposal, but it is also planning to add new taxes on April 1. The New Democrat perspective in this new NDP-Liberal government is starting to show through. When will it stop seeing the middle class as a never-ending source of revenue?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the official opposition has brought up the important issue of affordability, and there has been some great news on this front today. We signed a child care agreement with Ontario worth several billion dollars.

Oral Questions

We have officially signed agreements with every province and territory. This is good news for families, good news for Canadians and good news for Quebecers. It is all good news on this side of the House.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the first announcements made by this NDP-Liberal government last week involved setting conditions for the provinces to enter into discussions on health care and transfers.

Now, nothing will get in the way of this government interfering in provincial jurisdictions. The NDP-Liberal centralist coalition will impose not one, not two, but five conditions on the provinces.

The Minister of Health is incapable of scientifically justifying the need to maintain federal vaccine mandates, but now he wants to lecture the provinces. The solution is to trust the elected officials in the provinces. Why is this government incapable of doing that?

• (1425)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, trusting and working together is exactly what we have been doing over the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, with record investments in health and safety worth \$63 billion, in addition to \$43 billion through the Canada health transfer.

Most importantly, this exceptional collaboration has saved tens of thousands of lives in Canada. Tens of billions of dollars have been injected to support household incomes. We are very proud of this, and we will continue to work together.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the PBO released a report that literally blows the doors off the environment minister's talking points on the carbon tax. The tax will cost Canadians, and it is not neutral when we include the cost to the economy. Six in 10 Canadian families are actually now going to be losing money.

Will the minister admit the carbon tax is just voodoo economics, or is he going to say the PBO experts got it wrong?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we thank the Parliamentary Budget Officer for his work, which confirms that the price on pollution has a progressive impact and gives eight out of 10 families more back through the climate action rebate than they pay. Putting a price on carbon pollution is recognized as one of the most efficient ways to drive down emissions and fight climate change.

Again, let me point out that the Conservative member for New Brunswick Southwest is on the record as saying that his province should go back to using the federal carbon price. We agree with him.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know this is question period, not answer period, but perhaps the member and the government should actually read the report before they give a statement in the House. The PBO analysis is absolutely clear. I am not surprised that the government does not do the hard work of the complicated calculations, because it has a Prime Minister who says, "I don't think about monetary policy".

Either the minister or the government is incompetent because they did not do a full analysis of the carbon tax, or they knew it and were just hiding it from Canadians. Which one is it?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that the majority of households would receive more in climate action rebates than they pay, and that is eight out of 10 families. I am not sure where the hon. member is getting his numbers from.

Speaking of numbers, this year, a family of four will receive up to \$745 in Ontario, \$830 in my home province of Manitoba and \$1,100 in Saskatchewan and Alberta. We are fighting climate change and increasing affordability.

The Deputy Speaker: We are on question six and it is getting hard to hear already, so just keep it civil.

[Translation]

The hon. member for La Prairie.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it would be so simple to give Quebec the means to take care of its responsibilities in health care. All Quebec is asking for is for the federal government to pay its 35% share.

However, Ottawa keeps wanting to dictate how Quebecers' money should be used. It wants to come across as a saviour, when every year it cuts its share of health funding. It is Ottawa's fault that the system is underfunded. It is like a firefighter who is also a pyromaniac: It sets a fire and then tells us how to put it out.

When will Ottawa recognize that the expertise is in Quebec City, not in this Parliament, especially not on the benches across the way nor the ones next to us?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for giving me the opportunity to say more about the important investment we announced on Friday: a \$2-billion unconditional top-up to the Canada health transfer, in addition to the \$45 billion, effective April 1, to reduce wait times for treatments, surgeries and diagnostics, which have done so much harm over the past few months. It is time to clear the backlogs in order to prepare the health care system for future challenges.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is not as though this government is known for excellence even in its own areas of jurisdiction.

Everything it touches in its own jurisdictions turns into a fiasco. The Phoenix pay system is not even able to pay its employees. At the immigration department, the backlog is never-ending. It is chaos for Ukrainian refugees. First nations do not even have access to clean drinking water.

The list is long. There is one fiasco after another. Now the federal government is telling us that it is going to look after health care, one of Quebec's jurisdictions. May I say that this makes us very nervous?

Why does the federal government not just increase health transfer as everyone is asking it to do?

It is simple.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my suggestion is that, after question period, we go invest in shirt manufacturers. At the rate the Bloc Québécois members are tearing their shirts in outrage every day, there is money to be made.

The Bloc Québécois should recognize that it is perfectly possible for Ottawa and Quebec to work together, that it is possible to work together for all Quebecers.

As the Minister of Health clearly stated, there are no conditions attached to the \$2 billion. That is something the Bloc Québécois does not want to hear.

• (1430)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the President of Ukraine is criticizing the international community for being too slow to impose sanctions on Russia. Meanwhile, Canada is home to the global headquarters of Russia's largest uranium producer.

The company is owned by the Putin government, but this sector has been virtually untouched by the Liberals' sanctions. There is no way to know how many assets have been frozen in Canada or whether the sanctions are hitting Putin where it hurts. The people of Ukraine are fighting for survival and deserve more than empty rhetoric.

Will the government finally tell us how many assets have been frozen as part of the sanctions on Putin?

Oral Questions

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important question and for the opportunity to clarify a few points.

When we impose sanctions, we are making the assets of individuals or entities completely useless and depriving them of value. They cannot be sold or transferred. In short, no transactions are possible. Going against sanctions is also a criminal offence.

We will impose further sanctions, because it goes without saying that we must continue to put pressure on the Russian regime.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, that was not the question my colleague was asking. Ukrainians are fighting for their lives. President Zelenskyy is pleading for help as Putin commits war crimes against the Ukrainian people. Zelenskyy has said that governments have been too slow in implementing all possible sanctions to stop the Russian invasion. We still do not know if the sanctions are being enforced, and we still do not know if they are being enforced effectively and if Russian assets are being frozen.

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously, we have imposed sanctions and we have delivered lethal and non-lethal aid. Have we done a lot? Yes. Is there more to be done? Absolutely. That is why we will continue to impose sanctions. Just to be clear, when we impose sanctions, we are making their assets completely useless and are depriving them of value. Going against sanctions is also a criminal offence.

FINANCE

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the new NDP—Liberal Prime Minister. During the last election, the NDP promised to spend a whopping \$214 billion of taxpayer money with no plan to balance the budget. Now, the NDP and Liberals have negotiated a backroom deal to go on a massive spending spree that would cheat future generations out of their prosperity.

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

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives continue to talk down the Canadian economy and spin economic fiction, so let me take this opportunity to share some good news and some facts. StatsCan data showed that our GDP grew by 6.7% in Q4, exceeding market expectations. Our economy is the second-fastest-growing in the G7. Our economy will be the fastest-growing in the G7 next year. Our GDP is now back to prepandemic levels. Those are the facts.

Oral Questions

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to the new NDP–Liberal finance minister, inflation is raging and Canadians have been left behind. The cost of everything is skyrocketing: gas, groceries and household goods. Millions of families have seen the dream of home ownership slip through their fingers. Canadians are struggling to balance their budgets, yet the minister refuses to balance her own.

When will she finally tell us what she plans to do about the affordability crisis? When will she finally stop borrowing and spending and get inflation under control?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition is raising the important issue of affordability, and today we saw incredible news on that front. This government has signed a deal with Ontario on child care. This multi-billion-dollar deal will be good for children and families across the province, and now we have a deal with every province and territory in the country. That is affordability. That is focusing on families. That is focusing on Canadians.

• (1435)

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is estimated that this new NDP–Liberal agreement will cost taxpayers upward of \$40 billion by the end of the term. Last week, Scotiabank said, “The finance minister risks further undermining Ottawa’s credibility in...tackling [runaway] inflation.” That is because when inflation is more than double the 2% target, and with where we are in the business cycle, additional spending will only make inflation worse.

Will the Minister of Finance change her course or will she continue to plow ahead with additional spending that will make inflation worse?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the other side of the aisle continues to obstruct and delay important legislation that would benefit Canadians and make life more affordable. On Bill C-8 alone, which is up for debate right now, the Conservatives could stop blocking and gutting the bill so that \$1.7 billion could flow for COVID rapid tests, along with \$100 million for ventilation systems in our schools, tax relief for teachers and real action to help with the cost of housing. While they are obstructing, we are constructing. We are going to work every day for Canadians.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, a 73-year-old constituent named Dot called me, frustrated and upset, because she can barely afford groceries and does not have enough to cover her monthly bills. Under the Liberals’ fiscal watch, inflation has spiralled to 5.7% and Canadians are paying more for essentials because of the carbon tax, a tax that disproportionately affects seniors and rural Canadians.

When will the NDP–Liberal government realize that its carbon-tax hike and the corresponding out-of-control inflation are hurting Canadians?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know that climate change is real and that we should protect Canadians from the associated dangers and real costs. We introduced a price on carbon pollution across Canada because it is a market mechanism and the

most effective way to ensure that we continue to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Here are the real numbers for Canadian families. An average family of four in Ontario gets back \$745. It is \$832 in Manitoba, \$1,100 in Saskatchewan and \$1,079 in my home province of Alberta. That is real action on climate change and real action on affordability.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the deputy governor of the Bank of Canada said that gas and groceries are facing some of the fastest price gains, that all households are affected by high inflation and that this situation is especially painful for low-income households because they tend to spend a greater share of their earnings on such items.

That is exactly what Conservatives have been saying for weeks. We have to tackle inflation because it affects the most vulnerable members of society. Unfortunately, all this government knows how to do is spend, spend, spend, and that is driving inflation up. Will the government reduce or, better yet, cancel the tax hike set for April 1?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know that climate change is real and that we have to protect Canadians from its real dangers and costs. We implemented carbon pricing across Canada because it is a market mechanism that works.

Let us look at the cash going directly into taxpayers’ pockets: \$745 in Ontario; \$832 in Manitoba; over \$1,100 in Saskatchewan; and over \$1,000 in Alberta. That money goes back to taxpayers. That is the plan, it works, and we are continuing to make life more affordable.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are the realities and facts. Inflation, at 5.7%, is the highest it has been in the past 40 years.

The fact is that April 1 is this Friday. There will be a Liberal tax increase this Friday, and Canadians do not want it. One way to help Canadians with inflation would be to cancel this tax increase. Will the government finally see reason and give Canadian families a break?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not surprising to see the Conservatives campaigning for less climate action and pushing a false narrative about Canada’s carbon pricing regime.

Even the Conservative member for New Brunswick Southwest has urged his province to bring in pollution pricing so that New Brunswickers can get some money back in their pockets. He recognizes that this will result in quarterly payments from Ottawa and that federal carbon tax refunds will be mailed to individuals living on low, moderate, middle and fixed incomes.

That is the law. Here on this side of the House, we are taking action.

* * *

● (1440)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, the Prime Minister said before the European Parliament that we cannot abandon Ukraine.

However, today, Radio-Canada confirmed that his government is abandoning Ukrainians. He is plunging them into endless administrative chaos, which is preventing them from seeking refuge in Quebec and Canada. Despite our collaboration, despite our proposals and our efforts, the federal government's failure on the ground when it comes to helping refugees is even worse than we could have imagined.

We can deal with the paperwork later. There has been enough dilly-dallying. When will the government charter planes and start airlifting families out?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for all his work and collaboration.

What I can tell the House is that we have been working with our partners, including in the airline industry, from day one. I would also like to inform the House of the actions the government is taking. We are sending biometric instruction letters to clients every four hours, we are increasing the number of employees in biometric units in the regions, and we are going to send more personnel to deal with the surge. We will continue to work hard to bring as many Ukrainians to Canada as possible.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can it be that, after 33 days of war, there is just one centre in Poland, yes, one, where refugees can give their biometrics? How can it be that, after 33 days, all refugees can do is refresh a website that keeps crashing in the hopes of snagging an almost-impossible-to-get appointment at the only available centre?

Does this government think that the war is waged only on Mondays to Fridays from nine to five? Come on. The Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel is a failure. Will the government terminate it and start airlifting refugees?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada will continue to support people who are fleeing the war in Ukraine.

As I said, we have increased the number of employees and biometric units in the regions, and we are sending in more personnel. I

would also like to inform the House that we have extended the hours of operation at our visa application centres in accordance with local laws.

Again, we will continue to work on bringing over as many Ukrainians as possible as quickly as possible.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is not reassuring in the least. Three weeks ago, the Bloc Québécois asked the government to do better. The situation has evolved since then. The minister's plan to welcome Ukrainian refugees is, by all accounts, a failure.

It has gotten to the point that people fleeing the war in Ukraine have to make their way to Slovakia or even Portugal to get services from Canada. These people have fled war, and they are being forced to flee again, to go even farther, because of the federal government's incompetence.

When will the minister decide to deal with the administrative details later, charter some planes and go get these people?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question because it also gives me an opportunity to clarify and mention the announcement made by the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship this morning about our involvement.

We are expanding the federal settlement program for Ukrainians who want to come to Canada to offer language training, orientation, employment assistance and other supports for Ukrainians as they settle into their new communities.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, innovative practices such as zero tillage, precision farming and 4R nutrient stewardship ensure that Canadian farmers lead the world in environmental sustainability. These practices should be celebrated, but instead the NDP-Liberal carbon tax coalition is punishing Canadian farmers, and the agriculture minister is complicit. Not only did she vote against exempting farm fuels from the carbon tax, but she supports the coalition's increase in the carbon tax on April 1. Canadian agriculture is at a breaking point and a food shortage is looming.

Will the agriculture minister change her course and oppose a carbon tax increase on April 1?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again I can tell the member that farmers understand the importance of fighting against climate change. They care for their land. Obviously, it is the most important thing for them. They are the first ones to be impacted by climate change and they know we are supporting them with different funds and investments to help them afford clean technologies and adopt better practices and by investing in science, research and innovation. We are there to support farmers.

Oral Questions

● (1445)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what helps them afford new technologies and innovations is not crippling them with the carbon tax.

Let us be clear. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said that not only does the carbon tax not reduce emissions—surprise, surprise—it is not revenue-neutral either. What is happening is the Liberal rebate will give farmers pennies on the dollar compared to what they pay. This is devastating to Canadian farmers. The Liberal-NDP carbon tax coalition is going to take millions of dollars out of the pockets of farmers and agri-food businesses.

Will the agriculture minister listen to farmers and oppose any increase in the carbon tax on April 1?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government put a price on carbon pollution, which is ensuring cleaner air, fewer emissions and more money in the pockets of people. As the carbon price increases, these payments also increase, leaving most Canadians with more money in their pocket. This year, as I mentioned before, a family of four will receive up to \$745 in rebates in Ontario, \$830 in Manitoba and \$1,100 in Saskatchewan and Alberta. The quarterly cheques that people will receive are real. Climate change is real.

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CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal government plans to kick Canadians while they are already down. The carbon tax will grow by 25% on April 1. It might be April Fool's, but it is no joke. The government tries to claim there is actually more money going back into the hands of Canadians through this taxation scheme. However, the PBO said otherwise. He actually said that Canadians definitely pay more than they get back.

Will the NDP-Liberal government stop punishing Canadians and scrap the tax hike?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure my hon. colleague heard me the first time, but the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirms that the price on pollution is a progressive price on pollution and gives eight out of 10 families more back through the climate action rebate than they pay. Putting a price on carbon pollution is recognized as one of the most efficient ways to drive down emissions and fight climate change. By maintaining a fair price on pollution across the country, we are ensuring that carbon pricing remains affordable for Canadians no matter where they live.

* * *

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want bold climate action, but the Liberals' rhetoric just does not match their actions. Despite their promises, the government has the worst climate record of any G7 country. The minister claims they are taking bold action, but since signing the Paris Agreement,

Canada is the only country whose emissions have increased every single year, and the Liberals are still handing out billions to big oil and gas. We are running out of time.

We need a bold emissions reduction plan, but how can Canadians trust the government when it does the opposite of what it promises?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that Canadians are already feeling the impacts of climate change, from flooding to wildfires, deadly heat waves and other extreme weather events. We are taking bold action by putting a price on pollution, investing in clean energy, retrofitting homes, decarbonizing industries, setting new emission reduction targets and making historic investments in nature.

We have invested \$100 billion in these measures to date and we will keep doing more.

● (1450)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week the Conger ice shelf in Antarctica collapsed amidst record temperatures. Scientists are saying the polar region may be past the tipping point, yet last week the government increased oil production by 109 million barrels a year. Burning the planet might seem like a good idea for business, but it is condemning our children to a terrible future.

The environment minister has missed every single target he has established. Will his new plan include a hard limit on fossil fuel production, yes or no?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 2015, Canada has been delivering on real climate action that has cut pollution, created new middle-class jobs and protected a healthy environment, including, as I said, \$100 billion in investments. To further this critical work and ensure that Canada's economy and workers benefit from the global transition to a clean economy, our government will continue to make important investments to fight the climate crisis and build a better future for everyone.

HEALTH

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the incredible contribution that health care workers have made and continue to make in Canada's response to the pandemic. The omicron wave is receding, but we need to recognize that COVID is not going to disappear. Unfortunately, we know that COVID-19 presented challenges for our health care system. Too many Canadians had their care deferred during the pandemic, resulting in a significant backlog of surgeries and diagnostics.

Can the Minister of Health please update this House on its recent \$2-billion transfer to the provinces and territories to help clear surgery and diagnostic backlogs?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank our dear colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville for her hard work.

Last Friday we announced additional support of \$2 billion to help provinces and territories reduce backlogs in surgeries and treatments and also to support our health care workers to ensure better access to a doctor or family health team, to create digital health records for all, to improve mental health and substance use services for all and help everyone grow old in dignity and in safety across Canada.

We will continue to work together to ensure all Canadians have the care they need and deserve.

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HEALTH

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, President Biden made exemptions to the vaccine mandates for truckers who drive solo and for companies with fewer than 100 employees. As part of the road map that the Prime Minister signed with the president, they agreed to match requirements at the border.

Will the Prime Minister look for that match to get exemptions for unvaccinated Canadian truckers in order that we can address the trucker shortage here in Canada?

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the beginning of the pandemic, we made a commitment to Canadians and Canadian businesses that we will do whatever it takes to protect their health and safety. We have put in place a system of measures to ensure that we protect travellers, protect workers and protect our economy.

The good news is that as circumstances are changing, we are adjusting these measures. We have always followed the advice that we have been receiving from our public health experts. Right now we continue to encourage people to get vaccinated because it is the best thing to do to protect themselves and those around them.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while countries around the world and provinces across Canada are removing vaccine mandates, a closer look at labour regulations reveals that last December the government quietly included making mandatory vaccines permanent in its forward regulatory plan. The Liberals claim this policy will reduce transmissibility, but we know that is not the case.

Oral Questions

Will the NDP-Liberal government drop this unscientific regulation, which will negatively impact thousands of public servants?

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

Because of our joint work together with the provinces and territories over the last two years, which involved a lot of difficult decisions and difficult actions on the part of individual Canadians, together we essentially saved tens of thousands of lives. Had we not done that and had the types of public policies and vaccination rates we saw south of the border, 60,000 additional lives would have been lost in Canada.

● (1455)

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the health minister's lines on COVID-19 change with the blink of an eye. Last month he told the House that provincial governments determine mask mandates. Now Liberals want fully vaccinated Canadian families that travel to the United States and return home to wear masks in all public settings for 14 days.

Where is the science for this unenforceable demand, and why is Ottawa interfering with what it previously said was provincial jurisdiction?

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, for every policy we take, we keep in mind that we want to protect the health and safety of Canadians, including travellers, those who work in the travel industry and those who work in the tourism sector. We are regularly consulting our experts, and we have been adjusting our policies to respond to the changing circumstances.

I ask my colleagues to encourage Canadians to follow the science, to do whatever they can to protect themselves and to protect those whom they love.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last night I spoke with a heartbroken Lisa Budgell. She is living in Alberta and wants to properly mourn her mom, who just passed away in my riding. Lisa had one COVID vaccine, recently had COVID, and is waiting for her second shot. She is not allowed to board a plane in Canada. Lisa's mental health will be forever scarred if she is unable to say goodbye to her mom.

Will the Prime Minister have a heart, swallow his pride, follow the provinces and end these travel restrictions now?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the member of Parliament was very right in pointing to the difficulties many millions of Canadians have lived through in the last two years in the biggest health crisis in over a century and the biggest economic crisis since the Second World War.

Oral Questions

The reason we went through this crisis well in Canada, and better than in many other places, is that we have stuck together and we have had each other's back. We have followed public health measures so that at the end we will end up stronger and more united and can look forward to continuing the fight against COVID-19 as we relax some of the measures we have seen over the last two weeks.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, the Minister of Environment will attend the Globe Forum to plan getting to net zero by 2050.

That is where the minister will be presenting his emission reduction plan, as required by the legislation passed last June. To be credible, Canada has no choice but to immediately tackle its largest polluter, the oil and gas sector. In his plan, the minister must first put a cap on oil production, second, undertake not to approve new hydrocarbon energy extraction projects, and third, abolish all subsidies for fossil fuels.

Tomorrow, in his plan, will the minister announce these three essential measures?

[English]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada, as the hon. member knows, is committed to phasing out fossil fuel subsidies in the coming two years, and we have already phased out eight tax breaks for the fossil fuel sector. We have put in place an escalating pollution pricing system nationally for heavy-emitting industries through 2030 that provides the biggest emitters with the biggest incentives to reduce carbon pollution. We are working on a plan to cap oil and gas sector emissions and ensure the sector makes an achievable contribution to our climate goals.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister often presents carbon capture and storage as the miracle solution. However, investing in that area is not the same as leaving fossil fuels behind but, rather, subsidizing the industry's operations for longer. There are 400 scientists who have written to the minister about this wrong approach. It is expensive, it is not fully effective, and it takes a long time to put in place. The minister himself said in an interview that we are several years, if not a decade, away from a commercial application.

Tomorrow, the minister could either divest from fossil fuels or artificially extend their life span with carbon capture and storage. What will he choose to do?

[English]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again I would emphasize that we are taking bold action on climate change, from putting a price on pollution to investing in clean energy to retrofitting homes to decarbonizing industry.

We see carbon capture and underground storage as part of the solution. It is part of the \$100 billion that we are investing in measures to date. We will be doing more. I look forward to the emissions reduction plan that the minister will table shortly.

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● (1500)

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has been part of the F-35 development and procurement program with 10 other countries for more than 14 years. We have lost seven years because the Prime Minister made an election promise not to purchase this jet.

After losing so many years for purely political reasons, we now want a real answer.

Will the F-35 be Canada's final choice or will the government drag this announcement out as well?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is a great day for Canadians and for the Canadian Armed Forces.

This morning officials informed me that Lockheed Martin has been identified as the top-ranked bidder to provide 88 fighter jets to our Royal Canadian Air Force.

This is a highly complex procurement process and represents the most significant investment in the Royal Canadian Air Force in more than 30 years. The procurement of jets will enhance Canada's safety and security while generating jobs and economic growth.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with Ukraine fighting for its life, Canada sent them 50-year-old anti-tank weapons that could blow up in their faces. When the Ukrainians fire next-generation light anti-tank weapons from Great Britain, they yell, "God save the Queen". When they fire Carl Gustafs from Canada, they must say a prayer.

With the Russian threat to our allies, our Arctic and the war, when will the government go to the open market and buy modern weapons to help protect Ukraine and Canada?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I differ with the member opposite's characterization of Canada's aid to date.

In fact, I have announced six tranches of military aid, both lethal and non-lethal, to Ukraine since February alone. This represents well over \$100 million in military aid to Ukraine. We have also assisted our allies. With 21 flights on the C-130s, Canada is providing airlift support across the NATO alliance.

We are there for Ukraine. We stand with their sovereignty and stability. We will be there as long as we need to.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has committed 3,400 troops to augment NATO's eastern flank should Putin's war spread to an alliance member.

NATO members have contingencies to safeguard troops in case Putin deploys nuclear or chemical weapons. The Liberals stood down our military for the better part of two years during COVID. New recruits were put into solitary confinement, missing the rare chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear training course. The safety of women and men is at risk when they are not fully trained.

Why is the NDP-Liberal government putting our troops in harm's way without the proper protection?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at the member opposite's characterization of our Canadian Armed Forces.

In fact, our commitment to NATO operations, including Operation Reassurance, is unwavering. To reinforce our deterrent measures in Europe in the face of rising tensions, we announced that we are increasing military contributions in support of NATO and in support of Operation Reassurance with up to 460 additional CAF personnel; an artillery battery in Latvia; a second frigate, which departed Halifax over the past couple of weeks; and a maritime patrol aircraft.

We are there for NATO. We are there for Ukraine.

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[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the pandemic created some unprecedented challenges for the Canadian health care system, and our system is in dire need of support. Although Canada's vaccination rates are high, COVID-19 continues to threaten our health and our social and economic well-being. One of the impacts that the pandemic has had on the health care system is the cancellation of elective surgeries. My constituents are worried about whether the system can handle another wave of the virus.

Could the Minister of Health tell the House about the recent transfer of \$2 billion to the provinces and territories to support our health care system?

• (1505)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Alfred-Pellan for his hard work and for his excellent question.

Oral Questions

On Friday we announced \$2 billion in additional unconditional funding to help the provinces and territories address the delays in treatments, diagnosis and surgeries; to support health care workers, who have suffered considerably because of COVID-19; to improve access to primary care; to create digital personal medical records for everyone; to improve mental health and access to addiction services; to help everyone live and age with dignity; and to continue to ensure that—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

[English]

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the last year Nunavut has experienced a record high number of water advisories. Iqaluit residents have not known if their water is safe to drink for over six months. The government has long promised to make infrastructure funding for the north a priority, but has failed.

Why do moms in Iqaluit still have to bathe their babies in bottled water?

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning, our government has been engaged with the City of Iqaluit, the government of Nunavut and other officials on this very important issue. We believe that in Canada everyone deserves the right to safe, clean drinking water, and we are there to assist at every step of the way however we can. We are there for Nunavut.

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[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government obviously does not want to help and protect francophone minority communities in Canada.

After postponing the introduction of its bill to modernize the Official Languages Act, supposedly to take the January ruling into account, now it is appealing that ruling. The minister did not take any questions from journalists at a press conference this morning. Why?

Is the Minister of Official Languages capable of defending the rights of francophones within her own government?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is firmly committed to protecting and promoting official languages, especially in minority situations.

We recently introduced Bill C-13 to modernize the Official Languages Act. We learned of the order from the Federal Court of Appeal last Friday. We will take the time to review and consider the next steps.

*Oral Questions**[English]***TAXATION**

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the wine and cider industries in Canada are in trouble. If the plan for the federal government to put a cork in the excise sales tax for those wineries goes through on January 1, up to 50% of those wineries could close. In the Bay of Quinte riding in Prince Edward County, we have 40 wineries and five cider companies. In Canada, those industries generate \$11.5 billion worth of income, four million tourists a year and over 50,000 jobs.

Will the government commit to fixing the excise tax exemption for wine and cider production or will it simply pour an industry down the drain?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the tourism sector is critical to this country. The Canadian economy will not fully recover until the tourism sector does. I understand the importance of the wine economy to the tourism economy.

Let me say I had the pleasure and the opportunity to attend dozens of pre-budget consultations, and the good news is that we will have an announcement of the budget in the coming days. If Conservatives want to support Canadians, they should support and vote for Bill C-8 today or at the latest tomorrow.

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PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as part of its commitment to a high standard of ethics and accountability, the government absolutely needs to protect whistle-blowers. These are the ones who expose cases of serious wrongdoing. Could the President of the Treasury Board update the House on what she is doing to safeguard whistle-blowers?

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hard-working, hon. colleague for Pontiac for the question. Those who disclose serious wrongdoing must be protected. Canadian law provides a secure and confidential process for disclosing serious wrongdoing in the federal government and offers protection from acts of reprisal. Our government has strengthened these processes by improving training, transparency and monitoring. We are going to continue improving the whistle-blower protections and supports, including exploring possible amendments to the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act.

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● (1510)

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, nearly two years ago, the government signed an agreement with the Pacheedaht First Nation in my riding. They committed to build and co-manage a \$22-million Coast Guard facility on their territory near Port Renfrew. Chief Jeff Jones is rightly concerned because the federal government has provided no funding and discussions have stopped. Following last year's devastating container spill, coastal protection is needed now more than ever.

Why has the government delivered zero funding and stopped talking with the Pacheedaht?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member that after 10 years of very little investment in the Canadian Coast Guard, it is our government that has renewed the fleet. We are building 31 new, large vessels. The Coast Guard is working with many coastal communities, hand in hand, to develop guardianship programs so those communities can be eyes and ears on the ground and help with the important spill response and accident response that the Coast Guard is responsible for. We appreciate the community's help with that.

The Coast Guard's 60th anniversary is this year. Let us celebrate that, too.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow we are expecting the government to release its plan for emissions reductions. Without seeing it, unfortunately we know that it will fail to meet the urgency of the climate emergency. It is clear on the science that net-zero by 2050 is the wrong target. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change made it clear that the only way to hold to the 1.5°C we agreed to in the Paris agreement, and which is what we hope will be a livable level of climate disruption, is to make rapid, deep cuts by 2030, which Canada currently does not have.

Will the government tell us when it will update the target to meet the demands that we agreed to at COP26 in Glasgow?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would say to the House that, through the efforts of millions of Canadians from coast to coast to coast, Canada has successfully flattened its emissions curve. However, as we are seeing from the immediate devastating impacts of a changing climate, I would agree with the hon. member that we need to do more on a faster timeline. That is why our government committed to table the 2030 emissions reduction plan at the end of March 2022, informed by consultations on key emissions reduction measures. The hon. member will know that the end of March is coming soon.

The Deputy Speaker: That does it for question period today.

I do want to remind members, when talking about other ministers or members of the House of Commons, that we do not use their first or last names.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Considering the answers given by the Minister of Health in the House today, I am sure that if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent of the House to allow the Minister of Health to immediately table all of the scientific documentation recommending the federal vaccine mandate, as he promised to do last week.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

STATUS OF OPPOSITION PARTY

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to add to my point of order of last week concerning the coalition agreement between the Liberal and New Democratic parties.

On Thursday, I asked whether the Chair would indicate whether it would be helpful, in approaching a ruling, to know whether there were any signed versions of the agreement or additional side deals. In this morning's edition of *The Hill Times*, it was reported that this backroom coalition deal is, despite public appearances otherwise, a signed agreement.

Allow me to offer a selection of three quotations from the newspaper. One:

The Liberals and the NDP stunned Canadians across the country last Tuesday by announcing they signed a confidence and supply agreement which will allow the Liberals to govern until...2025...

Number two:

[The Prime Minister's] decision to sign this agreement with the NDP came as a total surprise for caucus members.

Number three:

The [Liberal caucus] meeting lasted about 90 minutes, during which [the Prime Minister] informed MPs about his decision to sign the agreement.

Earlier today, CTV reported that the leader of the NDP, the now moderate wing of the Liberal Party, said that he is confident that the Prime Minister will follow through on the deal because he "got it in writing".

The only thing worse than a backroom deal is a secret backroom deal.

Last week, I called upon the government to come clean with the House and with all Canadians by tabling the signed agreement and any other side deals. I renew that call here and now. Canadians need to know the full truth.

The Liberals' silence to date on my point of order in fact speaks volumes. I hope they are not just relying on friends in the wings to do their bidding. The government must come clean to the House and defend and explain this unprecedented arrangement.

In closing, I ask for unanimous consent to table the *Hill Times* article published today entitled, "No difference left between the Liberals and the NDP" after confidence and supply agreement, say some Liberal MPs."

Points of Order

• (1515)

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for New Westminster—Burnaby is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is the danger for the Conservatives when they prolong what has been a frivolous point of order.

The official opposition House leader was last week telling the House that this was some kind of coalition government that the NDP and Liberals had put into place. Today, he has contradicted himself by stating that it is indeed a confidence and supply agreement, thus contradicting everything he said last week saying it was a coalition government.

We have basically come to the end of what has been a series of frivolous and vexatious points of order. It is very true that this is a confidence and supply agreement. It is very true that this is a practice we have seen in numerous Canadian provinces and in other countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand.

At no point, with confidence and supply agreements, has there ever been the kind of attempt to put a frivolous point of order in place as the official opposition House leader has attempted to do. I was thinking that what he was actually doing was rising to thank the NDP for getting dental care for 30,000 people in Barrie—Innisfil, for getting a Canada pharmacare act for people in Barrie—

The Deputy Speaker: We are getting far into debate on this one. I want to render a decision as soon as I can on this.

The hon. opposition House leader is rising.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I will believe it when I see it.

For the Speaker's reference, in the first paragraph I did refer to the coalition agreement between the Liberal and New Democratic parties. I have not changed a thing.

The Deputy Speaker: I want to make the House aware that we will try to render a decision tomorrow if we possibly can.

Mr. Kyle Seebach (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During question period today, the member for Winnipeg South said that the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that 8 out of 10 Canadians are, in fact, better off as a result of the Liberal carbon tax. I have here with me right now Appendix A to that report, pages 18 to 21, to show that this is not necessarily the conclusion of the PBO.

I would like unanimous consent to table these documents.

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

Some hon. members: No.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[English]***CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 61(4) of the Canadian Human Rights Act, the report from the Canadian Human Rights Commission for the year 2021.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(e), this report is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

* * *

*[English]***GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

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

* * *

● (1520)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**HEALTH**

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following two reports of the Standing Committee on Health.

[Translation]

The first report is entitled "Supplementary Estimates (C), 2021-22: Vote 1c under Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Votes 1c and 5c under Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Votes 1c and 10c under Department of Health and Votes 1c and 10c under Public Health Agency of Canada".

[English]

The second report is entitled "Main Estimates 2022-23: Votes 1 and 5 under Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Votes 1 and 5 under Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Votes 1, 5 and 10 under Department of Health, Vote 1 under Patented Medicine Prices Review Board and Votes 1, 5 and 10 under Public Health Agency of Canada".

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.), seconded by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands moved for leave to introduce Bill C-261, an Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Canadian Human Rights Act and to make related amendments to another Act (hate propaganda, hate crimes and hate speech).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce a bill that seeks to combat the growing incidents of hate propaganda and hate

crimes and to make it a discriminatory practice to communicate hate speech via the Internet.

Racism remains alive and well in Canada, and it is especially active online. This bill would also amend the Criminal Code and Canadian Human Rights Act to better address online hate speech.

I know hate speech far too well and can provide examples when I have been called a chink and told to die. This bill would reduce such vile attacks on people subjected to racial slurs, some on an almost daily basis.

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

The Deputy Speaker: I also want to pass on my condolences to the member for the loss of his mom. On behalf of all members of the House, I want to pass on our condolences.

* * *

PETITIONS**UKRAINE**

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present, on behalf of Canadians from across the country, a petition that recognizes Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the human rights abuses taking place and the humanitarian situation that has evolved with the displaced people. There are 1.4 million Canadians of Ukrainian descent who would love to see more Ukrainian refugees come here.

They are calling on the government to expedite the process of bringing Ukrainian refugees to Canada by moving to a visa-free travel immigration system for Ukrainians rather than the current special visa system in place.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a number of petitions to present this morning.

The first petition I have is from folks concerned about the expansion of physician-assisted dying here in Canada. They recognize that folks with mental illness should not be eligible for physician-assisted dying, and they are concerned also around the conscience rights of physicians who have to participate in this. There are over 24,000 physicians in Canada who are concerned about their charter rights and freedoms and their freedom of conscience. Therefore, the undersigned of this particular petition are calling on the Government of Canada to enshrine in the Criminal Code conscience rights' protections to ensure that physicians are not subject to coercion or intimidation in order to provide or refer for assisted suicide or euthanasia.

• (1525)

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I have to present today is from folks from across Canada. They are concerned about their charitable status being revoked and their views being forced into a values test. The petitioners note that the Liberals have promised to deny charitable status to groups with views they call dishonest. This would jeopardize the charitable status of hospitals, houses of worship, schools, homeless shelters and other organizations. They also note that the Liberals have previously discriminated against folks who have applied for a Canadian summer jobs grant.

The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to protect and preserve the application of charitable status rules on a political and ideological-neutral basis without discrimination on the basis of political or religious values without imposing another values test.

AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I have to present is on behalf of Canadians who are concerned about ALS treatments. The petitioners note that ALS currently has no cure and a diagnosis with the disease leads to an expected life span of two to five years. ALS impacts not only just the only one diagnosed but also their family and friends.

The petitioners are calling for the expedition of some ALS treatments and drugs that are available in other countries but Health Canada has been slow in approving. The petitioners are calling specifically for a swift approval of the drug AMX00355, or the creation of a pilot project to reduce delays so that folks can get this particular treatment.

NORTHERN RESIDENTS TAX DEDUCTION

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I have is from folks from Fox Creek and Swan Hills in northern Alberta. These two remote communities in northern Alberta fall just below the line to get the northern living allowance tax benefits. They currently do not get any of the northern living allowance tax benefits, but they are only 12 kilometres short of the arbitrary line and they are distinctly remote communities. The intermediate prescribed zone in Alberta would allow the folks who live in this area to claim those tax credits.

The petitioners are calling for the government to recognize the hardships that come from living in Fox Creek and Swan Hills and to give them the tax benefits that are allowed to their neighbours.

AGE VERIFICATION SOFTWARE

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the last petition I am presenting today is from Canadians from across the country who are concerned about the access of children on the Internet. They are calling on the government to implement age verification software and calling on folks who host images on the Internet to ensure that underage folks are not being depicted in those videos and that underage folks are not gaining access to explicit content. The petitioners note that age verification can determine the age and identity of users and prevent exploitation.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners are calling for commitments from Parliament to defend vulnerable people and calling on the government to implement meaningful age verification.

BUS AND RAIL SERVICE

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to table a petition regarding public passenger transportation in our country. As everyone in this place knows, Greyhound's withdrawal of service last year has left Canadians, especially rural Canadians, with fewer transportation options than ever.

The petitioners are calling on the federal government to show real leadership on this issue by creating or empowering a national public corporation to connect communities within every province and territory via a safe, affordable, accessible and integrated bus and rail service.

UKRAINE

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have three petitions to present this afternoon all related to Vladimir Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine and some of the economic sanctions and policies that this government could implement to respond to the situation.

The first petition calls on the government to impose Magnitsky sanctions on all Russian officials who have any involvement in the invasion of Ukraine. This would create a disincentive for Russian oligarchs to support the war effort and serve to isolate Vladimir Putin within Russian society.

The second petition calls on the Government of Canada to work with the international community to implement a complete economic embargo on Russia, which is a pretty good idea actually. I remember, in the early 1990s, when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, the international community came together to impose an economic embargo on Iraq. For a few months I remember that nothing went in and nothing came out. It makes sense to do the same thing today with Russia.

Finally, the third petition calls on the Government of Canada to take steps to increase Canadian oil and gas exports to western Europe and to alleviate our allies' dependence on Russian oil. It really is a shame that the energy east pipeline never got built and that the Keystone XL pipeline never got built. If we can get Canadian oil and gas to our allies in western Europe, it would mean that much less money going towards Vladimir Putin's war machine.

All of these petitions have been signed by the Ukrainian community in Regina and southern Saskatchewan, and I am pleased to present them here today.

Routine Proceedings

• (1530)

POLITICAL BELIEF

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be able to present a number of petitions in the House today.

The first is a new petition in support of a private member's bill I have just recently tabled, Bill C-257. It is great to see people are already keen on bringing forward petitions on it. The petitioners point out that it is important in a democracy to protect public debate and the exchange of differing opinions, noting that this bill would protect Canadians against political discrimination by adding political belief and activity as prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act. Petitioners want to see the House support Bill C-257, which would ban discrimination on the basis of political belief or activity and would defend the right of Canadians to peacefully express their political opinions.

UKRAINE

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition that I am tabling highlights the situation in Ukraine and the horrific ongoing invasion we are seeing of Ukraine, an invasion that really began in 2014 but that we have seen an escalation of in recent weeks. Petitioners are calling on the government to take a number of points of action, some of which, we are pleased to see, have already been taken. The petitioners identify a number of actions that have not been acted upon yet.

The petitioners want the government to stand with the people of Ukraine in the threat facing Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. They call on the international community to take decisive action against the Putin regime and ban Russia from international organizations such as the UNSC, OSCE, etc.; to impose full and swift sanctions against the Putin regime, including the removal of Russia from the SWIFT payment system, boycotting Russian oil and gas imports in Canada and Europe and securing energy agreements with western partners; to increase the supply of military equipment and lethal defence weapons to protect the territory and human rights of the people of Ukraine; to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the people of Ukraine; and to provide vital assistance to refugees impacted by the conflict in Ukraine. They want the government to allow Canadians with family members in Ukraine to urgently bring family members to Canada for as long as the conflict persists. Conservatives have been calling for visa-free travel in that vein.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the third petition that I am tabling is in support of a private member's bill that started in the Senate and now stands in my name in this House. Bill S-223 is a bill that would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ taken without a person's consent. It also would create a mechanism by which a person could be deemed inadmissible to Canada if they have been involved in forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

This is important and common-sense, no-brainer human rights legislation that we have been working on, including various mem-

bers of Parliament before me, for about 15 years. Hopefully, this Parliament will be the one that finally gets it done.

HONG KONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition that I am tabling highlights the situation in Hong Kong, including concerns about ongoing human rights issues in Hong Kong and also some of the challenges with the immigration measures that the government has put in place with respect to Hong Kong. The petitioners note that the immigration measures that have been put in place do allow someone who has been charged under the national security law, which is a politicized prosecution, to still be able to come to Canada. However, they do not contain the same clarity around those who have been charged under other offences but still in a highly politicized way.

Petitioners want the government to recognize the politicization of the judiciary in Hong Kong and its impact on the legitimacy and validity of any criminal convictions; to affirm its commitment to render all national security law charges and convictions irrelevant and invalid in relation to paragraph 36(1)(c), but also to create a mechanism by which, for anybody charged in relation to a pro-democracy activity, those convictions would not be a barrier to their ability to come to Canada; and to work with other like-minded partners to waive criminal inadmissibility of Hong Kongers convicted for political purpose who otherwise have no criminal record.

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): The next petition I am tabling, Madam Speaker, by popular demand, is with respect to a Liberal Party election commitment. The Liberal Party has committed to politicize the charitable status determination to apply a values test to restrict pro-life organizations from having access to charitable status on the same basis. I know this is of grave concern not just to people who have those convictions but to people across the charitable sector who do not want to see the politicization of charitable status in this country. Petitioners call 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' freedom of expression.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): The next petition, Madam Speaker, is quite timely in light of new emerging concerns about the violation of the ceasefire between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Petitioners are, in this case, concerned about the ongoing detention of Armenian prisoners of war. Petitioners call for the immediate release of those prisoners.

• (1535)

They are hoping the Government of Canada is also urgently seized with the violations of the ceasefire agreement we have seen recently and is standing for peace in the region.

HAZARAS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I am tabling highlights the human rights situation facing the Hazara community in Afghanistan. There were grave concerns about the human rights situation facing the Hazara ethnic minority in Afghanistan prior to the Taliban takeover. Things have become a great deal worse, of course, since then for the Hazaras and other ethnic and religious minorities.

The petitioners are calling on the government to recognize that the Hazaras have been victims of genocide, to designate September 25 as Hazara genocide memorial day and to continue to be actively seized with the violation of human rights among the Hazaras and all communities in Afghanistan under the Taliban.

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the final petition I am tabling today is with respect to the situation in Ethiopia. Some of the asks in the petition text itself are a bit dated, but the petitioners are concerned about what is still an ongoing conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. They call for the government to be actively engaged in advocating for human rights in Ethiopia and an end to the conflict. I know there are growing concerns about food security in that region and throughout the world in light of concerns about food supply as a result of the conflict in Ukraine. The petitioners want the government to engage directly and consistently with the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments regarding this conflict and to call for credible, independent investigations into all human rights abuses that have taken place.

VACCINE MANDATES

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a couple of petitions to table today.

For the first, the petitioners are concerned about the Prime Minister calling everyday Canadians racists and misogynists and are looking for the government to end all federal mandates related to COVID-19.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition is with respect to conscience rights for physicians. Canadians are concerned about the potential that may exist regarding the coercion of health care providers and physicians. This petition, signed by many Canadians across the country, is to ensure that we have conscience rights for physicians and practitioners.

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam

Routine Proceedings

Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 317 to 320.

[Text]

Question No. 317—**Mr. Philip Lawrence:**

With regard to the additional revenue generated as a result of the tax increases scheduled to take effect on April 1, 2022: (a) what is the total amount of additional revenue expected to be collected by the government during the 2022-23 fiscal year as a result of the increase; and (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by type of tax being increased (carbon tax, escalator tax on alcohol, etc.)?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Excise Act and the Excise Act, 2001 adjust excise duty rates on an annual basis for tobacco and alcohol products. Each year on April 1, rates are adjusted for inflation to preserve the value of taxing tobacco and alcohol products and ensure that the excise duties continue to meet their policy objectives.

On April 1, 2022, rates will increase by 2.4%, reflecting the CPI from the previous year, ending September 30, 2021. Using the revenues from excise duties on alcohol and tobacco products received in 2020-21 according to the Public Accounts of Canada as our baseline, with regard to (a), we anticipate that the April 1, 2022, inflationary adjustment will generate in the 2022-23 fiscal year approximately \$121 million in additional excise duty revenue from tobacco and alcohol products. With regard to (b), to break it down by type, this results in approximately \$72 million in excise duty on tobacco products and \$49 million in excise duty on alcohol products in 2022-23.

The direct proceeds from the federal carbon pollution pricing system remain in the province or territory of origin. In Prince Edward Island, Yukon and Nunavut, the direct proceeds from the federal system are returned to the governments of these jurisdictions. In jurisdictions that do not have their own fuel charge consistent with the federal benchmark criteria, those being Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, approximately 90% of direct proceeds from the fuel charge are returned to residents of those provinces through climate action incentive payments, CAI payments. Most households get more in CAI payments than the increased costs they face from the federal carbon pollution pricing system. The remaining fuel charge proceeds are used to support small businesses, farmers, indigenous groups and other organizations.

Question No. 318—**Mr. Michael Barrett:**

With regard to the Public Health Agency of Canada's (PHAC) response to the unanimously supported first report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics: (a) has PHAC abided by the section of the report saying that the government is to "suspend the Public Health Agency of Canada's cellular data tender upon adoption of this motion"; (b) if the answer in (a) is affirmative, on what date was the program suspended; and (c) if the answer in (a) is negative, who made that decision and why was the decision not to adhere by the unanimous recommendation made?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the related motion adopted in the House of Commons on February 8, 2022, the Public Health Agency of Canada, PHAC, determined that it was not possible to suspend the mobility data request for proposal, the RFP. It would have had to be either cancelled and then reissued, or closed. As such, the RFP closed on February 18, 2022. As the RFP is finalized, PHAC will take into account the study findings of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics in its decision on whether it is in the public interest to award the contract.

Question No. 319—Mr. James Bezan:

With regard to the weapons cache held by the Canadian Armed Forces, originally intended for distribution to the Kurdish Peshmerga: (a) where is this weapons cache currently being stored; (b) what is the current inventory of the cache, including the types of weapons and the quantity of each; (c) what is the serviceable condition of each of these weapons; (d) are these weapons being maintained on a routine basis; and (e) what is the intended operational use of these weapons?

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, National Defence provided a cache of weapons and equipment, originally stored at 25 Canadian Forces Supply Depot in Montreal, to the Armed Forces of Ukraine in February 2022 under an agreement that they would not be transferred to any other entity.

The weapons that were stored at the supply depot were purchased in new condition and stored in their original manufacturer provided packaging and, therefore, were not maintained.

Small arms stored in original packaging require a process to activate, which includes removal of protective lubricants and verification of working condition. Canadian Armed Forces personnel activated and verified these weapons before their donation to the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

The weapons transferred included machine guns, pistols, carbines, 1.5 million rounds of ammunition, sniper rifles and various related equipment. In processing Order Paper questions, National Defence applies the principles of the Access to Information Act. The specific quantity and description of the make and model of weapons are not included for operational and security reasons.

Question No. 320—Mr. Blake Richards:

With regard to information the government has about the actions of foreign governments attempting to influence the 2021 Canadian election: (a) is the government aware of any attempts by foreign nations to influence the 2021 Canadian election through (i) hacking or other cyber espionage, (ii) influence operations, (iii) propaganda or false news reports, (iv) other intelligence activities, broken down by type of activity; (b) if the answer in (a) is affirmative, which countries were involved in which activities; (c) is the government aware of any attempts by individuals or agents sponsored, either directly or indirectly, by any other country to influence the 2021 Canadian election through (i) hacking or other cyber espionage, (ii) influence operations, (iii) propaganda or false news reports, (iv) other intelligence activities, broken down by type of activity; and (d) if the answer in (c) is affirmative, which countries' individuals or agents were involved in which activities?

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout the 2021 federal election, the security and intelligence threats to elections, or SITE, task force actively monitored the situation for signs of foreign interference.

The SITE task force consists of representatives from the Communications Security Establishment or CSE, the Canadian Security

Intelligence Service, Global Affairs Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and works together to raise awareness, monitor and report on threats and to provide advice to protect democratic processes. CSE's Canadian centre for cybersecurity also worked with Elections Canada to help secure election systems and infrastructure.

A panel of non-partisan senior civil servants administered the critical election incident public protocol, which includes a mandate during the election caretaker period to inform the public if an incident, or series of incidents, occurred that threatened Canada's ability to hold a free and fair election.

During election 2021, the Government of Canada did not detect foreign or domestic interference that would have warranted the panel undertaking public communications to warn of the presence of such interference. The threshold for making an announcement is the emergence of exceptional circumstances that could impair our ability to have a free and fair election, whether based on a single incident or an accumulation of incidents. As was the case in 2019, no public announcement has been made.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 321 and 322 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 321—Mr. Blake Richards:

With regard to the Corporate sponsorships and donations account that was established by the Department of National Defence (DND) and referenced on page 158 of the Public Accounts of Canada 2021, Volume I: (a) what is the value and number of donations that the fund received, broken down by fiscal year since 2016; (b) what are the details of each major donation (larger than \$10,000), including for each the (i) type of donor (individual, corporation, government, etc.), (ii) name of the donor, (iii) country where the donor resides or is headquartered; and (c) are there any restrictions imposed on major donors bidding on or submitting proposals for (i) contracts for DND related goods or services, (ii) contracts for goods or services related to the National Shipbuilding Strategy, (iii) general government contracts, and, if so, what are the details of such restrictions?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 322—**Mr. Tom Kmiec:**

With regard to government contracts with a value of more than \$1,000,000 and the proposals received related to Requests for Proposals (RFP) for those contracts, since 2018, and broken down by year: (a) how many proposals related to such RFPs were received; (b) how many of those RFP proposals came from (i) Canadian companies, (ii) foreign companies, broken down by country of the vendor; and (c) what are the details of the number of RFPs that were received for each such contract, including the (i) name of the RFP, (ii) description of the goods or services, (iii) final value of the contract, (iv) date of the RFP, (v) date the contract was awarded, (vi) name and the country of the vendor awarded the contract, (vii) number of Canadian firms that submitted an RFP, (viii) number of foreign firms that submitted an RFP, broken down by country; (ix) file number of the RFP, (x) file number of the related contract?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ECONOMIC AND FISCAL UPDATE IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2021

The House resumed 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. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are talking about Bill C-8, an act to implement certain provisions of the economic and fiscal update. We are talking about the economic pressures that Canadians are feeling, which are today at a generational high of 5.7%. However, if we look at industry-specific statistics, it can be much worse than that.

We are also talking about housing. The cost of housing, in the time the Liberal government has been office, has doubled. That is the legacy the government leaves behind when it comes to housing. Despite all of its programs designed to make housing more affordable, or maybe because of all those programs, the cost of housing is skyrocketing and it is becoming impossible for many young families to get into their first home. It is a deep concern.

We are urging the government to abandon its programs, like, for example, the failed first-time homebuyer incentive, and to instead look at the basic economic principle of supply and demand. That is the principle that says if an economy is not supplying the goods and services that people need and in the amounts they need, nor the types of product they want, there will be inflation. That is exactly what is happening in Canada today. We have so many young families that want to get into their first home. We have record high immigration, and we all need a place to live. We also have a shortage of rental stock in our growing cities. Coupling that together with unprecedented spending by the government during the pandemic, borrowed money and printed money, we have a perfect storm. We

Government Orders

have too many dollars chasing too few goods, and that is what is causing inflation.

I know the governing party has now adopted the Conservative policy in its platform of increasing housing supply. Well, that is a really good idea, and I have a few specific, concrete ideas focusing on my riding of Langley—Aldergrove that would help to increase the housing supply.

First, let us get the SkyTrain built from downtown Surrey to downtown Langley and encourage local governments to open up new areas of land for urban redevelopment.

Second, let us speed up the approval process for new developments so that Canada is the fastest place to get an approval. Investment dollars will come flowing into our economy.

Third, let us create balanced communities and more jobs close to home. Again, I am going to focus on my riding. We need better transit links to Gloucester park in the north part of my riding. We also need better transit links to Campbell Heights industrial park in neighbouring south Surrey. This is what I am hearing from businesses in those areas. They say they cannot get workers.

Fourth, let us train our young people to have the skills and knowledge that employers require. Let us also get more immigrants in. Let us speed up the credentialing approval process, particularly for the trades so we get more immigrants knowing how to build houses so they can build the cities they are going to live in. If we do not solve the housing affordability crisis, we will not be able to tackle inflation.

I am hearing from many people in my riding who are concerned that the government is dismissive about the inflationary pressures they are feeling. They hear the government saying that inflation in 2022 is only transitory because of COVID-related supply chain disruptions and it will all be gone soon. The government also points out that inflation is a global phenomenon. I suppose the implication is that there is not much it can do about it. It also says that even though inflation is at 5.7%, it is not as bad as the rate in other countries, the implication being that there is probably not much it has to do about it.

People in my riding are very concerned. I was talking to a farmer just the other day who is deeply concerned that inflation is becoming embedded in our economy and is not just transitory. He pointed out that the cost of delivering his specialty products from Langley to Calgary has doubled from \$3,200 per truckload to \$6,000. That is if he can even get truck drivers, because there is a shortage of them, and if he can get trucks, because there is even a shortage of trucks.

There we go. We have a shortage of workers and equipment. We also have ever-increasing energy costs and an increase to the Liberal government's carbon tax coming at the end of this week. All that leads to inflationary pressures.

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• (1540)

It is time to unleash the power of the free market again so that our businesses can make more, produce more and pay more wages to more workers, because there is nothing better for the economy than workers taking home a good paycheque. This is what a Conservative government would do. We would unleash the powers of the free market to solve these economic problems and find a much better balance. That is the balance we are looking for, and sadly Bill C-8, an act to implement certain provisions of the economic and fiscal update from the government, is missing that mark.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it has been a couple of times today that I have heard the Conservatives talk about “unleashing the power”. The last time I heard that phrase was from the member for Carleton, so I am going to assume those who are saying “unleashing the power” are referencing their hopeful candidate for the leadership.

I would hope members of the Conservative Party would unleash the power of support and recognize good legislation when they see it. Bill C-8 would continue to support Canadians in all regions of our country. It would do that through things such as a housing tax on individual foreign investors, which would help with house speculation, and through supplies of rapid tests and support for small businesses. All of these types of wonderful supports are within this legislation.

Can the member unleash his free mind and tell the House that he will vote in favour of these types of supports?

• (1545)

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, the hon. member talks about these wonderful programs. Well, we have not seen them. We are talking about the first-time homebuyer incentive, and it is a complete bust. It does not work in my riding. People have to earn more than the maximum amount set out in the program even to afford to buy a house, so it is another example of a failed program. We are just asking the Liberal-NDP government to stick to basic economic principles.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member spoke a lot about the housing crisis. It is something that impacts my riding of Victoria in an extreme way. Blind bidding has been driving up the cost of housing. Unfortunately there is nothing in the bill that would combat blind bidding.

I am curious if the member agrees that the government should be implementing policies that would really help first-time homebuyers and that would stop the rising cost of houses from escalating even higher.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, I would support any programs that are effective in helping first-time buyers get into the market. It can be very challenging and very intimidating for first-time buyers to bid on a house. I have talked to many people in my riding who are desperate to get into a house, but they keep getting outbid by investors and they fail to buy the home they want. Yes, I would support anything that would help first-time buyers.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could speak to the divide we are seeing between rural and urban Canada. The constituents in my riding note

the carbon tax right now. We look at this bill and there is really no relief for people who are just getting by. In my riding people have to drive everywhere. We do not have the option of a subway or public transit. We have a great first nation in York—Simcoe, the Chippewas of Georgina Island, that has to use a diesel ferry to go across. There is no electric ferry. They have to use airboats to cross the ice in the winter for safety to get kids to school. There are no alternatives for that.

I wonder if my colleague could speak to that.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, I am going to focus on my riding again. The western part of it is highly urbanized. I talked about the SkyTrain coming to Langley. It is going to help the people living in those urbanized areas. The people in the eastern part of my riding need to drive on the Trans-Canada Highway, and it is completely clogged up. To those people at home, I am also advocating for the expansion of Highway 1, because I recognize that not everybody lives in cities. I also recognize that many Canadians have to drive to work, have to do groceries or have to bring their kids to hockey, for example, so relief at the pumps is absolutely needed.

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, today the government is printing and spending money at a rate never seen in our nation's history. This is plain. Never before has the government spent so much so quickly, not just during the pandemic, but from 2015 to 2019 the Liberal government borrowed \$100 billion when, in the 2015 election campaign, the Prime Minister promised small incremental deficits and a balanced budget for 2019.

During the pandemic, Canada has borrowed more money than it has in its 155 years through 23 prime ministers. This year alone, the government printed \$300 billion. Where did this money go? It is simple. Just like a Will Smith slap, it was gone.

A lot of money was spent with little investment. After \$800 billion was spent in the last six years, we do not have more ICU or hospital beds that would help in future pandemics, allow much-needed surgeries to take place or stave off any more unneeded lockdowns. Our military is in shambles, and we need new equipment, and more investment in Arctic defence and our navy.

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We have a broken immigration system, with which we cannot currently fill the more than one million jobs in this country that need to be filled in order for businesses to grow. These are the businesses that pay salaries, payroll taxes and corporate taxes; generate GDP, which contributes to federal taxes; and make the stuff that will hopefully quell inflation. We have the biggest single housing crisis in the world, with a growing homeless population. We have an outdated strategy, and we are lacking innovation in this country.

Not only are we losing out in immigration, but other countries are poaching our talent from here at home. We have not invested as much as we need to in R and D. We are not seeing IP and patents generated here as well as they are in other countries, and we cannot get our Canadian energy, whether it be from Keystone XL or especially LNG, to Europe and the rest of the world. All at a time when it has to still buy it from Russia and Putin, fuelling the war machine devastating Ukraine.

It is quite simple. By having a government spend rather than invest, it has put Canada on a race to the bottom. We are headed for more disaster when we fail to invest in Canada, our children and our future, and continue to spend to satisfy today. By spending and not investing, it is Canadians who are hurting, Canadians such as my constituents in Bay of Quinte, who are having trouble pinching loonies and toonies together to pay for groceries, heat and gas for their fuel tanks.

They also have an incredible debt load that is compiling on its own. Do members know that, in all of the nations of the G7, we have the worst personal debt for our families in this country? They are racking up lines of credit and credit card bills, and putting a lot of money on themselves, just the same as the government is. The result is higher interest payments for them, payday loans they cannot get out of and having to decide how to pay bills this month and next. They are having trouble because the money spent may have been cheap and it may have been easy, but that easy and cheap cash is fuelling inflation, as more money chases fewer goods. These are all points that have been made clear on this side of the House again and again.

We are heading for more spending with the NDP and Liberal merger. Where spending is concerned, with the NDP and Liberals put together, we have not seen anything yet. There is a saying that goes, "Money is only important when you don't have any." Neither the Liberals nor the NDP believe we are out of it, never mind that the clock is ticking, literally. The national debt clock is fast approaching \$1.2 trillion, but, hey, what is \$1 trillion anymore? We certainly know \$1 million for a house is nothing now. I have a couple of statistics. That is \$31,000 per man, woman and child in Canada. For a family of five, that is \$155,000 that they now owe for the debt in Canada.

Let us look at what we are borrowing every day. Every day we are printing \$391 million to cover the debt, when this country needs to pay its bills today. Let us look at what is eclipsed and what the interest payments are for the debt. What does it cost us to pay for the debt? It is now \$40 billion. When we think about investments, would it not be nice to have \$40 billion more for health care, to create more beds and ICU beds, or to pay doctors and nurses, or to make sure we have what Canadians need just to have a universal basic income that we so pride ourselves in?

• (1550)

The Liberal-NDP merger has been said to be giving fits to the finance minister because the already outlandish spending is set to increase oh so very much more with universal basic income, free pharmacare, free dental care and on and on. Members can imagine that perhaps even Oprah Winfrey will make an appearance to the House herself, saying, "You get a car. You get a car. Everyone is going to get a car."

There is far more importance today. Success is where preparation and opportunity meet. For our investments, for a better tomorrow, for our children, for our children's children, we need to learn the difference between spending and investing, and make sure that we invest in Canada's future. Here is the kicker: Some of that investment may actually be free.

Number one, we need to stop the spending spree. There will be a windfall for the federal government this year, and do members know where that windfall will be from? It will be from oil, and Alberta itself may be able to balance its books for the first time post-pandemic. The federal government needs to put some of that money into debt repayment, and while we have too many problems to put the brakes on spending, it needs to spend more wisely than ever before.

Number two, we have to grasp that we cannot have everything. If we are going to make Canadians choose between groceries and rent, then we must choose those investments with extreme caution. Canadians choosing whether to put their kids into hockey or swimming know that they cannot have everything. They need to make choices, and the government needs to make choices as well.

Number three, we need to invest in those of Canada's strengths that will provide a return on investment. Housing includes working with the provinces to double our building of new starts, and it includes increasing our skilled trades in Canada by investing in our immigration system. It is terrible that, right now, across Canada, we cannot fill a million jobs, and when the immigration minister talked about this, he, in effect, said that it is broken, and they are putting \$85 million into it, but they are not sure if they are going to have many skilled labourers at all coming into this country by the end of the year. Every minute that we wait to fill these companies and they sit empty or are not able to produce the things that provide money for this country, we are failing those businesses. We are failing Canada to be able to make money on its own and quell inflation.

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We need to look at food production in Canada now that Ukraine and Russia have decreased theirs. Ukraine provides over 20% of the world's wheat and 9% of the world's corn. A bigger problem for Canadian agriculture is that 80% of fertilizer currently comes from Russia, and that 80% of fertilizer is nitrate, which helps us grow our corn. If we are out of nitrate and we do not have that fertilizer, we are in big trouble for producing the food that we need, not only for our own country, but also for those across the world. The simple solution may be to ask farmers to produce 10% more this year to ensure that we are making our own fertilizer, and ensure we are helping farmers as much as we can to produce the things they need to feed the world and feed Canadians.

We have to increase our output of Canadian energy, especially our nuclear energy modular units. Canadian oil is much better than unethical oil from other parts of the globe, and if we make it cleaner, we should be promoting it more steadily.

When it comes to GDP, few Canadians know that, after real estate and manufacturing, mining, gas and oil comes third, providing 585,000 jobs and over \$190 billion in direct and indirect taxes a year. In comparison, a country that I really love, South Korea, which is the size of the rock of Newfoundland, has the same GDP as Canada, and has manufacturing and innovation replacing those oil and gas revenues Canada enjoys. However, that innovation and manufacturing is worth almost three times what Canada does. If we are going to start replacing that, we need to increase innovation and we need to increase manufacturing.

When we look at South Korea and the examples it provides, it has Hyundai, LNG and Samsung, things that Canada needs to start investing in if we want to ever start bringing in royalties, increasing the GDP and jobs, and investing in Canada and Canadians. We need to start paying for the things we want. As deputy critic for innovation, science and industry, I would hope that for Canada's future we look at this kind of investment for Canada to succeed in the future.

Jim Balsillie was in the SRSR committee this week talking about what Canada needs to do in order to start capitalizing on intellectual property and ensure that we have an advanced and growing the economy. Do members know that the OECD has predicted that Canada, from 2020 to 2030 and the next three decades after, is going to have the worst-performing economy of all the OECD? It is absolutely deplorable, and we have to ensure now that we are investing. We have to fix this economy and get to the future.

Simply, on the struggle Canadians are going through today, with inflation and the housing crisis, we have to invest in Canada's tomorrow. The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now. Let us invest in Canadians. Let us invest in Canada, and let us get going for the future.

• (1555)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to this member talk about Canada's GDP. Canada has the best debt-to-GDP ratio among the G7 countries right now. We are actually bettered position to come out of the last two years of the pandemic as a result of having

that debt-to-GDP ratio. We are in the best position to come out of the problems that we have had over the last two years.

More specifically, with respect to the member's comment about investing in new technologies, I could not agree with him more. We need to do more right now to make sure that we get those new technologies in Canada so that we become exporters of that technology. I do not see a lot of new technology when it relates to oil and gas. The Conservative Party of Canada refers to anything energy-related as oil and gas being the only options.

Would the member not agree with me that there is a lot of potential and there are a lot of opportunities in renewables and sustainable development as technology that we could start exporting to the world?

• (1600)

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, the member is my neighbour down the road on the 401.

I have to agree, there are technologies, but I actually disagree because we have technologies in oil and gas. We have carbon capture elements in the oil sands right now and are doing an incredible job. Ontario is launching small modular nuclear reactors, which are emission-free. We are looking at many different things.

If we could do what the Ontario Liberals did 20 years ago with LNG in China, we could reduce the world's emissions by up to 50%. We have great Canadian energy and renewables, and we also need to look at the oil and gas sector. It is really important.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, personally speaking, I have never seen the federal government start to encroach on the jurisdiction of Quebec or the provinces and then express regret and step back.

I get the impression that by encroaching on the property tax domain, the government is putting one foot in Quebec's taxation jurisdiction, and the next step will be to dance on the grave of provincial fiscal jurisdictions.

I would like my colleague to tell me if the federal government should refrain from encroaching on this, the last untouched area of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

[English]

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, I do believe in jurisdiction. The federal government should stay in its lane and the provinces should stay in their lanes. The federal government's job is to help the provinces ensure that they are successful, that they have the resources they need and that we are moving in the right direction by making money and having taxation. They are responsible for their needs and the government should be responsible for its needs.

Absolutely, I agree. Let us just keep the federal government moving on ensuring it is doing its best to invest in Canada and that the provinces are doing the same for their constituents.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives are often talking about government spending, but they do not talk a lot about government revenue. Fiscal responsibility requires us to think about both. However, the Liberals and the Conservatives have voted against a wealth tax, and they voted against taxing the biggest corporations. They vote against making sure the wealthiest pay their fair share.

Why do the Conservatives continue to talk about cutting programs for the most vulnerable and, instead, protect the profits of the wealthiest?

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, I am a Conservative and a business owner as well, so I not only sign the back of a cheque, but I can sign the front of a cheque. I know a couple things. I know that businesses, when given extra taxes, find ways to pass those costs down to consumers.

I am not saying we should cut any programs for the vulnerable. I am just saying we have different programs that increase the GDP and increase the tax that Canada has to pay for those programs. I do not think we need to be wastefully spending and causing more inflation for those programs. We need to find ways to generate that, and that means investing in Canadians and investing in Canadian businesses. They then pay taxes and that pays for the rest of it.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I might say that the member's family is a very attractive and nice group.

We have heard a lot from this side about climate change, but given the fact that emissions have increased every year the last seven years, is it not just a bunch of hot air?

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, we had some great plans in the last election that talked about consumers having choices that better their backyards. People want to buy electric cars, and they want to be able to choose different forms of energy to heat their homes, but right now when they go to the gas station, they only get the one choice. They can purchase electric cars, but they are expensive and we are not making Canadian cars in Canada. Canadians need to be able to make choices. They want to better the environment, and we have always believed in helping them make those choices.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House on behalf of the great people of Cypress Hills—Grasslands, and I am grateful to also be able to have people attend the debate in person in

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the House. I have my family on Parliament Hill with me here today, so it is fantastic to have people in the gallery to see and hear the important work we do in this place.

Before getting into more detail on this particular bill, I just want to make sure that we keep in mind a major concern for our public spending going forward. When this bill was debated here last time, we did not realize that it would be the last Liberal spending bill for the next few years. Since then, we have seen that the Liberal minority government has made an official deal with the NDP to act as an artificial majority until 2025.

In a certain way, calling it a Liberal-NDP coalition gives it way too much credit, because the NDP as an opposition party is selling itself short as much as it is selling out. Giving away opposition power over a minority government to bring stronger accountability to Parliament without getting the perks of officially working in cabinet means the New Democrats will miss out on a promotion while protecting and getting used by the Liberal establishment. The NDP is a party that came to this Parliament in fourth place, and now it seems clearer than ever that it will not address the priorities of Canadians in years to come.

As one Liberal MP quietly told the media, “Already the Liberal Party has been too far left.... Now, it's official, we have joined this ultra left.” The article continues, saying, “MPs interviewed for this article said they were not against the idea of an average Canadian getting free dental care or pharmacare, but said their main concern is that after hundreds of billions of dollars of spending during COVID, it would be imprudent to embark on endeavours that will only add to those costs.”

Despite our best efforts here as the official opposition, which we are not going to stop, the Liberals are going to have their way with the NDP at the expense of Canadians. In speaking to those same Canadians, I will start with a number: \$30,964. That is the share of national debt right now of each and every Canadian. Let us take that for a moment. Every hour our debt rises by \$16 million and currently we owe over \$1.2 trillion.

We can talk about millions here and billions there. The number is so big that it starts sounding meaningless and easy to tune out, but that is exactly how risky our situation is. Who really has millions or billions to drop, adding up to trillions? We do not, and that is before another \$70 billion that this current bill we are debating here today wants to add. Then, right away, there is going to be another federal budget, no doubt introducing hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars more of federal spending, as if the Liberal obsession with failing to spend money effectively was not making it bad enough for people already in their everyday lives.

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On Friday, the carbon tax will be going up yet again. That means the exact opposite of what we asked for on behalf of Canadians, which was to remove the GST on fuel temporarily, in our last opposition day motion. Instead of going down, gas prices will be going up, unfortunately, on April 1, and unfortunately that is not a joke.

When people roll up to a gas pump they are greeted with sticker shock. Across the country prices are ranging anywhere from \$1.60 all the way up to two dollars a litre. That is not high enough, apparently, for the NDP-Liberal government, because is that not what this is all about? For an oil-exporting country, there is no reason for it. We need to harness oil and gas capacity and increase their production to meet demand and lower prices. We could do this by reducing the regulatory burden, building pipelines and increasing our refinery capacity. It could have helped our friends in Ukraine and all of Europe as well. These are common-sense solutions that do not involve spending \$70 billion and would actually help hard-working everyday Canadians.

People are also greeted by record-high prices and empty shelves in grocery stores. This is the result of poor infrastructure and no plan to fix the shortage of truckers that exists here in Canada. Before our vaccine mandate, the industry was already short over 18,000 truckers, and because of those mandates an additional shortage of 16,000 truckers is where the shortage is now.

• (1605)

I recently spoke to a senior in my constituency who relies on a health product that is only sold at Walmart. For years he has been taking this product and it has kept him healthier during COVID. Unfortunately he can no longer find it back in Saskatchewan. Upon further research and after contacting Walmart's distributors, this constituent found out it is having difficulty getting the product up to Canada, but particularly struggling to get it into western Canada. The NDP-Liberals voted down our Conservative motion on that issue too.

Instead, they want to spend \$37 million to extend mandates for another three years. It is time to end the mandates, no matter what flimsy justifications the health minister pretends to give. The Liberals laugh and call us names instead of fixing people's problems. Canadians are ready to get our country open, to get our country back and to be able to travel across the country without having to deal with mandates. We heard today in question period of people trying to go to see loved ones but unable to do so because of the mandates that are in place. Canadians did and gave up so much over the last two years. I recognize that a lot of it over a period of time was necessary, but Canadians are ready. It is time for the government to lead. It is time for the government to do what is right for Canadians. It is time to end the mandates.

It gets worse for everyone again, with the upfront cost of living, transport or the carbon tax through something like agriculture. I have heard from countless farmers in my riding who have shared how much of a burden the federal carbon tax is on them, for starters. Thankfully my colleague from Huron—Bruce has tabled a private member's bill that would exempt Canadian farmers from the carbon tax when using propane or natural gas for drying grain or for heating their barns. On top of this, producers are dealing with record-high input costs on their farms. A local farmer recently

shared with me how fertilizer has nearly doubled in price, which is proving to be a huge burden for him as he prepares for the spring plant.

Another farmer told me that, after last year's drought, many have found themselves in a position where they are importing feed for their herds all across North America. This is proving to be very costly, without even mentioning the cost of machinery or seed. This is leaving many producers in a position where they are losing money on the cattle they are raising. We are now heading into another planting season, and we are all holding our breath and praying that we might have a good and fruitful year.

This is the reality for our farmers. Coupled with record-high input costs, our farmers need all the support and help that they can get. We need to help them so that they can have a robust agricultural sector. We need to remove the red tape and increase our domestic production to bring down the cost of food for all Canadians. I am from the area of the country where the Palliser Triangle is. We farmed right in the heart of it, and we were able to produce all kinds of fantastic crops in an area where it was previously said no human being should even be attempting to live, let alone grow the food that feeds the world, which we do at an exceptional array down south.

Why has the government completely forgotten about the Canadian people who are struggling? Gas, groceries and rent are all going up and people's wages just simply are not matching up to this increase. People are having to decide between filling up their vehicle or putting food on the table. It is very shameful. It is very unacceptable.

Financial struggles do not end there. We currently have a housing market that is exploding. We are seeing record prices and competition that have resulted in it being extremely difficult for first-time homebuyers to enter the market. Once again, Conservatives have called on the government to implement common-sense solutions that can better address this issue. Simply increasing supply will do a lot to calm down the market. For that reason, we have called on the government to leverage our federal infrastructure in an attempt to increase supply. On top of this, we need to remove the red tape that is withholding the industry from simply building more houses. Conservatives have also called on the government to address the issue for first-time homebuyers by fixing the mortgage stress test, in turn making it easier to purchase their first home. It is not too late for the government to implement these measures that would actually have a real impact for hard-working Canadians.

The NDP-Liberal government has gone on a spending spree, claiming to help with COVID by spending over \$541.9 billion. However, it is important to note that \$176 billion is completely unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is unacceptable that millions of dollars are still unaccounted for. We have been seeing multiple examples of the Liberals padding the pockets of their closest friends. On top of this, the Prime Minister wants to print billions of dollars out of thin air.

Today I have outlined some of the issues that are facing everyday Canadians and some of the practical solutions that the government could implement to help them. I look forward to questions and answers.

• (1610)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, when I go to my riding, Mirabel, I meet with mayors there. They tell me they want to diversify their revenue sources and are concerned about the future of the federal gas tax fund because the transition is coming.

When I chat with municipal administrators, they have no interest in seeing the federal government interfere in their area of taxation. I wonder if the same is true in my colleague's province.

• (1615)

[English]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, I meet with quite a few mayors and people who work for rural municipalities as well about having the feds encroaching on their jurisdictions. We see GST is also being applied to the federal tax as well, which does not make any sense and is a big complaint a lot of people have. The City of Swift Current, for example, had to increase a line item in their budget to adjust for federal things that are completely out of the municipality's control, an additional \$500,000 this year in spending. That is completely unacceptable.

We need to make sure that we have a focused government that is not directly impacting and raising costs on Canadians at a time when inflation is at the highest that it has been for decades. It is time to get spending under control. It is time to quit printing money, so that we could get things back under control and let our municipalities do what they do best.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, as someone who also represents a large farming region, we know that the cost of fertilizer as we go into the planting season is top of mind for many farmers. We know there have been recent policy considerations by the Liberal government to increase the costs of the inputs in fertilizer production in an effort to reach their climate change goals. We know that these increased inputs are really going to make it difficult for us to grow food, especially in a world where we are looking at nearly a quarter of our wheat and other cereal crops being taken out of production due to the war in Ukraine.

I am wondering if the member could talk about fertilizer, the government's flawed policies and the need for a better approach for our agricultural sector.

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Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, fertilizer is definitely a very big issue. It is very much top of mind.

We could look at the costs and how expensive it is right now to get the fertilizer that is required for people who did not prebuy. For people who are looking to buy right now, that cost is exorbitant. It has gone up exponentially. It is having a severe impact on what farmers are going to be able to do this spring as they plant.

It is important to note that farmers have always led the way in innovation. There is a lot of talk these days about 4R and the importance of that. That is something that has been implemented on many farms, if not almost all farms in western Canada over the last couple of decades. It is not something that is new. It is not a new concept. Using variable rate is something that has been in place for a very long time. With the right place, right time, there is a lot of innovation that has happened already, and now we are seeing the government trying to take credit for it, which is wrong.

We need to give farmers the credit they deserve. We need to recognize the fact that they are doing what is in the best interests of the land, because without the land, they have no income. They take care of the land. By taking care of the land, they take care of the air that is around them. With farming practices, the way they have changed and evolved, emissions from farming have gone down exponentially over the years. In fact, there are several private sector studies that show that farming is actually a net-negative industry in the Prairies with the amount of carbon that is sequestered in the land, but also with the way the farming practices have changed. We have already done a fantastic job. It is time to look at the real science around here.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member represents a beautiful part of the country with some spectacular native grasslands. He touched on farming, and I just want to give the member some time to maybe expand on his comments about using native grasslands and conserving native grasslands to have carbon sequestration and to preserve biodiversity. This is the most endangered ecosystem in Canada.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, it was a pleasure to serve with the member on committee in the last Parliament. I really appreciate his question, because it is important to know that great water and grazing practices are extremely important to the survival and the revitalization of our native prairie grass. We saw in Grasslands National Park a number of years ago that there was a move to remove all grazing from the park. The problem was that the species at risk left the park too, because there is a very important relationship there between keeping grass grazed and providing the protection that those species at risk need from the predators that are trying to get them.

When it comes to species at risk, the grasslands and grazing practices are so important. They sequester more carbon. They do a better job of that, and the biodiversity that exists there is better supported when we have modern grazing practices, not by removing them from the land.

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• (1620)

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, the cost of everything under the NDP-Liberal government is getting too damn high. Today we are debating Bill C-8: the government's fiscal update from this past December. December feels like a lifetime ago for me, and I know it feels like a lifetime ago for millions of Canadians. A lot has changed since then, and the tack taken by the government in this legislation shows just how poorly prepared it is for the new reality that we live in, which has changed from just a few months ago.

The reality is that inflation is at record highs not seen in over 30 years, and not in my lifetime. The reality is that commodity prices, such as oil, natural gas, copper and steel, just to name a few, are hitting record new highs when adjusted for inflation. These highs in many ways are somewhat beneficial for parts of our economy, but also threaten other parts of our economy and the world economy.

The reality is that Canada's real estate sector is probably the most overvalued asset class anywhere in the world. Canadians, especially members of my millennial generation, are either priced out of the housing market altogether or have become so over-leveraged in the effort to get that first home that they are putting themselves in serious financial danger, particularly with rising interest rates. If we see a correction in our real estate sector, it is going to be tremendously bad for members of my generation who are just getting into the housing market for the first time.

Given the challenges that I have outlined, I would like to think that the government would want to make an approach and an effort to help Canadian families through this difficult time, but the fact is that as of April 1, only a few days away, the NDP-Liberal government is pledging a further increase to the carbon tax, from \$40 a tonne to \$50 a tonne. That is a whopping 25% increase, and this price increase will result in more taxes on Canadian families and small businesses at a time when they simply cannot afford them.

The government has told us many times to wait a minute: the carbon tax is revenue-neutral, and all funds that have been collected are returned to the provinces and the people they are collected from. However, we heard testimony recently from the Parliamentary Budget Officer that has indicated the carbon tax's effect on the total economy means that six out of 10, or about 60%, of Canadian families are worse off because of the carbon tax. We are seeing that, out of the funds that are collected, only about 90% of the total is being returned directly to families, and over the past number of years several provinces have been significantly shortchanged in what they were supposed to get.

The government has been bragging about its new plan for the climate action incentive rebates, saying that it is moving from a one-time annual payment to quarterly payments. I am going to list just why that is not something that one would really want to be bragging about. Folks in Alberta and other provinces who used to get their full climate action rebate after they filed their tax returns are now having to wait several more months just to get that one quarterly payment. I understand that there might be a benefit in stretching the payments out into four quarterly payments throughout the course of the year, but what we know in this highly inflationary en-

vironment is that the value of a dollar today is very rapidly diminishing.

By spreading this payment out into quarterly payments, the government is actually nickel-and-diming Canadians. It is helping the government's bottom line because it is able to print those dollars at full value and then, over the course of the year with these quarterly payments, it is paying Canadians less money in real value than if it had just issued them a one-time payment. With inflation roiling, this whole shell game about moving from a single climate action incentive payment to quarterly payments is really diminishing value for Canadian families. It is time for the NDP-Liberal government to stop shortchanging these families and show us the money.

I will move on to what is happening around the world and how the government is not preparing Canada now, and has not prepared Canada for the past six years. Our European allies and our allies around the world are struggling with their dependence on Russian oil and gas. The Minister of Natural Resources said the government can only offer a measly 300,000 barrels a day of additional production. That is to offset nearly 10 million barrels of lost Russian production.

• (1625)

We need to revise the meaning of a drop in the bucket and put Canada's name right in there, because it is simply not enough. Meanwhile, for the past six years under the Liberal government, Canada has failed to complete a major pipeline. We have failed to construct a single liquefied natural gas export facility on our coast, and permits for new oil and gas projects have been stalled indefinitely. I think of the Teck Frontier mine, for example.

Another example that is more current is the critical Bay du Nord project that is absolutely vital for the economic health of Newfoundland and Labrador. This is oil that, in the words of the previous minister of natural resources, who is from Newfoundland and Labrador, is the cleanest in the world. It is also oil that would not require the construction of new pipelines, because it is literally on the water. It is a no-brainer, yet the government continues to dither on approving this critical project.

We have inflation. We have more taxes. We have projects that are not being approved. They are not moving forward or not being approved at all. Now, we have this unscientific Liberal-NDP vaccine mandate that is really starting to bite our economy.

Farmers across Canada, including in my riding, are starting to enter the very busy shipping season, with a lot of our exports heading south to the United States. From before the pandemic until now, the rate to move these goods by truck has nearly doubled. Those farm families who can actually get people to move their products are lucky because it is very difficult to even find a trucker. There was a shortage of about 18,000 truckers before the pandemic and that number has exploded. There are about 16,000 additional truckers we have lost because of vaccine mandates.

A lot of unvaccinated truck drivers are solo truckers from the United States who Canadian farmers have come to depend upon to move our goods during this busy time of year because of our integrated supply chains. Instead, because of our border mandates, these truckers are choosing to stay home. It is costing our economy hundreds of millions of dollars. I come from a farm family, and this is a very real reality that families are facing. These truckers are not coming up from the United States. We are not getting our products moved south of the border. It is a real fact on the ground.

The food security of our North American supply chain has been put at serious risk. The cost to produce fertilizer is skyrocketing. The government has even announced plans, as I said earlier, to make it more expensive to produce fertilizer. With nearly a quarter of the world's wheat and other cereal crop production at risk due to the ongoing war in Ukraine, what the Government of Canada is doing is simply reckless and irresponsible. The world not only needs Canada's energy; it needs Canada's food. We have the ability to be an agricultural superpower, but instead the NDP-Liberal government wants to manage the decline of some of our most important traditional industries.

I understand that members of the government have said they do not want to take lessons from Conservatives, but they do not need to take lessons from Conservatives to look at what people are doing in the provinces and in countries around the world that are even more left-wing than the government. Spain, for example, just announced today that it was cutting the fuel tax on gasoline by 20 cents, meaning 20 cents to the euro. We have the NDP provincial government in British Columbia that announced a rebate for families to help them out at the pumps. It is temporarily cutting fuel taxes because it recognizes that, during this inflationary period, families are hurting. It is offering families further rebates on home heating. We are seeing that in Alberta. It is especially suspending further tax increases such as we will see on April 1 with the Liberal carbon tax.

Families cannot afford these tax increases on food, home heating and transportation fuels. That is why Conservatives are calling on the government to use the windfall that it is receiving from these high commodity prices and from its inflationary spending to lower taxes on families. We know that the cost to service this increasing debt, and to pay down this debt in the future, is only going to be a further burden on Canadian families.

It is time to use whatever resources we can to help Canadian families with broad-based tax relief: not boutique tax credits like we see in this bill, but broad-based relief that we know will disproportionately help low- and middle-income earners. We know that cuts to fuel taxes and cuts to consumption taxes have a bigger impact on family budgets for those who make under \$50,000

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or \$100,000. Conservatives are focused on delivering tangible benefits for these working-class Canadians who are increasingly struggling and living paycheck to paycheck.

• (1630)

In closing, Bill C-8 has failed to provide the targeted tax relief that families need at this time. It has failed to speed up these resource projects. It has failed to deal with high inflation. That is why the Conservatives cannot support it.

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

Madam Speaker, if I understood the member correctly, he said in his speech that Canada is being impacted negatively by the vaccination mandate to cross the border, but he is completely washing over the fact that both Canada and the U.S. have the exact same requirement. Canadian truckers would not be turned away or have a problem with a Canadian border officer as they would have already entered into the United States by showing their proof of vaccination to the U.S. border officer. Likewise, a U.S. trucker leaving Canada and going back into the States would have had to show proof of vaccination.

It is the exact same rule on both sides of the border, so how can he suggest that one side of the border is being affected negatively and the other is not?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Madam Speaker, the reality on the ground for farmers is that these vaccine mandates are causing problems. The member across can point and blame other jurisdictions all he wants, but the fact is that the current Liberal government has not taken leadership on it. It has not called the White House. We know that, in the United States, there are exemptions for companies with under 100 workers. We see that the truck drivers in the United States who are not vaccinated are not going anywhere. They are not coming to Canada like they used to, to ship our goods to the producers in the United States who need these goods. Instead of pointing the blame and trying to hide their own responsibility for this problem, maybe the government and the Prime Minister should pick up the phone, call the President and try to work out a solution so we can get our economy moving again.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague talks a lot about tax exemptions and things like that. There are some very inexpensive things we could have done to help the labour market, for instance.

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In this bill, there is absolutely nothing to help our businesses get workers. If my colleague went out in the field a bit, he would be saying the same thing: All our business owners are struggling to find employees.

We could have created a tax credit for people 65 and older who want to keep working.

I would like his thoughts on that.

[English]

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague is absolutely right. We are seeing a labour shortage all across the country. There are a lot of jobs available for people, but we simply do not have people either applying for them or available for those jobs. I think the government must do what it can to encourage people to get off the bench and get back into the workforce, whether they are new retirees or young people who are not sure about the first kind of job they want. We need to look at getting everyone participating in the market. I have talked to so many small business people who, if they had put out a sign in front of their business five years ago, would have had five people walking through the door ready to work, but now they are really struggling to find the labour they need. We know this is causing massive issues for our overall economy, and especially for our local small businesses.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments about agriculture. I represent Holland Marsh, the soup and salad bowl of Canada, and would like to say how important food security is now and moving forward. When we see the rising prices of fertilizer, can the member speak to how this will affect crop yield, with farmers not planting as much of their farm as they should be? How critical is this input to farmers in Canada?

• (1635)

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member who represents the soup and salad bowl of Canada. I like to think I represent the little potato part of Canada. Maybe the Prime Minister should give it a visit.

We know that, with the cost of fertilizer, the input costs are going through the roof. The government's climate policies are really increasing the cost of this, and we know that historically an increase in the cost of food is the number one cause of social unrest. Luckily, we are blessed to live in a country such as Canada. I do not think we are necessarily going to have a shortage of food, but we are looking at countries around the world that are facing food insecurity. Canada cannot afford not to produce food because these countries desperately need it.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to talk about Bill C-8, an economic and fiscal update tabled in December of 2021.

Before I get to the crux of my speech, I want to point out that this bill would add an additional \$70 billion of new inflationary fuel to the fire we are seeing already with our public finances. Inflation was at 5.7% in February. We are seeing supply chain shortages and labour issues, and the list goes on and on. We are now seeing a jaw-dropping \$1.2 trillion of national debt. Housing prices are up 25% from last year. The average typical home, when the Liberals took

power, was \$435,000. Now it is \$810,000. That is having real impacts.

The carbon tax is having a massive impact on people all across my riding. Of course, it is a rural area and a lot of it is cottage country, but it also has agriculture, tourism and manufacturing. The list goes on, but for the most part, people have to drive to get to work. These manufacturers have to import parts to make their components and to make their goods. We have seen continued price increases along the supply chain as a result of the carbon tax, among the other challenges industry is facing right now.

It is not going to get better, unfortunately. Some experts and media sources are saying that the new deal between the Liberals and the NDP could add an additional \$15 billion to \$20 billion of government spending over three years and upwards of \$40 billion in 2026-27, all of this while we have basically printed money, which is causing a lot of this inflation, and there is no end in sight. That has a real impact on people on the ground.

I want to start now by reading some of the emails I have been receiving from my constituents who are just struggling beyond belief to deal with the increased cost of living.

This one comes from Colin. It reads, "Prime Minister, now is not the time to hike the carbon tax again. Canadians like me are already getting hammered by the highest inflation in decades, which drives up the cost of everything. The crisis in Ukraine has increased the price of oil and gas, driving up anything that requires oil and gas to produce or transport, which is basically everything, and now the carbon tax is going up again on April 1." He says, "It is the worst April Fool's Day joke ever, and Canadians simply cannot afford this one-two punch."

Clayton's email reads, "Thank you for taking the time to read this email. Question: Have there been any thoughts or talks of reducing the carbon tax that is skyrocketing on fuel used to heat our homes? We use propane as our main source of heat, and the price of filling our tanks is getting out of control."

This one is from Colin: "My landlady and I are both on a fixed income. She is 81 years of age. We use heating oil, and the current bill, including GST and carbon tax, makes the price of heating oil \$1.65 per litre, which is more than the price of a litre of gasoline." Their bill is now \$250 per month more than last year. That will total about \$1,250 more for the season, and that is if they are lucky. Colin writes, "We have to start cutting back on groceries to cover our heating bill. This is unsustainable and, to be frank, downright", and we can insert an unparliamentary word here. He continues, "There should be some support for folks like us in this situation, and we have not drawn any support from the COVID payouts. Please help."

This one is from Brad: "I am very concerned about what my family and I are going to do with the current cost increases. I make a fair wage and I work hard for it, as does my wife. Seeing fuel prices today reaching \$1.84 per litre in Peterborough, we are unsure how we are going to choose between getting to work every day and putting food on the table for our family. I can't even imagine how people working two or three minimum wage jobs are going to cope. I beg of you to do your best to get us some relief. With gas taxes and carbon tax, it is making it impossible to stay afloat. The current carbon tax rebate is a joke. We have spent that already on propane and heating costs and fuel since January 1. This winter, our propane heating costs have increased at a tremendous cost due to the carbon tax."

His latest propane fill is \$600, and \$120 of that \$600 was a tax. Then we have the tax on the tax. He writes that food prices are going up and he does not see how he can possibly keep up with this.

● (1640)

I will keep going. I will read a message from Shawn. He said, "Here in the city of Kawartha Lakes, we are looking at a housing crisis. We are seeing, in my area, a lot of people moving up from the city now that a lot of people are working remotely and seeing the advantage of working from paradise." I do not blame them; it is paradise. However, it is causing a major problem with the supply and demand equation, not to mention the \$400 billion that I talked about earlier. Allowing all this money to be put in the atmosphere is helping to cause this unfortunate situation. He writes about different methods that he could talk about to get housing built. Not only that, they are talking about whether it is sustainable for their kids and whether their kids will be able to afford a house going forward.

I will read two more, because these are really important. I really did not get to my speech, but that is okay; these are important.

I am going to talk about Steve. He does construction, excavating and landscape work in Haliburton. Their company will have to increase their rates 27% just to stay afloat. Also, he is concerned about the larger jobs that he has not completed. Some he started last season; he got about 75% of the way last year, and now he estimates that the costs for material, wages, fuel, etc., will be up over \$5,000. Now Steve has to eat that cost, because that is not what the quote read. The customer might not pay it. Sadly, he writes, it is not even worth his fuel, but he has to finish the job and lose money just to save his reputation.

I will read this last one because it is actually quite moving. It is from David, who wrote, "I am a 69-year-old Canadian retiree living in Highlands East, finding it more difficult to live week by week in the amount of ridiculous inflation caused by reckless Liberal spending." That is all the more reason to stop funding some of the priorities that the Liberals have decided are priorities and to take a look at how seniors are struggling to get by. David continues to write, "This scares my wife and I to death, perhaps having to live in a 200- to 300-square-foot box in a hospital-like setting and paying approximately \$4,000 rent a month, and that's not even reasonable."

That is just a small number of the sad and very real stories I am hearing from constituents right across this constituency. We have

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heard struggling stories like that all day from constituents, regular Canadians, who are struggling to get by.

We have called for relief from this carbon tax. We are talking about how the carbon tax is affecting the farmers we are dealing with in my area, and others who are trying to figure out how they are going to manage these increased prices when they are talking about drying and about fuel for other methods. Everything has a cascading effect. If anyone has gone to the grocery store lately, they would have seen that the price of groceries is absolutely out of control. It is absolutely sad to see this.

We saw the same plan here in Ontario. The same thing happened when the Ontario Liberals decided to mess around in the energy sector and started picking winners and losers in the energy market. We saw energy poverty. We saw more people relying on food banks than ever before. They could not afford their electricity bill because the government decided that it would start to allow massive subsidies for energy that did not meet the massive demands for energy that Ontario needed. Even when it did, then the excess energy, because storage capacity is not where it should be, although it will be someday, was sold to various states for pennies on the dollar, especially New York and Michigan. Our businesses would therefore actually be subsidizing their competitors through their lower cost of energy.

We need more sources of energy. We need to stop the spending. We need to look at ways we can grow the economy and start building things, and have low taxes, less government and more freedom.

● (1645)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have been listening to Conservatives talk all day about everything that they are going on and on about that does not have anything to do with Bill C-8.

Bill C-8 is a support package. It is the fall economic statement that is meant to deliver supports to a lot of the people that the members on the other side of the House keep referring to over and over. This is not about inflation. It is not about the price of gas. It is not about a whole bunch of stuff, other than supports that are in a bill that was introduced back in December. The only party that is still talking to this piece of legislature right now is the Conservatives. Every other party has stopped debating it. The Conservatives are clearly just trying to stall time in order to just drag this on and on.

My question is quite simple, and I have a lot of respect for this member. When does he think that the Conservatives will finally let us vote on this very important piece of legislation that would provide supports to Canadians?

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Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, this is our job. We are legislators. We are supposed to be criticizing. We are supposed to be talking about how we can improve pieces of legislation. I will not stop talking about this issue and the causes of inflation when we are talking about a bill that is adding an additional \$70 billion in new spending.

I have just gone through how printing money and expanding the money supply is hurting everyday constituents and how the carbon tax is hurting everyday constituents. I am getting email after email and phone call after phone call from real people who are struggling because of policies brought in by the government. No, I will not stop talking about it, especially when this legislation is terrible.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. An hon. member wants to ask a question.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, usually the other parties accuse us of picking fights, but apparently it is not the Bloc this time.

Here is my question relating to my hon. colleague's speech. In the economic update, the government held the Canada health transfer to the legal minimum, which is 3%. I would like my colleague to comment on the fact that this is the absolute minimum and that the Canadian provinces and Quebec have been asking for significantly higher health transfers for a long time. An increase is overdue and would be perfectly reasonable following this kind of pandemic.

[English]

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, this is a point we have brought up many times. This was a pandemic that required health care to kick into high gear. We have seen that happen in every provincial jurisdiction. The one thing that did not happen was increases in health care transfers to the provinces beyond what was already previously budgeted for. We also saw that a third of the COVID spending that the government put forward did not have anything to do with COVID, but was only couched in the language of COVID. If it was truly a pandemic of health care resources, which I agree it was, why was health care not the number one item increased in the spending priorities of the government during the pandemic?

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock. I had the pleasure of visiting his riding last fall at the peak of fall colours, so I can appreciate where he comes from.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Lake Simcoe.

Mr. Richard Cannings: You have thrown me off there.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I come from a riding where tourism is a huge part of the economy, as does he. What does the member think of the government's misplaced support or lack of support for tourism when the latest tourism support program does

not include companies that are seasonal? Canada is all about seasons, with the fall colours and then the winter, yet people and businesses whose work is seasonal in nature could not even apply for this support program.

• (1650)

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for coming to Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock. I know the member for York—Simcoe was really putting in a plug, so maybe next time he can visit that area and see the beauty that his area has to offer.

The member is absolutely right that the tourism and hospitality sector has been severely hit. Tourism is number two in the economy in my area. A survey by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business shows that a massive number of businesses right across Canada have taken on severe debt just to keep going. One of the issues in travel and tourism, especially in Ontario, is that when we are running a tour, we do not always get the money until the tour goes. We need to look at restrictions at the border to allow international visitors to come back again. There is a lot more the government could be doing to help the travel and tourism industry.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): 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 Kelowna—Lake Country, Canada-U.S. Relations; the hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove, Infrastructure; the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona, COVID-19 Economic Measures.

[English]

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to get up on Bill C-8 and talk about some of the financial expenditures the government has made and some of the ones it is talking about in this bill.

I want to recognize that this is the first time I have been able to get on my feet since the announcement of the Liberal-NDP coalition. I know those in the sea of orange that I see across the aisle are still adjusting to being new NDP backbenchers. I know that is going to be difficult with the NDP prime minister we have now. I would say that this will be a big impact on the way the government spends going forward, and we are talking about Bill C-8 right now, which is in addition to the economic and fiscal update of 2021.

Let us just say that we, as Conservatives, are opposed to Bill C-8 because it has another \$70 billion in inflationary spending. We know that every time the government goes to the money presses and prints a whole bunch of new \$20s, \$50s, \$100s, thousands, millions and billions of dollars, it drives up inflation in this country because we have too much currency in circulation. We also know that, during this pandemic, out of all of the COVID spending we have had, \$176 billion was not even related to the pandemic. There is \$176 billion that has gone into Liberal pet projects and that has increased our national debt to where it sits today at \$1.2 trillion. We are talking about a national debt that is now almost double since the Liberals came to power in 2015. That is beyond belief and something I do not think any of us ever expected.

We know that we are sitting in a world today where we are seeing hyperinflation caused by everything from supply chain disruptions to Russia's war in Ukraine, something that is very near and dear to me with family and friends back in Ukraine dealing with it, knowing that there are going to be extra costs and burdens that we have to carry as a country to help out the people of Ukraine, those fighting the war against Putin and those fleeing the violence, the carnage and the atrocities being committed against the people of Ukraine.

Every dollar that we spend today is precious. We have a fiduciary duty to the taxpayer to ensure that their money is being spent wisely and that we are making the greatest benefit to society here in Canada and around the world. That is why investing in everything from national defence to humanitarian relief efforts, to what we do at home to make life better for Canadians, is important. Unfortunately, that has not happened under the Liberal-NDP government.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You've got it right, the Liberal-NDP.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I'll say the NDP government, just for the benefit of the member for Kingston and the Islands. I will talk about how his NDP government has been irresponsible in how it spent the money and how there has been so much money thrown into circulation it has created hyperinflation.

The biggest impact is, of course, on housing. We have seen housing prices increase by 85% in Canada in the past six years. A house that was worth \$435,000 six years ago is now worth \$810,000. That is the average price in Canada. For those of us who own homes and are going to sell down the road, that is great, but for my kids, for the generation of twenty-somethings and thirty-somethings who hope to have the ability to buy a house, just as we did when we were in our twenties, they cannot afford it now.

There is the extra stress test that has been put in place by the government, which banks now use on new borrowers, and they cannot even get a mortgage. We continue to see inflation eat away at their take-home pay. That goes to everything from housing to what we are seeing in food and what we are seeing with gas prices now. A lot of that, of course, is related to sanctions against Russia's oil sector. Oil and gas in Russia have to be sanctioned and sanctioned hard.

• (1655)

We also know that gas prices here are laden with taxes, especially the carbon tax, which is going up on April 1. The Parliamentary

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Budget Officer's report just documented that Canadians, especially rural Canadians and western Canadians, lose big time with the carbon tax. In Manitoba, the Parliamentary Budget Officer is saying that the carbon tax costs an average family an extra \$1,100 a year out of pocket, and they are not getting money back. It is \$1,100 out of pocket, and that is on top of the food inflation that we are seeing right now that is already up, this year alone, \$1,000 per family. We are talking \$2,100 because of excess inflation, especially on food, and \$1,100 on the carbon tax. Rural Canadians are hurt even worse, because we have to drive to get anywhere.

I have an agriculture background. My brothers, my son-in-law, my daughter, they are all farmers. They do not get any tax breaks with the carbon tax. To dry grain, they have to pay the carbon tax, and it runs into tens of thousands of dollars a year. That takes money out of their profit margin, but it also drives up the cost of food. It exacerbates food inflation.

We just heard from a couple of members who spoke before me, talking about the concern about food shortages. In Ukraine, we are talking about the bread basket of Europe. Here we have a real food crisis on the horizon. If Ukraine does not get its crops in the field, and it is very doubtful with the war going on that it will, there is going to be such a shortage of corn, wheat, sunflower, canola and soybeans. It is going to short the entire world market. We need to step up and do even more, just as we did in World War II when Canada produced even more wheat and fed the world. We are going to have to do this again.

The carbon tax, on everything from propane, natural gas and diesel fuel, along with the impacts of higher fertilizer prices will impact input costs. I do not know if members on the NDP-Liberal government side realize that the number one ingredient in making nitrogen fertilizer is natural gas. Those companies that produce nitrogen fertilizer have to pay the entire carbon tax, and they are getting nothing back. That is all passed on down to the farmer. Now we have Ukraine and the sanctions against Russian fertilizer, which produces nitrogen and phosphorus and potassium, which is going to be in even more short supply.

Even though farmers are going to see higher commodity prices, we know that the higher input costs, largely created by excessive government taxation through the carbon tax and other means, will drive down the profit margins. Instead of enjoying higher commodity prices, they will still be struggling to get by day to day.

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In Bill C-8, there is some money in here that is doing things we have to call into question. There is \$300 million out of the consolidated revenue fund to support more COVID-19 proof of vaccine initiatives. There is no plan or description on how that \$300 million is going to be spent. There is another \$1.72 billion for more COVID testing. Again, there is no description. Is this another Frank Baylis situation, where we have Liberal insiders and Liberal friends getting sole-source government contracts and making millions and millions of dollars? We are spending \$300 million on proof of vaccination programs. Why? Mandates are coming off. The restrictions in all the provinces are ending, and here we are going to invest more money into more federal proof of vaccinations.

The government should really start listening to Canadians and listening to the provinces. It is time to actually start taking off these mandates and allow people to travel again. It is time to remove the trucker mandate, because that is something that was never required to happen in the first place. It does not protect public health in any way, shape or form. All it did was create the protest and ultimately hurt supply chains again.

I am glad to be able to stand here and say I am opposed to Bill C-8. I am glad to join with my colleagues in pointing out all the difficulties that it presents and how this undermines our economy here in Canada.

• (1700)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, since we are on the topic of not talking about the bill, I thought I would ask a question that does not have to do with the bill.

This is about the F-35 announcement today. This member and I sat on the defence committee together for quite a while. He fought long and hard for the government to invest in the F-35 fighter jets. I am just curious. Is the member very happy or ecstatic with the news that he received today? I would like to give him the opportunity to rise in the House and thank the government for following through on his suggestion.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for the question and acknowledge that he recognizes that I am the biggest proponent for the F-35 and have been for a long time. It is better late than never that he showed up to the party. I can tell him that this is the right plane for our Royal Canadian Air Force. This is the right plane for our NORAD mission. This is the right plane for our NATO mission, and it is the right plane for the Canadian aerospace sector.

This is a serious investment and one that should have happened six or seven years ago. Instead, the Liberals played politics with this until now when they realize it is the only choice. I will call it the Liberal government because members dithered and delayed on it, but nonetheless I am glad that the NDP government made the right decision.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, last weekend, I attended the Trois-Rivières book fair, where I met people who asked me what is happening with the budget.

It seems to me that this budget signals that the government is tired. It contains very little to address the labour shortage and mis-manages supply problems.

One issue I care about, which we will talk at length about but is nowhere to be found in the budget, is the fight against tax havens. What does my colleague believe could be done to step up the fight against tax havens? At present, there is nothing in the budget about that. What can be done to crack down on people who use tax havens?

[English]

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I really enjoy working with the member on the ethics committee since I joined it a month ago. I know that this is something that he has personally been championing for many years, even before he entered politics, to ensure that we have accountability in government and that we have the proper processes in place to do those audits and find those that are trying to hide their money, whether it is in offshore tax havens or by other nefarious means. We believe that we have to have a fair tax system here in Canada for all Canadians, and that means that those who are tax cheats need to be found out and ultimately those monies have to be repatriated here to help the Canadian financial system.

I am looking forward to the fact that we are getting very close to a new budget, and I am hoping that the NDP finance minister will be coming forward very shortly with her budget so that we can actually see what the plans are of this new NDP-Liberal coalition, where that ultimately will take the finances of the nation and how they are going to crack down on those who are hiding their monies in offshore tax havens.

• (1705)

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, there is nothing in the bill on EI reform and we know that workers are struggling. We know that self-employed workers need benefits when they lose their income. I am curious if the member agrees that EI reform is desperately needed in this country.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I am sure that the Liberal backbencher is going to have a chance and opportunity to discuss that with her caucus colleagues very soon. I know this is something that does have to be reviewed, and I am hoping that we will see something in the future to ensure that we address all the problems that are out there in the shortfalls happening in the EI system.

All of us as members of Parliament witness this and hear from constituents all the time about how they have fallen through the cracks. Especially during this time of COVID, there were too many industries where people did not qualify for either CERB or EI because they were not in industries that were recognized and properly funded by the government.

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Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I really want to thank my colleague from Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman for bringing attention to how the appalling and immoral Russian aggression in Ukraine could affect world food supplies. One of the things I learned recently, and I would like to have his comments on it, is that fortunately, because we can store corn, barley and wheat, there are large stockpiles. The Food and Agriculture Organization looked at that, although some do it disproportionately, maybe in China.

I am wondering if he has looked at that in terms of that we are not starting from zero. If we do not get the seeds in the ground, we still may be able to feed people, but how do we get it distributed to the people who need it?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I am glad the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is taking an interest in this because these are very troubling times. The last thing we want to see is famine, hunger and starvation across the planet.

Although there is some hoarding by certain countries in their own coarse grain stocks, whether it is rice, wheat or corn, we also know that the coarse grain stocks and carry-overs we have right now are at some of the lowest points that we have seen in the world in history. On any given day, the actual amount of food that is on supply is only about a 30-day window. That really is how tight stocks are. By taking a country like Ukraine out of the equation, it can have a serious impact. Of course, it is going to go to the highest bidder in a lot of cases, but this is why we need organizations to step in to ensure humanitarian relief is there for those who cannot afford it.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is great to be here in the House again today rising on Bill C-8. As members are aware, Bill C-8 is an omnibus bill and a large piece of legislation, so I will spend my time focusing on several elements of it, particularly with respect to the carbon tax. However, before I do that, I think it is important to put down the context for Bill C-8.

From the time it was initially introduced to where we are right now, things have changed dramatically. Canadians are finding it harder and harder to get by. They are challenged to put gas in their tanks, feed their families and get through these cold months of early spring. The reason is that there has been profligate spending by the Liberal Party, and this unnecessary spending is being put right on the backs of Canadians.

What happens when we spend and spend is that the money has to come from somewhere. Either it has been coming from the taxpayer directly or it has been going to our loans. For people who are not aware, through quantitative easing we are actually borrowing money from ourselves, which is challenging because where is that money coming from? Well, the Bank of Canada is printing that money. It is a basic concept of economics that where we have more of something it is worth less, so what we are getting by having our printing press on overdrive through quantitative easing is more and more currency. There is \$400 billion of extra currency out there, and we have driven down the value of money in our country. Not surprisingly, shock upon shock, guess what? We have inflation, which means the value of goods is going up and the value of money is going down.

Scotiabank is saying that we may in fact face inflation of up to 8% going forward. Let us put that in context. We call this the “inflation tax” because what it is really doing, just as sure as income tax or sales tax, is taking value from the taxpayer and putting that value into the vaults of government. To give members an idea, at 8% inflation, a Canadian earning \$40,000, such as a single mother in Cobourg or Port Hope trying to get by earning a bit more than minimum wage, is going to be paying \$3,200 in extra inflation tax just this year. Imagine a couple earning \$50,000 each, and let us say they have a family four. That is \$100,000 total. As we know, with housing prices and everything else going up, that is not a tremendous amount of money to get by on. They are going to be paying an additional \$8,000 in inflation tax at 8% interest. This is robbing Canadians of the value of their labour and they are working so hard. The billionaires and millionaires will get by, but for those folks at the lowest rung of the economic ladder, those who are struggling, this inflation tax is enough to knock them down into poverty.

Then we exacerbate that problem with the carbon tax. I had the opportunity to ask the Governor of the Bank of Canada, Tiff Macklem, some questions about inflation and about the impact of the carbon tax. Surprisingly, he did not know what the impact was when I asked him. However, he wrote back to the finance committee and said that, at the time, nearly 10% of inflation was caused by one tax: the carbon tax. Imagine that. We have income tax, sales tax and taxes on tax, but just one tax, this carbon tax, is responsible for 10% of the pain being inflicted by the inflation tax.

The reality is that the purpose of the carbon tax is to increase the cost of certain goods and services that emit high amounts of GHG so that people will not want to buy them. We then push those individuals into buying lower GHG-emitting goods and services, which in itself is not a bad thing. The challenge, though, is that it is often a fallacy, because there are no other options available. As I said earlier, a single mother earning \$40,000 a year simply cannot afford to buy a \$50,000 or \$100,000 Tesla. It is the equivalent to saying, “Let them eat cake” when we say to buy an electric vehicle.

• (1710)

For farmers, this problem is particularly acute, and for many of them, at least at this point, there are no alternatives. We are starting technologies for electric tractors, which is great, but they are not there yet, so when we increase the carbon tax on propane, natural gas and other fuels, we are putting that directly on our farmers.

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One particular example I have is with respect to propane and natural gas. I had the great privilege and honour of introducing Bill C-206 in the House last Parliament, and what that called for was an exemption for farmers, not just on gasoline and diesel, as that already exists, but on cleaner fuels as well, like natural gas and propane. That gave farmers a full exemption, because they do not have the ability to use other technology right now. It does not exist. We listened to expert after expert at the agriculture committee, and they said there is not a commercially viable alternative to fossil fuels when it comes to drying grain or heating livestock barns. We live in a cold country, as we know. Those who do not know that should walk outside here in Ottawa. We need clean Canadian energy to allow our farmers to be competitive.

Bill C-8 offers a rebate to farmers instead of an exemption, and this rebate is a step in the right direction. However, I remember being in this very House about a year or two ago when the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food said the cost of the carbon tax is not a serious issue for farmers. Well, the farmers disagreed. They rose to the occasion and we were able to bring the discussion to Ottawa. We said that it is an issue and that farmers are paying tens of thousands of dollars. However, as is often the case, the new NDP-Liberal government is up here a day late and a dollar short, because this rebate only covers a very small amount of the cost. It is incredibly inequitable.

Let me explain what I mean by inequitable. Of course, this country is very different climate-wise, region-wise and even farming-wise. The type of farming someone does in Victoria, B.C., is much different from the farming someone does in St. John's, Newfoundland, and all parts in between. The system set up with Bill C-8 is one size fits all. It says that depending on expenses, the government will give a certain amount of a carbon tax rebate. That is a terrible proxy. It makes no sense because the expenses for farming in Victoria, B.C., will be different from those in Regina, Saskatchewan, and Northumberland—Peterborough South. We are just grabbing this one-size-fits-all solution. What I can guarantee will happen is that farmers will have no choice but to be in high carbon-intense areas of farming that will receive minuscule rebates, whereas other areas where carbon is not as important in a particular industry may receive higher rebates. We are creating inequity because the calculation in Bill C-8 makes no sense.

Here is a better idea. My colleague from Huron—Bruce has reintroduced the new and improved Bill C-206 as Bill C-234. It says we should just give them an exemption. That way they get 100% of the dollars they spend on propane and natural gas back in their pockets. It is a broader discussion we need to have. We need to decide whether we can trust Canadians with their own money.

Members will remember that back in the Paul Martin era, the Liberal government, now the Liberal-NDP government, famously said that if we leave Canadians alone, they are going to spend their money on beer and popcorn. This reeks of that. It reeks of this conversation. Why would we not just allow them to exempt that money instead of transporting all of it to Ottawa, since, shocker, some of it gets lost and stays here in Ottawa? Why would we not just leave it in the jeans of our farmers, instead of having that money go to Ottawa, where some of it will be left over, and then having a small portion go back to farmers? I will give an exact equation. A farmer

in Manitoba would pay \$9,000 in carbon tax and will get \$3,000 back, whereas under Bill C-234, they would get all \$9,000 back. I believe in the individual—

• (1715)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will have to continue on with questions and comments.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in listening to the debate today, I would like to emphasize that Bill C-8 encapsulates these issues primarily: school ventilation, proof support for vaccinations, rapid tests, the first annual tax on foreign home ownership and support for small businesses. That captures the essence of the bill, yet we have the Conservative Party talking about all sorts of other budgetary measures.

This bill has been before the House for a great deal of time. The Conservatives are saying they want to continue to debate it virtually indefinitely. That is fine. They can continue to do whatever they want. Can the member explain to those who might be interested in the legislation itself why the Conservative Party would oppose the measures being proposed to support Canadians in all regions as they continue to go through this pandemic?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, it is not surprising that the NDP-Liberal government would forget farmers. If the member would look at subsection (d) in Part 1, that is exactly what it talks about: It talks about the farming rebate I was just talking about for 10 minutes. I am not surprised that he would forget them, but for me and for our party, our farmers are important.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, every day for some time now, the Minister of Health has told us that he has spent \$63 billion or \$75 billion. The exact figure does not matter. What does matter is that not once has he said that it is a one-time expenditure, not a reinvestment in health care.

I would like to ask my colleague if he agrees with me that the government should make unconditional health transfers to the provinces.

[English]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, it is a troubling development that the new NDP-Liberal government seems to focus, more and more, on centralizing. It is taking money and the rights and freedoms of Canadians, of Quebecers, and transplanting them into Ottawa. Yes, I stand with my friend against centralization and I stand for Canadians and individuals across this great land.

• (1720)

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned farming in Victoria, British Columbia. In my riding of Victoria, we have an incredible urban farm called the Mason Street Farm. Jesse Brown and the nursery manager JJ have been doing incredible work. JJ is actually moving on to do further work on food security.

If we want to support farmers across Canada and if we want to protect food security, we need bold climate action. I wonder this. Can the member comment on the need for bold climate action to support farmers?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I think I would agree with the member in saying that no one is more committed to our fight against climate change than our farmers. They are the ones who live on the farms. They are the ones who will be most affected by climate change. I am willing to sit down and talk to her about climate change and fighting climate change any day. I can tell her that with the Conservatives there would not be seven years of hot air and missing targets, as the current Liberal government has done.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I could not agree more about the important role that farmers play. I would like to ask my hon. colleague if he agrees that we need to pay for the ecological services that farmers perform: for instance, not cultivating areas of wetlands, pulling back and protecting hedgerows, using low-tillage or non-tillage methods and doing things that sequester carbon in the soil.

Does he agree with me that we should pay farmers for sequestering carbon in the soil and protecting biodiversity?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I join this member in wishing her Green Party colleague all the best as he has recently been diagnosed with COVID. I would ask her to tell him that we want him to get better soon so we can continue to argue about fossil fuels.

I would agree with the hon. member, but with this caveat. Instead of taking money to give to Ottawa and then giving it back, why do we not just leave more money, but acknowledge the work that farmers are doing to fight climate change and soil erosion by having the government get the heck off their backs?

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are talking about Bill C-8. It is the fiscal and economic update, and I will be spending my time, as many of my colleagues have been, talking about inflation.

Inflation is probably the greatest challenge our country is facing at this moment in time, due in no small part to the fact that the government has basically written itself a cheque for \$400 billion. It then brought that cheque to the bank, deposited it in its bank account, and proceeded to spend the money. That money was basic-

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ly created out of thin air, and now we see this new influx of cash cascading through the economy. We see it in the rising of prices of all kinds of things, clear across the country.

Why should we care about inflation? We hear from the Liberals all the time when they say, "Well, it is happening all around the world. It is not just something that is happening right here in Canada." That is all true. A little bit of the problem is that we are unable to then measure what inflation is actually doing. If we are floating down the river and somebody is floating a little faster than somebody else, it may actually feel as though one is getting ahead of another who is floating a little slower. That is the problem we have. When the whole world is experiencing inflation, we cannot measure what the inflation looks like here in Canada effectively.

We often measure our inflation or relative inflation against the American dollar. We say that our Canadian dollar is worth 78¢ to the American dollar, and that is a decent measurement of our currency. However, if the American dollar is being devalued and the Canadian dollar is being devalued at a similar rate, that percentage might actually stay the same, in terms of the 78¢ to the American dollar. If inflation is running at the same rate, we are not going to see a big change between the two, because we do not have a fixed point we can measure up against.

The devaluation of our dollar is what happens when there is inflation. When our dollar is unable to buy the same amount of goods as it was capable of buying before that, that is a devaluation.

One of the things that I use to measure inflation and to measure effective currency exchanges is the Big Mac. McDonald's Big Mac is sold around the world. We can see the relative value of one's money by seeing what the Big Mac is worth around the world, everywhere one goes in the world. For me, that is my quick check to see what a dollar is worth. The relative price of a McDonald's Big Mac around the world gives one a measure of what one's dollar is worth.

When we see that the value of the Big Mac, or the price of the Big Mac, is going up right here in Canada, we know that our money is worth less. We see that in housing prices. If one's house has appreciated in value over the last couple of years, as many Canadians' homes have, it is because of, one, more demand for the house or, two, the dollar now actually being worth less. The house did not change. The house is still the same house one bought several years ago. If one is a Canadian that happens to own a house, that is an advantage at this point of time, but it is still the same house. The fact that it has doubled in value or gone up by 50% is a measurement of inflation. It does not mean one's house is now suddenly worth more. It just means that our dollar is worth less, so it takes more dollars to buy the same house.

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What does that mean, particularly now that we hear about how the government seems to be oblivious or does not seem to take this as seriously as I think it ought to, in regard to the whole issue of inflation? Members of the government will say, well, it is just a matter of fact, it is happening around the world and there is not much we can do about it.

There are a lot of things the government could do. First of all, it could stop printing money. Second, it could show some fiscal restraint. Many times when we ask in this place about what the government is doing about a particular thing, its members stand up and tell us how much money they are spending on the thing.

● (1725)

When it comes to housing prices, we say that housing prices are getting out of control and government members stand up and say, “Yeah, we know and that is why we are going to spend this much more money on housing affordability” or when we say that taking care of children is getting more and more expensive in this country, they say, “Yeah, we know and that is why we are going to spend this much more money” on that particular thing.

I am from a Dutch family and the Dutch are notorious in terms of their money management. If one is getting the same thing for more money, that is not a good deal. If one gets the same thing for less money then one is doing a good job. That is what is going on in this country. Government members say that Conservatives were obviously not managing that particular issue well because they only spent that amount of money and we are spending this amount.

Border controls are a clear example. When Conservatives were in charge of this country, we did not have a massive influx of people running across the border. We were managing our border. We were keeping our border secure. It did not even cost us that much. Now we have a steady stream of people running across the border. We could say that this perhaps is a problem. There is a front door to Canada. People are welcome to Canada. If they just apply through the normal channels, people are welcome to come to Canada. What is happening now is that the government says this is obviously not a problem because it is spending x number of dollars on border controls. If we have a bigger problem and we are spending more money on it, that to me is not good value for the money. That is another area where we see the government spending more and more money to achieve less and less.

The Liberals may say it is all fair and nice for me to say as I am a Conservative with my own arguments. They will make their own arguments and say that they are here to fight climate change and all those kinds of things and that costs money so they have to spend money. That is fine if that is the argument they want to make.

Why should a person whose number one concern in the world is climate change and the environment care about inflation? I am going to make the argument that they should care about inflation because runaway inflation drives short-term thinking. To pull this to an extreme, in Germany after World War I, they had runaway inflation, like unheard of inflation. Folks were demanding that they get paid by lunchtime so that they could run to the store to buy a loaf of bread, because if they got their wages later, the price of the loaf of bread would have gone up by the end of the day. People demanded to get paid for their work in real time and turned that cash into a

tangible asset in about the same amount of time. That drives very short-term thinking.

We see that happening here in Canada right now as well. Everybody is trying to turn their cash into something. They are trying to take their earnings and turn them into a hard asset so that they do not lose the value of their money. They do not lose the value of their effort. Real estate is an example. Folks across the country have turned their earnings into real estate. It drives the fact that we do not save for a rainy day. We do not think about the future. We want to get our earnings into a tangible asset by any means possible. If someone is able to afford a house, that is a good place to do that, but if one is unable to afford a house, one buys other things in order to manage that. Runaway inflation drives short-term thinking.

Climate change and the environment, all these things, are pressing issues, but they are all issues that are somewhat long term. There are a lot of studies around the world that point out that the net worth of the population must reach over \$5,000 U.S. before people start to care about the environment and things like that. There is a correlation between one's net worth and inflation that drives long-term thinking. We should be thinking about those things. If we are going to drive inflation up wildly, people are less likely to look further into the future. They are going to think about turning their earnings today into tangible assets in real terms. That is a reality. I hope I can make that argument to folks who are concerned about the environment to say that runaway inflation drives short-term thinking. If we want to make it so that our country thinks about things in the long term, we have to get this inflation under control.

● (1730)

It looks like I have to wrap up. I hope to have many questions so that I can continue on some of these issues.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member has put a great deal of focus on the issue of inflation. In that regard, I believe it is appropriate for us to take a look at what is happening in the United States and the European Union. In both situations, Canada's inflation rate is less than theirs. To try to give the impression that inflation is not an issue outside of our border I think is somewhat misleading.

By the way, I did a quick Google search regarding the Big Mac, which is still cheaper in Canada than it is in the United States using American dollars.

It seems to me that the Conservatives are off base with Bill C-8 in terms of its many benefits, including to our farmers, and I do not understand why they are voting against it. I have not heard a substantive reason, other than the fact that they really do not understand the bill.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I do not think the hon. member understood my speech, because the point I made was that when the entire world is suffering from inflation, there is no standing-still point, no reference point. When all of the world is experiencing inflation, we have a hard time judging what our inflation actually is.

There are some really exciting things happening around the world, particularly with Bitcoin, which may be the instrument that will enable us to measure what a particular country's currency is doing relative to inflation, because Bitcoin is tied at 21 million total, so it is not inflationary, unlike other currencies. There are some really cool things that are happening around Bitcoin and inflation, and I hope we will be able to continue that discussion as well in this place.

• (1735)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I usually enjoy his interventions. They are articulate and meaningful and offer good arguments. I have a lot in common with him.

He raised several very positive points. He pointed out that spending a lot of money does not equate to being effective. That is something we should bear in mind and repeat more often to keep the Liberal propaganda from taking hold.

There is another piece of Liberal propaganda that we must watch out for. The Liberals promise a lot of things by saying they will spend a lot of money, but we often realize three years into a program that only 10% of the money has been spent. Even though the announcement seems promising, the Liberals spend only one-tenth of what they promised.

Then there are promises that are slow to be fulfilled. Just look at the fight against tax havens, which has not started yet.

However, the bulk of my colleague's intervention focused on inflation, and that is what I will ask him about. Government intervention to address inflation is not easy. It is something very complex.

My colleague spoke a lot about housing, and I think it is an area where we could intervene more, in building social housing, for example, to increase supply and meet the high demand.

I would like my colleague's point of view on the need to quickly build and invest—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I must interrupt the hon. member. There is not a lot of time left.

The hon. member for Peace River—Westlock.

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his question. He obviously did listen to my speech, and I appreciate that.

On the housing aspect, I am very much in agreement that there is a need for more supply. I have driven across this country several times to drive here to Ottawa, and there is an immense amount of lakefront property in this country that is undeveloped. I would recommend that perhaps we start selling off some lakefront property and get some more housing built, particularly once we get to Kenora. From Kenora to here, I can tell members that there is an endless amount of beautiful lakefront property that is probably valuable. We might be able to raise some tax money off of it and build some beautiful housing all across this country.

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Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I take issue with the member's comments about climate change being something we can put off. Climate change is not something we can put off. We have to act now, and we have to act boldly. Any investment we make into fighting climate change now will be well worth that investment, because it is going to cost us 100 or 1,000 times more if we wait 10 or 20 years, and we will be worse off besides.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that I did not get my point across as well as I had hoped I had.

My point was that when there is wild inflation, people do not think about the long-term effects of their spending, so if we can bring inflation down, people will start to invest their money in longer-term things. We need to invest in and think about climate change and the environment in the long term. There is no doubt that there are consequences to our immediate actions, but if we are all worried about our money being devalued in the moment, we are not going to spend it on things that are further in the future; we are going to spend it on things that are tangible in the moment.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise and add my voice to the report stage debate on Bill C-8. Here we are on March 28 debating the so-called fall economic statement, which was tabled just before Christmas, three full months after the summer election. That election was supposedly called to establish a mandate for an urgent, transformational, once-in-a-lifetime moment. I do not agree with the rationale that was offered for last summer's snap election, that it was a transformational moment, but what has been transformational is what has happened since this bill was tabled and during the more than three months during which this bill has been debated and studied.

It might not be reasonable to have expected the government to have taken an invasion of Ukraine into account when it tabled Bill C-8, but Vladimir Putin has long threatened Russia's neighbours, including Canadian friends, such as Ukraine. Putin's Russia has also long been a threat to Canada's Arctic lands, Canada's territorial waters and Canadian airspace. There is nothing in this statement that will address the now critically urgent need to prepare for our own self-defence and to increase our capacity to provide all forms of aid to our friends and allies. Financial aid, humanitarian aid, logistical aid and, yes, lethal military aid are all urgently needed by Ukraine.

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Since this bill was tabled, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has confirmed that the government's military capital spending, including its 2017 strong, secure, engaged funding announcement, is hopelessly behind schedule. In other words, even the spending that has been approved and authorized by Parliament is not being spent. The PBO went on to point out that more money will probably still be needed in addition to what has been approved to meet the goals of existing capital procurement. This is a critical failure of government at a time when Canada's ability to defend itself and support its allies is at the most urgent point that it has been in decades. I am pleased that the government has reversed its earlier positions and finally announced that it will buy the F-35s. That is good. Now it should buy ships.

Canada was a founding member of NATO. It is our principal alliance and it has secured our peace since 1949. We have an obligation to it to increase military spending to 2% of GDP, yet we cannot even get our act together to spend the money that Parliament has already authorized. Russia is not going to wait for us. China is not going to wait for us. The time to act is now, and there is nothing in this bill that will fix systemic failures in Canada's long-broken defence procurement system.

Also, since this bill was tabled, the true structural nature of Canada's inflation crisis is becoming increasingly clear. When I spoke on this bill at second reading, the most recent report said that the average Canadian house price was \$717,000. That is about 14 times the annual earnings of an average Canadian worker and absolutely unaffordable for a typical Canadian household, but now, just within the last couple of months, new reports show that the average price is now \$100,000 higher than it was when this bill was debated at second reading. Just moving from one stage of debate on this bill, the price of a home in Canada has gone up \$100,000.

It is certainly not just housing that has gone up. Groceries continue to go up and, of course, the price of energy has also gone up. The war has enormous effects on the price of energy, but the government must take responsibility for its role in the inflation crisis. The government is charging ahead with its annual carbon tax increase set to take place this Friday. Gasoline is already over \$2 a litre in some parts of Canada, and the government will push gasoline prices higher, along with the cost of home heating.

Since this bill was tabled, the Bank of Canada has published research confirming that the carbon tax alone is responsible for 0.4% inflation. While the bank's target rate is 2%, the actual rate is now just under 6% and the carbon tax, one single piece of government-engineered inflation, contributes 0.4% of that inflation. The government should be fighting against inflation, not explicitly contributing to it with punitive and increasing taxes.

• (1740)

The real shame of the global crisis of affordable and reliable energy, given the situation with the degree to which many parts of the world rely on Russian imports, is that the current government has done everything it can to prevent Canadian energy from reaching foreign or even domestic markets. Canada could be doing its part to keep the price of energy under control by replacing Russia's exports, but this bill is a continuation of the government's anti-energy, anti-Alberta agenda. We now find ourselves in an inflation crisis

exacerbated by both high energy prices and a punitive domestic carbon tax.

It is not just the carbon tax going up this Friday. This Friday is also the day that the tax on beer, wine and spirits will automatically go up and further fuel inflation. We will not see this tax increase in this bill, because the excise escalator is an April Fool's gift that the government announced in budget 2017 that keeps on giving every year, which raises taxes without a vote in Parliament. There is no bill and no vote, but a tax increase nevertheless.

Another thing that is not in this bill is any demonstration of short-, medium- or long-term fiscal discipline. The endless deficits, enabled by monetary expansion and increasing taxes, mean that inflation will make life increasingly unaffordable for Canadian families. Again, I will refer to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, whose recent report confirms that the conditions for the withdrawal of stimulus spending in budget 2021 have been met, yet the spending continues. The Liberals laid out criteria to withdraw the stimulus, and then they got rid of the criteria and just kept the spending in this fall statement.

The bill contains \$70 billion in inflationary new spending on top of \$176 billion in extra non-COVID spending that the government has run up. It would bring Canada's debt total to over \$1.2 trillion.

I remind the House that the government was teetering on the brink of a recession with a horrifically blown deficit projection, even before COVID struck. The government blew all of its fiscal credibility long before COVID. It has ignored every single fiscal anchor, guardrail or election promise it has made on deficits. Now, against this fiscal backdrop, the Liberals invited the NDP to abandon its opposition role and join the government in a de facto coalition.

I can already hear the howls of protest. I can hear the desperate explanations. I imagine New Democrats saying, and we have heard it before, that just because they have entered an agreement to support the government on all confidence and supply votes until October 2025, that the government has agreed to brief them on any such potential motion before it is made public and that they have promised to snitch if they get wind of opposition procedural tactics that might slow down the government's agenda at a committee, it does not mean it is a coalition. They will say that none of them is in cabinet, so it is not a coalition. They will ask whether I passed political science 201, and say it is not really a coalition.

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We will let Canadians be the judges of what is really going on here. They can call it whatever they want, but the really sad part about what we have seen here is that an opposition party is now supporting the government rather than opposing it. This comes at a time when the current government increasingly fails to govern competently and transparently, which takes us right back to the beginning and the circumstances around which this bill was tabled.

This bill was tabled just before Christmas, and in the briefing on the fall economic statement the PBO told us:

This year both the Annual Financial Report and Public Accounts were published on December 14, 2021, the latest publication since 1993-94. Comparatively, Canada was among the last of the G7 countries to publish their [reports]....

Canada falls short of the standard for advanced practice in the [IMF] financial reporting guidelines, which recommends that governments publish their annual statements within six months.

...the delay in the Government's release of its audited financial statement undermined [Parliament's] ability to meaningfully scrutinize proposed Government spending.

This matters because it is symptomatic of declining basic government competency. We have a government that needs to be challenged by a loyal but vigorous opposition, which will challenge the government to better serve Canadians. Instead, it is emboldened by the defection of the members of the NDP caucus to the government in support of this tired and—

• (1745)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the hon. member's time is up. I do want to remind members, especially parliamentary secretaries, that instead of heckling or thinking out loud they should hold on to their thoughts quietly until it is time for questions and comments, which it is right now.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Mirabel.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, in our view, Bill C-8 represents a significant encroachment on provincial tax jurisdictions. This new tax on underused housing infringes on the property taxation jurisdiction.

The Bloc Québécois proposed an amendment at the Standing Committee on Finance. We asked that Quebec and the provinces be given the right to opt out, so that the provinces could tell the federal government not to encroach on their areas of jurisdiction.

The Liberal committee chair of the Standing Committee on Finance ruled the amendment inadmissible, which meant that it could not even be debated.

Does my colleague think it would have been a good idea to give the provinces the right to opt out on property taxation?

• (1750)

[English]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, the member seemed to refer to something that happened at finance committee. I am not sure I caught exactly the piece of tax legislation that he was concerned about for provincial jurisdiction, but provincial jurisdiction is something that Conservatives always respect. We respect the Constitution and the delineation of provincial responsibilities. I am not

certain I have a specific answer to his question, but I certainly believe in provincial jurisdiction.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the comments made by the member today and I cannot help but once again reflect on the fact that no Conservatives who have spoken, at least in my time listening to the debate today, have actually been talking about the substance of this actual bill. Nonetheless, I know it is so important for them to keep debating this as they are the only ones in the House who are still going on about this. I would hate to think that this was done with the intent of trying to delay passage of the bill.

In the interests of continuing to debate this and to give them more opportunity, I am wondering this. If I were to move a unanimous consent motion that we sit until midnight in order to allow Conservatives to keep speaking and debating this, would the member support that?

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, I do not know that I would object, but I cannot speak for all the members in the chamber, so he is welcome to try that on.

He must not have listened to much of my speech, because I spoke about a number of things that the bill does and a number of things that the bill fails to do. I drew attention to the way the bill withdraws the criteria around the continuation of stimulus spending. The Liberals just dropped that and then continued with \$70 billion in non-COVID additional spending. I did not get to that in my speech for lack of time. I will not support the bill. I do not think any of my Conservative colleagues will. We have no confidence in the government.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wanted to hearken back to the finance committee where we passed an amendment to the bill, in respect to some of the money that is being disbursed, for quarterly reporting on how it was spent. That was exactly in response to the comments by the PBO that the member cited in his speech about the late filing of public accounts.

We had proposed another amendment on the rapid test purchases. Because it was asking for information from the provinces on how funding was spent, that particular one was defeated not with the help of the NDP, who in fact moved that amendment, but with the help of the Bloc at committee because the Bloc did not agree the provinces should report on how the money was spent.

I want the member to know that we continue to care about how the public's money is spent, and we are actually proposing solutions to ensure that there is good scrutiny of government spending on this side of the House.

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Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, I do not think I caught a question there, but I will respond to the member's comment. He is a thoughtful member. I have served at committee with him before and I know that he is a champion of transparency and accountability from government. I certainly hope that he will continue to demand that, even as his party is choosing to support the government through until 2025.

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak again on Bill C-8, an act to implement certain provisions of the economic and fiscal update, particularly because since I last spoke on Bill C-8 on February 4, the housing crisis, the inflation crisis and the cost of living crisis have only gotten worse for Canadians.

When I spoke in early February, the inflation rate was only the worst in 20 years. Now it is the worst in 30 years and getting worse by the day. When I spoke in early February, the average home price in my home communities of the Hamilton and Burlington area was around \$1 million, and now it is up 10% further, to \$1.1 million and growing. This is a great failing of not only the fiscal update and economic statement but of the government overall when it comes to managing public finance and its impact on the economy and these issues.

The cost of living crisis is spinning out of control. What is driving it is more spending. We know that the Parliamentary Budget Officer, as was previously alluded to by other speakers, including the one who spoke previous to me, was asked about the proposed spending that was contained in Bill C-8, and the response was, "It appears to me that the rationale for the additional spending initially set aside as 'stimulus' no longer exists."

Further, when asked at the finance committee, the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that all of this deficit spending does contribute to inflation, which is why the \$71.2 billion in additional spending proposed in the economic and fiscal update 2021 is just adding more fuel to the fire of inflation. It is going to make matters worse.

We all know that gas, groceries and home heating are all going up, and that is exactly the wrong direction for Canadians who are struggling to pay their bills each month, including those in my constituency. We know there was a report that the average family would pay an extra \$1,000 for groceries in 2022. I fear that realistically it may be more than that.

Staple foods that we produce here in Canada are up. Chicken is up 6.2%. Beef is up almost 12%. Bacon is up over 19%. Bread is up over 5%. What does Bill C-8 do to remedy this situation, rather than exacerbate it?

As was alluded to by the previous speaker, we are just four days away from more tax increases. On April 1, we will all be paying more at the pumps and other tax increases will take effect, such as the excise tax escalator that was referenced, and yet the new NDP-Liberal government voted down a sensible motion by the Conservatives last week to provide relief to Canadians by putting a pause on the GST at the pumps.

What also worries me is the interest that is accumulating on all this massive debt hole that has been dug. How many more billions

in interest are going to be accrued, especially as interest rates increase? Would it not be better to spend that on hospital beds or other investments in health care, or infrastructure, or on properly equipping our armed forces at a time of heightened security concerns?

As I alluded to earlier, the housing crisis has been engulfing Canadians for some time now, and there is no relief in sight. There is certainly no relief in Bill C-8.

Just down the road from where I am sitting right now, down the road from my constituency office, there are hundreds of new families moving in every month. They are leaving Toronto in search of a more affordable life here at the western edge of the greater Hamilton and Toronto area, except that housing prices are skyrocketing here too. Like so many other Canadians, they are mortgaged while at the same time being squeezed by inflation.

In fact, the average family in the greater Toronto or Vancouver area spends about two-thirds of their gross income to meet monthly payments for an average home. How can families juggle this and the price of groceries? How can families juggle this and nearly \$2 a litre at the pumps as they commute to work to pay that mortgage, while at the same time that gas is going to be taxed more this coming Friday?

There is no real plan by the government to tackle housing inflation. Prices have doubled in Hamilton since the government came to office, and there is no plan to address the supply crunch.

● (1755)

In the Hamilton area, we need 110,000 new homes built, of all shapes, sizes and affordability ranges, just to keep pace. Housing inflation is also inflating rents in our region. How can a young person save for a home when the cost of their rent is sky high and is, in fact, often more than they might pay in a mortgage payment down the road? It is a vicious cycle, which has meant that 50% of Canadians under the age of 40 have given up on the dream of home ownership, and that is sad.

Canada has long been a land of opportunity for so many around the world to look to. People seek to immigrate here for a better life for themselves and a better life for their families, yet they arrive here and find they cannot afford to live. The housing is too expensive and inflation is going up, and that is what we are experiencing right now.

It is having a devastating impact on all Canadians. Take Lucia and her husband, for example. They are seniors living on a fixed income in my riding. Unfortunately, they must rely on the generosity of family and friends to help them with housing costs because they cannot afford housing or rent. It is out of reach for them. What is the government doing to help with this housing inflation so that seniors like Lucia and her husband can find houses they can actually afford?

Similarly, Roseanne is a well-educated young woman in her thirties living in the Upper Stoney Creek community within my constituency. Roseanne is saddened by what she sees among her peer group. She wrote to me recently and here is what she said: "For many years now, I have watched as my friends and colleagues have left Ontario for greener pastures in the west, or for a chance to enter the housing market in the east. Over the last two years, however, I have now witnessed a mass exodus not just from Ontario, my home province, but from Canada altogether." This is not right. Young people are tired of living in their parents' basement. Where is the plan to fix this?

There is also Heinz, who is a senior living on a fixed income in Flamborough. He has written to me a few times, and each time he showcases me his home heating bill. The totals are astronomical. They are going up a couple hundred dollars, month over month, over the winter, and the taxes on that home heating are adding insult to injury. Inflation is robbing Heinz and seniors like him of their golden years. Plus, rapidly rising prices of groceries are only making this worse.

Where does it end? When do we focus on the economy and growing it, rather than growing the debt and deficit?

Back in December, the OECD released a report that said Canada would be among the worst-performing economies in the industrialized world this decade, and worse than perennial underperformers like Italy and Greece. Perhaps it is even more concerning that this report also indicated that it foresaw a further two decades of weak growth. I wonder why this is not raising more alarm bells. How does \$71 billion of more spending, how do more taxes and how does more debt turn this around?

The economic and fiscal update and Bill C-8 do not fix the housing crisis and do not cool the inflation crisis. Nor do they help people from my communities, like Lucia and her husband, Roseanne and Heinz, with the cost of living on a daily basis. That is why I stand with my Conservative colleagues and oppose this bill.

• (1800)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for talking about the impact that the bill will have on his constituents. I really appreciate him talking about the impact it will have on young Canadians and their ability to access some of the things they feel are important, like their first home.

I am wondering if my colleague can expand on what he is hearing from his constituents and on the impact this increased spending is going to have on the cost of living, inflation and certainly the ability to access a first home.

Mr. Dan Muys: Madam Speaker, it is certainly the most common question I get as a new member of Parliament from young

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Canadians who are frustrated that they cannot enter the housing market. When it is \$1.1 million to buy a starter home in the Hamilton area and it has gone up \$100,000 in the last month, they are further and further away from their dream of home ownership. It is extremely frustrating. At the same time, they are paying more at the pumps to commute to their job, usually in the greater Toronto area, which is also a huge frustration for those young people.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, back to that last question and answer.

Can the member tell me where in Bill C-8 it talks about the issue he just addressed? The question from the previous Conservative member asked specifically how this bill would be affecting people trying to buy a home. I am just wondering if the member can point out for me where in the bill it actually talks about that.

• (1805)

Mr. Dan Muys: Madam Speaker, I think we are having a discussion about the fiscal update and economic statement. If we are going to talk about the economy, we need to talk about the things that are affecting Canadians very directly, and top of mind is the cost of living, which is exhibiting itself in the cost of groceries and housing in particular.

All of the people whom I have cited, plus many other examples that I could bring forward, want to know what the government is doing to make their life more affordable.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his excellent speech.

The Liberals are doubling down on their first-time homebuyer incentive, which is something that was introduced a couple of years ago, but it has helped less than 15% of its stated goal. Now, Conservatives have brought forward Motion No. 54, which would help increase supply.

Could my colleague explain to the Liberals and the NDP why it is so important to let these failed programs die and reinvest that money so we can actually increase the supply for young people and seniors to have a safe place to live?

Mr. Dan Muys: Madam Speaker, the member for Oshawa knows that the other end of the GTHA is experiencing some of the same market dynamics as we are here in the Hamilton area. Motion No. 54 is the right initiative because it addresses one of the key problems in the housing market, which is supply. I referenced the fact that here in Hamilton, and I have spoken with the Realtors Association of Hamilton-Burlington, we are short 110,000 homes just to catch up. I know that across the country we are short over a million, half of which are in Ontario, so that is a big gap to make up.

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Motion No. 54 looks to address the heart of the issue rather than the failed programs. When 15% over that many years is all that has been achieved, we are moving at a snail's pace. Frankly, what new graduate or young person, who is paying rent and cannot save up, is going to have that amount of money in an RRSP to withdraw from to invest in the first-time homebuyers program? It just does not work.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour always to rise in the House to speak on behalf of my constituents in Foothills and, in my role as shadow minister for agriculture and agri-food, to speak on behalf of farmers and farm families across Canada.

We are talking about Bill C-8. There is one key element of Bill C-8 that I want to address today and discuss. That is the sharp contrast between what the Liberal government is proposing in its carbon tax rebate for farmers and what Conservatives are proposing in the private member's bill, Bill C-234, brought forward by my colleague from Huron—Bruce. We have seen a very sharp response from the Parliamentary Budget Officer that certainly counters the claims that have been made by the Liberal government.

From the very beginning, when the Liberals have talked about their carbon tax, they have always said it is going to be revenue-neutral and that whatever anyone pays into the carbon tax they are going to be getting it back in a rebate. We know, from the report of the Parliamentary Budget Officer that came out last week, that this is completely untrue. In fact, Canadian farmers only get about \$1.70 for every \$1,000 of eligible expenses that they pay on the farm. That is definitely not revenue-neutral. In fact, that is only a fraction of what a farmer or a farm-family producer or agri-food business would spend in a carbon tax.

All of us in this room who have farmers in their constituencies have received carbon tax bills from our constituents. I have had bills that have gone from a few thousand dollars to tens of thousands of dollars in one month, depending on the size of the operation. Therefore, to say that this carbon tax rebate is going to be revenue-neutral is misleading Canadians and certainly misleading farm families. We know now that the carbon tax is disproportionately more punitive on rural communities and especially on farmers.

If that were not bad enough, we have seen already that the carbon tax has been quite punitive on farmers. We saw the numbers that have been put forward by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. The average farmer paid about \$14,000 in the first year of the carbon tax. That went up to \$45,000 last year, and this is going to go up again on April 1.

What is that going to mean, moving forward? MNP has stated that, in the canola industry alone, the carbon tax of 2022 cost about \$71 million. By 2030, that carbon tax as it continues to increase is going to cost the canola industry alone \$1.7 billion. Those are funds that are not going back into investments in technology and innovation. They are not funds that are going into the local rural economies. That money is going directly into Liberal government coffers and is not going to be redistributed, as the Liberals have claimed that it would be, to the farm families who are having to pay that.

This is unsustainable, especially with the precarious situation that Canadian agriculture already faces with skyrocketing input costs on things like fertilizer, herbicides, diesel, propane and natural gas. Farmers are also facing very critical supply-chain problems and a crisis in labour supply. All of these things are having a compound negative impact on Canadian agriculture. It is almost nonsensical at this very tenuous time, when there is a global food shortage looming as a result of the conflict in Ukraine, that the government would continue to add to that burden by increasing the carbon tax on Canadian farmers.

One of the other issues with it that was highlighted by stakeholders is that there are no viable alternatives presented in Bill C-8. I would invite some of my colleagues to come to rural Canada and see exactly how things work. A Canadian farmer cannot haul cattle with an electric car. It is physically impossible. A Canadian grain farmer cannot move his grain from the farm to the terminal on the subway. My riding is 25,000 square kilometres. Public transit does not exist. It certainly does not exist for the average citizen, but it definitely does not exist for a farm operation that needs to move product and drive very long distances to deliver its product to market and that needs to drive a tractor to spray and plant and drive a combine to harvest. There are no alternatives for these things. They have no choice.

● (1810)

However, we have seen that they have managed and worked hard to improve efficiencies: their carbon footprint has gone down substantially as a result of modern technology and innovations such as zero tillage, precision farming and 4R nutrient stewardship. They have gone to great lengths to ensure that Canadian farmers are doing all they can to protect their environment and their soil, but government policy needs to be based on reality and the realities that Canadian farmers and farm families are having to face every single day.

It is even more frustrating for those farmers who are investing money each and every year to improve their operations, because they are the frontline stewards of our environment. I would say that is known around the world, as Canadian farmers are world leaders when it comes to environmental sustainability. Looking at the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report on the carbon tax, it clearly states that the carbon tax does not even reduce emissions. It does not force people to reduce emissions because there are no viable alternatives when it comes to our ability to reduce emissions on farms.

In fact, I would argue that it is quite the opposite. There was a study done by the Keystone Agricultural Producers two years ago. The report noted that agriculture has about 100 megatonnes of emissions a year, which has remained quite stable despite a massive increase in yield, so we are doing much better with much less because of our commitment to efficiency and sustainability. However, reading further on, what is very important in that study is that not only do farms emit about 60 megatonnes of CO₂ a year, but they also capture 100 megatonnes of CO₂ a year in carbon sequestration by taking care of the land. When that product leaves the farm gate and goes into the market, not only is agriculture already net-zero, but it is actually a 30-megatonne carbon sink.

If that is the case, as agriculture stakeholder groups have said in their data, why are they not being celebrated or encouraged to continue on with the work that they are doing? Instead, we are doing exactly the opposite by punishing them with the carbon tax. They now clearly know from the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report that they will not be made whole: This is going to cost them money. That is money that they should be able to keep in their pockets and reinvest into their operations, reinvest into new energy-efficient equipment, and reinvest into more efficiencies in terms of agronomy, drones, precision agriculture and those types of things. When we take tens of millions of dollars out of farmers' pockets, it makes it very difficult for them to do that.

In contrast to what is being offered by the Liberals in Bill C-8, the Conservatives have put forward a private member's bill, Bill C-234, that would exempt farm fuel from the carbon tax, specifically natural gas and propane used for heating and cooling barns and buildings, as well as for drying grain. That would allow those farmers to hold that money in their accounts and reinvest those dollars into their operations, again to make them more efficient and more sustainable.

Unlike the Liberals' carbon tax in Bill C-8, Bill C-234 has almost unanimous support among agriculture stakeholders, including the Agriculture Carbon Alliance, which is a coalition of 14 different national farm organizations that represent 190,000 farm businesses and more than \$70 billion in cash receipts. I think that is pretty critical, when all of those groups are supporting our approach to reducing emissions compared with the Liberals' obviously failing option. I will give some examples. Mary Robinson, the president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, is in support. The Agriculture Carbon Alliance is supporting it. Jan VanderHout, president of Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada, has given notes of support.

In conclusion, to have these stakeholders and our farm families across Canada supporting one direction in addressing emissions that is in complete contrast to and opposite from what the Liberals are proposing in Bill C-8 is, I think, something we need to listen to. Getting money back into producers' hands as quickly as possible is more beneficial, and it is more effective in reducing emissions, becoming more efficient and continuing to ensure that we can not only feed Canadians but carry that burden of feeding the world as well.

• (1815)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member, in his speech today, talked about how

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“government policy needs to be based on reality”. My question to him would be what about the reality of climate change? What about the reality of the fact that half of the OECD countries have some form of price on pollution? What about the reality that the top economists throughout the world say that carbon pricing is an effective tool at curbing its usage?

What about the fact that the member for Durham, when he was leader of that party, was in support of a price on pollution? What about the fact that Patrick Brown is a fan of carbon pricing? What about the fact that Jean Charest was in partnership with Dalton McGuinty and the premier of California to bring in cap and trade, a form of pricing pollution?

I wonder if the member could speak to those realities.

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Speaker, let us talk realities, as my colleague likes to say. The Parliamentary Budget Officer was very clear. The carbon tax is not revenue-neutral, as the Liberals claimed it was going to be. This is going to cost farmers. Most importantly, let us talk reality. The Parliamentary Budget Officer also said the carbon tax put forward by the Liberals does not reduce emissions. If we are going to base these policy decisions on science and data, the data clearly says it does not reduce emissions. All it does is cost farmers money and increase inflation.

We know what we have put forward will reduce emissions because farmers are already doing it. We have seen a 60-million megatonne reduction in carbon emissions from farmers. Why have they done that? They have done that because it is the right thing to do. They have done that by reinvesting in their farmers with innovation and technology, not by being forced to do so by bad Liberal policy.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Foothills for his speech. I think he realizes the NDP is supporting Bill C-234. He comes from one of the most beautiful ridings in the country. It is almost as beautiful as mine. What it does have is some of the most fabulous native grasslands in the country.

I used to serve on the board of the Nature Conservancy of Canada. We did a lot of work in that area, working with ranchers to help conserve one of the most endangered ecosystems in the country. It was valuable to have ranchers on side to help us with that cause. Could he expand on that?

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• (1820)

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Speaker, I will not get into arguing with my colleague about which riding is nicer. He brings up a very good point. I always appreciate the opportunity to highlight that yes, in my riding, I am the heart of cattle country and Alberta beef. We also take a lot of pride in the fact that we are protecting one of the most endangered ecosystems on planet earth and that is Canada's grasslands.

I know Canadians find that somewhat surprising at times, but the grassland ecosystem is more endangered than the coral reefs and the rainforests. It is so critical that our ranchers and our livestock producers take care to protect that grassland. Once it is gone, it is irreplaceable. It is so important for carbon sequestration and for carbon sinks that we protect that land so it is not developed for urban sprawl or any other options. It is critical that we protect that diversity.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I think it is really important, and I agree with my friend from South Okanagan—West Kootenay, that we need to emphasize the carbon sequestration potential of grasslands and the preservation of grasslands. I do not want to get into a full debate on carbon taxes with the hon. member because Bill C-8 does not mention carbon taxes, except for trying to give farmers more of a rebate.

I also support, as does the hon. member who just spoke, the private member's bill to take the carbon tax off grain drying. The carbon tax program that the federal government put forward does exclude farmer's use of fossil fuels in the engines of cars and tractors, but not the grain drying. I think that was an oversight.

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Speaker, I do want to thank my colleagues from the NDP, the Bloc and the Green Party who are supporting our private member's bill in exempting the farm fuels from the carbon tax, because it is so important that farmers are able to keep that money in their pockets to reinvest in ways to be more efficient and more sustainable. I want to thank my colleagues around the House for supporting that bill. I wish the Liberals would find it in their hearts to do the same.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I remember how it felt to buy our first home, to take the keys and walk through our front door. It was a modest and older home, but it had character and all kinds of potential. For young people, owning a home is often seen as a key to the next chapter of their life story, which a lot of times includes starting a family and putting down roots in a community, a community where they contribute to the social and economic fabric while building lifetime friendships and family memories. Quite simply, a home is considered a really important part of realizing the Canadian dream, but that dream is in jeopardy. In fact, it is in crisis. An entire generation of Canadians is being left behind and worse off than their parents' generation with the government's constant raising of taxes, printing of money, spending money it does not have, raising inflation and orchestrating a housing crisis.

I am humbled to be able to speak on behalf of Canadians who are being left behind by their federal government while so many others, namely, the rich and well connected, are getting further and further ahead. That is why Conservatives are so concerned about Bill C-8, yet another tax-and-spend bill that adds more inflationary fuel to

the fire. Despite elements of the bill that are supposedly meant to address some of the underlying causes of this crisis, they are completely dwarfed and overshadowed by the \$70 billion of new inflationary spending this bill proposes, \$70 billion on top of \$176 billion in new spending brought in over the past two years that has been entirely unrelated to the pandemic. That is also in addition to the \$400 billion in new cash that has been printed over the same two years, cash that is chasing fewer goods and driving up inflation.

These choices have only helped to bring our national debt to an astounding \$1.2 trillion and counting. For the sake of our country, spending of this kind has to stop, but numbers such as these are unfathomable to average Canadians. What does this inflation crisis really mean to them? Here is what it means. It means that 60% of Canadians are concerned they might not have enough money to feed their families. The government appears to take no concern with the fact that the average person will need to spend \$1,000 more in a year to simply feed their families.

While that is insignificant to many who sit in the House of Commons, that is simply outside the margins for most Canadians. That is why many have no choice but to change their buying habits, moving to less healthy choices and discount brands, or cutting back on food significantly. At the same time, one cannot even begin to provide nutritious food for one's family if one cannot get to the grocery store, and that is a real problem, especially in rural Canada.

Sixty-eight per cent of Canadians are worried they cannot afford to fill up their cars any longer. The government likes to shrug off the blame to current world events, denying the layers of carbon tax, compounded with GST, that it has been punishing Canadians with several times over and is disproportionately punitive on families, low-income Canadians and seniors. We are just days away from yet another increase in the carbon tax that will add 12¢ to every litre of gasoline.

As the official opposition, we have devoted entire days of debate on this matter alone and have asked the government to give Canadians a GST holiday on gas, but to no avail. In its first act as a coalition government, the NDP-Liberal government voted our motion down. Even the NDP is not interested in giving Canadians support, a break at the pumps, in these extraordinary times. Therefore, what would make anyone believe that this coalition will follow through with relief for first-time homebuyers? Why should Canadians trust them, especially when the relief is not enough in light of the insane prices in the housing market today?

When the Prime Minister took power, the cost of the typical home was \$435,000. That has since ballooned by over 85%, up to what I believe is \$810,000 now, with inflation of 25% and more in just the last year alone. As politicians, we can cite these numbers all day long, but real empathy and meaningful action only comes from hearing the effects of this affordability crisis on everyday Canadians, so let us shift the focus back squarely on housing.

The average family must spend two-thirds of their gross income on monthly payments for the average home in Toronto or Vancouver, some of the world's most unaffordable markets, 66% of their gross income. Meanwhile, any financial adviser worth their salt will tell young buyers that monthly housing costs should not exceed 25% to 30% of take-home pay. Otherwise, owners run the risk of living house poor. On Vancouver Island, I know that rent prices have soared out of reach for low-income and young Canadians. Even with the savings for a down payment on a home, there are no homes that young families can afford. They are being outbid by hundreds of thousands of dollars above the asking price.

• (1825)

British Columbia's Minister of Housing states that the province has been told to prepare for 100,000 new British Columbians every year for the next three years. That is about one-third of Canada's total immigration target. In the last three months, 24,000 new Canadians have arrived in B.C. Compounded by population growth within the existing population, pressure on housing supply is only going to get worse. The minister was clear that a dramatic increase in new builds is needed in short order. Also, the effect of offshore investment in Canadian land and real estate is making affordable housing an impossibility for young families.

Closer to Ottawa, a friend put a bid on a new home right here in the nation's capital. Another buyer offered \$10,000 more than the asking price. This individual took a deep breath and matched it, only to learn that in response the other individual offered \$90,000 higher.

Another couple I know locally has been diligent at putting away every dollar they can. In fact, they have now saved an amount for a down payment equal to the full purchase price of the husband's childhood home in 1999 prices, but they are still unable to find a home in Ottawa without living house poor. The most affordable options would place them more than an hour out of the city, away from their places of employment and the opportunities and services that the city provides.

It is not surprising, then, that Ontario has seen an exodus from the province in the last year. In 2021 alone, 108,000 individuals left for other provinces. That is the highest level since 1981, and it could be because the average price of a home in the greater Toronto area climbed 31%, to \$1.2 million—

• (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to interrupt the member. She will have three and a half minutes the next time that this matter is before the House.

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ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, the absence of an agreement with the United States on softwood lumber continues to have disastrous consequences in my home province of British Columbia. We are seven years into the current government's time in office, yet a softwood lumber agreement has not been a priority of this NDP-Liberal government.

Last year we heard from the Minister of International Trade that she was disappointed when additional American duties were placed on our critical lumber industries. Then last fall, after duties went even higher, the minister said she would raise the issue with the Americans.

Last week, when I questioned the government again on when it expects to have an agreement, the member for Winnipeg North, the most frequent government spokesperson in this chamber on a softwood lumber agreement, informed us that the government would “continue to monitor” this problem.

Canadians do not elect governments to monitor industry-destroying problems; they elect governments to solve them. Working families in my riding in Kelowna—Lake Country whose livelihoods are made in the forestry sector and the over 200 people who lost their jobs when a mill closed are perfectly capable of monitoring the situation themselves, as they are living through it.

The Prime Minister promised a new softwood lumber agreement within 100 days of his first election in 2015. We are now thousands of days past this, three U.S. presidents later, and no closer to that agreement. Does the government expect Canadians to wait another seven years?

The Liberals were not successful in negotiating softwood lumber into CUSMA. They left it up to negotiating a separate agreement, and this has not happened.

Over a year ago, on February 23, 2021, to much fanfare, the Prime Minister, the U.S. President and their trade counterparts announced the “Roadmap for a Renewed Canada-U.S. Partnership”. This mutual economic potential has not happened. Whether it is buy America policies or softwood lumber production moving to the U.S., Canada has the short stick.

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It is not just those whose livelihoods are made in the forestry sector who are affected; Kelowna—Lake Country residents are seeing inflation rise thanks to the absence of government action on this file. Susan Yurkovich, the president of the BC Council of Forest Industries, recently testified at the trade committee that the lack of a softwood lumber deal has an inflationary effect. As those unfair and unwarranted tariffs get priced into the cost of lumber, Canadian construction companies and home renovators are forced to pass on these costs to consumers, leading to even higher costs to housing.

The Association of Interior Realtors recently reported that the benchmark selling price of a typical single-family home in Kelowna has now risen to more than \$1 million, up from \$761,000 just a year ago. House prices in Lake Country rose similarly, with new figures from BC Assessment showing a one-year increase of 32%. These increases are alarming. The escalation of home values jeopardizes the ability of seniors on fixed incomes to maintain their homes, prevents first-time homebuyers from ever being able to buy a home, forces families to live in homes that no longer suit their family's size and force people to spend far more than 30% of their pre-tax income on rent. House pricing increases are caused by several factors, and increased construction costs are certainly one of them.

The NDP-Liberal government has always acted as if a softwood lumber agreement was out of reach. Canadians know better than to believe in those excuses, because they remember that we had an agreement under the last Conservative government. We did not have to tweet endless photo ops that were disguised as productive meetings but produced no results; we got a deal that worked.

I am hoping today we are going to hear from the NDP-Liberal minister on what steps she is taking to negotiate a softwood lumber agreement. We know the lack of an agreement is adding to inflation. Families in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country and workers in my province and across the country are relying on this. Let us hear about the plan and see some action.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for raising this important issue in the House.

I just want to emphasize that the federal government is extremely disappointed that the U.S. Department of Commerce continues to apply duties to most exports of Canadian softwood lumber. Those duties are unfair and entirely unwarranted. They harm Canadian communities, of which the member represents in British Columbia, and the workers. They harm Canadian workers and Canadian communities right across the board, particularly the industries in Quebec and British Columbia, but also people who are purchasing homes right around this country.

We understand that the softwood lumber industry is a key component of our highly integrated forest sector, and it is an economic anchor for communities around Canada. We know that Canadian interests in the softwood lumber dispute are best dealt with through a team Canada approach. Let me highlight this. What we are doing is that we are not taking a partisan approach and we are not taking the approach that favours a particular region. We are adopting this as truly a team Canada initiative and have done so continuously

through our years in government. We are in close contact with provinces, territories, industry and other partners on how best to respond to the most recent U.S. decisions regarding duties on softwood lumber products.

In January, the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development convened a round table with representatives from across the country to exchange views on Canada's approach to the softwood lumber dispute. One thing that is clear is that we stand by our industry and by the workers, and they can rest assured that Canada is actively contesting these unfair measures.

What are we doing in the face of these unwarranted initiatives by the U.S. Department of Commerce? We have launched legal cases against the various U.S. decisions to date that have imposed duties on Canadian softwood lumber products. Under chapter 19 of NAFTA, Canada is challenging the 2017 U.S. subsidy and dumping determinations. These determinations are also the subject of WTO challenges. We are already seeing the results of those efforts at the WTO.

In August 2020, the panel that adjudicated Canada's challenge of the subsidy determination found the U.S. duties to be inconsistent with the United States international trade obligations. Further, we are contesting, under chapter 10 of CUSMA, the first and second administrative reviews. I will pause parenthetically here. That is the very same provision under CUSMA that the official opposition, when CUSMA was renegotiated, urged us to abandon in order to get a deal done. Were it not for our determination in ensuring that the dispute resolution mechanism was entrenched, we would not have a vehicle for which to advocate for my friend opposite's very constituents and the industry she is purporting to advocate for.

We are a reliable trading partner. In the past, all of these independent tribunals have consistently found that the United States allegations regarding softwood lumber are entirely without basis, meaning Canada has won at every turn. We will continue to litigate, because that is the route that is available to us. We believe that will ultimately be the case in this present dispute.

In parallel, what are we doing? I reject categorically the categorization that was presented by the member opposite that we are somehow abandoning this issue or not making it a priority. To the contrary, we continue to engage on this issue with the U.S. government at every level. The Prime Minister has raised it with President Biden. The Minister of International Trade has raised it with her U.S. counterparts, that is U.S. Trade Representative Tai and U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo.

An agreement is in the best interests of both parties involved, and we will only accept a deal that is beneficial to Canadian industry, Canadian workers and Canadian communities.

• (1835)

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, it has been seven years. What I was asking the NDP-Liberal minister for was an outline of actions the government will be taking on negotiating a softwood lumber agreement, not just raising the issue.

The last softwood lumber deal was negotiated by the previous Conservative government, including achieving an extension, which expired in 2015. The Liberals did not negotiate softwood lumber into CUSMA, nor through three U.S. presidents, and they did not sit down and negotiate a new deal.

Lumber production is up in the United States, yet down in Canada. Mills have closed in Canada, thousands have lost their jobs and lumber prices have skyrocketed in large part due to U.S. tariffs affecting construction costs. We now have testimony at the trade committee that increases in lumber costs have increased inflation.

Residents in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country cannot afford these cost increases affecting construction and housing prices. Could the NDP-Liberal minister tell us how long the government expects the forestry industry and my constituents dealing with inflationary costs to wait for a softwood lumber agreement?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, what I would say in response is that we are working on this at all levels, as I have indicated.

We are taking a team Canada approach. In the most recent trade trip by the minister in the fall, she brought with her representatives of the official opposition, as well as the NDP, to participate in that team Canada approach. What we are doing is emphasizing that these tariffs do not just hurt Canadian communities, but they also devastate American communities, because by virtue of the duties placed on Canadian lumber coming in to build American homes, it is escalating the price of homes in the United States. The result of this advocacy has been that recently we have seen 100 different congressional representatives from both sides of the American House petition the Biden administration to reduce these unwarranted tariffs for the benefit of American homeowners.

That is the kind of advocacy we need more of. That is the kind of advocacy we will continue. We will not cease to make this a priority in terms of all of our relations with the American administration.

• (1840)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am here this evening to talk about the recent flooding in the Fraser Valley, in particular in the Sumas Prairie area.

The Minister of Emergency Preparedness or his parliamentary secretary will be well aware of the extent and dimensions of the damage and the estimated cost for repairs. It is somewhere between \$339 million and \$580 million to seismically upgrade the Sumas Prairie diking system and the Matsqui Prairie diking system, and probably about that much money again to pay for repairs that need to be done because of the damage caused by the recent flooding.

Tonight, I want to talk in particular about another aspect, which is the American impact on the flooding on the Canadian side. The Nooksack River runs in the U.S. Just like the Sumas River, it

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breached its dikes during the floods in November. By way of reference, north is downhill, and that water ran into Canada.

Canadians have said, “Good neighbours don't flood their neighbour's property”, and Americans have said, “Well, good neighbours don't actually block the natural flow of the water”, and that is the natural flow. One American official is quoted in the Vancouver Sun as saying, “You're not going to argue against the lay of the land. Sumas Prairie is a lot lower than Everson” on the American side, and that is absolutely true. Sumas Prairie on the Canadian side used to be Sumas Lake until about 100 years ago. Pioneers decided to build a dike around it. They cut in canals, put in pumping stations and pumped Sumas Lake dry. It has become very productive farmland now.

Fixing the Canadian side is going to be the easy part. That is roughly \$1 billion. Fixing the American side is going to be much harder from an engineering perspective, but also from an international relations perspective. Canadians are hoping that the Americans will improve the dikes and the levies on the Nooksack River, but there is, of course, a downstream risk for the Americans with that. The Americans prefer a natural floodway northwards across the Canadian side of Sumas Prairie to the Fraser River. They are already buying up farmland for that. If that happens, it will have a devastating impact on the Canadian side. There is a lot of very densely populated and very productive farmland at risk here.

My question to the government is this. What is the government doing in negotiating with the U.S. to come up with a sensible solution to what looks to be a very serious international impasse?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in response to the hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove, I will start by saying that our thoughts remain with the families of those who have lost loved ones and all those affected by the floods, landslides and extreme weather conditions in British Columbia last November. Our government recognizes that this was a flooding event of extraordinary scale and scope. While the full causes of the event have yet to be determined, the Insurance Bureau of Canada has estimated the insured damages to be at least \$550 million, and we know that climate change is making these kinds of events more frequent and more severe than ever before.

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The President of the Queen's Privy Council and Minister for Emergency Preparedness travelled to the province earlier this month to survey the rebuilding progress in some of the most severely affected regions, including Merritt and Abbotsford, and spoke directly to those whose homes have been impacted. The minister saw that the people of British Columbia are working hard to rebuild their lives. However, we agree with our hon. colleague that there is much more work to be done, not only to build back from this event, but to create more resiliency in our infrastructure and communities to mitigate the impacts of future disasters. We have made a commitment to British Columbia and those impacted by these floods that our government will be there for them during the rebuild.

That is why our government has formed a joint committee with British Columbia to work alongside indigenous leadership on immediate and ongoing support. Through this committee, we also discuss how we can enhance climate adaptation and response measures to better prepare communities for future events. Improving infrastructure resiliency was one of the top priorities the committee set out during its first meeting in December.

The disaster financial assistance arrangements program, also known as DFAA, remains a key component of how the federal offers financial support to the provinces in the aftermath of these kinds of events. To speak to the effectiveness of the program, through the DFAA the federal government has paid out over \$6 billion in postdisaster assistance to provincial and territorial governments since 1970. As I have previously confirmed to the House, the Government of British Columbia has submitted an initial request for support under the DFAA for November's flooding, and our officials are working together with their provincial counterparts to move this request forward.

As we continue to work with the province on rebuilding from this disaster, we also continue to work on a number of measures to better prepare for and respond to weather-related events of all kinds. In 2019, we collaborated with federal, provincial and territorial partners, indigenous communities and municipalities to develop the emergency management strategy for Canada. This strategy sets out common priorities and areas for action when it comes to helping Canadians and their communities better predict, prepare for and respond to natural disasters.

Through budget 2021, our government has allocated funding to complete flood maps for high-risk areas in collaboration with the provinces and territories. Budget 2021 also provided an additional \$1.4 billion in funding to expand Infrastructure Canada's disaster mitigation and adaptation fund and to support projects such as wildlife mitigation activities, rehabilitation of stormwater systems and restoration of wetlands and shorelines. Finally, several ministers have been mandated to collaborate to develop a national climate change adaptation strategy and invest in reducing the impact of climate-related disasters, including flooding.

I thank the member for his advocacy on this issue on behalf of his constituents, and I look forward to working with him as we develop solutions to better protect his communities and the rest of British Columbia.

• (1845)

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, of course, we in the Fraser Valley are grateful for support from the federal government in funding repairs and enhancing infrastructure to adapt to climate change. However, my real question today is this: What is the state of negotiations with our American counterparts regarding the Nooksack River specifically, which drains Mount Baker and the North Cascade Mountains? I ask because we cannot solve the problem on our own. Fixing the Canadian side is the easy part; we know exactly what needs to be done. It is just going to require money and a lot of energy. I want to know what our relationship is with the United States on that matter.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, as the member opposite knows, we of course work very closely with our American partners. In this instance, it is important that we also work very closely with the Province of British Columbia. As I mentioned, we have formed a joint committee with the province to work alongside indigenous leadership on immediate and ongoing support and to better understand the future steps that need to be taken in terms of adaptation, from a climate change perspective, and in terms of infrastructure resiliency. That would also involve talking about cross-border issues, and I am sure, with the help of the member opposite and working with our colleagues in British Columbia, we will be able to come up with solutions that work best for all our communities.

COVID-19 ECONOMIC MEASURES

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am rising this evening to follow up on a question that I asked at the end of last year about the government's treatment of some of the most financially vulnerable during the pandemic, including many seniors. Since then, we have gone through the omicron wave of COVID-19, and a couple of things stand out about that wave in particular.

The first is that I think it was a wave where people were, relatively speaking, less concerned about the effects on their personal health. That is not true for everyone, but it is true for many who noted that omicron, we are told, had less severe symptoms for many people who got it than those who got one of the preceding variants of COVID-19. Also, frankly, there was very widespread uptake of the vaccine by the time omicron got here, which had not been true for previous iterations of COVID-19.

Overall, for many people, it was a wave that felt less threatening from a personal health point of view, although there were still many people who found themselves in hospital, many people who were seriously ill in hospital and many people who were concerned about access to medical services for things other than COVID. They may not have been as worried about COVID getting them very sick, but they were still concerned about access to medical resources in the event that they were sick or injured from something else.

It was a very disruptive wave, and there was a lot of fear and anxiety on the financial side that we had not quite experienced with the other wave. This was largely because it was the first big wave of COVID since the government had chosen to first drastically reduce the amount of CRB payments by 40%, from \$2,000 a month to \$1,200 a month, and because the Liberals ultimately did away with the CRB program altogether post-election and replaced it with programs that were much more difficult to access. It was the first time that a lot of Canadians really did not have robust financial support to fall back on when the economic disruption of omicron struck.

I raise that because many Canadians are still contending with those very difficult economic circumstances. There are seniors experiencing that. New Democrats fought very hard in the fall alongside people in civil society and many seniors' advocacy groups to make sure that those seniors who were being punished by having the CRB, which they rightly received according to the rules, clawed back through their GIS. They were being evicted from their homes and released into destitution.

We finally succeeded in getting the government to try and correct that. That was a good thing. We are hoping that the assistance is going to arrive in the weeks to come, very shortly in April, but we are thinking about seniors who are still facing a lot of cost challenges, particularly those seniors between the ages of 65 and 75 who are not going to see the increase in the old age supplement that other seniors are seeing. We in the NDP feel that there is a fundamental unfairness there to be creating two tiers of seniors, and I want to ask the government if it will finally decide to get rid of the two-tier senior model and have a uniform increase for the old age supplement that would apply to all seniors.

• (1850)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think all of us agree that, during the pandemic, so many of our most vulnerable Canadians and constituents were severely impacted and, of course, seniors are at the top of that list in terms of the challenges that they faced. However, contrary to what my colleague is suggesting, the financial support needed by more vulnerable Canadians remains available and has been there from the start of the pandemic. From the onset of the pandemic, the Government of Canada has been implementing measures to help those who need it most.

Today I am going to focus on an additional program available to provide temporary income support for the most vulnerable in Canada. This additional support came through Bill C-2, which we tabled in December 2021 and was promptly passed, thanks in large measure to the NDP. This bill enabled us to provide benefits to Canadian workers whose employment was impacted by COVID-19 in designated lockdown regions. In light of the omicron surge, Bill C-2 proved to be very forward-looking. Among other things, the bill introduced the new Canada worker lockdown benefit. It also extended the weeks available for the Canada recovery sickness benefit and the Canada recovery caregiving benefit.

I am not going to go into too much detail, but I will briefly explain what the new Canada worker lockdown benefit is. The benefit provides income support of \$300 per week through to May 7, 2022,

to eligible workers who are directly affected by a public health lockdown order related to COVID-19 in their respective region. Eligible workers can apply within 60 days of the lockdown in their designated region to receive the benefit retroactive to October 24, 2021. In December 2021, in response to public health restrictions brought about by the omicron variant, we temporarily expanded the Canada worker lockdown benefit definitions so that more workers would be eligible. This temporary definition ended on March 12, 2022.

My colleague's question implies that the government is using financially vulnerable people as the basis for economic recovery and that assertion is false. The truth is that some beneficiaries received overpayments because of, for example, the Canada emergency response benefit advance payment. We are in the process of identifying those overpayments, and we will proceed with recovering them. By the way, flexible repayment options are available to prevent undue hardship for recipients.

Canadians are at the very heart of every decision this government makes and, yes, financial support is there for more vulnerable Canadians.

• (1855)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, there are a few things to correct. New Democrats actually opposed Bill C-2, and we did it because we did not feel that the financial support was going to be adequate. We felt we should heed the advice of many public health officials that new waves of COVID were going to come, and that turned out to be true. In fact, the government had to modify the conditions of the program just days after Bill C-2 passed because it was already clearly inadequate to the task of addressing the omicron wave.

What is also going to be inadequate is having no meaningful increase in the OAS for seniors aged 65 to 74, which is why I will ask again if the government will change its tune and apply the OAS increase to all seniors, rather than only those aged 75 and above.

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Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Madam Speaker, we are proud of our track record in terms of supporting seniors. One of the first things that we did for seniors was to restore the age of eligibility of OAS back to 65 from 67. We enhanced CPP. We raised the GIS for single seniors. We introduced the special tax repayment for those who receive OAS and GIS. We invested half a billion dollars for seniors' essential services and supplies during the pandemic, and we provided a one-time \$500 payment to seniors 75 and older. Of course, this year we are increasing OAS by 10%.

We have been there for seniors before the pandemic. We were there for seniors during the pandemic, and we continue to be there

for seniors. We recognize that they are some of the most vulnerable Canadians in our society.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:57 p.m.)

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