



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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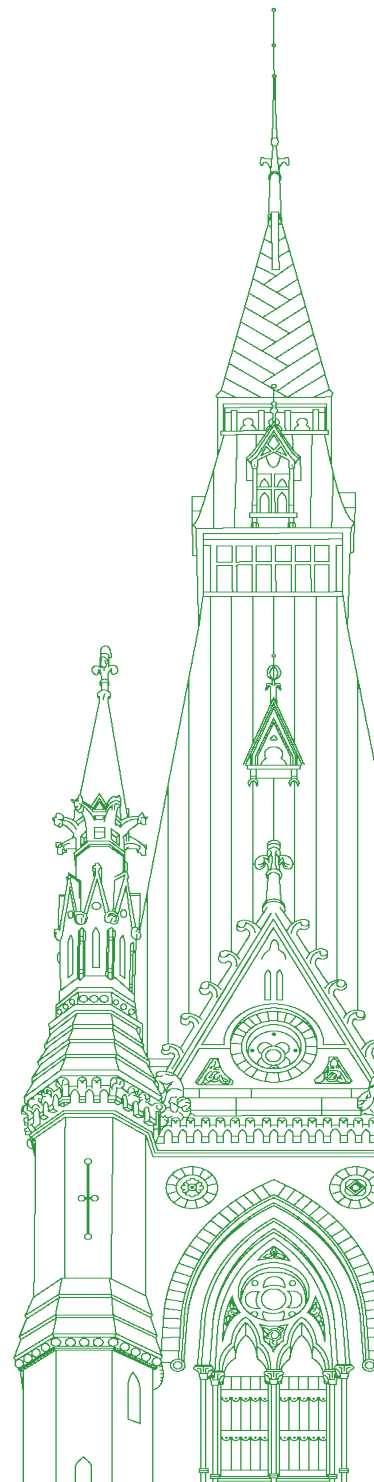
House of Commons Debates

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Tuesday, May 3, 2022

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 3, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1000)

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

FIGHTING AGAINST FORCED LABOUR AND CHILD LABOUR IN SUPPLY CHAINS ACT

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): moved that Bill S-211, An Act to enact the Fighting Against Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act and to amend the Customs Tariff, be read the first time.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of Bill S-211, sponsored by Senator Julie Miville-Dechéne. The bill has been expeditiously passed by our colleagues in the other place, and I hope the House will do the same. It would require companies of a certain size to disclose that they have examined their supply chains and certified to the Government of Canada that they are free of slavery. This was part of both the Liberal and Conservative Party platforms.

I want to thank the senator for her hard work, and particularly Jérôme Asselin-Lussier, my friend from Thunder Bay—Rainy River for his support and my fellow co-chairs of the all-party parliamentary group to end modern slavery and human trafficking.

This may come as a shock, but there are many more people in slavery now than there were at the height of the Atlantic slave trade. About 40 million people are enslaved, and about 1,200 companies in Canada import goods that are infected by slave labour. Canadians pride themselves, as a people, on being in a country that defends human rights. I think they would be upset to know that we are the unwitting consumers of those products.

I therefore look forward to working with all colleagues to move this bill forward and turn it from a bill into a law.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

* * *

MURDERED AND MISSING INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion. I move:

That a take-note debate on murdered and missing indigenous women and girls be held on Wednesday, May 4, 2022, pursuant to Standing Order 53.1, and that, notwithstanding any standing order, special order, or usual practice of the House: (a) members rising to speak during the debate may indicate to the Chair that they will be dividing their time with another member; (b) the time provided for the debate be extended beyond four hours, as needed, to include a minimum of 12 periods of 20 minutes each; and (c) no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

● (1005)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC) moved that the third report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, presented on Monday, February 28, 2022, be concurred in.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House to speak on behalf of the hard-working people of South Shore—St. Margarets, including over 7,000 fishermen. I rise to speak in response to the concurrence motion before us in consideration of the third report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

Routine Proceedings

This report, when originally tabled in Parliament in the first session of the 42nd Parliament in June 2019, was entitled “Aquatic Invasive Species: A National Priority”. It is very good reading if members have not had a chance to read it. I hope all members have. This excellent unanimous report has been ignored by the government and that is why we are debating it today.

Like all of its other virtue-signalling initiatives, the government claims that it is protecting the biodiversity and health of our oceans and freshwater resources. The Liberals talk the talk, but they do not seem to ever deliver. The government has not developed a single response to this study, so let us take a look at the report and the government's record on these issues.

Aquatic invasive species, for those who do not know, are invertebrates or plant species that have been introduced into an aquatic environment outside their natural range. In other words, they have come here to Canada from some other part of the world and are not natural to our oceans or fresh waters. Once introduced, aquatic invasive species populations can grow, and can grow quite quickly, because they do not have any natural environmental predators or things that would prevent them from multiplying. As a result, they can out-compete our native plant species and our native freshwater species, consuming resources and taking over the biodiversity of waterways.

They can even alter habitats and make them inhospitable for our native species. That is particularly concerning when we have a number of species at risk in both freshwater and saltwater bodies. They are put in further jeopardy by the introduction of aquatic invasive species, plants and invertebrates.

The Minister of Fisheries has the responsibility under the Fisheries Act to protect fish and fish habitats. Canada has also signed international agreements on aquatic invasive species, including the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, signed by the Brian Mulroney government in 1992, when I was a senior adviser to the then foreign minister, the Hon. Barbara McDougall, who was the member of Parliament for St. Paul's. It was also signed by the then environment minister, the Hon. Jean Charest. John Crosbie was Canada's fisheries minister at the time, so there was a very powerful trio of senior ministers committed to this international convention.

In 2019, though, Canada's commissioner of the environment and sustainable development published an audit on the government's performance of the aquatic invasive species area. The audit concluded that DFO “did not determine which aquatic invasive species and pathways posed the greatest risks to Canada” in our system, and “did not systematically collect or maintain information to track [them].”

What has happened since then? The former minister of fisheries was defeated in South Shore—St. Margarets in 2021, and the current suburban Vancouver Minister of Fisheries, with no commercial fisheries in her riding, has done absolutely nothing to respond to the recommendations of the commissioner of the environment and those of the standing committee.

As for the government's claims, we are finding at the fisheries committee somewhat fake claims of listening to the science and

DFO. The commissioner of the environment stated that when DFO “developed the 2015 Aquatic Invasive Species Regulations, it did not always use science-based information”. I know that would probably be a shock to many members, but those who have studied the area know that DFO was using science less and less in its decision-making. Why would we expect the government to actually live up to its promises when it never has in the past?

• (1010)

Another example is the legal partnership with the United States to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species in the Great Lakes, among other important priorities. Through the bilateral treaty with the United States, both countries are financially obligated to support the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. Canada provides 31% of the funds for the commission, primarily aimed at dealing with sea lampreys and zebra mussels, and the United States provides 69%. Sea lampreys, in case members do not know, are an invasive species in the Great Lakes. They are essentially little eel-like vampires that latch onto a fish and drain the blood out of the fish and kill it.

The Liberal government budget in 2017, four years ago, allocated \$43.8 million over five years, supposedly of new money, to support the Great Lakes Fishery Commission in the fight against sea lampreys. While DFO may have received the money, DFO must have diverted it to something else. I am sure when finance puts it in the budget, the money goes to DFO, but DFO ended up paying only half the annual cost for invasive species in the Great Lakes. The U.S. has had to pick up the tab for the remainder. However, the U.S. is fed up with being DFO's patsy, and the deadbeat government is not paying its international bills for the program. It got so bad that the U.S. Congress this year threatened to not only withhold payment of this year's allocation, but also not pay the Canadian side's bills. This means sea-lamprey prevention would disappear this year and the sea lampreys would become a greater threat to our fisheries in the Great Lakes.

I raised this two months with Minister of Fisheries in committee to try to get her to commit to paying the bills. When I told the minister the best way to deal with sea lampreys was to pay our bills, she sort of mumbled “yes”. Now in 2022 we hear, “It's déjà vu all over again”, to quote Yogi Berra. The government, under pressure from the official opposition, has now committed \$48 million over the next five years to support the sea lamprey program and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. However, what we know from the past is that—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): One moment please. I am not sure if I missed the hon. member saying that he was splitting his time. I am not sure if I heard it, so I want to give an opportunity to the member to remind me if he did.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Rick Perkins: I appreciate that, Madam Speaker. We are splitting the time.

An hon. member: With whom?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It does not matter. As long as the hon. member says that he is splitting his time, that is fine.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, this is the third consecutive full sitting day when the Conservatives have botched up Routine Proceedings and stopped members of Parliament from presenting petitions, and they do not even have their story straight. They do not even know who is speaking. What kind of chaos are we seeing from the Conservative—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: That's not a point of order.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I remind the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan that he is not the Speaker and he should wait until I respond.

I want to remind the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby that it is not the first time other members have forgotten and not stated it. I just indicated that I did not hear him. I was of the understanding that he was going to split his time, so I wanted to double-check to see if it was me who misunderstood.

Everything is in order. I will allow the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets to continue his speech.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, the Liberal deputy House leader from the NDP should know that we do not have to name the other individual when we are splitting our time; he should read the rules.

The lack of commitment by both the NDP and the Liberal government is seen again in Miramichi, where the government does not put its money where its mouth is. The rapid population increase of striped bass has raised concerns over the ecosystem and balances, further straining the wild Atlantic salmon. The fisheries committee issued a report on this destructive situation in May 2019, and the government has yet to implement any of that either.

If that is not enough on the Atlantic salmon, there is pressure in the headwaters of Miramichi Lake, where DFO actually approved a smallmouth bass invasive species program, but last year stood by and did not enforce its own permits when a few protesters went out on the water, so the commitment of the government is pretty slim when it comes to actually backing up its words with action on invasive species. If the government does not deal with the smallmouth bass problem in the head of the Miramichi, we will end up having even more pressure on the diminishing wild Atlantic salmon.

The permits have been issued this summer for that same project in Miramichi Lake on smallmouth bass, and I am hoping the minister will actually do her job this year and ensure that conservation and protection officers of DFO actually enforce the permits and allow this invasive species to be managed in Miramichi Lake. My hope springs eternal, but the record shows that the government will likely do otherwise.

I would urge all members to take a look at the report and read it if they have not. They will understand that across Atlantic Canada, through Ontario, through the Great Lakes, in the Prairies with the zebra mussels, and in British Columbia we have a massive issue of invasive species, and the Liberal government of today is not doing anything to implement the recommendations of either the standing committee reports or the environment commissioner.

• (1015)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when I was in opposition, we often raised the issue of the experimental lakes project, which was in the whole Manitoba and Ontario area, and this is an area in which Stephen Harper actually cut, much to our dismay, given the importance of the fresh water.

Why does the member believe the then prime minister cut support funding that would have dealt with the issues the member is talking about? I can remember producing petitions on the issue, and I am wondering if he can provide his thoughts on that. While he is doing that, could he explain why the Conservative Party continues to want to play games and prevent debate on Bill C-8?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, I know the member for Winnipeg North cares about the invasive species in Manitoba; anyone who is a responsible member of Parliament will care about the destruction of our natural biodiversity.

Obviously, even though I am seasoned, I was not actually here during those days. I can only look at the record of the current government for the last seven years of promising to bring in money to implement invasive species programs, actually allocating it in the budgets, as it did in 2017, giving it to DFO, and then DFO using only half of it for invasive species and mysteriously putting the rest off somewhere else.

After we pressured the government to actually pay the bills and not be a deadbeat, it finally put it, again, in this year's budget. It is almost the same amount of money: Last time it was \$43.8 million, and this time it is \$48 million. It is almost the same wording, saying it is going to invasive species, but again, as I said in my speech, I doubt the government will live up to that. DFO will find some other purpose for it. Perhaps it will go to the 178% in senior executive growth in six years in DFO rather than invasive species.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member has not really responded to the question of the dismal decade of the Harper government and the massive cuts, including cuts in programs that would have combatted invasive species.

Routine Proceedings

My broader concern is not with the member's speech but with the systematic obstruction of the Conservative Party. We have had three routine proceedings in a row in full sitting days when the Conservatives have blocked the ability of members of Parliament to present petitions on behalf of our constituents, and on two of those three days they presented the same report twice, even though they know that report will be discussed next week.

Why are the Conservatives blocking Bill C-8 so systematically when teachers and farmers need access to those tax credits?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from the deputy House leader for the Liberal-NDP government.

The answer to that question is this: What is obstructionist is Motion No. 11, which takes away democracy in the House, threatens prorogation at any time, and removes quorum from the standard, 400 years since Magna Carta, of parliamentary democracy. Those are the things that are undemocratic.

It is quite shocking, actually, that the party of Tommy Douglas, of Ed Broadbent and of Jack Layton has sided up to the government to reduce democracy in this country in a coalition government, ignoring the will of the Canadian public, who only voted for a minority government and who did not vote for the socialist agenda to be implemented by the Liberal government.

• (1020)

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, given that Canada signed a treaty in 1956, and given that we have had an awfully hard time living up to the terms of that treaty, and given that the government budgeted funds to fully live up to the treaty in 2017, would the member opine whether transferring the responsibility for that treaty from DFO back to GAC, from whence it came, would help the government's ability to honour our own treaty?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, absolutely, the fiduciary responsibility for the Great Lakes Fishery Commission should go, like all other fiduciary responsibility in international agreements, back to Foreign Affairs and allow DFO to manage the policy element of it. Of course, during all the years when the Harper government was in DFO, we actually paid all our bills for the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, unlike the NDP-Liberal coalition, which believes that we should take the bill that we get from our neighbours in a treaty, throw it in the garbage and let them carry the weight.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today in the House to speak to the concurrence motion on the report from the standing committee, "Aquatic Invasive Species: A National Priority". It is a great honour to speak to this motion today, as I am the member who proposed that this study be done at the committee, a number of years ago now. This was initially presented in previous Parliaments, and government has yet to respond properly to this report from the committee.

The testimony that we heard during this study was compelling. The results and recommendations that came in this report were unanimous from all members of the committee: Liberal members, NDP members, Bloc members, everyone who was on the committee. Actually, at the time the report was done, there may not have

been a Bloc member on the committee. I would have to check. However, it was a unanimous report from the committee.

Many of the recommendations in the report echoed the report from the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development. That audit of the government's work on aquatic invasive species condemned the lack of work within the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, within the government, and its reactions to the risks of aquatic invasive species becoming established in Canada, especially in my province of British Columbia.

In 2004, the Canadian action plan to address aquatic invasive species estimated the combined economic losses directly associated with 16 aquatic invasive species to be \$5.5 billion. A U.S. report estimated the annual economic burden of invasive species in America to be \$137 billion.

Last year, the journal *Nature* published a report that estimated that invasive species have inflicted costs of at least \$22.8 billion in Canada over the past 50 years. The same report found that zebra and quagga mussels have had a cost of \$409 million in the Great Lakes alone since their introduction in the late 1980s.

A 2013 study by the Okanagan Basin Water Board estimated that the introduction of zebra and quagga mussels would cost the Okanagan region \$43 million per year just to manage. That does not speak to eradication or any other measures; that is just to manage the species should they become established.

Zebra and quagga mussels continue to proliferate across North America. Since I was elected, I have consistently pushed the government to follow through on implementing and enforcing the aquatic invasive species regulations delivered by the previous Conservative government in 2015.

Zebra and quagga mussels have not been detected in my home province of British Columbia in the natural environment, but they have been detected in vessels, boats coming into the region, by the provincial inspection program that takes place every year. In its annual report, 244 watercraft coming into the province last year were identified as high-risk. Eighteen were issued quarantine periods and 153 decontaminations were ordered. Of the watercraft that came in and were confirmed to have invasive mussels on board, seven were from Ontario, two from Manitoba, one from Quebec, one from Colorado, one from Illinois, one from Michigan, one from Minnesota, one from Missouri, one from Ohio and one from Wisconsin. This shows the incredible risk that is out there if we do not take steps to prevent the establishment of aquatic invasive species where we have pristine lakes and waters.

My riding of North Okanagan—Shuswap spans the boundaries of two different watersheds, two massive watersheds. The Shuswap and some of the headwaters of the Fraser River system are known as one of the best salmon habitat areas in the world.

• (1025)

The North Okanagan part of the region is part of the Columbia River system where sockeye salmon have now been re-established in the Okanagan system. It was a joint project through the Okanagan Nations Alliance and first nations to establish a hatchery in the South Okanagan, which is now bringing salmon back into areas where they have not been for decades.

Going back to the two 2019 reports, the commissioner's report and the report from the committee, they highlighted the fact that the cost of preventing the spread of AIS, aquatic invasive species, is much less than the cost of trying to manage or eradicate them afterward. The only proven way to rid a body of water of zebra and quagga mussels is to drain it, and this is not a viable option for the Okanagan or Shuswap systems. They are simply too massive and there are too many other consequences. It is simply not physically possible. These lakes make this prevention that much more essential, and at this time the stakes and threats of the invasion of zebra and quagga mussels in B.C. have never been higher.

More and more visitors from across North America are visiting my area in B.C. with their watercraft. The Province of British Columbia operates watercraft inspection stations on B.C. borders as part of its invasive mussel defence program and last year, as I mentioned, 17 mussel-fouled watercraft were found coming into the province, risking the spread of zebra and quagga mussels into B.C. waters. The province issued 153 decontamination orders, as I mentioned, and that was only from April 1 to October 24. We know that boats cross the border year-round. There is a higher percentage during those summer months, but it does happen year-round and those inspection stations are not open year-round.

The provincial program is perhaps the most important program for preventing zebra and quagga mussels from entering B.C., but the federal government refuses to provide the support required to expand inspection station hours to 24 hours a day and for a longer period covering the boating season. A single watercraft, one float plane or a pair of hip waders carrying invasive mussels could cause ecological and economic catastrophes across B.C. and western Canada. The government continues to drag its feet when it should have been acting to protect our waters and ecology.

I hope that all members from all parties will recognize the acute threats of aquatic invasive species. This is not something we can continue to kick the can further down the road on. The economic consequences, and the ecological consequences, of simply turning a blind eye to this risk are far too great for the residents and the visitors to my riding of North Okanagan—Shuswap. This is so important for the entire Okanagan, Shuswap, British Columbia and all of Canada.

We have recently noted the federal government put some funding into the national parks program: one small portion of the area that has potential for the risk of infestations and the economic and ecological consequences that are going to fall out of that. We have recently seen where invasive clams were found in Shuswap Lake,

near my home. I do not live on the water, but in the lake in my area those invasive clams have been found. To my knowledge, there has yet to be a plan to deal with those invasive clams there. This is now two years down the road since the first discovery of those clams.

Routine Proceedings

Should the same thing happen with zebra or quagga mussels, they are considered to be much more detrimental to the environment. I do not believe the government has done anything to provide a plan to move forward on dealing with the threat of aquatic invasive species. I encourage all members, as we continue the debate on this important issue, to support concurrence on this motion.

• (1030)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are supposed to be debating Bill C-8 at this time. Members will be familiar with it because it is the 2021 fall economic update that was to implement a number of measures such as rapid tests, supporting small businesses and supporting northern rural residents. We have passed the federal budget now and the Conservatives are still filibustering Bill C-8: the fall economic statement from last year.

Is there something in that legislation that the member or the Conservative Party can identify that is so fundamentally wrong that they want to continue to play the games they are playing, by introducing motions for concurrence on reports in order not to debate Bill C-8?

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, it is interesting that this report went to basically the same government members back in 2019. It is now 2022, and the government still has not responded to this report.

Years after it was presented to the government, the government has failed to respond. There have been years of inaction by a government that fails to recognize the threats being posed to our ecology, our economies and our salmon species that the government continues to ignore.

We are using this opportunity to raise the importance of this issue.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy listening to my colleague. I know that his interest comes from a sincere place; there is no doubt. I am glad that the Conservatives are coming around, because under the Harper government, we saw a gutting of environmental funding, including action to fight invasive species.

Routine Proceedings

We have the Conservatives, I guess, doing a *mea culpa* today. My greater concern, of course, is that the NDP will be proposing a concurrence debate in the evening in the coming days. We hope that the Conservatives will support it on this important issue, but today we are supposed to be voting on Bill C-8, and Bill C-8 provides supports to teachers and farmers in his riding.

The Conservatives have blocked, systematically, any debate and any passage on Bill C-8, which just does not make sense, when all of us are getting our teachers and farmers saying, “Why is Bill C-8 being held up?”

My question is very simple. The Conservatives have now blocked three consecutive routine proceedings. They have blocked petitions from being presented.

Will the Conservatives agree to the NDP's proposal for an evening concurrence debate around this issue so that we can have this full discussion without blocking needed legislation?

• (1035)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, it is interesting that this question comes from the House leader of the NDP. I would ask him in return why his party has decided to go along with the government that has railroaded the official opposition voice in the House through Motion No. 11? The government has pushed it forward and the NDP have supported it.

It basically quashes the ability for the opposition parties to hold the government accountable on the measures that it is taking and the scandals that continue to develop. It continues to block our official opposition investigations into the ethics breaches of the finance minister and the SNC-Lavalin issue. It continues on and on. Every time we get close to finding the answers, the government, and the NDP supporting it, shut us down.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, most of the fish in my riding actually live in glass tanks, but I appreciate the great work that the member and his colleagues on the committee do. I think that it is important to clarify, and the member can follow up on this, that some members have said that concurrence debates eliminate the existence of the opportunity to table petitions, when in fact that is not true.

After a concurrence debate, we proceed with petitions unless the government takes the very draconian effort to move to the orders of the day, and it is government motions to proceed to the orders of the day, not opposition concurrence motions that actually prevent members from tabling petitions.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, certainly we in the opposition are here to hold the government accountable, not to block the process of what is taking place in the House in the way the government has worked in cahoots with the NDP to block our voice here.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to address two quick points before I have something more solid to say on this.

The first point is that it takes a great deal of courage, as a Conservative, to stand and speak about invasive species in our lakes. It was Stephen Harper, and I want members to remember the Experi-

mental Lakes Area, who actually cut that back. I remember standing in opposition criticizing the then prime minister.

We had over 50 pristine lakes. The science being administered in that area, and the research, was phenomenal. It was recognized around the world as dealing with substantial issues in order to protect freshwater lakes. The Conservatives now have the courage to move a concurrence motion on that issue, at least in part, on a government that is invested in protecting our oceans.

Just the other day, I talked about the importance of our fishing industry. It was a special focus on Atlantic Canada in particular. We have many members from Atlantic Canada and B.C. who are very passionate about conservation and protecting our waters. Regarding freshwater lakes, I made reference to Lake Winnipeg.

We understand the issue, and that is the reason we have put into place percentages of protected areas where we have invested tens of millions of dollars. It is definitely a lot more than the former prime minister and former administration put forward. The Conservatives then try to give the false impression that, as a government, we are not stepping up to the plate. I will leave it at that on that particular point.

The second point I want to raise is one of gamesmanship. The question I put forward to opposition members was in relation to Bill C-8. Members of the House, and those following the never-ending debate on Bill C-8, have witnessed an official opposition going out of its way to prevent that legislation from passing. It has brought in a number of concurrence reports in order to prevent the debate. The one I really like is when the Conservatives move to adjourn the House. They want to quit: to stop the House and go home in order to prevent debate on Bill C-8.

We saw the Conservatives' behaviour in the last couple of days in opposition to allowing for more debate. If we did not bring in the motion yesterday, we would not have had the two hours of debate we had late last night, even though the Conservatives were hollering, screaming and crying that they did not want to sit late in the evening.

I think the Conservatives need to come to the realization that there are members in the House, whether Liberals or New Democrats, who have seen the value in allowing for a legislative agenda and allowing not only debate to occur but the ultimate passage of legislation. The Conservative Party is determined to continue to play the game.

That is why I find myself in a position, as I have in the past, to try to get the Conservative Party to refocus on the issue of serving Canadians through passing some of the Liberal government's legislative agenda. Bill C-8 needs to be debated and it needs to be passed. Bill C-8 was brought in many months ago. It is a reflection of the fall economic statement of last year—

• (1040)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I understand that the official opposition is really anxious to ask questions and comments. They will have 10 minutes, so I would ask them not to yell out their comments, thoughts or questions until it is time for that.

I would ask the hon. member for Edmonton West to write his questions and comments down. I know he has his pen and paper getting ready for it, but I would ask him to stop thinking out loud.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, as I was saying, if we look at the fall economic statement of last year, as we are approaching summer of 2022, we have—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman is rising on a point of order.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, we are discussing a serious report right now from the fisheries committee. Unfortunately, the comments of the parliamentary secretary, the member for Winnipeg North, are neither relevant nor do they pertain to the report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that there is latitude during discussions and within speeches before the House. However, when hon. members are delivering their speech, they must ensure at all times that they reference the bill during their speech and the content of the bill if they so wish.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, just in case the member was not listening to all of it, I said there were only two points.

The first point I emphasized was the issue of the IISD Experimental Lakes Area. The member was a parliamentary secretary under Stephen Harper, so I can understand why he might have selective hearing on that aspect of it. That definitely falls within the jurisdiction of the legislation.

I am also pointing out how the motion we have before us is meant to continue playing the ongoing game of avoiding the passage of Bill C-8, which is causing me to have to move the motion I am about to move. This way people will understand why I am feeling obligated to move the motion.

There is no disrespect for the issue being raised today. Unlike the Conservative Party, the government genuinely believes in taking action to deal with invasive species. We have shown that in budgetary measures, and I would even suggest in legislative measures, with some of the protection legislation we have brought in for our environment.

Having said that, I am feeling obligated to move the following motion because it is time to finish the debate so we can have a vote on Bill C-8. Remember that we have already passed budget 2022-23. All we are saying is that it is time we support our teachers, farmers and business people, along with the many people who are dependent on Bill C-8. Let us pass the legislation. Let us allow it to come for debate.

I move, seconded by the member for Halifax West:

Routine Proceedings

That the House do now proceed to orders of the day.

• (1045)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, unless the will of the House is to pass it on division, I would ask for a recorded vote.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 72*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Baker	Barron
Battiste	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Cannings	Carr
Casey	Chagger
Chahal	Champagne
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fergus	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Garneau
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns

Routine Proceedings

Joly	Jones	Fast	Ferreri
Jowhari	Julian	Findlay	Fortin
Kayabaga	Kelloway	Gallant	Garon
Khalid	Khera	Gaudreau	Généreux
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk	Genuis	Gill
Kwan	Lalonde	Gladu	Godin
Lambropoulos	Lametti	Goodridge	Gourde
Lamoureux	Lapointe	Gray	Hoback
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Jeneroux	Kelly
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	Kitchen	Kmiec
Lightbound	Long	Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Kurek	Kusie
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)	Lake	Lantsman
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Larouche	Lawrence
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada	Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
Masse	Mathysen	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
May (Cambridge)	McDonald (Avalon)	Lloyd	Lobb
McGuinty	McKay	MacKenzie	Maguire
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod	May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McPherson	Mendès	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
Mendicino	Miao	Melillo	Michaud
Miller	Morrice	Moore	Morantz
Morrissey	Murray	Morrison	Motz
Naqvi	Ng	Muys	Nater
Noormohamed	O'Connell	Normandin	O'Toole
Oliphant	O'Regan	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski	Pauzé	Perkins
Qualtrough	Robillard	Perron	Plamondon
Rodriguez	Rogers	Rayes	Redekopp
Romanado	Sahota	Reid	Rempel Garner
Sajjan	Saks	Richards	Roberts
Samson	Sarai	Rood	Ruff
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke	Savard-Tremblay	Scheer
Serré	Sgro	Schmale	Seebach
Shanahan	Sheehan	Shields	Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Singh	Sorbara	Small	Soroka
Spengemann	Sudds	Steinley	Ste-Marie
Tassi	Taylor Roy	Stewart	Strahl
Thompson	Turnbull	Stubbs	Thériault
Valdez	Van Bynen	Therrien	Thomas
van Koeverden	Vandal	Tochor	Tolmie
Vandenbeld	Virani	Trudel	Uppal
Vuong	Weiler	Van Popta	Vecchio
Wilkinson	Yip	Vidal	Vien
Zahid	Zarrillo	Viersen	Vignola
Zuberi— 181		Villemure	Vis
		Wagantall	Warkentin
		Waugh	Webber
		Williams	Williamson
		Zimmer— 145	

NAYS**Members**

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benzen	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Blanchette-Joncas
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Caputo	Carrie
Chabot	Chambers
Champoux	Chong
Cooper	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
Desbiens	Desilets
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ellis	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.**PAIRED**

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ECONOMIC AND FISCAL UPDATE IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2021

The House resumed from May 2 consideration of the motion that Bill C-8, An Act to implement certain provisions of the economic and fiscal update tabled in Parliament on December 14, 2021 and other measures, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for Hochelaga.

I appreciate the opportunity to take part in today's debate on 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. This bill is about making sure we have the tools we need to protect Canadians.

For two years, Canadians have been grappling with COVID-19. Two years ago, this pandemic triggered the steepest economic contraction in Canada since the Great Depression. At its worst, it cost three million Canadians their jobs as our GDP shrank by 17%.

Today, even in spite of ongoing challenges presented by the pandemic, we are on a strong footing. Canadians have put saving lives first. This has meant one of the lowest mortality rates in the G7. As of March 25, over 85% of Canadians five years and older are fully vaccinated.

The Canadian economy has seen the benefits of prioritizing our health. The Canadian labour market rebounded strongly from the omicron wave in February. We have already more than recovered lost jobs, a healing that took eight months longer than after the much milder 2008 recession. In fact, as of February, we have recovered 112% of the jobs lost during the pandemic period, compared to just 90% in the U.S., and faster than after any other recession. Encouragingly, growth was broad-based, supported by solid underlying fundamentals and an ongoing rebound in sectors hit hardest by the pandemic.

However, even with these encouraging signs, we know that businesses, especially small businesses, continue to need support. That is what Bill C-8 delivers, support where it is needed. Many small businesses continue to feel the impacts of the pandemic. They are playing a critical role by making sure their workers and clients are safe. They understand that proper ventilation makes indoor air healthier and safer, helping reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Many continue to make further improvements to their indoor air quality, to protect their workers and customers. However, they are finding that investing in equipment to improve ventilation can be costly. That is why Bill C-8 is proposing a refundable small business air quality improvement tax credit of 25% on eligible air quality improvement expenses incurred by small businesses. This measure would make it more affordable for them to invest in safer and healthier ventilation and air filtration.

Government Orders

Businesses would receive the credit on eligible expenses incurred between September 1, 2021 and December 31, 2022 relating to the purchase or upgrade of mechanical heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, and the purchase of stand-alone devices designed to filter air using high-efficiency particulate air filters, up to a maximum of \$10,000 per location and \$50,000 in total. That is not just a good deal for businesses; it is a good investment in the health and safety of Canadians.

Our government has delivered significant fiscal policy support to Canadians during this pandemic, with \$8 out of every \$10 spent to fight COVID having been spent by the federal government. This has contributed to a rapid and resilient recovery so far.

The vast majority of the government's recovery plan is targeted towards growth-enhancing and job-creating initiatives such as the Canada emergency business account, which has been one of the key government supports for small businesses throughout the pandemic.

• (1135)

The CEBA program has provided interest-free, partially forgivable loans of up to \$60,000 to small businesses to help recover their operating costs during times when their revenues have been reduced. In total, the CEBA has provided over \$49 billion in support to nearly 900,000 small businesses affected by the pandemic.

In January, our government announced that the repayment deadline for the CEBA loans to qualify for partial loan forgiveness is being extended from December 31, 2022 to December 31, 2023 for all eligible borrowers in good standing. This extension would support short-term economic recovery and offer greater repayment flexibility to small businesses and not-for-profit organizations, many of which are facing continued challenges due to the pandemic.

Repayment on or before the new deadline of December 31, 2023 will result in loan forgiveness of up to one-third of the value of the loans, which means up to \$20,000 in loan forgiveness. Bill C-8 would set a limitation period of six years for debts under the CEBA program to ensure that CEBA loan holders are provided consistent treatment no matter where they live.

The new measures in Bill C-8 would also build on the significant support for businesses that became law with the passage of Bill C-2 in December. Bill C-2 was built on the understanding that with the spread of the omicron variant, public health restrictions had to remain in effect in certain regions across the country to contain its spread, and that many of these restrictions would have an impact on businesses. With Bill C-2, our government made sure that economic support was available to them if and when they needed it.

While lockdowns have now eased across the country, the application period for the local lockdown program remains open to provide wage and rent subsidy support of up to 75% to employers who have had to reduce the capacity of their main business by 50% or more.

Government Orders

To expand access to the program at the height of the recent restrictions, we temporarily lowered the revenue decline threshold for eligibility from 40% to 25%. Expanded eligibility for these wage and rent supports ran from December 19, 2021 through to March 12, 2022.

For businesses facing other pandemic-related losses, support is also available through the tourism and hospitality recovery program and the hardest-hit business recovery program. Many tourism-related businesses in Bonavista—Burin—Trinity were able to take advantage of that support, and I am told many tourism businesses across the entire country were able to take advantage of that support.

By supporting businesses through these challenges, these programs are protecting people's jobs and allowing people to stay connected to their employers. As the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance said, this keeps people strong; it keeps families strong and it keeps businesses strong. That is what we need to keep our economy strong.

In conclusion, like all Canadians, we hope that lockdowns and capacity restrictions will continue to become a thing of the past. We know that Canadians are tired of COVID-19, but the unfortunate reality is that COVID-19 is not quite tired of us. We put supports in place so that public health authorities could make the right, albeit difficult, decisions, knowing that the federal government would be there to support workers, small businesses and other employers in their communities when needed.

• (1140)

That is why Bill C-8 is so important. It would continue to do what is necessary to sustain the recovery and provide help where it is needed, to create jobs and set the stage for strong growth for years to come.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, early on in my hon. colleague's speech he described Bill C-8 as delivering support where it is needed. I am wondering if he could comment on whether he agrees with the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who described this bill as delivering support that was not needed. Would he agree that it is feeding part of our present inflation rate?

Mr. Churence Rogers: Madam Speaker, when many of the programs were put in place and agreed to by most members in this House, they were put in place in response to the emergency created by the pandemic and COVID-19. As a result, many of the programs were rolled out rather efficiently and quickly, creating some challenges. Nevertheless, we need to focus on the fact that these supports, like CEBA, rescued many businesses from failure. Therefore, Bill C-8 will continue to offer the great support that businesses and individuals expect across this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, over the weekend, the Government of Quebec struck a deal with general practitioners and signed an agreement that will, among other things, improve access to first-line health services. The agreement will also create family medicine groups, which will enable 500,000 Quebecers—half of the one million residents who

do not currently have a family doctor—to have access to family practitioners.

On the other side of the House, the Liberals still think that health care was only important during the pandemic, when they sent money to help. The pandemic is more or less behind us now, hopefully, but the needs remain. One million Quebecers do not have a family doctor, and we need money to pay for that. That is what the Quebec government is doing, as it reaches agreements with doctors and manages hospitals.

When will the federal government finally decide to increase health transfers from 22% to 35%, as all provincial governments are calling for?

[English]

Mr. Churence Rogers: Madam Speaker, I share the hon. member's concerns around family doctors, particularly as we hear stories about the loss of family doctors in rural Newfoundland and Labrador and rural Canada. That includes every province in this country. There is no question that there are challenges, but the federal government recently transferred \$2 billion to help with some of the supports that were needed as a result of backlogs in health care in this country.

I understand there are further discussions to be had somewhere in the not-too-distant future about how we can address health care challenges in rural Canada and right across the country, many of which were backlogs created by the emergency that we dealt with, called COVID-19.

• (1145)

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the issues as part of Bill C-8 is the fact that teachers are supposed to be receiving tax credits for items they use in their profession. I know a lot of my constituents have had their taxes held up because of the holding up of this legislation. Maybe the hon. member could talk a little more about that and if he and his constituents share that frustration, because I know mine certainly do.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Madam Speaker, teachers and others are being impacted by our not passing Bill C-8. There are many items in this legislation that impact teachers, farmers and others, and that is why we are here debating Bill C-8 today and why I encourage all members of this House to support this legislation and pass it for the good of all Canadians.

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians have been grappling with COVID-19 for two years now.

The pandemic caused the biggest economic downturn this country has seen since the Great Depression. At the height of the crisis, three million Canadians lost their jobs and our GDP dropped by 17%. The pandemic shook the global economy and was the worst planet-wide public health crisis of our lives.

Today, despite the presence of the omicron variant and subvariants, we are in a good position. We have recovered more jobs than we lost to the COVID-19 recession. We still have work to do, and that is the purpose of Bill C-8, with which we will continue to fight COVID-19 while protecting Canadians' health and safety. I would like to highlight a few important aspects of this bill.

The first thing is ventilation in schools. In my riding alone, several families and parents have expressed concerns about ventilation in schools. This bill proposes measures to protect children by improving ventilation systems. Good ventilation makes indoor air healthier and safer, which helps reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. This is particularly true for schools. The pandemic has not been easy for anyone, but it has been particularly difficult for students and their families, as well as for teachers and school staff. The spread of the virus led to school closures, followed by reopenings and more closures. For many parents, it was difficult to navigate.

Bill C-8 therefore provides for an additional payment of \$100 million to the provinces and territories through the safe return to class fund. These investments would be in addition to the initial \$2-billion envelope of the safe return to class fund. The money would be specifically allocated to ventilation improvement projects in schools, particularly in primary and secondary schools.

Education is of course a provincial and territorial responsibility. The provinces and territories are responsible for ensuring the safety of our children in the classroom, as well as the safety of teachers in the workplace. The provinces and territories could use the money to work on the projects they deem important. We are sending the message that the federal government is there to support them in their efforts to make their schools safer.

That said, the fight against COVID-19 must take place on multiple fronts, and this means we also need to help improve ventilation in commercial buildings in order to reduce the risk of the virus spreading in those settings. However, we know that making such upgrades can be very costly. Bill C-8 proposes measures to help businesses improve their ventilation and air quality systems. With this bill, we are proposing a 25% refundable tax credit for eligible small business expenditures to improve air quality. Since the beginning of the pandemic, our government has supported the provinces and territories, and we will continue to do so.

Another aspect of Bill C-8 is of particular interest to me. It has to do with housing. In the economic update and in budget 2022, which we just tabled, we want to tackle the housing crisis with an ambitious financial plan. For Hochelaga and Montreal east, housing is one of the biggest challenges. The increase in the cost of housing and the shortage of inventory are putting more and more financial pressure on families. A family should not have to choose between food and housing. This is a basic right, a human right.

Bill C-8, just like our recent budget, proposes tangible solutions to address housing affordability, as well as the right and the access to home ownership. It proposes bringing in a 1% tax on underused housing to directly support those who are struggling with rent increases and to address the shortage of housing. For many Quebecers, it is almost impossible to find housing.

Government Orders

Also, in our recent budget, we want to double the construction of housing over the next 10 years and launch a new housing accelerator fund totalling \$4 billion over five years.

I strongly believe in the co-operative model. In my life, I have had the chance to help create three housing co-ops in Montreal. The co-operative model is a model of solidarity and shared ownership. I am very pleased to see that the recent budget proposes allocating \$1.5 billion to this housing model.

● (1150)

For us to tackle the housing crisis and problems with access to ownership, we need a series of measures like the ones I just listed. We must also ensure that housing is a right and then pass legislation to that effect. That is why our government also wants to create an ownership registry in collaboration with the provinces and territories to curb foreign investment.

Today, there is a real generational gap for young families and young workers. It has become almost impossible to buy a property. To solve this problem in a serious and permanent manner, we must increase the supply of housing, which would make it more affordable and accessible. Bill C-8 seeks to remedy this situation.

This bill also includes concrete measures to protect Canadians' health and to tackle the housing crisis. We want to make the investments that are needed. The government has been there from the start of the pandemic and we will continue to be there, not just to support the provinces and territories in the fight against the pandemic, but also to provide socio-economic support, primarily through access to housing.

After two years, we are still in a health crisis, which has made life more precarious for the most vulnerable. It is a real challenge for businesses, community organizations, all Quebecers and the people in my riding.

I believe that all the members here should support Bill C-8 to provide real support to people who really need it.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent speech. I know that she is quite involved in the housing file, as am I. She mentioned this in her speech. Housing is a problem in her riding, much like it is in my riding of Longueuil. It is a problem all across Quebec.

Government Orders

There are some good measures in the budget, especially when it comes to housing. I am talking about measures such as the tax-free first home savings account and the first-time home buyers' tax credit, which will help boost demand. The budget also allocates money to programs that support affordability, such as the rental construction financing initiative and the national housing co-investment fund. However, over the years we have seen that this does not always create affordable housing.

Would it not be better to focus on the programs that work really well, such as the rapid housing initiative? Organizations really like this program, but the problem is that it is underfunded. Would it not have been better to focus on that program to help improve access to more affordable housing in Quebec and Canada?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, I share a lot of the concerns my colleague raised. I had the pleasure of participating in a round table he organized in his riding and I really appreciate that.

There is no one single measure that will address the housing crisis. That will take a whole series of measures. We cannot simply focus on social housing; we must focus on affordability, home ownership, and buyers' and renters' rights. It will take a series of measures, and that is exactly what we are doing with our budget and, in part, with Bill C-8.

• (1155)

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, as we have heard from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, there is a concern that the spending contained in Bill C-8 and other aspects of the government's fiscal agenda is contributing to the inflation crisis that is driving up the cost of everything in this country.

I wonder if the member has any comments on the fact that this is not about politics or partisan opinion. Rather, very respected fiscal experts are suggesting that the spending found in Bill C-8 and some of the other fiscal frameworks that the government has set forward is contributing to the cost-of-living crisis that our country is facing. Is restraint needed to ensure that we address the continuing issue of inflation?

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, I find my hon. colleague's question a bit ironic. In the last election, his party called for a lot more spending than what the government is planning.

I will put this question to him: If his party were in power and made all the investments it wanted to make, what would it have done?

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, Bill C-8 and Bill C-2 before it were meant to provide help for businesses struggling to get through the pandemic. They were both drawn up before the omicron variant hit and extended the pandemic by months and months.

We have had calls from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the Tourism Industry Association of Canada to extend the benefits that were there before to help businesses that have

struggled to stay alive until now. Even a few months would help some of them get through this pandemic alive, yet we are seeing the government abandon those programs. The Conservatives, as we just heard, are not trying to support businesses and workers.

Why did we not help those businesses get through the summer at least?

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I can assure him that since the beginning of the pandemic, this government has always been there for the most vulnerable businesses and Canadians. During the pandemic, eight out of every 10 dollars invested came from the federal government. We will continue to be there to support the businesses, organizations, and people who need it.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am not sure if the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay put his earpiece too close to the microphone, but there was a bit of a buzz.

I want to remind members, if they are taking their earpiece off, to make sure that it is not close to the microphone.

The hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I just noticed that during the response from the member, there did not seem to be interpretation.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, every time the hon. member gets up, there seems to be a buzz on the microphone. I am not sure what is happening.

I will allow the hon. member for Hochelaga to repeat her response.

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, as I was telling my hon. colleague, our government has been there since the beginning of the pandemic to support the most vulnerable businesses, organizations and people. Out of every 10 dollars invested during this pandemic, eight came from the federal government. We will continue to be there for businesses for as long as they need us.

• (1200)

[English]

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it has been a while. I would have finished my debate on Bill C-8, but the last time I rose, I had five minutes and we had to break for routine proceedings. It is great to get back on my feet and talk about this bill.

This bill really looks at some of the budget implementations from the economic and fiscal update in 2021. There are seven parts to this bill. A lot of it has to do with amendments to the Income Tax Act. We have had a lot of questions around the 25% income tax for school supplies and rebates for the farm fuel industry and farmers and producers across Canada, and I will get to those discussions.

However, what the Liberals are putting forward is that Conservatives are holding up this debate. I would like to outline a bit of the timeline that we have seen and the incompetence in the legislative agenda by the Liberal government, which it is trying to blame us for. The Liberals did not introduce this bill until December 15, right before the House rose for the Christmas break. My colleagues across the way will know this is factual. Then, the Liberals did not start the second reading debate until February 2. Second reading was completed a week later, on February 10. That was the week of the completion of the second reading debate.

The finance committee studied the bill for less than a month and reported the bill back on March 1, after only three meetings. The current debate on report stage started March 4. Since then, there have been four constituency weeks, when the House did not meet, and only six days of debate in this chamber. There were 34 sittings days in the House for this bill to be debated, and they are complaining that this bill has been debated for only 11 days. Once again, the government is seen not completely telling the truth to Canadians on where and how this bill has proceeded through the House of Commons and the committee stage.

I said to some of my hon. colleagues yesterday, when I was asking questions, that it has been a long time since I have heard someone be so adamant that it is the opposition's fault that the government is not getting its work done. It is the equivalent of a kid saying, "The dog ate my homework." Just because the government does not have the capacity to get its legislative agenda through, that does not mean it is the opposition's fault. We are standing and presenting different ideas and different priorities that Canadians might have.

A lot of this debate is around making sure the refundable tax credits are given out. There is just a different philosophy on this side of the House. The member for Winnipeg North gets so excited about how he can hand out money to Canadians across the country. On this side of the House, I asked a question that a lot of the constituents in Regina—Lewvan have. The government is excited for tax return season, but Canadians do not want to have their taxes given back to them at tax season. What they would like is for the government not to take them in the first place. The government is not giving out government dollars to Canadians; it is giving back money it should not have taken in the first place.

That is the problem we see with the Liberals. They think the \$500 billion they are throwing around like a drunken sailor is their money. It is not. The government does not earn a dollar. It does not raise a dollar. The only way the government gets money is by taking it from Canadians who go to work each and every day and earn that money. That is why we feel the government should be a bit more careful with Canadians' money.

Government Orders

I should be more careful to make sure I say that I am going to split my time with my good friend, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

We are talking about how the government believes the money it is giving back is its money. It is something that we never really hear from people in Saskatchewan and in Regina—Lewvan. They always see tax season as a bit of a difficult time, because they see all the money and all the tax rebates, but the government is saying that people should be so thankful it is giving them refunds. Why take it in the first place? That is the question lots of people come to my office to ask.

● (1205)

Another thing is that the Liberals are like Robin Hood. They expect Canadians to kiss the ring and be grateful they are getting this money back at tax time, when they should have had it throughout the year. They should have had it when their kids needed new shoes. They should have had the money they earned when they had to buy school supplies. They should have had that money when inflation made their grocery bill \$500 or \$600 more each month. They should have had that money throughout the year, not just given back to them at tax time. That is something that I think the people across the way just do not understand, that all this money they continue to shovel out the door, time after time, has to come from somewhere and it is everyday Canadians who are the ones stuck paying the bill.

We have heard a lot of questions about schools and when teachers can get their rebates back. Do members know what I hear from teachers and what they are concerned about? What teachers and people in the school divisions across Saskatchewan are concerned about is the hundreds of thousands of dollars more that it is going to cost them each year to keep the classrooms warm in the winter and cool in the summer, because of the NDP-Liberal carbon tax.

In rural Canada, the cost of fuel for people to have their kids bused to school continues to increase each and every day. That is something that hits people hard in their pocketbooks. It is basically a trickle-down effect. The municipalities and the provinces have to pay for that because of a Liberal initiative that continues to put pressure on each and every level of government. When we speak with school board trustees in the school divisions across Saskatchewan, that is one of their major concerns, and it is something they cannot control. They cannot control what the cost is going to be when they have to keep filling those buses with expensive fuel because of the Liberal carbon tax. In Saskatchewan, when it is -40°C, they have to have heat in their classrooms. What the current government continues to do, in basically each and every one of its pieces of legislation, is ensure that people in rural Canada are treated differently than everyone else across the country. The government continues to try to divide Canadians and make sure that what it is doing is seen as environmentally friendly, yet more Canadians are being left behind.

Government Orders

Another thing I find interesting when it comes to the economic and fiscal update in 2021 and now Bill C-8, and the government's budget as a whole in 2021, is the fact that the PBO said that of the \$500 billion that was earmarked for COVID, because my colleague talked about COVID a lot in his speech, \$200 billion was not even for COVID measures at all. He said it was not accounted for in COVID spending: \$200 billion of the \$500 billion the government spent, and said it needed to spend, on COVID basically is not accounted for whatsoever. There really needs to be more accountability when it comes to the government's legislative agenda. I think that is what the Liberals do not like. As we have seen time and again, accountability is not very high up on the government's list of priorities. Whether it be with respect to the Emergencies Act committee or the WE Charity scandal and the ethics committee, when it comes to accountability, this is definitely something where the government used to believe that sunlight was the best disinfectant, but that was long in the past.

I remember when, in 2015, the Prime Minister used to do his Care Bear stare, hand over heart, and say that the government had the backs of Canadians. With friends like the Prime Minister, Canadians truly do not need any more enemies. If this is the idea of the Prime Minister having the backs of Canadians, when 50% of them are \$200 away from bankruptcy, when inflation is going to 6.7%, when the idea of owning a home in Canada for people under 30 is now a nightmare because they will never be able to do it and they will live in their parents' basement until they are 40, I think they would rather that he just take his walk in the snow and say goodbye.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am certainly from the vintage of the Care Bear stare. I always thought the member was quite a bit younger than me and assumed that he would not even understand that reference, but he just looks great for his age, I guess.

I just do not understand the end goal here of the Conservatives. We have had speaker after speaker, more than 50 speakers, speak to Bill C-8 since report stage. The Conservatives have clearly identified some issues they have with the bill, and I get that, but does that justify doing absolutely everything humanly and procedurally possible to prevent this legislation from going forward?

• (1210)

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, I do remember the Care Bear stare. There was one back in the 1980s and there was one again in 2015. I also remember the Prime Minister talking about having to imagine things that are different than space and time. Maybe that is what the current Liberal government is doing, imagining different space and time. The reason it cannot get its legislative agenda passed might be the fact that it does not actually understand time anymore.

What my colleague has said is basically that it is the Conservatives' fault that the Liberals are not getting their job done. When I was sent to the House of Commons by the constituents of Regina—Lewvan, and I am honoured to speak on their behalf, not one of them said when they voted for me, “Please, please make sure the Liberals get their agenda passed.” That was not a priority for my constituents in Regina—Lewvan. Therefore, I am going to ask

questions on their behalf. I will do it as often as I can, to make sure that if this thing does get passed, it is done in the right way.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague about a specific aspect of Bill C-8, and that is the tax on underused housing. Everyone agrees with the basic intent.

My first question has to do with the rate of 1%. Is that enough? We know that other places like British Columbia and France have much higher rates than that.

Other than the rate, there is also the way this tax will be applied. The federal government is once again infringing on areas of jurisdiction belonging to the provinces, and Quebec in particular. I think that this should be done in co-operation with the municipalities, rather than imposed by the great, all-knowing Ottawa. What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

[English]

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, my colleague and I worked together on the agriculture committee and I do appreciate his insight.

One thing I would say is that the current government has not really taken a broad enough approach to housing. The Liberals brought forward a budget here in 2022 where they are not going to have one house built in a year and a half or two years.

I think a provincial approach to housing is a good idea. As a member of the legislature of Saskatchewan, I had some responsibilities and I know how the Province of Saskatchewan has reacted to housing issues. There should be respect for provincial jurisdiction, so provinces should have a good say and a fair say on some of the housing initiatives, moving forward.

The current government has failed on housing since 2015. Housing has gotten less affordable. Vacancies are fewer. Really, it is just a dog's breakfast when we look at the current government's housing initiatives.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan and others in the Conservative caucus have spoken many times about the impact of the rising costs on farmers and their opposition to the carbon tax. I would like to know why the Conservatives then have been holding up Bill C-8, which means that farmers are being held back from getting their rebates on the carbon tax.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the question from the NDP-Liberal member.

I was just at the national Holstein convention. There are 400 dairy farmers in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. What did they talk about? It was not about getting a rebate on the carbon tax, but about how much it will be for them to pay it when it gets to \$170 a tonne. That is their biggest concern. They are tired of begging for scraps from the NDP-Liberal government's table. They want to be listened to. They want the carbon tax scrapped so they are able to actually make a living for themselves and their families. Their biggest concern right now is not the fact that their rebate is not ready to be submitted yet. Their biggest concern is that the government has not listened to them and has not exempted a lot of farm fuels. It is almost like the Liberals do not care what farmers across this country think.

Maybe what this member and a lot of other members should do is take the opportunity to visit some farmers, as the member for Kings—Hants did in Saskatoon a couple of months ago. It was nice to finally see a Liberal in Saskatchewan again, but not for that long.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will note at the outset that I will be moving an amendment to the amendment at the end of my speech to Bill C-8.

As always, it is a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Out of respect for the four young men who lost their lives recently in Kingston, I will be taking a brief moment of silence to recognize their service and sacrifice, and to honour their memories.

On that note, I would like to thank all those who have served, both past and present. We have a number of people in the House who have served, and I thank all of them for their service. I thank all of our brave soldiers, who are currently enrolled in the forces, for enhancing our country's safety.

Last night I debated about what I was going to speak about on the bill, and one thought that came across my mind was the idea of trust in the government and how much trust the average Canadian should or should not put in government. I also thought about trust when it comes to fiscal affairs and trust when it comes to spending.

Trust, when it comes to this country's finances, is important. Do Canadians trust this government, and all of us here, to be good stewards of their money? When we think about finances, and I recognize that no government is perfect, the Prime Minister previously said things such as “the budget would balance itself” and that the budget would be balanced by 2019. I believe that was to be set in stone. During our most recent federal election he said that a reporter, or Canadians generally, ought to forgive him if he did not “think about monetary policy”. These things worry me as a parliamentarian, a Canadian, a father, a husband and a member of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

I have spoken about my background in the House, and I will do it again, because I think it is appropriate at this time. My dad came from Italy when he was in his early teens, my mom came as a young woman, and they met in Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. My dad was a sawmill worker. My mom was a homemaker who went back to work when I was about 10 years old.

My parents paid off two houses on one income. As a young man, we did not go out for dinner because we could not afford it. Family

Government Orders

trips to Vancouver were a big deal. Now, as a parliamentarian, I have to be candid, it was fairly novel to get on a plane. The lustre has worn off, I will admit, but it is still an honour to be here at all times. However, what I learned is this: It is important to have one's own financial house in order, and that house includes this House and what we are spending in the House. It is important to be a good steward of the economy.

I remember my dad driving a 1967 Ford into the 1990s. Why did he do that? It was because that was a prudent financial move. My dad bought a truck, I believe, in 1981, and he practically ran it into the ground. We, as government, cannot act like we are leasing a Rolls-Royce when we can only afford a lesser vehicle.

The problem I am arriving at is this: Interest rates are rising. This means that life will become more expensive. I am focusing on spending here, but there is a lot to say on Bill C-8. We just saw interest rates rise about a half a point, which is going to make every mortgage more expensive. It is going to make every line of credit more expensive, and there will be an impact on housing. There will be an impact on spending generally. However, this fall economic statement increases government spending by about \$71.2 billion.

• (1215)

I am concerned about the lack of relief when it comes to the cost of living in this bill. It is a fairly lengthy bill and I know that colleagues across this House will point to aspects of the bill that are meritorious. One thing I am highlighting, though, is the gravity of the spending \$71.2 billion. This is against a backdrop of inflation hitting 6.7% in March. The last time inflation was that bad was in the early nineties when the GST had just been introduced. I remember a can of soda going from 95¢ to \$1.02, and we just were not used to using our pennies. That is where inflation is right now.

My colleagues across the aisle, in particular, have pointed out that inflation is a global problem. Globally, inflation is occurring but that does not mean that we ignore it locally because inflation is exacerbated by local policies. The printing of money necessarily contributes to inflation because more money is chasing around the same amount of property and services.

This high-spending agenda also concerns me. When we have high deficits, who pays? One of the reasons that payday loans, for instance, have been heavily scrutinized is because they are compounded, and that can result in death by a thousand financial cuts. There are people who simply cannot afford another payment, another tax, or another bit of interest.

Government Orders

The same goes for credit cards. With all due respect, I see the government, if I can draw an analogy, as having a credit card when it comes to the Canadian economy and when it comes to spending on behalf of Canadians, and here is the problem. It is like that credit card is maxed out, so rather than pay it off, the government keeps on making the minimum payments. That sounds like a good plan, but eventually the minimum payment just will not cut it, so what do we do? We up our credit limit.

That is what I feel is happening when it comes to this country's finances. What happens when this country's credit limit cannot increase any more? In 10 years, the Prime Minister may be going off to another climate conference in Scotland, or he may be surfing in Tofino, but my question is this: When that credit card is maxed out, who is going to pay? The Prime Minister will likely not be in this House to recognize that, so who is going to pay? I am, and we are. The people of Canada are.

• (1220)

Research from my office indicates that federal interest payments alone will reach \$26.9 billion in 2022-23. This is estimated to be \$49.2 billion by 2026-27. That is \$16 billion. My rudimentary research is that our military operates on a budget of \$22 billion per year, so three-quarters of our military spending will be taken up just in the differential of interest payments between 2022 and 2026-27. That should be concerning.

We still have spent double our military expenditure in just interest in this last year, so how do we deal with this? Is it going to be a home equity tax? The government has said no, but it has to come from somewhere. Is it going to be tax on capital gains? Is the NDP-Liberal government going to go there? Will it be taxes on the middle taxes, more taxes for more spending?

Those are my concerns about this. I have more to say, but I want to make sure that I move this amendment in time.

Therefore, I move, seconded by the member for Brantford—Brant:

That the amendment be amended by adding the following:

"and that the committee report back no later than 10 sitting days following the adoption of this motion."

• (1225)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The amendment to the amendment is in order.

Continuing with questions and comments, we have the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened quite attentively to the member's discussion about the level of debt that has been taken on by this country, and there is no doubt that it is an extremely large amount that was taken on, in particular to provide assistance to Canadians collectively throughout the COVID pandemic. I will give this member the benefit of the doubt that perhaps he was not in this House when a lot of that funding was passed and spent, but I would like to inform him that the vast majority of that spending was done through unanimous consent motions. Conservatives voted in favour of

those. All of this member's colleagues voted in favour, quite often through unanimous consent, for spending that money.

I am curious how he can justify standing before this House and being overtly critical of the spending, when his own colleagues voted in favour of it all.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, I can be critical of imprudent spending. When my colleagues stood up we were in the midst of a pandemic, and I admit that at this point we are still in an endemic. However, as the colleagues across the aisle like to point out, we have recovered all of the jobs and our economy, according to them, is roaring.

We are here debating what is happening today, not the spending that happened yesterday. Bill C-8 is about today, so to reference and allude to the fact that I simply do not know what I am talking about because I am talking about today, with respect, misses the mark.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very sensitive speech. I came to really enjoy his company after spending 12 days with him on a recent mission in Italy.

I would like to know what he thinks about housing affordability. The real estate market is obviously overheated, given that the vacancy rate is under 3%, prices have gone up 18.6% over the past five years and it is considered normal to pay \$2,225 a month in rent in Montreal, judging from what the government is saying.

What does my colleague think about that? Does he have any solutions to propose?

[*English*]

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, it was a pleasure to spend time with my hon. colleague. He is someone who really does care about what happens in the chamber. I had hoped to talk about housing, but I just did not get there.

We need shovels in the ground. This is a supply and demand issue. I have frequently heard the housing minister talk in the chamber about the fact that they have spent money and done this and that. What we need is to increase the supply. Having programs that encourage people to save up over the years may well be helpful for some people, but those programs likely would not go far enough when housing prices have doubled from \$430,000 to over \$850,000 during this mandate.

To answer the question as directly as possible, we need shovels in the ground and to encourage that.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are hearing from teachers, the same teachers who throughout COVID have had to endure so many challenges. They have had to pivot to deliver online classes, and many of them are out-of-pocket helping to make sure their students have the supplies and tools necessary to continue learning. These educators are relying on a tax break that would be provided in this bill, which would give them an increase of 15% to 25% on the school supplies they purchase. Many of them subsidize the school systems.

Why are the Conservatives holding up this very important piece of legislation, which would support those educators who we absolutely need to support?

• (1230)

Mr. Frank Caputo: First, Madam Speaker, I reject the premise that Conservatives are holding this up. The House of Commons is predicated on rigorous debate, and we debate things as part of the democratic process.

I have heard from teachers about this. I actually was speaking with one of my colleagues today and learned that if the government had chosen otherwise, as in the choice between a refundable versus a non-refundable tax credit, royal assent would not have been needed. This was an issue when it came to drafting the legislation, as I understand it, and that is the issue. My sisters are both teachers. I would love to see this matter dealt with as quickly as possible.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Kings—Hants.

It is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-8 today. The government knows that elevated inflation and rising gas prices are leading Canadians to worry about the cost of living as the pandemic continues to affect our everyday lives. Let me remind hon. members in the House that this is a global phenomenon driven by the unprecedented challenge of reopening the world's economy.

For two years, Canadians have been grappling with COVID-19. Two years ago, this pandemic triggered the steepest economic contraction in Canada since the Great Depression. At its worst, it cost three million Canadians their jobs as our GDP shrank by 17%. Today, even in spite of ongoing challenges presented by the pandemic, we are on a strong footing. Canadians have put saving lives first. That has meant one of the lowest mortality rates in the G7.

As of March 13, 85% of Canadians five and older were fully vaccinated, and the Canadian economy has seen the benefits of prioritizing our health. The Canadian labour market rebounded strongly from omicron in February. We have already more than recovered the jobs lost: It was a healing that took eight months longer after the much milder 2008 recession. In fact, we have recovered 115% of the jobs lost during the pandemic compared with just 93% in the United States, and we have recovered faster than in any other recession.

The unemployment rate fell to 5.7%: the lowest since we started collecting data in this way. Canada continued to see a strong economic recovery in the fourth quarter, with economic activity increasing 6.7%. Encouragingly, growth was broad-based, supported by solid underlying fundamentals and an ongoing rebound in sectors hit hardest by the pandemic. However, this growth could not have happened or been achieved without government support. Our government delivered significant fiscal policy in order to support Canadians during the pandemic, and this has contributed to a rapid and resilient recovery so far.

Last December, we introduced Bill C-8, which seeks to address housing affordability through the implementation of a national annual 1% tax on the value of non-resident, non-Canadian-owned residential real estate in Canada that is considered to be vacant or un-

Government Orders

derused. It is something our government announced as part of budget 2021 to crack down on underused housing. The bill would introduce a new act, the underused housing tax act, to ensure that non-resident, non-Canadian owners, particularly those who use Canada as a place to passively store their wealth in housing, pay their fair share of Canadian tax beginning in the 2022 calendar year.

We are also working to address the issue of supply chain disruptions from around the world, and shipping bottlenecks that have made it harder for Canadians and businesses to get products and supplies they need and that, in many cases, are contributing to rising prices.

Let us review the facts. Bill C-8 was tabled in the wake of the omicron variant. The bill contains critical support for Canadians, including a tax credit for businesses that improve their ventilation in the wake of COVID, an expansion of the school supplies tax credit for teachers who bought additional supplies as a result of virtual school, a return of the price on pollution for farmers in backstop jurisdictions, \$1.72 billion for rapid tests and \$300 million to support proof of vaccination systems developed by provinces and territories.

Bill C-8 also proposes to establish a statutory authority for the Minister of Health to make payments in a total amount of up to \$300 million to provinces and territories for costs associated with implementing COVID-19 proof of vaccination credential programs in their jurisdictions. Another important tool in our tool box to navigate through this pandemic is the use of rapid tests. With studies suggesting that people without symptoms may cause up to 50% of COVID-19 transmission, it is obvious that rapid tests can significantly help reduce the risk of outbreaks.

The Conservatives have seen fit to filibuster this bill for months on end, using procedural tricks to stop this support from getting to Canadians who, quite rightly, expect and deserve better.

• (1235)

With their report stage amendments, the Conservatives tried to delete from the bill an expansion for the school supplies tax credit for teachers who bought additional supplies as a result of virtual school, a return of the price of pollution for farmers in backstop jurisdictions, a tax credit for businesses to improve their ventilation in the wake of COVID, the expanded northern residents economic deduction, \$100 million for provinces and territories to support ventilation projects in schools and \$300 million to fund provinces and territories in order to support existing proof of vaccination initiatives.

Government Orders

Over the past two years, our government has put in place comprehensive, broad-based support programs that have since evolved to more targeted measures. We did this because it was the right thing to do at the time. As we look to the years ahead, our government is determined to continue to do what is necessary to support and sustain the recovery, to provide help where it is needed, to create jobs and set the stage for strong growth in the years to come.

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

At the conclusion of her speech, she talked about Conservatives and procedural delays. It seems to me that when the Liberals were in opposition, the same would occur. Be that as it may, let us talk about the fact that there was a pandemic election, as British Columbia literally burned and as Kabul did, as well. On top of that, we also were not recalled back to Parliament until well into November.

I would like to ask my colleague this. How can this member say that the Conservatives are the ones to blame for the late fall economic update when we were not even sitting in Parliament because of the Prime Minister's decision?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Madam Speaker, this was introduced in the fall. It is the fall economic statement and today, May 3, we are still debating this in order to get help back to Canadians who need it. Yes, definitely; there has been a delay.

We have been trying to get this legislation debated for months and we are still here today because of the Conservatives.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, last spring, the Bloc Québécois moved a motion asking the House to recognize Quebec as a nation with a single official language: French. Most members of the House voted in favour of the motion, but my colleague who just delivered a speech abstained from voting.

I suppose she must have had something more important going on that day. Maybe she had to do a little gardening or attend to something on the stove. Today, I would like her to answer one simple question right here before Canada and the people of her riding: Is Quebec a nation, yes or no?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Madam Speaker, we are here today to debate Bill C-8, which contains very important measures to give my constituents the help they need during the pandemic. I am thinking of the teachers in my riding who will receive a tax credit for changes to their work over the past two years. They have had to buy things for their homes so they could teach their students well.

Talking about this very important bill is the reason I rose in the House today.

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague touched upon housing. I think there is not a member in the House who does not have constituents with serious concerns about the lack of affordable housing.

There are some measures in this bill that deal with housing, I think, mainly about underutilization of property, but there is nothing in the bill about an anti-flipping tax. There is nothing on blind auctions. There is no real additional funding to increase affordable supply, or a housing strategy by and for indigenous communities.

I am wondering this. What does my hon. colleague think about that, and what measures does she think the government should take in order to provide affordable housing options for Canadians?

● (1240)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Madam Speaker, I agree that housing needs to become more affordable. This is only a start as to how we can get it to that point. I know that our government has spoken about commitments to further help housing become affordable in Canada, so I look forward to working with the member on this point.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, one item that was not in Bill C-8 was a guaranteed income for folks with disabilities.

I want to start by thanking the member for Saint-Laurent for her support alongside over 100 parliamentarians in this place who have called out, in light of that, for the government to reintroduce substantial legislation for the Canada disability benefit.

I wonder this. Would she mind sharing the importance of reintroducing the Canada disability benefit?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Madam Speaker, I obviously completely agree that Canadians living with disabilities need extra supports. I would personally support any initiative that would help Canadians with disabilities get the support they need.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a privilege to have the opportunity to rise and speak to important legislation, including today on Bill C-8.

I had that opportunity a couple of weeks ago. I want to say at the outset that I was sick of hearing about Bill C-8 then, and I still am. I will gladly stand here and speak to it, but I want to go on the record saying how disappointing it has been to see that the bill has not moved through the House at the speed in which it could. For those Canadians who are watching at home today, Bill C-8 is actually the legislative introduction of measures that were introduced before Christmas, in the fall economic statement.

The reality is we are on day 11 or 12, and it is concerning that these measures have not been brought forward. I have chided some of my colleagues opposite in terms of their seeming desire to keep this in this place for quite some time. I will start with that.

I also want to go on the record to say that, although there is not yet a decision, we are hearing reports from the United States that *Roe v. Wade*, the really important, fundamental decision that reinforced a woman's right to choose, could be overturned by the Supreme Court. I just want to say how concerning that is. I know that we, as Canadian parliamentarians, do not get to control judicial decisions in the U.S., but the policy implications and the impact on women across the United States is concerning. It is important for all members of Parliament in the House to reaffirm the belief and the protection of a woman's right to choose for her own body. We will see where that conversation goes in the days ahead in Canada. It is a sharp reminder of that importance.

One key element of Bill C-8 is the returning of fuel surcharges on the price on pollution. We have heard a lot of conversation about the price on pollution in the House. I am proud to be the Chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. We had discussions about this in terms of practices on farms, such as grain drying, heating of barns and certain other elements, and making sure that when farmers are not able to make a transition, or when they are not able to take on different techniques to get around the price, we are not punitive.

There is \$100 million in Bill C-8 that is extremely important to get to farmers in backstop jurisdictions. The backstop jurisdictions are Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. I head the opportunity, as the member for Regina—Lewvan commented earlier in the House, to be in Saskatchewan about two weeks ago, when we had a break. I certainly heard a lot from farmers around the price on pollution.

I reminded them of the importance of getting this legislation through. I know some of my Conservative colleagues would take a different view about the policy altogether, but I reminded them that the government is recognizing that we want to make sure the price signal stays and that we have a way to compensate farmers. I reminded the good folks in Saskatchewan that they should turn to their Conservative members of Parliament to make sure that we get this legislation through so that support could be going to farmers. I will keep that message for my kind colleagues across the way.

That element of Bill C-8 gives me an opportunity to talk about the importance of agriculture. I have had the opportunity in the House to speak to it before. On February 24, the world fundamentally changed its outlook, first and foremost because of what we are seeing in Ukraine and the tragedy and impact of human suffering. We are proud of the way that Ukrainians have stepped up to defend their sovereignty, and indeed to defend rules-based international orders. We have been there. Today is not a conversation on that.

However, the implications of that are such that we are staring down a global food shortage. Members should let that sink in. Not just in the next couple of months, but for the next three to five years, the destruction of some of the agricultural infrastructure in eastern Europe is going to cause complications around the world. Indeed, it will be felt here in Canada. We have the propensity to step up and fill that gap. It is a really important time for all parliamentarians, regardless of what area of the country they represent, to understand that we have a chance to support the world in food production.

Government Orders

I want to just highlight for colleagues the importance of our agriculture and agri-food industry. It accounts for one in eight Canadian jobs. That is 12%, or almost 13%, of the Canadian workforce that is tied to this particular industry. It represents \$140 billion of our gross domestic product every year. I really do believe, again because of world events that we have seen, that there will be a heightened focus on food policy and the way we as parliamentarians can be constructive in the conversation to make sure that Canada can play its part in the global context.

● (1245)

As I mentioned, I spent four or five days in Saskatchewan, and let me go on record as saying how impressive it was to see the innovation, the ingenuity and, really, the tremendous work of farmers and those involved in the industry. It is not only in Saskatchewan. I know this is happening across the country. However, Saskatchewan is certainly the heartland for where this is happening. Forty per cent of our arable lands are in that province.

I want to take the opportunity to talk about a few things that will be particularly important. I will move quickly, because I only have so much time.

Commodities are through the roof. We know that the price for energy, the price for fertilizer and indeed the price for our cash crops are high. That is going to create tremendous pressure on our transportation sector. Now is the opportunity to be identifying ways in which the government can work with rail companies, in particular, to try to address what we know is going to be a demand surge, as energy, critical minerals and harvest will all come to pass at the same time.

I had a conversation with Dr. Richard Gray at the University of Saskatchewan, and I want to mention him. He had two suggestions. We should get agronomists who are already on the ground across the country to take inventory of what we expect for our harvest come harvest time so that we can have estimates of the tonnage that will be needed and the number of railcars that will be needed to get this to port. The other suggestion, of course, is to work with the transportation industry to find out how we can meet this demand. It will not be a matter of the farmers planting. We know that the market signals are high and that they will indeed be doing that. It is going to be about whether we have the opportunity to get things to market.

Government Orders

With respect to plant breeding, it is not necessarily a sexy topic, but it is going to be extremely important and has been extremely important in the past. We talk about canola, for example. Back in the 1990s, canola did not exist in the way we know it today. That was driven by innovation through plant breeding cycles. It is particularly important for the government to be looking at its guidance documents for gene editing. This comes under Health Canada. It would allow us to have a regulatory market that can drive innovation in this space, which is going to be particularly important. My understanding is that before Christmas this was set to come forward. The sooner that we as a government and all parliamentarians call for this, the more beneficial it will be.

With respect to plant protein, I had the opportunity to be in Vanscoy, just outside of Saskatoon, at the Ingredion facility. It is a \$300-million facility driving at the tip of the iceberg of what the plant-based protein industry represents. Indeed, this is something of a global movement, but our prairie provinces are well placed to take this opportunity. I was very pleased to see in the budget the continuation of funding for the supercluster. Hats off to Protein Industries Canada for its work in driving some of the private partnerships and capital we have seen.

• (1250)

[Translation]

I also want to take a moment to recognize the importance of supply management. During the pandemic in particular, we saw just how resilient the systems that support farmers across the country are.

Occasionally, some argue that Canadians would be better off without supply management, but the system ensures that there is national capacity across the country. It ensures a fair price, but it still has a competitive factor built into the model. Unlike in the United States and Europe, no government intervention is needed.

I am proud to represent the riding with the largest concentration of supply-managed farms in Atlantic Canada. However, the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka is openly pushing to dismantle this system, and the Conservatives have not been consistent in their support.

Budget 2022 has made significant commitments to the sector, and I know that farmers across the country will take notice.

[English]

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the speech by my friend from Kings—Hants. I always like it when people talk about Saskatchewan, and I will help the member out with some pronunciation when he goes back next time.

It is great to see a Liberal in Saskatchewan, because it has been a long time. Provincially, not since 1999 have the Liberals won a seat, and then after Mr. Goodale parted because the voters got sick of him, it has not happened since 2019.

I am wondering, with all of this experience in Saskatchewan, if the member would like us to put the Liberals on the species at risk list for Saskatchewan, because there are lots of rare sightings in Saskatchewan, such as Liberals and Blue Bombers fans. We want

to make sure that once they get there, they feel safe when they are in our province.

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, I will say to the member opposite for Regina—Lewvan that I have great respect for him. I have worked with him on the agriculture committee. His question is not a serious one, of course, so I will ask him whether he would like us to put the Conservatives on a species at risk list for Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, in many cases Nova Scotia and all of Atlantic Canada.

I do not think the question is really constructive, but let me go on record as saying that I really enjoyed my time in Saskatchewan. It could really use someone like Ralph Goodale at the table to make sure that there is strong representation here at the federal level.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's raising the request for the guidance documents. I met with representatives from CropLife Canada this morning. They, too, have been looking for them since December 8, so I hope he has the opportunity to encourage the minister to release them very soon.

I want to ask the member more specifically about the price on pollution for fuels, particularly for grain drying. Why does he consider the approach the government is taking in Bill C-8 superior to the one being proposed under Bill C-234? He mentioned that the government wants to keep a price signal. However, when there are no viable alternatives, what is that price signal doing? Is he hearing from his constituents, as I am from mine, that his is the more preferable approach?

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Chatham-Kent—Leamington for his collaboration on the agriculture committee.

There are a couple of things I will address.

On the price on pollution, to be fair, I do not hear a whole lot from my farmers in Nova Scotia. The provincial government there has taken an approach to carbon pricing that perhaps has not had the same impact elsewhere, or has had a differential impact on his constituents in Leamington. I do not hear a lot from my farmers in Kings—Hants on that.

As to the price, again, we will continue to drive innovation. The government wants to see the industry take on different methods that exist. Some of those are coming to bear, and some of them are not yet in the market. However, I worry that getting rid of the price signal altogether stymies some of that innovation, and I know that it becomes a bit of an ideological argument. The bill we are talking about today tries to recognize the government's approach. We want to make sure that money is returned to farmers where there is no alternative to move right now. However, we think that an alternative will be coming in the days ahead.

• (1255)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his presentation.

We know that the government has put off its plan to address tax havens. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that, because this is about money, this is about the budget, and this would also be a way to bring down major deficits.

How does my colleague approach the issue of tax havens in connection with this budget?

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I will answer in English because some of the terms used for tax havens are different in English.

[English]

My understanding is that the government has taken on a number of initiatives to reclaim money from individuals who are trying to move forward with tax havens. In my view as a parliamentarian, it is fine to say that we are going to try to go after them and have different types of tax changes in the country, but this has to be a global effort, very similar to putting in a minimum corporate income tax and partnering globally.

Those same types of principles need to apply when working in partnership here so that individuals who have the means to move their money to other jurisdictions to avoid taxes are not able to move it to other jurisdictions, at the behest of Canada. We can work in a multilateral forum to make sure that individuals who have very high incomes are paying their fair and equitable share toward public programs.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be speaking to Bill C-8 for those in Canada who are watching today, and I will speak about how Bill C-8 fails our farmers.

What I learned recently, when I was back in British Columbia and spoke to the grain growers in my neck of the woods in north-eastern B.C., is how dramatic the costs have risen over the last 12 months. Bill C-8 would not help. It would just make things worse, and I will speak to that.

Ultimately, when we put our farmers at risk we put our food security at risk. I am going to mention the B.C. grain growers. That is the group I met in Dawson Creek a couple of weeks ago. They are good folks: President Malcolm Odermatt of Fort St. John, Vice-President Jennifer Critcher of Tower Lake, Robert Vander Linden of Clayhurst, Ernest Wiebe of Rose Prairie and researcher Kristyn Brody of Fort St. John. We heard what was obvious. We talked about Ukraine, the effects of Putin's invasion and its effects globally on fertilizer and things like it, and that accentuates what I am going to speak about. At a time when our farmers are getting hit with all these increased input costs, the government should be looking at any way possible to support our farmers.

This is what I heard. This is directly from farmers. From Ernest Wiebe of Rose Prairie, I heard that fuel has doubled over 12 months

Government Orders

from 73¢ a litre \$1.55 a litre this year. For Ernest's farm, let us speculate what the costs will be. Last year, in 2021, it was \$110,000 for fuel, and in 2022, it will be \$230,000. Inputs have doubled. Seed has doubled. Fertilizer has doubled. This highlights what the government could do with Bill C-8.

By the way, I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

The member from the Liberal Party has already spoken about what Bill C-8 could do, but what about what Bill C-8 does not do? What the government has been asked to do is to extend the carbon tax exemption to propane and natural gas. Instead of just diesel, it really needs to be applied across the board. For people in Toronto, Ottawa or Vancouver, heating a shop might be an option, but where we live, in northern B.C., it gets down to -40°C for long periods of time and this really is not an option. Natural gas and propane are also used in grain drying, so they are a much-needed commodity up there, and we are asking the government to allow propane and natural gas to be exempt.

We are talking about carbon tax credits for our farmers, and I have not even brought up what they really do by putting carbon in the ground through carbon sequestration. Then there are all the other measures that farmers contribute to our environment but do not get credit for. However, maybe I will talk about what the government is offering in Bill C-8.

It says it is offering \$1.73 per \$100. I think that is the promise it has made, and it is in the form of a rebate. However, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has already come back with a figure that is much lower than that. I will digress a bit here. A rebate is something that a farmer has to apply for and then get refunded in the future. It could be a year or 18 months before a farmer ever sees a dime of that rebate, or maybe never at all. Maybe a form was filled out incorrectly and the farmer does not see any rebates.

Let us get down to the brass tacks of what the government is offering. It is a lofty promise, but this is what really happens. This is from the member of Parliament for Foothills in a previous speech:

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.

• (1300)

There is a huge cost to farmers right now. We see that the risk farmers are under is at an all-time high too. There are huge costs. The margins are the way they have pretty much always been, but the risk is much higher.

Government Orders

I would like to talk about a positive way the Liberals could actually change this, with Bill C-8. We have put forward a motion on this side of the House, by the member for Huron—Bruce. We had Bill C-206 put forward by a member in the House in the previous Parliament. This Parliament it is Bill C-234, and it does exactly what I am asking to do today. I will read it out.

This is a quote from the member for Huron—Bruce. He said, “According to Bill C-8, in the fall update on page 83, the rebate is \$1.73. When I read that I thought it was per hundred dollars of eligible expenses, but it is actually per thousand dollars of eligible expenses. Therefore, if farmers have a million dollars in eligible expenses on their farms, they would not even receive a \$1,800 rebate.”

It is cents on the dollar. This is, again, when farmers are at an all-time high of just pure risk and pure money that they are spending, and they are all dependent on weather to get food on our tables.

Once again, the Liberals across the way say the carbon tax is neutral. This is from the PBO. This is not just from the member for Foothills. This is from the PBO. The PBO recently updated the fiscal cost of Bill C-234. It costed exactly the carbon tax on propane and on heating, and the benefit that the farmers would receive. This is what the PBO has said the net gain would be. The PBO recently updated the fiscal cost of Bill C-234, and what farmers would save. Previous reports were done for its predecessor, Bill C-206. As members can see, the numbers are relatively similar, with cumulative costs being \$1.107 billion versus \$1.104 billion for Bill C-206.

Clearly, we have a plan. The government could be putting this in Bill C-8, as I heard the member across the way mention. This would be a really easy fix for farmers and really supportive for farmers, especially in this very trying time we are stepping into in 2022.

I am going to speak more about Bill C-234. I have another quote from the member for Foothills. He said,

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.

The Liberals say we are holding up debate and holding up the House, but when there are simple things like this that they could be doing for farmers across the country, especially farmers in my riding who I just spoke to two weeks ago, it is unfortunate they will not make those simple changes that might get some support across Canada.

I will finish with this: Most importantly, whenever we put our farmers at risk and their businesses fail, what concerns me is that with one failed farm business, there are implications for our food security and for putting food on our tables across the country and

well into the future. We all know that once farms fail, they rarely come back.

The Liberals know the right thing to do on Bill C-8. They have the opportunity to fix it and make it better. I would ask them to do that.

● (1305)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, toward the conclusion of his speech, the hon. member justified why Conservatives have intentionally slowed this down. He basically said that it is because there is something in here that he would like to see different, but that is not how the democratic process works. This bill was introduced. It was debated here. It went to committee. Suggestions were made there. It came back from committee.

You win some; you lose some. He might not get exactly what he is looking for right now, but at the end of the day, he has to respect the fact that the democratic process worked. What he is basically saying is that because he did not get his way, he is going to kick and scream and not let this bill pass. Is that essentially what he is trying to tell this House?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, I really look forward to opportunities to speak in the House, and this is the first time I am speaking to Bill C-8 in respect to farmers and the negative effects of the bill on their operations and their farm families. This is part of the debate. This is part of what the House of Commons is for. I wish the member across the way would recognize that. This is a part of democracy.

We have seen the government across the way do a bunch of things that are, frankly, undemocratic. Canadians are becoming more and more aware of this, with the strong-handed, strong-armed approach of the Prime Minister, followed up by support from members like the one who just asked a question. My hope is that we can get some better measures in Bill C-8. That is why we are debating today.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. As my colleagues may guess, I appreciated the fact that he talked a lot about agriculture.

I would like him to tell me what more we could do for our agricultural community. We are talking about a credit that does not even apply to Quebec. Beyond that, how could we treat our agricultural community in a more forward-looking and respectful way, if only by giving them their compensation—I have suggestions in that regard—and providing them with adequate support in their role as conservationists?

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on this.

[English]

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, this is a great opportunity for me to talk once again about Bill C-234, being the measure we referred to that could potentially give a carbon tax exemption to farmers for propane and natural gas to dry and heat their shops, etc. It is a perfect opportunity. It is not finished yet; there are still votes. We still have an opportunity to support it.

I would hope that the members across, from the Liberal Party, would support a measure like this, because they missed the opportunity before. If they really want to do great things for our farmers in this country, that opportunity is still forthcoming. Again, I hope to see support for that across the way.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies obviously cares a lot about the farmers in his riding. He also, I know, has a lot of small businesses in his riding and a lot of tourism operators, yet the government has abandoned small businesses and tour operators in the last year, because it has not extended the supports they need to get through this last omicron variant. The tourism industry has pleaded to extend those benefits to the end of the summer. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business wants CEBA loans extended for two years, and the government has abandoned them.

I am just wondering why the Conservatives are siding with the government in abandoning small businesses and tour operators.

• (1310)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, I really respect the member, but to say that we are siding with the other side is really rich when we have seen the terms of the NDP-Liberal marriage. It is clear for all to see.

I will just bring up one example of when the government promised one thing. It said that carbon taxes were going to be neutral. Here again, the PBO said that just that one carbon tax exemption alone would save farmers across Canada \$1.107 billion. That would be huge for our farm families and farmers across this land.

My hope, again, is that Bill C-234 passes. The government has made a good change to Bill C-8, but I digress.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, it is an honour to enter into debate in this place and on such important issues.

Before I get into the substance of Bill C-8, and I have a lot to say about that and there is a lot my constituents expect me to say, I trust I will be given a bit of latitude. I wanted to share specifically how much I appreciated being able to join this morning with members from all parties at the Sam Sharpe Breakfast. There, I joined with other parliamentarians, veterans' rights groups and organizations, and folks from across the country, including some both current and retired military personnel, to hear from an esteemed guest speaker and to talk about the need to ensure that mental wellness, operational stress injuries and PTSD are part of the central conversation related to the realities our men and women in uniform face on a daily basis.

Government Orders

I just wanted to start my remarks by thanking the member for Durham and the retired general and senator Roméo Dallaire for their work in helping make sure we could have what I think was very important. How fitting it was for the first public event in two years to bring together members of our military to talk about something as important as mental health. It is so very important, so I thank all those who made that happen, and I look forward to more of these sorts of events happening in the heart of what is supposed to be Canada's democratic infrastructure.

The second part of the context for this debate is very important. We are debating Bill C-8, a bill to implement various measures related to the fall economic update, but the context here is incredibly important. The Liberals have claimed a lot of things, as they often do, about how it is somehow Conservatives' fault that we are now in May, still debating the implementation of various measures in the fall economic update.

What the Liberals have failed to mention is the fact that it was only a day or two before Parliament rose for the winter break that this bill was introduced. If they were serious about their legislative agenda, they could have prioritized this to see that it was passed and to allow for the fundamental function of this place to ensure that members of Parliament are able to speak to such important pieces of legislation.

I find it really ironic that members opposite will talk about how it is all the opposition's fault. It is a little like the coach of a losing team blaming the fans for its performance on the ice or on the field. I am deeply troubled by the passing of Motion No. 11, which I think could have serious consequences to democratic discourse within our country, and I certainly hope the Liberals and their partners in the NDP will think long and hard about how we all have the responsibility to take our jobs very seriously.

On that note, I will jump into the substance of what Bill C-8 is about. I would just note that I heard comments from my colleague from Prince George and earlier the member for Regina—Lewvan, and there is important context for some of the measures that are included.

Part 1 of Bill C-8 talks about various amendments that would be made to the Income Tax Act when it comes to providing a refundable tax credit to eligible businesses on, for example, qualifying ventilation expenses. In the midst of a pandemic, I think most Canadians would think that is very reasonable. However, this is another example of where, according to many health professionals, we are moving into an endemic stage of COVID-19, yet this is what the Liberals are moving forward.

• (1315)

They are also expanding the travel component of the northern residents deductions to \$1,200 and expanding the school supply tax credit, which would include electronic devices.

Government Orders

There is one part of the amendment to the Income Tax Act that I want to focus on specifically, and that is for farmers. I have heard members opposite talk a lot about how Conservatives debating Bill C-8 are somehow not serving farmers well. Let me be absolutely crystal clear. For members opposite, I happen to be from a farming family. We are the fifth generation to work the land in what is called Alberta Special Areas. It is in the north part of the Palliser Triangle. I hear often from farmers in my constituency and across Canada who are tired of the Liberal government's approach to try to control everything they do. This amendment is another example of that.

The Conservatives are opposed to the carbon tax: let me make that very clear. When it comes to the reality that farmers face, they are paying significant costs when paying the carbon tax on the fuel they burn. This is not an option for farmers. A large tractor can burn hundreds of litres of fuel per day. There are many green eco-activists, I am sure, on the Liberal and NDP benches who would like to suggest that somehow that should change. The fact that we are feeding the world is the reality that these farmers face. There are many examples where the taxes and expenses that are imposed on farmers by the government are inhibiting their ability to do what they do best.

The fundamental policy difference between Conservatives and the left in this country seems to be that Conservatives believe that farmers can and should be able to do what they do best, while the Liberals simply want to control and have a say in everything that they do. Let me again be crystal clear. Farmers tell me that it is not bureaucrats and politicians in Ottawa who know how to farm: it is the farmers themselves, and this is simply another example of how the Liberals seem not to be able to catch on to that.

I would suggest that, as my colleagues alluded to earlier, when it comes to expenses related to farming, the Conservative bill to bring forward an exemption to the carbon tax for agricultural activities is common sense. It is something that, quite frankly, should have had universal support within this place. There were, I believe, 18 Liberals in the last Parliament who voted in favour of this bill, and I am sure that they heard from their constituents in that regard. Again, there is that fundamental difference: the common sense of keeping dollars in the hands of farmers so that they can do what they do best and feed the world, versus heavy government bureaucracy controlling farmers.

That is not to mention the massive costs and the fact that the government is talking about a fertilizer mandate that could have devastating implications for global food security. There is the fact that fertilizer is directly related to the oil and gas industry. There are many other dynamics.

There is so much more to say on this. There are seven main parts to this bill and I only got through one of seven, so I could truly go on for probably another 60 minutes or so as I address all seven aspects. If there was unanimous consent, I would be happy to continue indefinitely.

I would simply sum up the next six parts by saying this. The Liberals have significant questions that need to be answered when it comes to even the most simple aspects of how they would approach

this bill. I read through the costs for things such as their vaccine passport system. As provinces end the mandates—

• (1320)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, when the member was speaking earlier, he was talking about the desire of the Conservatives to continue to discuss this bill. He expressed his displeasure with the fact that a new motion that was introduced and passed last night gave the ability to give it even further discussion and debate in the House over the next few months. If I heard him correctly, he referred to that as being undemocratic or as somehow an abuse of powers, or the opportunity to debate, in this place.

I wonder if he can explain that to me. The motion we passed last night was to extend the ability of members to speak in the House and gives more members the opportunity to speak so that when another motion or bill comes forward and over 50 Conservatives want to speak to it, such as with Bill C-8 at report stage, they would have an opportunity to speak to that.

How can he phrase that motion in such a way?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, let me simply conclude the sentence that I had started before I get into the substance of the member's question.

Because the government wants to spend \$300 million on something the provinces and the public health experts have so rightfully suggested we need to move away from is why the Conservatives have said clearly that it is time to end the mandates.

I would simply suggest to the member opposite, who at length spends time in the House equivocating on Prime Minister's Office talking points and defending the indefensible, that if he was so interested—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, am I not entitled to the right to speak in this place when I am recognized by the Chair? The member suggested and indicated through his comment that somehow I am not entitled to do that. If I am acting out of line, I would—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is an issue for debate.

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I rise on the same point of order.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I did not recognize the point of order, so the hon. member will pursue his answer briefly.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, it is ironic. I will just leave it at that.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, in Bill C-8, there is some mention of housing, but there is a bit more in the budget. Canada is the worst country in the G7 for the average number of homes per 1,000 population. This is already a scandal, it is already something quite significant, and it is a major problem.

The budget even contains an admission of failure, since it recognizes that Canada needs 3.5 million housing units in order to solve the crisis, but it does not indicate how it is going to be solved. It does not propose any measures for addressing it.

I frequently hear my Conservative colleagues criticize the government on housing. During question period, they keep asking the Minister of Housing question after question on this issue, with good reason, but I do not hear them suggesting any solutions. What are their solutions for fixing the acute housing crisis that Quebec and Canada are currently experiencing?

• (1325)

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, the member is certainly right. There has been a litany of failures when it comes to housing. I did not have a chance to get into the fact that the Liberals' approach to try to address the overinflated housing market certainly has not worked in other jurisdictions in Canada that have tried. I am doubtful that it will work in this case.

Here is the reality. Canada needs to become a country that says yes again. Canada needs to become a country that allows home-builders to build houses again. Canada needs to become a country that ensures there can be investments in things like property so that people can have affordable housing—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the things that concerns me is that so many people across Canada go without dental care. I was recently contacted by a senior in my riding who is on a very small, fixed income and was told by her dentist that she would have to pay \$6,000 to have several teeth pulled and appropriate dentures made so that she could eat. She said that without them she would simply not be able to eat and is looking at maybe buying a blender as a cheaper alternative.

Could the member talk about how important it is for all people to have dental care, just as all the MPs in the House do?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I actually had an extensive conversation with my brother-in-law, who is a dentist and serves some communities that have a great need for these sorts of services. What I find very interesting is that there has been a lot of talk about how the NDP have somehow solved the challenges related to ensuring that all those Canadians who need it have access to dental care. They have basically claimed victory when nothing has yet been accomplished. That is typical—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Kingston and the Islands. This is a pleasant surprise for me. I am happy to share something with this colleague. Perhaps this is the beginning of something. We do not usually see eye to eye.

I am going to talk about Bill C-8. The main problem that we have with it is the underused housing tax, which is yet another jurisdictional encroachment.

Allow me to clarify that, fundamentally, everyone agrees on the basic principle that something needs to be done about the housing shortage and foreign speculation. On the substance, we are in perfect agreement. The problem is how to go about it.

The Standing Committee on Finance heard from constitutional expert Patrick Taillon, who explained that the tax was legal, but that the problem lies in using the tax as a way to regulate the sector. We agree, so we think this must be done in collaboration with the municipalities, and especially with the provinces and Quebec. We are seriously concerned about this, and it is going to be a big stumbling block for us when it comes time to vote.

As usual, as the party that believes in constructive, positive, sensible opposition, the Bloc Québécois suggested adding a clause requiring the agreement of the cities involved. Our suggestion was rejected, so we have no choice but to oppose the measure.

There are other things missing from Bill C-8, such as measures to address the labour shortage. Everyone knows that I am a good sport in Parliament, because I am willing to acknowledge the positives. I will acknowledge that there are things in the budget that will help, particularly when it comes to immigration. However, this is an urgent matter, and I do not think that enough is being done to address it.

The number of calls we are getting about delays is absolutely staggering. Money has been announced, of course, along with a lot of good intentions, but something needs to be done quickly. Processing times are atrocious. The government is all smiles as it makes big announcements to the media, promising to do this or that, which sounds good, but, months later, nothing has changed.

Take, for instance, the increase in the cap on temporary foreign workers in the agri-food industry, which was announced in August but did not end up being implemented until late January. That is too long. The government needs to be more efficient.

We have other ideas for measures to address the labour shortage, such as tax credits for people aged 65 and over. I see that as a simple measure that everyone would support right away. I look forward to seeing that implemented, but it has not happened yet.

We can be creative. Why not bring in a tax credit that would apply once a certain threshold of hours is exceeded in a given week? Let us sit down and get to work, because our entrepreneurs need these workers.

Government Orders

There is also the whole issue of the supply chain. I am willing to believe that Bill C-8 was prepared some time ago, since it has been around for a while now. On this point, I agree with my Liberal friends. However, we can always improve things, especially in the next Parliament, in order to do something to help our farmers.

There has been a lot of talk about agriculture today, particularly about an additional credit for the carbon tax, but now we have other problems, such as the fact that fertilizer from Russia is now subject to a 35% tax. This will have repercussions on all of eastern Canada, which gets its fertilizer from Russia.

We had meetings with the parliamentary secretaries and ministers to explain the situation, and they told us that they would always be there, that they would monitor the situation and act accordingly.

We need to do something, because our constituents are sounding the alarm. We raised the issue in question period last week, because this is ultimately going to have an impact on the cost of groceries, and that affects everyone.

• (1330)

There is nothing about tax havens either; it boggles my mind. Every time that we talk about the budget or the money available to deliver services to the public, I am sorry, but I cannot not talk about tax havens. It is estimated that at least \$7 billion is lost to tax havens every year. These amounts are rather fuzzy because nobody is sure of what is really going on.

At the same time, the government is dragging its feet on bills such as Bill C-208, which deals with the next generation of farmers. This is about agriculture. If we respect our farmers and want to provide for the next generation, we have to get rid of the vagueness surrounding this bill. I just quickly touched on this, but I hope that the government will hear my message.

I did not bring up compensation for people in supply-managed industries either. Wherever it is paid out, we will be happy, but it has to be paid somewhere.

Let us talk about health transfers. How can we not talk about them? We are being praised for bringing in a dental plan. Again, the same principle applies as to the underused housing tax. We all agree on the substance, but there are areas of jurisdiction in this federation, and they are the responsibility of the provinces. Why not increase health transfers to the provinces and Quebec, which is something they have been calling for?

When we talk about health transfers, we are talking about increasing the federal portion to 35% of expenditures, or \$28 billion per year, which represents \$6 billion for Quebec alone. That needs to be ongoing funding, not just a sexy press announcement about a one-time shot of \$2 billion to show just how generous the fine Canadian government is. That is smoke and mirrors. The pandemic was temporary, but the problems with the health care system have long been an issue and they are not going away.

Of course, then there are seniors. Those 65 and older suffered the most during the pandemic. The government still has its head stuck in the sand.

I see people are looking at me with interest. Earlier, when I was being asked questions, I was expecting to hear that they were there for seniors, that they increased old age security starting at age 75 and that they handed out \$500. Those are all temporary measures. We want to see an increase to old age security starting at age 65 so that we do not have two classes of seniors. That is important.

There are other measures in Bill C-8, including the underused housing tax. We have expressed our reservations about who would implement it and how it would work. Essentially, will a 1% tax actually be effective, considering countries like France have taxes as high as 12% or 13% the first year and 25% the second year? That may be more effective. Why not go a bit further? Again, it is all in the execution.

As far as help for businesses is concerned, we also agree. It is good that the deadline for repaying Canada emergency business account loans has been pushed back, but that is not enough. We have proposed other measures.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has also sounded the alarm, saying that its members are struggling. They have taken on heavy debt loads, and the concern is that many of these businesses will not weather the crisis.

For example, why are we not providing more support to brick-and-mortar businesses facing unfair competition from e-commerce? That could be a solution. We could also decide to make a larger share of the loan non-refundable. Why not help businesses set up online purchasing and electronic marketing so they can compete?

There is also the issue of shipping costs. I do not understand why it only costs \$2.50 for a Chinese company to send a package to Canada when it costs me \$20 to send a package to Lac-Saint-Jean. Something is not right. Can we help businesses with shipping?

There is also the \$2 per book to help bookstores.

These are all Bloc Québécois proposals. These are suggestions we have made, and we will be there to collaborate if the government wants to make improvements.

Some members have given speeches about agriculture and education and a tax credit for electronic devices. These are good measures, but they are too small. Let us get serious and provide appropriate support to our farmers and teachers.

• (1335)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made reference to the property tax issue and health care transfers. It is important that we recognize that members of the Bloc Québécois very much would like the breakup of Canada. At the end of the day, Bloc members would ultimately argue that Canada should be nothing more than an ATM from which cash would just flow to provinces.

The Bloc members do not recognize that within Canada is a great federation with provinces and territories and with incredible leadership from indigenous communities. It is a nation that makes for the best country in the world to live in. This means that the national government does have some leadership roles to play, whether in housing or health care, according to the Canada Health Act. I wonder if the member feels that, maybe for the rest of Canada, Bill C-8 is a good thing.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to see that at least one person understands what we want. Ultimately, what we want is for Quebec to be independent. In the meantime, why are we here?

We are not here to cause trouble. We are here to salvage something from the wreckage and to work together in a positive way. That is what we try to do every day. I would like the parliamentary secretary to understand that part too. It is all well and good to keep repeating that we are trying to pick a fight, but I think that, if the parliamentary secretary is even the slightest bit serious, he will see that we always propose real solutions.

What we want is respect for the essence of the contract that was signed behind our backs for as long as we are stuck with it.

[English]

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciated my hon. colleague's comments about agriculture. I would like his opinion on the different approach we are taking to the carbon tax on farm fuels. The government is proposing that the farmers act as the bank account for the government. This is setting aside the fact that \$1.73 per \$1,000 of expenses does not come close to covering the cost of the carbon tax. What would the member's opinion be on the utility of having the farmers be the bank account for the Government of Canada versus granting an exemption up front?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. I really enjoy working with him on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Obviously, he wants me to talk about Bill C-234, so that is what I will do. The Bloc Québécois is extremely rational. We want to protect the environment in a way that makes sense. The reason we are supporting this system is that there is currently no other alternative. However, we need to do a lot more than this. That is why we are proposing an environmental partnership with our farmers, some-

Government Orders

thing serious that will not be controlled by the great, all-knowing Canada.

We need to decentralize funding for farmers, these entrepreneurs, so that they themselves can bring in technological and environmental innovations to improve yields. These innovations must be recognized, and compensation must be given for them. That money needs to be available to farmers for the next innovation. If we trust our farmers, I guarantee we will not be disappointed.

• (1340)

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am sure that Quebec is no different than any other province in that the citizens of these provinces are having a terrible time finding affordable housing. This is one of the areas where we are all in agreement that it takes all levels of government working together in order to provide a supply.

In my riding, we still have many constituents who have benefited from the very successful co-op housing program of the federal government of the 1970s and 1980s. I wonder if my hon. colleague can comment on whether co-operative housing and federal support for building co-op housing in Quebec would be a significant way to help people of Quebec develop at least one model of affordable housing.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

The federal government certainly has a role to play, but the parliamentary secretary opposite will be happy to hear that what the federal government needs to do here is to provide funding, because this is Quebec's jurisdiction. That is fundamental. My colleague said that he is sure that Quebec is no different than any other province, but it is a little different. I am not trying to cause trouble. We are here to teach others about the reality in Quebec.

Quebec's AccésLogis program is not being taken into account. I must point out that the last time there was money for social housing, the government transferred money to the other provinces but took three years to send the money to Quebec.

We are behind, which is not right.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-8, but like some of my colleagues who have spoken before me, I too want to bring up the fact that I am gravely concerned about what we are hearing coming out of the Supreme Court of the United States, the leaked document that suggests that it will be rolling back its ruling on *Roe v. Wade*. I think it is incredibly concerning. I think that, as a global community, we should be concerned about such a regressive form and attack that the United States is taking as it relates to such an important issue.

Government Orders

Equally as alarming, I am very concerned that the leader of the Conservative Party sent out an email to all of her MPs today telling them that they are instructed not to speak to the leaked document that has come out. I see some people shaking their heads, so I better quote this for them. It says, “Conservatives will not be commenting on draft rulings leaked from the Supreme Court of the United States.”

That was sent to Conservative members by the Leader of the Opposition this morning around 9:00 a.m., and I think that the Conservative opposition leader should allow her MPs to stand up and say exactly what they think about this because I think it is extremely problematic. Conservatives should stand united with the vast majority of Canadians in their feelings toward this.

Nonetheless, we are here to talk, once again, about Bill C-8. Bill C-8 is the bill that keeps coming up in the House. It is, for some reason, the hill that the Conservatives have chosen to die on, and I do not understand why.

This is a fall economic statement implementation act from the fall of not this year but last year. It is very likely that budget 2022 may be passed before we actually see the fall economic statement of 2021 passed. In any event, it is there to provide very important supports for Canadians during the conclusion of, and coming through the end of, the pandemic and into the endemic state that we are going to see COVID enter into.

For this to be the hill that Conservatives have chosen to die on is absolutely outstanding to me. I cannot, for the life of me, understand their strategy.

This is because most times, when a political party chooses an issue that will be the issue that it will define itself by through filibustering and doing everything possible to influence the way the House treats it, there is a common theme behind their approach. Normally, if it is something like, for example, we were suddenly going to do something dramatic to the health care transfers, I imagine that the Bloc Québécois would put up an endless fight on that, and I think that everybody on this side could appreciate and understand where they were coming from, given the fact that they raise it on a daily basis.

The Conservatives are not doing that. They seem to be all over the place in their approach when it comes to Bill C-8. They are picking and talking about this little bit, and then they are talking about another thing over here. Then they are talking about farmers. There is no common theme. I am left to conclude that the only common theme is the absolute stalling of Parliament, doing whatever necessary, for whatever reason, for any reason at all, to make sure that legislation cannot get through the House.

The rationale for their approach to Bill C-8 is entirely politically motivated. I do not know if they have just dug their heels in so far that they are now just saying, “Well, we have come this far, we may as well not stop now.” They need to explain to the House what it is that is so offensive within this piece of legislation.

I have heard Conservatives talk about the fact that they have some concerns about stuff that is missing from this legislation. That is fair. I think that is a good way to be critical about it. It is part of the democratic process, but it went to committee. It came before the

House, was debated, went to committee and was discussed. Ideas were put forward, and I imagine some ideas were adopted and some ideas were shot down. Then it came here, and we are debating it again. That is the democratic process.

As I said earlier to the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, one wins some, and one loses some. One gets some, and one does not get other things. At the end of the day, we eventually should be voting on a piece of legislation that we do know is going to impact and help a lot of Canadians.

● (1345)

I bring this up, because on this bill at report stage alone, as of my count yesterday, 51 Conservative members had already spoken to it. That does not include today. Just for comparison, and this is before today, four members of the Bloc spoke to it, two members from the NDP, two Green members and four Liberals. That is just to put it into context for members. The Conservatives have monopolized the time of debate on this particular issue.

The Conservatives are going to stand up and say, “Well, that is part of the democratic process: rigorous debate.” Of course it is. It is important to discuss and bring forward members' ideas, but it is very clear to people after a while that we have passed the threshold of vigorous debate, and they are just being obstructionists for the sake of being obstructionists.

There is no desire among the Conservatives to actually see this go through. They just want to ensure that they can inflict as much damage as possible, in terms of allowing this government to move forward its political agenda, and nothing made it clearer than when we debated the motion yesterday about extending sitting hours. One would have thought we had done something dramatically unparliamentary and undemocratic: those two terms, by the way, were brought up by the Conservatives. One would have thought we had done that, but all we did was say, “Let us debate more. Let us have more time to talk into the evenings and all the way until midnight.” The Conservatives had a problem with that, so they wanted to ensure that we could not even do that.

Members will forgive me if I come off as being very cynical about it and as assuming that there is some ulterior motive here. I cannot seem to wrap my head around why the Conservatives would take this approach, again, on a bill that would provide supports to Canadians. It is not a hill that, in my opinion, any political party would be willing to die on, but the Conservatives have chosen to do that.

In the last few minutes that I have to speak, I want to talk about some of those incredible supports that were introduced in the fall economic statement, which we are talking about on May 3.

I will speak specifically to the one that really is important, and I think it should be to all members of this House. This is supports for safe schools and teachers. This is about increasing the ability to provide quality air ventilation in schools. This is about allowing teachers to claim certain expenses on their income tax. This is stuff that none of the 50-plus Conservatives who have spoken has brought up. They have not commented on them at all. I am not just talking about being against them: they have not commented in favour of them, either. However, those are some of the supports we are talking about here. Teachers are literally beyond the deadline to do their taxes for 2021, and they cannot, because the Conservatives have still held this issue up.

There are so many other things, such as employment insurance details, supports for businesses and the underused housing tax act. These are all things in here that, in my opinion, should be passed. If we missed stuff, and members of the Conservative Party are still very upset about the fact that they have been missed, then they have representation on the finance committee and should bring forward a motion. They should go and garner support from a majority of members of Parliament on the committee, have a study on it and then make a recommendation to Parliament. That is how this body works. That is how the democratic process works in our chamber, and that is certainly how I would encourage the Conservatives to approach it, despite the fact that they have completely chosen not to do that.

I am running up against my 10 minutes, but I am very glad that we finally have some time allocation on this bill so that we can get moving on it and pass the fall economic statement from the fall of 2021.

• (1350)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to join the debate and ask some questions of my colleagues across the aisle.

Just for context, for the people at home who love watching CPAC, the member who just spoke, the member for Kingston and the Islands, and his colleague, the member for Winnipeg North, have the responsibility to help get the legislative agenda through the House for the Liberal government. That is why they are a little testy right now. It is their job to make sure the legislation gets passed that the government wants and that is its priority.

Those members are upset: They basically got their hands slapped because they were not getting the job done. That is why the members are so upset. Unfortunately, this is probably the fourth time the member for Kingston and the Islands has spoken on this bill. The biggest problem he has is that when he goes to the PMO, they are asking him why he is not getting the job done. That is why he is a little more animated in his speech today.

Quite frankly, I do not think he is delivering on the promises he made to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, for the record, I am way less animated today than I was yesterday. I am sorry that member missed that speech.

We heard the reality in his question. That member said that this is a priority for the PMO. This bill, and the details of this bill, should

Government Orders

be a priority for every member of the House. The supports in here are for teachers and small businesses. The Conservative member for Regina—Lewvan basically said in his question that this is not a priority for the Conservatives but that it is a priority of the PMO, and that is the only reason why this side of the House wants to get it passed.

Not everything comes down to a political agenda. From time to time, even though the member might not realize this, we are here to serve Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, frankly, I thought that was a rather strange speech. The member spent a lot of time talking about the official opposition instead of his government's bill. That was an interesting choice to make.

Since my colleague encouraged the opposition to support the bill and tried to get the support of a majority of opposition members in committee, I want to ask him how this works now that one of the opposition parties is systematically supporting the Liberals.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the only way this got back here is if a majority of the members at committee voted in favour of it. That is the only way that the report would have gotten back to the House. Clearly, that happened at committee.

The member said that he found my speech to be unusual. Did he listen to the 55 Conservatives who have spoken to Bill C-8 just since report stage? It was literally the same speech over and over again, with no central theme to it. There was no central theme to attacking a particular portion of it.

This is not the hill to die on, yet Conservatives continually put themselves in a position as though Bill C-8 is the be-all and end-all.

• (1355)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, in addition to the toxic drug supply crisis, Canada is experiencing, as we know—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Could we have some silence to actually hear the questions and the answers? Thank you.

The hon. member.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, thank you, I really appreciate that.

Statements by Members

In addition to the toxic drug supply crisis, Canada is experiencing a broader mental health crisis as we deal with the impacts of two years of the pandemic. COVID-19 highlighted what many of us already knew, which is that our mental health care system is woefully underfunded. The Liberal government committed, in its election campaign, to establish a mental health transfer with an initial commitment of \$4.5 billion over five years. However, we have yet to see any concrete action or fulfilling of that promise to make it a reality.

We know that mental health is health, and Canadians deserve to be able to access the mental health supports they need without worrying about barriers such as cost or availability. This week is Mental Health Week in Canada. I ask my colleague this. Is this one thing that we could all unite behind as parties, and have empathy for those who need support for mental health? When will the government be moving forward with the transfer?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I would agree with the member 100%.

The member brought this issue up yesterday. I asked him a question about his private member's bill, and he provided some feedback on what he was hearing throughout the country when he was touring around, talking to people about it.

We have come a long way in our understanding and our appreciation of mental health, in terms of the genuine health challenges we have around mental health. I would be willing to work with this member, as I know many members on this side of the House would, to do and provide more, in terms of mental health supports.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington will have about two minutes before Statements by Members.

The hon. member.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with my hon. colleague for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

I am pleased to rise today to give my second speech on Bill C-8. I have always indicated my support and preference for proper scrutiny of the bill as it comes through this place.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Could we have some quiet please so we can actually listen to the speech? Thank you.

The hon. member.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Madam Speaker, earlier this week, I spoke to the House about the importance of allowing Parliament to scrutinize legislation. Imagine my dismay when I glanced over the Notice Paper later that day to see what the government House leader had placed on notice.

It was a motion that would mark a severe departure from the normal practices of this place and set a precedent that could easily be abused by current and future governments. Parliament is supposed

to be a legislature based on collaboration, not coercion. While I am absolutely in favour of increased scrutiny of legislation, this motion would give the Liberals and the NDP enablers the power to adjourn the House on any whim of any minister.

I would note the Liberals chose their executive designation, a minister, as an enabling mechanism, not a member. We should all be wary when the executive tries to worm its way into the proceedings of this place. It is 2022, not 1640.

In my earlier speech, I also highlighted just how important the role of a parliamentarian is. We are here to scrutinize the spending of public funds. I will remind my colleagues of the two maxims that govern this institution: One, the executive should have no income that is not granted to it or otherwise sanctioned by Parliament. Two, the executive should make no expenditures except those approved by Parliament, in ways approved by Parliament.

• (1400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member will have almost eight minutes to conclude her speech after question period.

Statements by Members, the hon. member for Burnaby North—Seymour.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

BURNABY FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Terry Beech (Burnaby North—Seymour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to thank our firefighters in Burnaby and in the District of North Vancouver. Not only do they work hard to keep our community safe, but they regularly go beyond the call of duty.

On April 23, Burnaby firefighters hosted their gala ball, which raises money for charitable organizations and programs like the firefighter society's nutritional snack program, which helps feed hungry kids in Burnaby schools. This year, they generously donated 50% of the gala's proceeds, more than \$50,000, to support the people of Ukraine.

I also want to thank firefighters for their advocacy for the people of Burnaby Mountain. Their hard work for the last three years helped us announce \$30 million to build a brand new fire hall at Simon Fraser University.

This gives our community something extra to celebrate during Hats Off Day in June. The firefighters will be out in full force at station 5, and if they have a dunk tank again this year, I will be going back in it, so everyone should come out, bring the family, enjoy the festivities and take time to thank our local firefighters.

* * *

PRINCETON, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, Princeton, British Columbia, is a rural community in my riding with a population under 3,000. Six months ago, the community was absolutely devastated by severe flooding. The damage was in the tens of millions of dollars, and whenever the promised federal disaster relief funding arrives, it will not be nearly enough. However, there is hope. The community has rallied together like never before.

Currently, Princeton, British Columbia, is one of just four communities remaining in the Kraft Hockeyville contest. I cannot state enough how incredible it would be for the town of Princeton to win this award. Not only would the \$250,000 provide much-needed support to literally keep a roof over the local arena, but the support would give Princeton the boost it so desperately needs right now to keep moving forward in the rebuilding effort.

If there was ever a community deserving of the honour of Kraft Hockeyville, it is Princeton, British Columbia. I ask all hon. members in this place to help the good people of Princeton and this Friday, May 6, when Hockeyville opens, give them their support.

* * *

AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN ST. JOHN'S EAST

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, April 29 was a good day for housing in St. John's East, as it marked the announcement of 132 new affordable housing units. Affordable housing options are transformational investments for our communities, and we know that if we want to improve housing affordability and combat homelessness, we need to continue investing across the whole housing continuum. That includes building more affordable housing near necessary supports and amenities, and having repairs done for existing homes to preserve and revitalize communities.

This is why the national housing strategy is so important. It ensures that women have the housing they need to stay safe and thrive. It provides workers with a home they can return to at the end of the day so they do not have to make the decision between rent and food. Last week, it was about ensuring that the most vulnerable residents of St. John's have somewhere to go and a place to call home.

* * *

[Translation]

MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are right in the middle of Mental Health Week, and this year the focus is on the great strength that lies in empathy, because, before we weigh in, we need to tune in. That is what it means to get real about

Statements by Members

how to help, as the Canadian Mental Health Association is calling for us to do this week.

I would like to take this opportunity to draw special attention to veterans. Veterans are more likely to be dealing with mental health problems, compared not only to members of the military, but also to the general public. They are more likely to experience homelessness and to consider suicide. Behind all of these problems is the toll that military service takes on mental health. Even Quebec's greatest war hero, Léo Major, suffered from severe post-traumatic stress disorder at the end of his military career.

This Mental Health Week, I encourage all Quebecers to get real about how to help and to talk with a veteran. Empathy and listening can go a long way.

* * *

BAGELMANIA BAGEL SHOP

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to talk about something that many Canadians, especially Montrealers, are passionate about. We all know that Montreal bagels are the best. For generations, Canadians from across the country, and the greater Montreal area in particular, have sought out the best bagel in the world.

Today, I would like to inform my colleagues that another name can be added to the list of best bagel shops: Bagelmania. Located in my riding of Vimy, Bagelmania spreads joy and love throughout Laval and Montreal with its warm, delicious bagels. Sophie Trivlidis and her brother Kosta have been in the business for 26 years. Their hard work and dedication have been recognized by the newspaper *Le Devoir*, which just included Bagelmania in its list of the top 10 bagels in all of Quebec.

Congratulations, Sophie and Kosta. May the best bagel win.

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

GAELIC NOVA SCOTIA MONTH

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, *ciamar a tha sibh*.

Statements by Members

May is Gaelic Nova Scotia Month, a time to celebrate Gaelic history, culture, language and contributions, not just in Nova Scotia but across Canada. Gaelic speakers were among the first explorers and settlers to our country. It was the mother tongue of Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. When the Scots first immigrated to Canada, Gaelic was the third most common language in our country. Through time, that language almost disappeared, but now more young people are excited to learn about the language and the culture of their ancestors. Fiddle and bagpipe music and Gaelic song provide a rich history and culture. Dance, storytelling, local history and customs are filled with the heart and soul of a Gaelic renewal here in Canada.

Many Canadians, including my two talented daughters, kept these storied traditions alive through things like highland dancing, the Highland Games and Gaelic music. We want to see that revival all across Canada in communities across the country.

I encourage all Canadians to take a moment to listen to a Gaelic song, read a poem by Robbie Burns and be inspired by the beauty of Gaelic culture.

* * *

MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a mental health advocate, I am pleased to rise today to acknowledge Canadian Mental Health Week, May 2-8. We are all aware of the immeasurable impact of COVID-19 on Canadians' mental health, but we need to couple awareness with actions in various ways.

First, we need to understand the problem by investing in research and evidence-based policies that inform us of the social determinants of health and mental health outcomes. We then need immediate collaboration among federal, provincial and territorial governments to achieve mental health parity by bringing services and resources up to par with those allocated for physical health. These efforts will be informed by the national standard framework for mental health, which, once developed, can formalize what we can expect regarding timelines, access and quality of mental health services across Canada.

To conclude, I echo my support for a three-digit mental health suicide prevention hotline to make emergency support more accessible for those who need it the most. We keep saying that mental health is health. We need to bring this statement to life. We need to commit to the above-mentioned actions. Let us get real.

* * *

STUDENT RECRUITMENT INNOVATION

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to share with this House that ApplyBoard is one of the recipients of the Governor General's innovation award. This local business with global impact was founded only six years ago by three brothers, Martin, Massi and Meti Basiri, two of whom are residents of Kitchener South—Hespeler.

In this short time, they have grown their company to the largest online international student recruitment platform in the world. They have helped more than 300,000 students to date and are on a mission to improve access to education for everyone, no matter where

they are from. Their work has strengthened the diversity of our student population, supported the flow of academic talent and fostered internationalization. It is for these reasons that ApplyBoard has received this award, and it is very well deserved.

I ask the members of this House to join me in applauding ApplyBoard for receiving this prestigious award in its pursuit of educating the world.

* * *

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINE

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the 71st annual Mental Health Week, and all across the country we are trying to raise awareness of mental health issues that Canadians are suffering from. We also know the pandemic has been incredibly difficult on Canadians' mental health.

In an incredible show of unity, this House passed a motion by the member for Cariboo—Prince George to enact a national suicide hotline number, 988. It has been over 500 days since it was passed by this House. Nothing has happened. It has been 500 days and more Canadians have taken their lives. It has been over 500 days of continued mental health challenges, and yet nothing has been done.

Canadians cannot afford any more delays by the government. I am calling on this House to reaffirm and push the government to get the 988 suicide line done.

* * *

● (1410)

LGBTQ2+ NATIONAL MONUMENT

Hon. Jim Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is building a national monument to memorialize discrimination against LGBTQ2+ people in Canada. The LGBT Purge Fund and Canadian Heritage held a competition for the design of the monument, and I am happy to share with the House that a design submitted by constituents of Winnipeg South Centre was selected.

My constituents, architect Peter Sampson and landscape architect Liz Wreford of Public City Architecture in Winnipeg, along with Albert McLeod, an indigenous and two-spirit people subject matter expert, and visual artists Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan, won the competition with their design, which they call “Thunderhead”. The design draws on the symbolism of a thunderhead cloud, which embodies the strength, activism and hope of LGBTQ2+ communities.

In the words of Liz Wreford, “This monument will be a symbol of celebration and a space for reflection, healing, activism and performance for generations to come.”

231ST ANNIVERSARY OF THE POLISH CONSTITUTION

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I joined with dignitaries, Canadian Polish Congress representatives and Polish Canadians to raise the flag of the Republic of Poland here in Ottawa on Constitution Day in Poland, an acknowledgement of the 231st anniversary of the introduction of the Polish Constitution.

Poland continues its legacy of fighting for freedom in the midst of insurmountable odds. From its history and standing for democracy around the world to NATO involvement and, most recently, the support for the people of Ukraine during the present Russian invasion, Poland commands respect during uncertain times. I am proud to stand in this House as the great-grandson of Polish immigrants, and I am proud to be a member of the Canada-Poland Interparliamentary Friendship Group to build the relationship between our two countries.

I join with Polish Canadians from across our great nation in commemorating this important day for Poland, the Polish diaspora and all those who value freedom and democracy around the world.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for that intervention. I do need to remind the hon. member about the usage of props, even though it was a big part of his presentation. The usage of props is not allowed in the House of Commons.

The hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is Mental Health Week, and I want to highlight the work of two amazing organizations in my riding.

I send a big shout-out to Marg Cox, a tireless champion at the Haliburton County Youth Wellness Hub, one of only 10 such centres in Ontario. Despite restrictions imposed by COVID, the hub served 656 youth aged 12 to 25 last year, helping with mental health, substance abuse, primary care, vocational housing and other support services.

In addition, our local chapter of the Canadian Mental Health Association is launching a mobile mental health and addictions clinic that will include an office in a modified bus to deliver services to remote and underserved areas. This initiative will save lives by providing accessible services for those who are dealing with complex

Statements by Members

mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, suicide, addictions, abuse, trauma and psychosis, as well as poverty and isolation.

It is perhaps fitting that the theme of Mental Health Week this year is empathy. It has been said that the shortest distance between two people is empathy, which can help bridge divides and heal our communities.

[Translation]

ABORTION RIGHTS

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, access to abortion is important in Canada. A woman's right is well entrenched and, I hope, unassailable. We have a responsibility to speak out when this right is under attack. Today, our Prime Minister reiterated that the right to choose is a woman's right and a woman's right alone. It is my right, it is my daughter's right, and it is the right of all Canadian women, across the country, to have access to a safe and legal abortion.

Even today, there are members of the opposition who are not speaking out about what is happening. According to CBC, the interim leader has asked her MPs to keep quiet and not to comment on abortion. I hope that is not true.

Canadians across the country need to know that the members of this House will protect this fundamental right, today and always.

● (1415)

[English]

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with renewed hope to address the crisis of coercive and controlling behaviour in Canada. I began this work at the start of the pandemic when I started to hear from police and frontline service providers who were seeing a spike in domestic violence. I still hear every week from those suffering from coercive and controlling behaviour. They are living in fear of the physical violence that nearly always follows it.

A tragic fact in this country is that one woman dies at the hands of her partner every six days. Many fear not only for themselves, but also for the safety and well-being of their children and other family members. The justice committee has tabled its report “The Shadow Pandemic: Stopping Coercive and Controlling Behaviour in Intimate Relationships” for a second time. I eagerly await the response from the government to this unanimous report.

Taking action to make coercive and controlling behaviour a criminal offence will send a clear message that this behaviour is, in itself, violence. Taking this action will give hope to survivors, allow earlier intervention and help create a path to safety for survivors.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, these are tough times for the press.

In Ukraine, journalists are being bombed to death. In Russia, journalists have to go into exile or let themselves be put in jail, where they are silenced for telling the truth about the war. Journalists, columnists and bloggers everywhere are being imprisoned, threatened or killed.

The planet is warming, the pandemic is lingering and war is raging in Europe. Now, more than ever, we need a free press. We need to be informed.

In Quebec and in Canada, on social media, journalists are increasingly the target of insults, bullying and threats.

I call on our fellow citizens and all democracy-minded people: Let us work together to protect the free press. Let us not allow intimidation to prevail over information.

There can be no free press without newspapers. I therefore call on the government to provide more support to our local and regional weekly papers. This matter is urgent.

On this World Press Freedom Day, I thank journalists for their essential work.

* * *

[English]

ANTI-SEMITISM

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the world has witnessed an abhorrent new low from Russia's foreign minister, whose ignorant comments about Adolf Hitler perpetuate a hateful and bigoted narrative to distract us from his war crimes. Russia has frequently invoked Nazism and World War II to justify its brazen aggression in Ukraine, while attacking Holocaust memorials as well as survivors of Russia's deliberate murder of civilians.

This is the lowest form of racism against Jews: to accuse Jews themselves of anti-Semitism. Lavrov's remarks are simply false and continue to contribute to the perpetuating discrimination and disinformation worldwide.

It takes courage and more than just words when it comes to standing up for Jewish communities and their homeland. That position is non-negotiable, and I invite members of the House to say so. I will add my voice to the forceful condemnation and complete repudiation of these vile comments from Mr. Lavrov. They should also be called out in the House.

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ISLAMOPHOBIA

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Muslims across Canada and around the world observed the end of the holy month of Ramadan, a time of fasting and charity, and marked the beginning of Eid al-Fitr, a time to pray, feast, give back, help the less fortunate in our communities and celebrate with our loved ones.

This Eid, I would like to draw attention to those Muslims across the world who are struggling: the Uighurs, the Rohingya, Muslims in India, the Kashmiris, the Philistines, and more.

Human rights matter. Here in Canada, we are combatting Islamophobia through appointing a special representative for combatting Islamophobia. We are working on online hate and so much more. We all need to work together to ensure that Canadians in Mississauga—Erin Mills and across Canada have the protections we all need to ensure that we prosper.

Today, I wish each and every Muslim Canadian in Canada and across the world a very happy Eid. *Eid Mubarak*.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for days during the illegal protest on Wellington Street, the Prime Minister stayed in hiding, refusing to intervene and deliberately sowing discord and division by condemning Canadians who did not think like him.

Then on February 14, realizing that his inaction might backfire, he brought out the big guns, the Emergencies Act, claiming that the police needed it to deal with the protests.

Protesters returned on the weekend. They left, without the Emergencies Act.

Can the Prime Minister tell us why?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank all the police forces and the RCMP for their good work. Last week, they carefully prepared a plan for the protest.

This protest played out very differently from the events in January and February, when we invoked the Emergencies Act on advice from the police. It was a necessary and responsible decision, and we are going to work with the commissioner and parliamentarians in the interest of transparency.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to justify invoking the Emergencies Act, the Liberal government cited security threats. It stated, “the threats of violence and presence of firearms at protests...constitute a public order emergency”.

These are serious allegations that created a lot of public concern.

Knowing that, why did the Prime Minister allow members, senators and House of Commons staff to continue to circulate among the protesters at the protest in January and February?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the beginning of the illegal blockade last winter, we offered a great deal of support to all parliamentarians working on the Hill. However, what some parliamentarians experienced here was very different from what the residents of Ottawa experienced, which included many disruptions and violence in the community. This was proven by all the arrests made by the police.

The Emergencies Act needed to be invoked. We will now co-operate with all transparency processes.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, another part of the proclamation states that there must be an emergency that arises from threats to the security of Canada that are so serious as to be a national emergency.

What information did the Prime Minister possess at the time that confirmed the existence of such a serious risk to our country?

How many Canadians were arrested for committing sedition against the Government of Canada?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there was a plenty of evidence of disruptions at the border, in our communities and to our economy. Many Canadians lost their jobs temporarily. That is one reason why the Emergencies Act needed to be invoked.

Now we must participate in a transparency process, and the government will co-operate with the commissioner, Justice Rouleau.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the main pillar of our justice system is that all Canadians must be treated equally under the law. When new evidence of fraud comes to light, law enforcement has a duty to investigate, regardless of how powerful or privileged any individual who committed the fraud may be. The Attorney General has an obligation to make sure this applies to everyone, including a sitting prime minister.

Does the Attorney General believe that individuals who commit criminal offences, regardless of how powerful or privileged they are, or what positions they hold, should be charged?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we see again and again is the Conservatives wanting to play partisan games. Rather than posing questions on the issues that are affecting Canadians they want to throw mud. Canadians are looking for answers, and we have put forward tangible solutions in everything from housing to the environment.

They want to talk about things that happened six years ago. They want to obfuscate and block Parliament from doing its work, taking days and days to repeat the same things. We can do that. They can play their partisan games, or they could do the business of the nation and ask things that Canadians actually care about.

• (1425)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians do care that they are treated equally under the same laws

that apply to the powerful and privileged in this country. The criminal brief released by the RCMP made it clear that, if this were a civil servant or any other Canadian, they would be facing serious criminal charges in this case. There are new known facts that warrant a full investigation.

Does the Attorney General believe that the law should be applied equally to all Canadians, including a sitting prime minister, if they commit a criminal offence?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I realize that the Conservatives want to spend time talking about things that happened six years ago, but I would ask them about this instead. Right now we have a Bill C-8, which has been debated for 12 days in the House. That was introduced in December, so that is five months of obstruction. I would say that, while they do not want to talk about the economy, while they do not want to talk about the environment and while they do not want to talk about the issues that are important to Canadians, will they at least let the other parties in this place do their work and get the business of this nation done?

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal immigration department is possibly the worst department in Canada, and that is saying something. The wait time for Quebec immigrants applying for permanent residence is 31 months. There is a backlog of 29,000 files, and some cases have been dragging on since 2009. Ottawa is where cases go to die.

That is why it is arrogant to mock Quebec for wanting to manage all of its own immigration files. Above all, it is arrogant towards the people who are waiting.

In light of its obvious incompetence, why does the federal government not let Quebec manage all of its own immigration applications?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, immigration is essential to our economy.

What is going to get things moving is an increase in Quebec's immigration levels. Quebec is allowed to receive up to 28% of the immigrants who are welcomed to Canada each year, but it has chosen to accept only 13%.

If Quebec really wants to improve wait times for the tens of thousands of people waiting for permanent residence in Quebec, it only has to follow the example of our government and increase its immigration cap.

*Oral Questions***WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY**

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us never take women's rights for granted. Let us never assume that everything we have gained will never be taken away. Let us never believe that the issue has been settled once and for all, that everyone agrees that a woman's body is her own, and that the decision to terminate her pregnancy is hers and hers alone.

We need to continue to fight because one careless moment could set us back decades. Can the Deputy Prime Minister guarantee that her government will ensure that women's right to abortion will be protected?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, I would first like to say that, as a Canadian woman, I was both shocked and deeply worried by the news from the United States last night about abortion rights.

Having said that and speaking in the House today as a woman, as a mother and as Canada's Deputy Prime Minister, it is important for me to underline our government's clear and determined commitment to protect a woman's right to choose. That is a fundamental right.

* * *

● (1430)

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the federal government leapt into action to go after the Canadians who applied for CERB because the government had told them to, but when it comes to a wealthy, powerful corporation, it cut a sweetheart backroom deal for a company that avoided paying its fair share, over the objections of CRA staff.

Why does the government continue to prioritize going after everyday families instead of going after wealthy corporations that are purposely avoiding paying their fair share? When will the government understand it needs to prioritize the wealthy corporations that are cheating the system and stop going after working-class Canadians?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the confidence of Canadians and the integrity of our tax system are central to all of the agency's activities. The allegations of misconduct in relation to transfer pricing agreements were reviewed by a third party and no misconduct was found.

Let us be clear. The investigation carried out by an independent tax expert showed that the terms of the agreement were favourable to the agency and did not provide any type of preferential treatment to the taxpayers involved.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people are paying the price of rising fuel costs and of climate change, while the big oil companies are making record profits. Imperial Oil

has earned its biggest profits in 30 years. Cenovus earned \$1.6 billion in profits.

Why does the government continue to give more subsidies to these companies, instead of putting an end to oil subsidies?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is working with all sectors of the economy to reduce greenhouse gases, but also to grow the economy. We are working with the steel sector, the oil sector and all sectors to ensure we have a very strong economy in the future.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will ask the Minister of Public Safety the same question I asked yesterday, a question that he suspiciously avoided answering.

Did any minister or members of their political staff speak with Justice Rouleau before his appointment as commissioner on the inquiry into the Emergencies Act?

Did they discuss what kind of evidence the inquiry would or would not seek, including documents covered under cabinet confidence or solicitor-client privilege?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure my hon. colleague that the government is fully committed to being transparent around the events and circumstances that led to the invocation of the Emergencies Act.

Last week, we launched the public inquiry, affording Justice Rouleau broad powers to compel witnesses, documents and information, including some classified information, should he choose to ask for it.

Our intention is to shine a light on those events and it would be, I think, a point of departure to hear the Conservatives recognize that there was an emergency. We fulfilled our responsibility to protect Canadians.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he is avoiding the question again, but I will move on.

This past weekend, Ottawa saw the so-called "Rolling Thunder" protest come and go without major incident. During the "freedom convoy" protest, the government claimed that it needed the Emergencies Act because it needed to compel tow truck drivers to remove the protesters.

Over this last weekend, we saw many vehicles towed without needing the Emergencies Act, yet another blow to this government's fabricated claims.

If the government did not need extraordinary powers to get the tow trucks, what did it need them for?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to all frontline police officers, including members of the RCMP, who ensured that we were able to maintain public safety over the course of the past weekend.

Of course, there are big distinctions between what occurred last weekend and what occurred last winter, which was a national emergency.

We invoked the Emergencies Act after we received advice from law enforcement. Once it was invoked, we were able to restore public safety, and now we will ensure that there is transparency in the accountability of that decision.

• (1435)

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the minister claimed that Liberals invoked the Emergencies Act because they needed it, yet there was a large protest, related to the winter one that he just referred to, this past weekend, and as far as I am aware, no one remains camped out on the roadways around Parliament. This is in direct contradiction to what the minister is claiming. As this weekend showed, with leadership and coordination between government and police, peace and order can be maintained.

There was clearly a failure by the Liberals to show leadership during the winter protest, as the minister refers to it, and they used the Emergencies Act to bail themselves out.

Is that not right?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would point out that, notwithstanding the fact that public safety was maintained, there were enforcement actions taken last week as a result of some individuals who, again, crossed the line and broke the law.

It would be, again, an opportunity for the Conservatives to recognize, finally, after months of denying it, that there was an emergency. Collectively, we have a responsibility and a burden as parliamentarians to uphold the law. That is exactly what we did when we invoked the Emergencies Act, and now we will ensure that there is transparency, so that all Canadians can be reaffirmed in that decision.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, MPs continued to work from right here in Parliament throughout the winter protest. In fact, I would walk across Wellington Street at least once a day, with my infant son in a stroller, to come to work.

If the threat was as serious as the government is now making it out to be, did the Minister of Public Safety knowingly put my life and those of my infant son and every single person who works here in danger?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I am very relieved that my colleague was able to access the Hill with the additional protection and safety that was offered by the RCMP, by the Parliamentary Protection Service and by the Sergeant-at-Arms, but there is a big difference be-

tween what some of us were able to experience on the Hill and what was going on off the Hill.

There can be no doubt that people who live in Ottawa had their lives completely upended by the illegal occupation here, and that people who lived in border communities had their lives upended. That was because individuals broke the law to a point of a national emergency. That is why we invoked the Emergencies Act. We did it to protect Canadians.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, there were protests in downtown Ottawa. The police, the City and the various stakeholders managed the situation effectively and quickly. It was simply a matter of leadership.

However, last January, the government was completely overwhelmed by the events on Parliament Hill and hid behind the Emergencies Act.

Will the Prime Minister finally admit that he failed to show leadership?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are many differences between last winter's protest and last weekend's, which was much smaller.

Last winter's blockade and occupation were illegal. We listened very respectfully to what the police forces told us. Then we very carefully made the decision to invoke the Emergencies Act. That decision was necessary. Now we will collaborate with all transparency efforts.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not an answer.

Again, the protest this past weekend was orderly. It was simply a matter of leadership. The Minister of Public Safety said, "first of all, we are relieved because of the good work of the police forces on the ground, including the RCMP, which added resources to assure everyone that public safety would be maintained." That is what he is repeating today.

How can he still claim today that it was really necessary to invoke the Emergencies Act for the January events?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the short answer is that it was necessary.

There was a lot of disruption at the border. There was a lot of disruption to the economy. There was a lot of disruption to public safety for many Canadians. Those are the reasons why we invoked the Emergencies Act. It was not an easy decision to make. It was a tough, but necessary decision.

Now, we on this side of the House will be transparent during the inquiry into this process.

Oral Questions

● (1440)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in March we were lamenting the fact that immigrants in Quebec had to wait 28 months for the federal government to process their permanent residency applications. Now, just a few weeks later, that delay has jumped to 31 months. The feds are 31 months and 29,000 files behind, some of which have been languishing since 2009.

There is an immigration crisis. The minister cannot just say that everything is fine. He cannot just try to pass the buck. These figures are from his own department.

Can the minister at least name the problem and acknowledge that yes, there is an immigration crisis?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps now would be a good time to talk about the Canada-Quebec accord.

Quebec is entitled to 28% of the new permanent residents that arrive each year and chooses to welcome 13% of them. It selects 74% of the immigrants who settle in Quebec, and this includes their language skills. The federal government transfers Quebec nearly \$700 million a year, with no conditions, for the facilities that provide settlement services such as francization.

We, on this side of the House, will continue to work with Quebec instead of picking fights like the Bloc Québécois.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party says the Bloc wants to pick a fight. The parliamentary secretary just said that the immigration crisis is Quebec's fault. They are the ones picking a fight.

The federal government is currently in court over cases that have dragged on since 2009. That has nothing to do with François Legault's targets; his party did not even exist in 2009. It is not Philippe Couillard's fault either; he had not yet returned to politics. It is not Pauline Marois's fault; it has been going on longer than that.

The system is broken. It has been broken for a long time. When will the federal government take a good look at its own actions instead of blaming Quebec?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoy my colleague's energetic style in the House. His position is an honourable one.

As we on this side of the House have said on more than one occasion, immigration is essential to our economy.

As the member knows, Quebec sets its own immigration targets. Last year, the province welcomed nearly 50,000 new permanent residents. This year, Quebec has significantly increased its immigration targets, which will reduce wait times.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, three things are certain in life: death, taxes and federal government delays in bringing in temporary foreign workers.

However, there is nothing more predictable. Spring arrives at about the same time every year, as does the harvest. Every time, the federal government seems surprised. Every time, farmers face the same delays. Every year, they wonder if the workers will arrive on time.

Ottawa's machinery is broken. If they do not want to fix it, they should transfer the file to Quebec.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that immigration is an integral part of addressing the labour shortage.

IRCC is prioritizing work permit processing for in-demand occupations in industries such as health, agriculture, food and seafood production.

I would like to remind the House that in the first quarter of 2022, we processed more than 100,000 work permit applications. That is nearly double the number of work permits processed over the same period last year.

We will continue to ensure that Canadian employers have access to the workers they need.

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[English]

HEALTH

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if a person wants to visit Big Ben or the Queen, it's no problem. Passengers through Heathrow no longer require tests or proof of vaccination. If they want to visit the Hans Christian Andersen Museum or the Little Mermaid statue by the sea, they should feel free. There are now no travel restrictions in place for tourists visiting Denmark. If they have always dreamed of visiting the Leaning Tower of Pisa or the Trevi Fountain, no health pass is needed.

However, Canada is left behind in a myriad of mandates as tourist season looms. When the Prime Minister said that Canada was back, did he mean the back of the line for ending the mandates?

● (1445)

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the last two years have been very difficult for Canadians. A once-in-a-hundred-years pandemic has compelled governments around the world and in Canada to put together a range of measures to protect the health and safety of their citizens.

Over the last few weeks, our federal government has been adjusting these measures. We have removed predeparture tests. We have removed testing at airports. We are now continuing to adjust our measures based on the advice we receive from our public health experts.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are a couple of headlines from the past few weeks: “Italy, Greece relax COVID restrictions ahead of tourist season”; “UK Drops All COVID-19 Travel Restrictions”; “Denmark Lifts All Covid-19 Travel Restrictions”. Hungary, Iceland, Norway, Ireland, Romania and Slovenia are all open for travel ahead of summer, and the list goes on.

When will Canadians have the same freedoms that so many others around the world currently enjoy? Very simply put: Does this NDP-Liberal government actually trust Canadians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate very much the key word, which is “freedom”. The reason we have the freedom to relax those measures in Canada is that many Canadians, in fact, the vast majority of Canadians, have received their first, their second and, in many cases, their third dose.

When we hear the opposition speak about public health measures, but badly about vaccination, we have to make a choice. We cannot have relaxation of public health measures and more freedom without vaccination as we go through COVID-19.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that our duty is to Canadians and ensuring their safety, but these mandates have gone on too long. Canadians are unable to travel to see their ill relatives or attend funerals. Constituents continue to not be able to see their mothers, fathers, siblings or grandparents who are suffering from illnesses. Canadians are looking for hope.

What is the government going to do to end these mandates and reunite Canadians with their families?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 135,000 is the number of lives lost in the United States because it had a lower vaccination rate than we had in Canada, and 135,000 people is about the size of any one of the ridings in our country. There were 135,000 lives lost because the other country had a lower vaccination rate. That is not only a personal but a social tragedy.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Argentina, Costa Rica, Denmark, Hungary, Jamaica, Thailand, Mexico, Norway and Poland are a few of the many countries that have ended all their vaccine mandates. Even citizens of Cuba, a country with an interesting connection to the Prime Minister, have more freedom to travel than Canadians. However, the Liberal government maintains one of the most restrictive vaccine regimes around the world.

On what day will seven million Canadians get to fly again?

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague never agreed with any of the public health measures we put in place. He never supported vaccine mandates—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. If we let the minister answer, then members can ask another question. It is easy to get on the list. They can talk to their whips and get on the list.

The hon. Minister of Transport.

Oral Questions

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Speaker, let me just say that these measures are temporary and we will always consult our public health experts on how to proceed forward.

Let me just say to my hon. Conservative colleagues that they cannot, on the one hand, agree that vaccines save lives and, on the other hand, call them vindictive measures. That does not add up. They have to tell Canadians that they believe vaccines save lives. Do they agree with that or not?

* * *

● (1450)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, 112 organizations wrote a letter saying fossil fuel subsidies are undermining our climate goals. The government is fuelling the crisis, handing out billions of dollars to big oil and gas. Today, the minister defended his newest subsidy citing the IPCC, but the Liberals lobbied to highlight this flawed approach. Despite that, the report says carbon capture is the least effective and most expensive option.

Why is the government listening to big oil instead of the science?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government remains committed to the phasing out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, but fossil fuel subsidies do not include the measures that are intended to reduce carbon emissions. If my hon. colleague would actually read the IPCC report, it talks about carbon capture and sequestration as being an enabling technology to reduce emissions around the world.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as Canadians get hosed at the pumps, Imperial Oil has tripled its profits. RBC says four Canadian oil giants are on track to getting \$47 billion in revenue. Do we think they would spend any of that mitigating the damage they are doing to the planet? Not a chance when they can mooch off of the Liberal government, which gives them billions in subsidies. In the face of a burning planet, the government has turned itself into an open bar for the oil lobby.

My question is for the carbon capture and environment minister. When is he going to do the right thing and stop giving Canadian taxpayers' money to big oil?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government has an ambitious climate plan, perhaps the most detailed climate plan that exists in the world. It is focused on reducing emissions, but doing so in a manner that is going to create a good economy, a strong economy and good jobs for Canadians across the country. We are working with industry in all sectors of the economy to ensure that we do just that. That is something the NDP has never understood: a strong economy.

It is important that we reduce emissions and maintain a strong economy at the same time, and that is exactly what we are doing.

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AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Punjabi Canadians in my riding of Brampton North and across Canada have been advocating for a direct flight from Canada to the Indian city of Amritsar. My colleagues and I have also been raising our concerns with officials.

Would the Minister of Transport please update the House as to our government's position on the issue?

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Brampton North for her advocacy on this issue.

I have been hearing from members of Punjabi Canadian communities and colleagues here in the House of Commons about their desire to see more direct flights to India, including flights to Amritsar. This afternoon I met with the Indian civil aviation minister and raised the issue of more direct flights, including flights to Amritsar. I want to thank Minister Scindia for his willingness to work together on strengthening our air transportation agreement.

Our government will continue to support airlines looking to implement more direct flights to India.

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HOUSING

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, housing prices in my community have doubled since 2015. Former Conservative governments kept the housing market stable. HouseSigma, using house sales data for Weston, the housing minister's own neighbourhood, shows the price of a home in May 2007 was \$233,500. In April 2015, it was \$296,250, and in April 2022 it was nearly \$800,000.

Why is the minister failing even his own constituents, who are having to pay over half a million dollars more for a home since he was elected?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in budget 2022 we are investing more than ever before in the building of more affordable housing. We are doubling the number of new homes built in Canada in the next 10 years. We are introducing the tax-free first home savings account and making sure that we double the first-time homebuyers' tax credit and extend the first-time homebuyer incentive. In addition to that, we are cracking down on speculation and unfair busi-

ness practices in the real estate sector while also helping first-time homebuyers.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question today is on behalf of François and Josée, two young people from Charlesbourg. They hope to one day be able to buy a house, but mortgage rates continue to rise, which makes it more difficult to negotiate a first mortgage.

The Prime Minister would have us believe that inflation is a global phenomenon and that no government can control it. That is completely untrue. François and Josée tell me that the growth of their savings for a down payment on a home cannot keep up with the ever-rising house prices.

When will the Prime Minister take François and Josée's problem seriously?

• (1455)

[English]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, François and Josée can be helped by the tax-free first home savings account, the first-time homebuyer incentive and the doubling of the first-time homebuyers' tax credit. They will also be helped by the ban on foreign ownership, something the party opposite has opposed. This will help free up more housing stock for first-time homebuyers like those the hon. member mentioned. In addition to that, we are building more housing supply, tackling speculation, ending blind bidding and introducing a new homebuyers' bill of rights. All of these things taken together will do a lot to help first-time homebuyers.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after seven years of the Liberal government, the price of the average home has doubled from \$400,000 to \$800,000. More and more Canadians are unable to afford a home, and others cannot even afford rent. In Canmore and Banff, people are forced to live in vans or share apartments with a dozen other people because they cannot even afford rent, let alone buy a home. In Airdrie and Cochrane, young couples are living in their parents' basements with their children. No matter how hard people work, adequate housing is just not attainable.

How is this acceptable, and why has the government not done anything to fix it?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the party opposite has absolutely no credibility on this issue. Its members downloaded housing to the provinces and municipalities. They had no help for renters. We are the party that introduced federal leadership and significant resources back into affordable housing.

The hon. member talks about renters. We introduced the Canada housing benefit, which has helped tens of thousands of families in his home province, but the Conservatives voted against it. We are not stopping there. In budget 2022, we are adding an additional \$500 to the Canada housing benefit.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, their party is the problem. The problem is inflation and they are the ones causing it. At 6.7%, inflation will cost Canadians an extra \$2,000 this year. At the grocery store, Canadians are feeling the sting of higher prices, totalling an extra \$1,000 this year. At the gas pumps, Canadians are paying 40% more than they were last year. The natural gas that Canadians use to heat their homes is up 19%.

These hard-earned dollars are being taken away from people just trying to get by. Why will the government not stop causing the problem?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives continue to talk down the Canadian economy with an absolutely false economic narrative. The truth is that Canada is well placed to weather the economic storm caused by COVID and Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine. According to the IMF, we will have the fastest-growing economy in the G7 this year and next year. Just last week, S&P reaffirmed Canada's AAA credit rating, with a stable outlook. We have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Robert Laplante testified before the Standing Committee on Official Languages and said, "There are not two majorities in Canada; there is only one, and it is an anglophone majority, a representative group of which lives in Quebec."

The government said the same thing in its 2020 throne speech. It said, and I quote, "the situation of French is unique. There are almost 8 million Francophones in Canada within a region of over 360 million inhabitants who are almost exclusively Anglophone."

Is that still what the Minister of Official Languages thinks?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

As a francophone living in an official language minority community in New Brunswick, I know first-hand how important it is to protect and promote French. That is part of my daily life.

That is why I am pleased that my government reintroduced our bill to modernize the Official Languages Act. I hope that my friend and colleague will support this bill and help us pass it as quickly as possible.

Oral Questions

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the situation of French is unique, but not according to federal language law.

Here again I would like to quote what Robert Laplante told the committee. He said, "It is...indefensible to suggest that the situation of French in Quebec is perfectly symmetrical with that of English in Canada and, likewise, with the situation of anglophone and francophone minorities".

Even the Prime Minister said in 2020: "[F]or Canada to be bilingual, Quebec must first and foremost be francophone."

Is that still what the Minister of Official Languages thinks?

● (1500)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said repeatedly, protecting and promoting French are a top priority for this government and a priority for me as Minister of Official Languages. We are the first government to recognize that French is in decline in Canada including in Quebec.

Once again, that is why we are moving forward with a new version of the official languages bill. Again, I hope the opposition members will help us pass this bill as quickly as possible.

* * *

[English]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an avalanche of information came out today regarding the Liberal government's corrupt tax dealings with a huge multinational corporation. Documents reveal that the Minister of National Revenue gave a sweetheart tax deal to a corporation using Ireland as a tax haven, which is a breach of the CRA's own rules. Whistle-blowers in the minister's department raised alarm bells, saying the deal "undermines the...integrity of the CRA".

Will the Minister of National Revenue tell Canadians why there is one tax code for normal Canadians and a secret tax code for friends of the Liberal government?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the confidence of Canadians and the integrity of our tax system are at the heart of everything the agency does. Allegations of misconduct relating to transfer pricing agreements were reviewed by a third party, and no misconduct was found.

Oral Questions

Let me be very clear: The investigation was conducted by an independent tax expert who showed that the terms of the agreement were in fact favourable to the agency and did not offer any form of preferential treatment to the taxpayers involved.

[English]

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): With respect, Mr. Speaker, that is not what the media are saying and that is not what is coming out from insiders in the CRA. According to the report, CRA violated its own policy and procedures to give a sweetheart deal to big business. This is in addition to not prosecuting one person for the Panama papers.

Why is the CRA aggressively pursuing hard-working Canadians while letting big business off the hook?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can well understand, during this Mental Health Week, how warped the thinking is on the other side of the House and that they do not understand what we mean.

I am saying that the investigation was very clear.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Perhaps it would be appropriate for the minister to phrase her words differently.

[English]

Maybe she could apologize for that last statement. It was a little inflammatory.

The minister.

[Translation]

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

Let us be very clear. The investigation was conducted by an independent tax expert. He showed that the terms of the agreement were in fact favourable to the Canada Revenue Agency and to Canadians, and did not offer any form of preferential treatment to the taxpayers involved.

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are horrified to hear media reports that high-ranking Canada Revenue Agency officials are making sweetheart deals with multinational corporations so they do not pay their fair share of tax revenue. Worse yet, internal Canada Revenue Agency emails raised concerns around corruption.

Has the Minister of National Revenue met with the CRA Commissioner on this issue, and does she support the Conservatives' calls to have the commissioner appear before the finance committee?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that the Conservatives still have not figured out that committees are autonomous and indepen-

dent. I want to reassure my colleague opposite that the Conservatives can call their witnesses without my approval.

* * *

● (1505)

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House know that vaccines save lives.

That is why we made an announcement with Moderna last week regarding plans to build a plant in Montreal capable of producing up to 100 million vaccines. This is very promising for our biomanufacturing.

Could the Minister of Innovation comment on the importance of this partnership to the health sector and the Canadian economy?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his excellent question.

The Prime Minister and I were in Montreal last week to mark a historic step forward in the life sciences sector, as we announced that Moderna would build its plant in Quebec.

For the past two years, we have been rebuilding the Canadian biomanufacturing sector with strategic investments. Thanks to our vision, Canada will be better prepared to deal with any future health emergency.

We are going to invent the future of vaccines right here in Canada.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal budget proves once again that the current government is all talk and no action. Instead of a plan to protect our Arctic sovereignty and security, all we got was a reannouncement of NORAD's existing infrastructure and that the government is considering its options. Millions are promised, while billions are needed.

Our Arctic sovereignty and security cannot be protected by more Liberal empty promises. Will the minister, who continues to fail to defend our north, stand up and explain?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic is secure and well established. We are taking action and making landmark investments to increase our Arctic sovereignty, including conducting joint exercises in the Arctic, purchasing six Arctic offshore patrol ships and enhancing surveillance and intelligence capability in the Arctic with the procurement of 88 fighter jets.

We will remain firm and unwavering in the defence of the Arctic and of our continental security more generally.

HEALTH

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Baie Verte Peninsula, Fogo Island, Buchans, St. Alban's and Harbour Breton once had 25 doctors. These five communities in my riding are either without a doctor or are about to lose their last one. Some desperate communities are even asking me if it is possible to get relief from army doctors and medics.

The 7,500 health care professionals promised for rural Canada in the Liberal election platform cannot be found in the 2022 budget. Why did the Liberal government break its promise to rural Canadians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to receive a question from an MP from Newfoundland, with which we have a great relationship.

We are very grateful for their hard work through the last two years. We are also very grateful for the important work that they do every day to provide people in Newfoundland with primary care providers in health: family physicians. In order to reduce the backlog, a \$2-billion investment that we announced just a few weeks ago will make sure that every person in that province, and in all provinces and territories, benefits from the wonderful collaboration we are having across Canada.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the provincial governments, which are responsible for the delivery of health care, are fine with removing vaccine and mask mandates in their jurisdictions, because they know they can now manage COVID.

The federal government, however, which is not responsible for health care delivery, is still implementing punitive mandates for employees, travellers and those crossing borders. It is virtually the only government in the world that is doing this.

Why are these NDP-Liberals such “out liars”?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: I would say maybe the member could find a new word, apologize for that little quip, and rephrase that.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. Wearing a mask has made me cough. I meant to say “outliers”.

• (1510)

The Deputy Speaker: I know we are trying to say indirectly what we cannot say directly. Maybe the member could try one more time.

The hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I am just asking. I withdraw the comment. I am wondering why the Government of Canada is an outlier on this issue.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone in the House obviously agrees on the importance of being responsible and prudent. We have done what Canadians have expected of us in the past two years. Canadians have done what we expected of them in the past two years, which was to follow public health measures and to get vaccinated.

Oral Questions

Because of that, in Canada we have achieved one of the lowest death rates in the world. If that is called being an “outlier”, we are very proud of that.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a former small business owner who knows first-hand the struggles that small businesses and entrepreneurs faced throughout the pandemic, I know that expanding trade ties with the Philippines is crucial in our trade diversification strategy as it is a fast-growing market and would create new economic opportunities for Canadian businesses of all sizes.

Can the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development update us on what our government is doing to strengthen our economic and commercial relationships with the Philippines and Filipino-Canadian businesses?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this weekend Canada and the Philippines signed an agreement to establish a joint economic commission.

The Philippines is a growing, dynamic market in the Indo-Pacific region. This is going to help Canadian businesses of all sizes export more into this market and become more competitive globally. We will also continue to build the people-to-people ties, with over a million Filipino-Canadians who call Canada home. I want to say to those entrepreneurs that this is a great way to kick off Asian Heritage Month.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week is Mental Health Week. After two years of COVID-19, Canada has seen what we already knew: that our mental health system is woefully underfunded.

Many Canadians are struggling with their mental health, but cannot access the care they need. The government promised to establish a new federal transfer to help provinces and territories expand mental health services. While the government pledged an initial \$4.5 billion over five years, this funding was nowhere to be found in the budget.

When will the government fulfill its promise and deliver a permanent federal transfer for mental health services?

Points of Order

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his ongoing advocacy. As he knows, mental health is health, and our government has made mental health a priority. In 2017, we made \$5 billion available to provinces and territories in bilateral agreements. It is for 10 years: up until 2027. We have established \$45 million for the national mental health care standards. Through that, we will get a mental health strategy and have a plan to be able to negotiate with provinces and territories for the very important mental health transfer.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the impacts of colonialism are deep among Inuit. In Nunavut, suicide rates are 10 times higher than in the rest of Canada. I must emphasize the need for sustainable, culturally appropriate mental wellness services. Organizations such as the Ilisaqsivik society work tirelessly to support mental well-being and train Inuit to be counsellors. To survive, Ilisaqsivik must compete for funding.

Will the government take action by providing sustainable funding for organizations that provide culturally appropriate wellness services?

Qujannamiik.

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to rise in the House during Mental Health Week to talk about the overlay of extreme mental health needs in indigenous communities as a result of the history of colonization and oppression in this country.

That is why this government takes it so seriously. In fact, we have designated \$425 million toward indigenous mental health-specific programs. There is more money in budget 2022 so that we will have mental health services that are culturally appropriate and that will serve communities to the best of their needs as designed by indigenous people.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of the honourable John Streicker, who is the government House leader, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, Minister responsible for Yukon Development Corporation, Minister responsible for Yukon Energy Corporation, Minister of the Public Service Commission and Minister responsible for French Language Services Directorate.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

• (1515)

POINTS OF ORDER

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and, if you seek it, I hope you will find unanimous consent for the following motion, that given that we are in a climate emergency and Canada spends 14 times more on financial supports to the fossil fuel sector than it does for renewable energy, the House call on the government to eliminate all subsidies, public financing and other fiscal supports to the oil and gas sector before the end of—

Some hon. members: No.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion: That the House emphasize that Quebec and Canada are welcoming countries, open to the world, invested in the fight against anti-Semitism and all forms of discrimination and condemn the false, defamatory and offensive remarks made by the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov.

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

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

[English]

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, there have been conversations with my colleagues, and I think, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion, that this House affirm that the rule of law is one of the principles upon which Canada was founded and applies equally to everyone, that no one is above the law, and that the Criminal Code provides no statute of limitations for crimes such as fraud against the government and anyone—

Some hon. members: No.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion: That the House reiterate that a woman's body belongs to her and her alone and that it recognize her freedom of choice on abortion for any reason whatsoever.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

• (1520)

[English]

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Mr. Speaker, there has been consultation among the parties and I believe if you seek it you will find unanimous consent for the following, that the government allow public servants to return to work, regardless of vaccination status.

Some hon. members: No.

REMARKS BY RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope I will do better than my hon. colleagues in terms of getting consent.

There have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I hope you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion:

That this House emphasizes that Canada is a welcoming country, open to the world, invested in the fight against anti-Semitism and all forms of discrimination; and condemns the false, defamatory and offensive remarks made by the Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov.

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

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I wonder if you can just report to the House on the question of bringing a unanimous consent motion when a unanimous consent motion that was identical or very similar has been put forward.

I supported the last motion, of course, but I am concerned about protecting the rights of members insofar as seeing the same motion proposed repeatedly.

I wonder if you can report to the House on the expectations around that.

The Deputy Speaker: I will follow up with this right after we finish this list of motions.

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties. In the spirit of Mental Health Week and the incredible work of organizations like the Do More Agriculture Foundation and my colleague from Cariboo—Prince George, I think that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion, that, in the opinion of the House, the government update the mandate of Farm Credit Canada to further enhance services and products that support mental health, members of agriculture and agri-food—

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I think if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion, that, in regard to the government's Motion No. 11 and out of respect for the hard-working and dedicated employees of the House of Commons—

Some hon. members: No.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I hope I will be able to finish my motion before we get all these “no”s from across the way.

There have been discussions among the parties, and I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion, that, given

Speaker's Ruling

that the government tabled the largest spending budget in Canadian history—

Some hon. members: No.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I think if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion: That the House acknowledge the provincial premiers' unanimous call for an increase in health transfers and ask the government—

Some hon. members: Nay.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I hope that—

Some hon. members: Nay.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Let us just hear the first sentence, and then we will decide from there.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I hope that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That, in the opinion of this House, the government should update the mandate of Farm Credit Canada—

Some hon. members: Nay.

● (1525)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is rising on a point of order.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I would like it if the members of this place acquainted themselves with the standing rules, particularly Standing Order 16 and Standing Order 18, which mean that when a member rises and has been recognized by the Speaker, he or she or they are not to be interrupted by yelling.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to take the opportunity to respond to the point of order?

The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, frankly, we are all quite aware of the rules of procedure in the House. We do not need to be lectured by another member on how to conduct ourselves. We know what we are doing here in the House.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: I have this comment to make, whether it is a point of order or a response to one.

I know there was an unusually high number of requests for unanimous consent motions after question period for today. All but one were denied. I would like to bring attention to a few quotes from chair occupants with regard to this process.

This is from May 17, 2019:

It is known to be common practice of the House to use the unanimous consent motion approach when there is known agreement among parties for the acceptance of these motions.

This is one from May 27, 2019:

Government Orders

As Speaker, I am confident that members still expect the process of unanimous consent to be used for its rightful purpose and in the manner in which it was intended, including ensuring that the necessary consultations take place prior to these requests being raised in the House....

Finally, this is from June 3, 2019:

[W]e expect in fact there will be consent because the member consulted all the parties and has received that consent.

I encourage members to bear this in mind before seeking unanimous consent for a motion.

[*Translation*]

Perhaps this subject could also be discussed by the House leaders at their meeting this afternoon.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, my hon. friend from South Surrey—White Rock is indeed a friend. I rose only because it is impossible for either of these parties to hear themselves speak. I have been here 11 years, but I have never heckled once. It is possible to respect our rules and respect each other, and that is all I plead for.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for her intervention as well.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ECONOMIC AND FISCAL UPDATE IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2021

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-8, An Act to implement certain provisions of the economic and fiscal update tabled in Parliament on December 14, 2021 and other measures, be read the third time and passed, of the amendment, and of the amendment to the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: When we last went off, the member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington had the floor. She has eight minutes left and five minutes of questions and answers.

The hon. member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to resume my intervention on Bill C-8.

Earlier, I noted that Parliament is supposed to be a legislature based on collaboration, not coercion. I also highlighted how important the role of Parliament is in scrutinizing the spending of public funds. Now I want to bring this around to something that the leader of the NDP, the member for Burnaby South, said just last week in his speech on the budget.

He said that in the past couple of years, Canadians have had to deal with the pandemic and the growing cost of living, which is at a crisis level now. The cost of everything has gone up, from filling up our cars to buying groceries to finding an affordable home and to paying rent. On top of that, there is a war that makes everyone across the world feel less safe. In this context, Canadians sent us to

Parliament, he said, in a minority government, to get them help and to find ways to help them solve the problems they are dealing with.

My hon. colleague then went on to claim victory, touting potential dental care as a surefire sign of victory. All it took was surrendering the most basic function of parliamentarians to the Liberal government, and that is their ability to scrutinize public expenditures. This is what their confidence and supply agreement necessitates, the automatic support of money bills. In my opinion, that is not a win for Canadian. That is an abstract shirking of the most basic duties of a parliamentarian. I find it incredibly difficult to believe that my colleagues in all parties are satisfied with the content of this legislation. Out of a 124-page bill, there is a singular area for improvement and nothing else that they would like to see added to the legislation.

On this side of the House, this is not the case. For example, at committee my colleague from Northumberland—Peterborough South raised concerns about the inequitable nature of the distribution of the carbon tax rebate for farmers. He rightfully pointed out that a dairy farmer in Stirling would have different expenses than a wheat farmer out in Saskatchewan. There are both regional differences and industrial differences, differences that the legislation does not differentiate. This was confirmed by Ms. Lindsay Gwyer, the director general of the legislation, tax legislation division in the tax policy branch at the Department of Finance.

Subsequent witnesses confirmed that the government's approach was not ideal. When asked whether his members supported the approach to the carbon tax rebate as laid out in the private member's bill of my colleague from Huron—Bruce, as opposed to the patchwork job in Bill C-8, Mark Agnew, of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce replied, "We'll take what we can get in the meantime, but certainly working towards Bill C-234 is what we hope can happen."

My colleague from Calgary Centre rightfully questioned the value and efficacy of a 1% increase in housing tax. He said:

I cite in the House of Commons the example of British Columbia, where there is a municipal tax already on foreign transactions in the housing market of up to 2%, depending on the buyer, plus a provincial tax up to 3%, for a total of up to 5%. In addition, there is a 20% transfer tax on foreign buyers, and yet 7.7% of activity in the Vancouver real estate market is still being consumed by foreign buyers of real estate in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland.

These small taxes aren't having much of an effect on buying, unless we're looking ex post facto at this. How do you suppose an extra 1% jurisdictional overreach is going to solve the housing problem in Canada?

The response from the government official was, "I will just point out, very simply, that this is a tax, the purpose of which is to raise revenues. It's estimated that the tax will raise \$735 million in revenues over the next five years."

Another witness styled the tax as perfunctory, stating:

I would say at a very basic level that you are looking at with the cost of doing business is. In this case it's the business of crime. When you are talking about laundering millions of dollars, a 1% hit on that could be considered the cost of doing business.

This is why we talk about, as well, the need for penalties for money laundering to be highly substantive and not just seen as the cost of doing business, to properly dissuade money launderers from exploiting Canadian housing.

● (1530)

At a time when young Canadian families are living in their parents' basements because of the obscene increase in housing prices, this government comes in and increases it further, and not to combat foreign ownership or restrict purchasing, but to exclusively raise money to pay for its record spending.

It was interesting to have been able to approach this particular type of legislation with a different mindset than I had had previously. Armed with new information, we were able to contextualize how Bill C-8 would truly affect Canadians. Paired with the budget, Bill C-8 clearly signals what this government views as a priority and, unfortunately for many people across Canada, including struggling families in Hastings—Lennox and Addington, they are not included.

I had previously highlighted some areas I believe the government needs to focus on to best serve struggling Canadian families. This includes investment in rural infrastructure, taxation relief, cutting red tape and support for our agricultural sector. It is my firm belief that these are the most effective measures to get our economy going and stifle crippling inflation.

The record increase in inflation we experienced months ago has not subsided. The cost of fuel has continued to increase, and with that, the cost of living. Canadians need a government that will help them through this extremely difficult time. Through my eyes, Bill C-8 would not do that.

● (1535)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member talk about collaboration, and she suggested that this place requires collaboration. That is absolutely true, but collaboration does not equal consensus. The way our entire system works is to bring forward ideas, a bill in this case; bring it to committee; have robust discussion at committee; formulate a response with a majority of the committee members voting in favour to send it back here; debate it one more time in this place; and, ultimately, vote on it.

Can the member explain to me why she feels as though the collaborative process has not occurred? If a majority of the members on the committee have sent the report back to the House for final debate and to vote, it clearly has.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Madam Speaker, the hon. member fails to mention that it is not consistent with the views and concerns that I am hearing from people at the dinner tables across my riding. People are fed up. They are disappointed, and they are concerned. What we need is a government that has the support, the will and the hope of Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, according to Bill C-8, the health transfer escalator will be 3% until 2027. That is one of the reasons why the Bloc Québécois is against this bill. Quebec and the provinces stand united in demanding that the

Government Orders

government cover system costs and increase the health transfer escalator to 6%. All the experts have told us that the system has become more vulnerable than ever and that we need to restore the strength of our health care networks to recover from the pandemic.

Can my colleague tell us whether she agrees with the Liberals' measure, which seeks to maintain the Harper government's action to reduce the health transfer escalator to 3%?

[English]

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Madam Speaker, we have to recognize that the budget projections are fiction. They do not necessarily account for the promises in their future costs.

Earlier today, I read a comment from a colleague of mine back home, and I am going to share it with members, because it really gives the sense and the pulse of where Canadians are at. She recently shared, "Shelby, I am not the only one who is busting their backside. Moving forward in this world is difficult. Our patience is being tested daily with an economy that is crumbling and creating barriers for all ages. So many people are struggling. Is it normal to have to create an income as a side job to be able to get gas to drive to your full-time job?"

This is not okay, and these are the types of messages I am getting from people in my riding.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, I have been receiving emails from constituents. One in particular says that 50,000 teachers are waiting for their tax refund. As a single parent, this constituent is counting on this money and has been waiting for this bill to finally be passed to implement the refundable tax credit for teachers.

Does the member agree that the time to move forward is today, so teachers can finally get the funding that they have been waiting for to do the work that they do, which is just so important?

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Madam Speaker, I have two girls, one in grade school and one in high school, and the work their teachers do is admirable. I respect them for that.

I reject the member's comments that Conservatives are not necessarily supporting it. At this point, I would encourage the hon. member to get involved in her local provincial campaign and address those particular types of issues.

● (1540)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-8, and my comments will focus on part 5 of Bill C-8. This is the government's effort to double down on its failed strategy of mandates and in fact try to push provinces, which are all moving away from mandates, to try to bring them back. Specifically, part 5 of the bill says:

Government Orders

The Minister of Health may make payments to the provinces and territories not exceeding \$300 million in total for the purpose of supporting their coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) proof-of-vaccination initiatives, with the amount of each payment to be determined by the Minister of Health.

This is the context in which we are living: Provinces are recognizing and moving away from these mandate policies, and the federal government is doubling down on its failures.

Members who travel back and forth to Ottawa will see the realities of how the federal mandates conflict with the provincial mandates and really how absurd it is. This weekend, I was at a trade show in my riding, and in keeping with the provincial rules in Alberta, anybody could come to the trade show without needing to present proof of vaccination. I think that is a good thing. People are not required to wear masks, which is positive and reasonable as well.

I was at this trade show meeting with constituents who were coming through, shaking hands, kissing babies, talking to people about the issues on their mind. None of these requirements were in place at the provincial level. Then, when I go to the airport and get on an airplane, all of a sudden I am in federal jurisdiction, which means that all of a sudden the pandemic is back once I arrive at the airport. I need to wear a mask, and I need to provide proof of vaccination to get on the plane. There are all these new requirements in place.

Then I get to Ontario and leave the airport. In Ontario, people do not have to present proof of vaccination to get into restaurants. They do not have to wear masks in restaurants. I get off the plane, come downtown and go to receptions. There are all these receptions being hosted off the Hill in restaurants, and I see Liberal, NDP, Conservative and Bloc staff and members at these receptions not wearing masks. No proof of vaccination is required. They are in a restaurant and it is all fine, apparently. Then, when they get on the Hill, they are back in federal jurisdiction and the government insists that proof of vaccination is required and they have to wear a mask.

I try to make sense of the science behind the apparent conclusion that COVID-19 can only be transmitted when we are in places regulated by the federal government. How does it make sense scientifically for Liberals to say we need these mandates in these small, limited areas of federal jurisdiction, even when provinces are lifting these mandates? It is perfectly okay for Liberal members and staff to go to parties and restaurants in Ottawa outside of the parliamentary precinct and there is no risk from COVID, apparently, in those places. However, when they come to the Hill, apparently we need to ban any person, staff member or member of Parliament who is not vaccinated and require people to wear masks. It does not make any sense. These rampant inconsistencies do not make any sense at all.

This is what has frustrated so many people throughout COVID-19. They are being told they have to follow the science, and then they are being faced with these obviously radically inconsistent rules that are applied in different ways. Insofar as there are things that make sense scientifically, they should be in place across jurisdictions. If the same people are going to events in their ridings and going to restaurants, out and about where they are not wearing masks and the government is not insisting that there be proof of vaccination in those places, and then it insists on the continuation

of discriminatory mandates in areas of federal jurisdiction, we should note and call out how absurd that is.

We should also know that these federal mandates that are being promoted in Bill C-8 are applied regardless of the risk of transmission or exposure. One would think that the government would be happy to include an exception for those who take a rapid test. If people have just completed a negative rapid test, they are obviously at much lower risk of having and transmitting COVID-19 than if they were vaccinated a significant number of months ago. I think that is fairly clear in terms of the scientific data that we have right now, and yet people who have not been tested recently can get on an airplane if they were vaccinated, but if they have just produced a negative test and they are not vaccinated, then they cannot get on the plane.

• (1545)

This is clearly not about risk to other people on the airplane. It is clearly not about risk to other people in that space. It is about the government trying to be as punitive as possible toward those who have made a personal choice with respect to their health.

We have federal mandates that say to public servants who work from home that they have to be on leave. That does not make any sense. Those mandates do not affect just the unvaccinated; they affect vaccinated people who rely on federal government services. We are seeing in immigration and so many other departments delays in the provision of government services and major gaps in terms of the provision of key government services. People need to wait years for their citizenship application to be processed. People who are trying to sponsor refugees in vulnerable situations need to wait three years before they can privately sponsor someone to come to Canada. It may be that a contributing factor to that is that the government has told people who work in immigration processing and other areas, even if they are working from home, that they cannot continue to work if they are making a choice not to get vaccinated. How does that make sense?

For all members of the government know, the people they are interacting with on public transit and servers at restaurants close to the Hill at the various receptions they are going to may or may not be vaccinated, yet they insist that public servants who are working from home providing vital service to Canadians in immigration processing or working on providing support to people who are filing their taxes, and other areas, have to be vaccinated or they will be put on leave, again, even if they are working from home.

These mandates clearly do not make any sense. They have never made sense, because they are not applied with a view to risk; they are applied solely with the objective of being as punitive as possible toward those who have chosen not to be vaccinated. Why else would these have happened?

Government Orders

At this point in time, where we are today, in May 2022, let us acknowledge that any meaningful impact on vaccination rates of these coercive mechanisms has now run its course. I do not think these mandates made sense at any point in time, but certainly at this point, any people who are going to be impacted in their vaccination choices by these coercive tools have already had the opportunity to consider the impacts, and if they are not vaccinated, they have definitively, despite the coercive pressure from the government, chosen not to.

It is time now for the government to recognize that people have been presented with information and they have made the choices they want to make. Now, proposing the spending of another up to \$300 million to promote mandates at the provincial level just does not make any sense. Let us recognize that at this stage, two years after the start of the pandemic, many Canadians have been vaccinated and we have worked hard to address the issues we need to address in terms of health care capacity and other things, and it is time now to try to move forward.

People I talk to across the country, including in my riding, do not want to see the permanent realization of vaccine mandates. We saw at times the government proposing funding for three years of vaccine mandates, and it is simply grossly unfair that people would be still, and possibly in the future, prevented from getting on airplanes, prevented from seeing family members and prevented from coming into Parliament in the event that they are not vaccinated, especially given that people from federal jurisdictions are going out and participating in things where they are interacting with people without masks and people who are not vaccinated.

In the time I have left, I want to comment on the principle behind vaccine mandates. It was interesting in question period to hear the transport minister say that we cannot at the same time think that vaccines are useful from a health perspective and also say that—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I believe that the button the member is wearing is in reference to what is definitely known to be a political statement in here, talking about ending mandates. We all know, and in particular this member does, that we are not supposed to be wearing any kind of buttons that promote any kind of political agenda or statement in that manner, and the member is clearly disregarding that rule. I am wondering if you could politely ask him to remove it.

• (1550)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am not sure. Maybe the hon. member can tell me what his button says so in that way I will be more clear about my decision, but I want to remind members that I have asked members not to wear buttons in the House unless it is something that has been approved throughout the House.

If the hon. member can tell me what his button says, then I will be able to better say whether he should remove it right now.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, I want to acknowledge that the member might have a point. I did not intend to leave this button on for this speech. I will tell them, since members are curious, that it says “end federal mandates”. I could also table the button if—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will ask the hon. member to remove the button. I will remind members not to wear buttons in the House unless it is something that is being supported throughout the House itself, such as the Moose Hide Campaign or the White Ribbon Campaign.

We are now at the time for closure, unfortunately.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, certainly in light of the conversation that was just had, I would hope that if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to support the message of “end the mandates” here in this place. I would ask for unanimous consent in that regard.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member has asked for unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind members that the House rules are that these are props and they are not to be used in the House. It is not the first time that we have had to raise that with different members of the House. I would again ask members not to wear buttons. It is certainly a conversation that we will have at the House Speakers' breakfast, whenever we have it next. There are to be no buttons at all.

I would say that if the respect is not going to be there for the Speaker's ruling, then I would ask those members not to come to the House if they prefer to wear the button.

It being 3:51 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, April 28, 2022—

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I know you mentioned that the time for debate on Bill C-8 was over. My impression was that it was going until 4 o'clock, and that was counting five hours from a particular point. I just wonder if the table might be able to inform us when that clock on the five hours began and therefore when it finishes.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): After question period, there were 23 minutes left, which led us to 3:51 p.m..

It being 3:51 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, April 28, 2022, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[*Translation*]

The question is on the amendment to the amendment.

May I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of amendment to the amendment to the House*]

Government Orders

● (1555)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the amendment to the amendment be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 4, 2022, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

*[English]***BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2022, NO. 1**

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.) moved that Bill C-19, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 7, 2022 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Madam Speaker, I would like to first say that, like so many Canadian women, I was both shocked and deeply worried by the news from the United States last night about abortion rights. The U.S. Supreme Court confirmed this morning that the leaked document was authentic, but that it does not represent a decision by the court or the final position of any member on the issues in the case.

I also want to recognize that this decision is a decision for American judges, American politicians and the American people. However, having said that, and speaking here today as a woman, as a mother and as Canada's Deputy Prime Minister, it is important for me to begin by underlining our government's clear and determined commitment to protect a woman's right to choose. I want every single woman and girl in Canada to hear me say that here today.

Abortion is a fundamental right. Feminists fought for decades to secure it, and here in Canada we will not let it be undermined in any way. As part of Canada's feminist foreign policy, it has been a priority for our government to support the reproductive rights of women and girls around the world. We will continue to do so with greater determination than ever.

We cannot take any of our rights, including this fundamental one, for granted. In a democracy like our own, our rights are ultimately secured by the will of the people, as expressed by the decisions of their elected representatives: all of us here in the House. That is why it is so important for me to make this statement today and why all Canadians, especially all Canadian women who care about a woman's right to choose, need to be active and vigilant and need to speak out.

[Translation]

I am pleased to start today's debate on Bill C-19, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 7, 2022 and other measures.

I would like to begin by explaining the context of the current debate. When COVID-19 struck for the first time, Canada suffered a tremendous economic shock. Three million Canadians lost their jobs and our economy shrunk by 17%. This gave way to the worst recession since the Great Depression.

Our main objective was to keep Canadians at work and to keep their employers afloat. That is why we provided unprecedented emergency help to Canadian families and businesses. It was a bold plan and it worked.

● (1600)

[English]

We have recovered 115% of the jobs lost in those awful first months, compared with just 93% in the United States. That means that more than three million jobs have been created or recovered. Our unemployment rate has declined to just 5.3%. That is the lowest level since Canada first began collecting comparable statistics in 1976. Our real GDP is 1.5% above where it was before the pandemic, with annual GDP growth of 6.7% in the fourth quarter of 2021, and a remarkable 13.9% on an annualized basis in February of this year.

The IMF projects that Canada will have the strongest economic growth in the G7, both this year and next. Last Thursday, S&P again affirmed Canada's AAA credit rating and gave us a stable outlook. This is in part thanks to the emergency support our government provided to rescue Canadians and the Canadian economy. It is thanks to the remarkable grit and determination that Canadians have shown over these past two years.

However, there are still challenges ahead. Inflation, a global phenomenon, is making things more expensive in Canada too. Snarled supply chains have driven prices higher at the checkout counter. Buying a house is out of reach for far too many Canadians.

Russia's illegal and barbaric invasion of Ukraine is directly contributing to higher food and energy prices, both here at home and around the world. We need to do better as a country at innovating and encouraging small businesses to grow.

We need to continue to address the existential threat of climate change, which is why, with the investments outlined in the budget and through Bill C-19, our government is focusing on growing our economy and making life more affordable for Canadians.

[Translation]

One of the pillars of our plan is investing in the backbone of a strong and growing country.

People need homes in which to live. The problem is that Canada does not have enough homes. Our budget contains the most ambitious plan ever put forward by a federal government to resolve this fundamental problem. Over the next 10 years, it will help us double the number of new homes built in Canada. To build the new homes Canadians need, we must make a great national effort that will demand collaboration from all levels of government.

That is why Bill C-19 contains measures aimed at investing in building more homes and bringing down the barriers that keep them from being built. For example, the bill provides for up to \$750 million to help municipalities address public transit shortfalls caused by the pandemic. To increase the impact of this investment, the provinces and the territories will have to commit to match the federal contribution. This funding will also serve as a lever for the construction of new homes. The provinces and territories will have to accelerate their work with their municipalities to build more homes for Canadians.

• (1605)

[English]

We also need to make the housing market fairer, which is why Bill C-19 will legislate a two-year ban on allowing foreign investors to buy houses in Canada. We know that foreign money has been flowing into Canada to buy residential real estate. This has fuelled concerns about the impact on costs in cities such as Vancouver and Toronto, and across the country. Canadians are worried about being priced out of the housing market. By banning foreign purchases of Canadian housing for two years, we will make sure that houses in our country are being used as homes for Canadian families, not as a speculative financial asset class.

We will make all assignment sales of newly constructed or renovated housing taxable for GST and HST purposes. Bill C-19 will help seniors and people with disabilities live and age at home by doubling the home accessibility tax credit's annual limit to \$20,000, which will help make upgrades such as wheelchair ramps more affordable.

A growing country and a growing economy also demand a growing workforce. With Bill C-19, we would make it easier for the skilled immigrants that our economy needs to make Canada their home by improving our government's ability to select applicants from the express entry system who match the needs of Canadian businesses.

We would also invest in the determined and talented workers who are already here by making it more affordable for people working in the skilled trades to travel to where the jobs are. This legislation would introduce a labour mobility deduction for tradespeople that would allow workers to deduct up to \$4,000 per year for travel and temporary relocation expenses as part of an effort to reduce labour shortages in the skilled trades.

We would also introduce 10 days of paid sick leave for workers in the federally regulated private sector, which would support one million workers in industries like air, rail, road and marine transportation, banks, and postal and courier services.

The budget invests in the skills that Canadian workers need to fill the good-paying jobs of today and tomorrow, and it would help

Government Orders

break down barriers and ensure that everyone is able to roll up their sleeves and get to work. Passing this bill is critical to that effort.

[Translation]

In addition, Bill C-19 will enable us to continue the work we are doing to maintain a sound tax system where everyone pays their fair share.

Our government knows that people who can buy expensive cars, planes and boats can also contribute a bit more. Canadians also know this. We were elected on this promise and we intend to keep it.

To this end, we are following through on our commitment to introduce a tax on the sale of new luxury cars and aircraft with a retail sale price of over \$100,000. This tax will also apply to the sale of boats that cost more than \$250,000.

[English]

Today, anonymous Canadian shell companies can be used to conceal the true ownership of assets including businesses and property. Through this legislation, our government would hasten the creation of a public and searchable registry of federally incorporated companies before the end of 2023, two years earlier than planned, to help counter illegal activities including money laundering and tax invasion. This would also help to prevent shell companies from being used to avoid sanctions, and would allow the tracing and freezing of financial assets. This effort is particularly pressing as Canada works hard with our allies through the new Russian Elites, Proxies and Oligarchs Task Force to target the global assets of Russia's elites and those who act on their behalf.

That brings me to the way that Bill C-19 would allow the Canadian government to cause the forfeiture and disposal of assets held by sanctioned people and entities, and to use the proceeds to help the people of Ukraine. Among our allies, Canada is leading the way on this work. We would be, with the passage of this bill, the first member of the G7 to take this important step. I can think of no better way to pay for the very expensive work of rebuilding Ukraine than with the seized assets of the Russian leadership that has waged this war.

In 2019, we introduced a national price on carbon pollution to make sure that it was no longer free to pollute anywhere in Canada. In provinces where the federal system applies, the proceeds are returned to Canadians and their communities.

Government Orders

• (1610)

For those living in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, Bill C-19 will change the delivery of climate action incentive payments from a refundable credit on tax returns to quarterly payments, starting in July of this year.

[Translation]

In Canada and around the world, climate action is now an economic necessity. Trillions of dollars can be invested in good jobs and the clean industries of today and tomorrow. Thanks to meaningful measures, the 2022 budget will enable Canada to benefit from the green transition.

One of these measures is the new Canada growth fund, which will help attract the billions of dollars in private capital we need to transform our economy at speed and at scale.

We will make zero-emission vehicles a more affordable choice for Canadians. We will build and expand the national network of charging stations for zero-emission vehicles. We will make new investments in clean energy. We will also help Canadians and Canadian companies benefit from the transition to a clean economy. One of the measures included in Bill C-19 consists in cutting tax rates in half for businesses that manufacture zero-emission technologies.

We recently introduced the 2030 emissions reduction plan, the 2022 budget and the bill we are debating today. The measures contained in these three documents represent a more sustainable economy for Canadians today as well as for future generations.

[English]

Bill C-19 will make a real difference in the lives of Canadians. It will help grow our economy, it will create good jobs and it will help us continue building a Canada where nobody is left behind. I hope all hon. members in the House will support the swift passage of this bill in the weeks to come.

• (1615)

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am going to ask the minister a question that I have asked her before. It is one that we have not received an answer to. It is a question that I believe Canadians deserve an answer to. It has to do with the state of Canada's finances.

We have incurred the largest budget deficits in Canadian history. We have the largest debt that Canada has ever seen. In fact, our debt has doubled over the last six years. We have accumulated more debt over the last six years than all previous governments in Canadian history.

Canadians, quite rightly, want to know when the government's house will be brought back into order, so my question for her is a simple one, with a yes-or-no answer. Does she have any plan to return to balanced budgets?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Speaker, my answer is also a simple one. If Canadians want to understand the state of our public finances, they should look to the judgments of the objective analysts who are paid to make those assessments.

That is why it is a real pleasure for me to remind Canadians of the good news that last Thursday, S&P reaffirmed Canada's AAA

credit rating, with a stable outlook. Why did it do that? It is because Canada has the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. Our budget showed a debt-to-GDP ratio that will continue to decline and a deficit that will continue to decline. In fact, our budget has been universally judged to be fiscally responsible, which it is.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, Terrebonne is a magnificent riding, and I hope you will visit us very soon.

I thank the Deputy Prime Minister for her speech. We agree in principle with several of the measures proposed in Bill C-19. However, I have an important question to ask her.

On March 4, we sent a letter to the Deputy Prime Minister concerning the semiconductor shortage. Unfortunately, Bill C-19 contains no measures to address this serious shortage affecting many of our businesses. What we are seeing is a loss of expertise and jobs, and a number of businesses might have to declare bankruptcy or have already done so.

What do the Deputy Prime Minister and finance minister plan to do about this?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question, and I am certain that Terrebonne is an excellent riding.

I would like to start by thanking the Bloc Québécois for raising today, during question period, one of the most important issues at present: the fundamental rights of women and young girls. It is important to highlight that. I want to thank them once again.

With regard to semiconductors, we are aware of the issue. We have had discussions with the Bloc, and I am certain that the member opposite knows that the budget contains measures to support the manufacturing of semiconductors in Canada.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, when we look at the budget implementation act, we see there are some modest changes to the employment insurance system. There is some tinkering with the paid sick day provisions too. However, neither get full implementation.

Canadians are still in need of widespread and ambitious employment insurance reform. There is still more legislative work to do to finally get the 10 paid sick days that were promised some time ago. We have the looming deadline of May 7 for a number of the pandemic benefits that have helped cover off some of the important things that Canadians have had to do during the pandemic, such as stay home with their kids when their kids are sick and stay home from work when they themselves are sick. Not having implemented those EI reforms and the paid sick days fully before having those benefits expire means there is a gap, and it is workers who are going to suffer for that gap.

I wonder if the government is considering an extension of those benefits until it completes those much-needed employment insurance reforms and a final full implementation of the 10 paid sick days.

• (1620)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Elmwood—Transcona for his hard work on behalf of working people in his riding and across the country.

I share his concern with working people, and that is why our government has focused so intensely on jobs. It is why when the pandemic hit, we were so deeply concerned about the three million jobs lost. It is also why in my remarks I underscored the significance of our historically low unemployment rate of 5.3%.

When it comes to the well-being of Canadians and Canadian families, well-being starts with having a good job. I agree with the need for 10 paid sick days. It is why we have that in this implementation act. I look forward to continuing to discuss EI.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for opening her speech with a condemnation of the loss of women's rights that appears to be imminent in the United States.

I want to address the issue of the budget implementation act by starting with a fair statement. I have gone through the bill, and of course it is very long. I do not find any hidden, sneaky things that should not be in a budget implementation bill, as we experienced in 2012 with two budget implementation bills, Bill C-38 and Bill C-45, that were disastrous. Then we had, in 2018, one sneaky thing that I lament, which was putting deferred prosecution agreements in the Criminal Code. That should not have been in a budget implementation act. It is hard to prove a negative, but right now it looks like there is nothing sneaky in this bill.

The main thing I want to ask the minister about is her reference to the climate crisis as an existential threat, which is defined as a threat to existence. It is a threat to the existence of a habitable planet. If we read the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's April 4 report, we are currently on a trajectory to an unlivable world. This budget is not taking us away from that trajectory; it doubles down on it.

Would the hon. minister consider re-examining this bill and all bills in relation to the IPCC report?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Speaker, I will start by confirming for the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands that all measures in the BIA are referenced in the budget text. I agree with her that

climate change is an existential crisis, and I want to acknowledge the many years she has been working on this issue, at a time before it had the wide recognition and support it does today.

However, with the greatest respect and affection, which I hope she does not mind me publicly expressing, I disagree with her about the impact of this budget on climate change. This is a very green budget and it will help Canada and the world.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister spoke about the U.S. rolling back women's rights, and I was really disappointed today to hear the Conservatives yell out "no" to a unanimous motion to support women's rights in the House. Media are also reporting that the leader of the official opposition has ordered her members and senators not to discuss this matter.

Can the Deputy Prime Minister speak about leadership for women and women's rights in this country?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Speaker, I certainly can. The news from south of the border that we first heard last night has reminded us that at the end of the day, women's rights depend, in a democracy, on elected representatives who are willing to stand up for them day after day after day. That is what this government will do, and I know other members of the House will as well.

* * *

• (1625)

POINTS OF ORDER

USE OF PROPS IN THE HOUSE

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to raise a point of order and seek your clarification on an issue.

Earlier, before the finance minister spoke, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan was called out for wearing a button that was deemed to be a prop. Madam Speaker, you intervened immediately, advised members that they are not to violate the House order in that respect and outlined the consequences if they do not follow the rules. However, I was confused about the procedure.

Earlier in the day during Statements by Members, the member for Battle River—Crowfoot was making a statement in the House. It was noted that he was sporting a flag that was also deemed to be a prop. The Speaker at the time allowed the member to finish his statement before advising him that he should not be violating the House rules by wearing what is a political statement.

Points of Order

I am not clear on what the rules and procedures are, and I wonder if the Speaker could provide clarity for me. When members are called out or someone has noted that they are violating the rules with buttons and such, should they be stopped immediately and not be allowed to proceed until they remove a political button, or can they wait until they have finished their speeches? I would love to get the Speaker's clarity on that, just to make sure that every member of the House knows what the rules are and follows them accordingly.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will certainly consider all of the information the hon. member has put before the House. I was not in the chair during Statements by Members. The Speaker who was here ruled on that, but we need to make it very clear that unless an item has been approved by the House, such as an item for the Moose Hide Campaign or the White Ribbon campaign that we wear in the House, no buttons or props should be used in the House.

I remind members that if they want to wear some type of button or ribbon, they should discuss it with others as well, but the issue will be addressed during the Speakers' meetings.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Abbotsford.

* * *

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2022, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-19, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 7, 2022 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, that was quite an introduction to my speech. It basically took all the oxygen out of the House.

Let me start by saying that this bill is effectively the budget implementation act, which would implement a portion of the last federal budget, budget 2022, which was tabled just over a month ago. Not surprisingly, after having given this much thought, considered it and looked at all the different elements of this particular bill, as well as the budget itself, we as the Conservative opposition have no choice but to oppose it. I will tell the reasons why.

When I spoke earlier to the budget itself, I highlighted the fact that there were a number of issues we took very seriously. One was that, contrary to expectations, it was not a growth budget. In fact, it was very much like the previous budget in 2021, which was panned by the Liberals' own former advisers, who said that the claims that that budget was a growth budget were actually profoundly wrong. In fact, it was a spending budget. It turns out this budget, budget 2022, is also a spending budget.

Why can I say that it is a spending budget? We know the figures, and the officials have confirmed them. There is somewhere in the order of \$57 billion or \$58 billion of new spending in this bill. That is not just carrying over from the previous year or established programs simply carrying those forward. This is, on top of that, \$57 billion more that the government would spend.

I believe we need to place this all in context because the government took over some six and a half years ago in 2015, and over

those six and a half years, and members will not believe this, spending has grown 53%. To put this into further perspective, just between 2019, so just before the COVID pandemic, and today, spending has increased by 25%, so by all measures this is a tax-and-spend Liberal government. Canadians should not be surprised. That is the reputation they have earned over many decades.

Is this a growth budget, which is what it was supposed to be? It was intended to be about fundamental changes that were going to improve the prospects for long-term growth for our country. About the growth we are seeing in the economy today, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has said that growth is actually "GDP inflation." In other words, it is not organic or substantive growth that is generated by improving productivity within the economy that would improve our competitiveness on the world stage and the global marketplace.

For example, there was nothing in this budget about comprehensive tax reform, which would clearly position our tax system as being fairer, making sure the wealthy pay their share, and also position Canada to be competitive within the global marketplace. Such a tax system would attract investment from all around the world, because today Canada has a reputation of being a place people do not invest in. They shy away. It has too much regulation. Taxes are too high. There is no certainty that the investment will ever be approved, and it has a federal government that is not supportive of this investment, certainly not investment in our resource sector and certainly not investment in our oil and gas sector.

This is also not a growth budget because there is nothing in it about regulatory change or about regulatory reforms that would speed up the approval process for worthy projects. That just is not here.

• (1630)

There is nothing in this budget about interprovincial trade barriers, which have bedevilled governments for many, many decades. It is tougher to do trade among the provinces and territories than it is to do trade with some of our free trade partners around the world. What a sad comment on the performance of the government, which had nothing in the budget or in this bill that addresses that serious problem.

There is nothing in the budget that addresses Canada's lagging investment performance. In fact, Canada is at the bottom of the list of the 38 OECD countries when it comes to investment performance. Investors from around the world just do not see Canada as an attractive place to invest.

I want to hearken back to a comment that the finance minister just made. She made it seem like Canada's growth rate is the best in the world. There is nothing to see here. It is all great. "Don't worry, be happy." In fact, she quoted the IMF, which said that Canada is going to have a good growth rate for a couple of years.

Points of Order

Do members know what the OECD has said? Canada ranks 38th of 38 countries when it comes to expected future growth of our economy over the next 30 to 35 years, between 2030 and 2060. Canada will be at the bottom of the list of the developed countries of this world. That is a failure on the part of the Liberal government. This is not a growth budget. The prospects under the government are bleak when it comes to future growth.

Second, let me address the issue of inflation. Inflation is the biggest challenge to Canadian families today. The affordability crisis stretches from coast to coast to coast. Yes, there are external influences that have driven inflation from around the world, supply chain challenges and spiking commodity prices, but the government has to take responsibility as well. Economist after economist notes that governments cannot keep spending and spending and pumping more money into our economy without paying a price, and that price is the inflation we see today, especially in our housing market. The housing affordability crisis is as severe as I have seen in my lifetime. It has never been so bad in this country. Right now, the government cannot give Canadians any hope that things are going to get better in the near to mid-term.

The problem is this. The Liberals had something in their budget called a housing plan. They said they were going to pump \$10 billion into Canada to help ease the housing crisis, but \$4 billion of that is simply a transfer from the federal government to municipalities across the country. It will not create one extra house in Canada. It will not build one extra house over the next few years. It is going to be used, purportedly, to help the municipalities improve their application processes, to make sure they are more efficient, more timely and speedier, so they can get more permit approvals out the door, but that is going to take years to manifest itself. I think we all in the House know that this is not a quick fix.

The other \$6 billion from this \$10-billion fund is going into a program that will allow first-time homebuyers to set up a savings plan where, over a period of five years, they can invest \$8,000 per year for a total of \$40,000 in an account that has tax-deductible investments into the fund and one can take money out tax-free. It sounds great, but it is only \$40,000 and it is over five years.

● (1635)

Over five years, these families are going to be left far behind by a housing market that is raging out of control. To boot, that program is going to increase demand for housing in Canada even more as more Canadians take advantage of this. We are going to have a problem on the demand side and a problem on the supply side of housing in Canada.

The real challenge here in Canada is the housing crisis itself, and the inflationary aspect of it is a made-in-Canada crisis. Some of the elements that go into our home construction would be impacted by global forces, but for the most part, housing inflation in this country is a made-in-Canada crisis. We had the Governor of the Bank of Canada, Tiff Macklem, at our committee not long ago and we specifically asked him if it was possible that some of the inflationary spending that the federal Liberals had done, the borrowing and spending, with record deficits and record debt, could be contributing to housing inflation. He admitted that yes, that was true. Housing inflation can be driven by excess liquidity in the marketplace.

It is not available to the Liberal government to simply wash its hands of the inflation crisis besetting our country and afflicting homes across this country. It has to take some ownership and responsibility for a crisis of its own making. It is not solely of its own making, I will be the first to admit, but it is significantly of its own making.

That was the cost of living, and of course it is going to get worse because on one side we have inflation. How do the Bank of Canada and Mr. Macklem fight inflation? He now has to increase interest rates. At committee last week, he admitted he was going to have to do that quickly and that the increases in interest rates would be significant.

Now we are between scourges afflicting families across this country: on one side, we have skyrocketing inflation, and on the other side, we have rising interest rates. Canadians who have mortgages that are due for renewal are going to be paying higher mortgage rates. That means higher payments, which in turn mean less disposable income for those families. That is the story and the legacy of the Liberal government.

I will go to the third problem that we see with this budget and this bill. The finance minister was expressly directed by the Prime Minister, just over a year ago, not to engage in any more new permanent spending. That was in the middle of the COVID pandemic, and the government I thought had realized that we could not keep spending. We need to discipline spending because, at the end of the day, we also have a duty to future generations of Canadians who have to pay back this massive debt that has been incurred because of the COVID pandemic and because of the government's reckless spending.

Instead, after receiving that clear directive, a year later what did the Prime Minister do? He gave the finance minister another mandate letter in which he purged any reference to eliminating new permanent spending. I do not know. Maybe the Prime Minister already knew that he was cooking up a coalition between the NDP and the Liberals, that it would cost taxpayers a lot of money, and then the government would have to borrow a lot of money to satisfy the NDP. I do not know that, but I do know this.

● (1640)

Shortly after the finance minister received that mandate letter, she started crafting her 2022 budget, which introduced a massive amount of new permanent spending, including a dental care program. In the last budget, it was a child care program. In the next one, we expect there will be a pharmacare program.

Points of Order

What was shocking to me, as a member of the finance committee, was the process when all of these requests were pouring in as we did our pre-budget consultations. There were stakeholders from across Canada. Five hundred written submissions came in, and many more witnesses were basically asking the government to fund this program or that program or to give them this subsidy or that subsidy. We asked the other members of the committee if we could at least go through a process of prioritization and triage all the requests flooding in, so that we could bring a critical eye to them to determine which ones were actually affordable for Canadian taxpayers and future generations, who would have to pay the bill.

The Liberals, NDP and Bloc said that they were not interested in prioritization. They wanted to take all the recommendations and send them up to the minister to see what she would do with them. What a reckless way of doing business. That is not the kind of country I want to live in. I want to live in a country that is fiscally responsible. I want to have a Prime Minister who actually thinks about monetary policy, not who shuns it and says it is something that does not concern him.

It is the monetary policy of this country that is requiring interest rates to go up because of the reckless borrowing and spending of the Liberal government. That is the permanent spending part of it. There is \$57 billion of new spending just in this budget alone, and that will saddle future generations with an albatross. It is a huge indebtedness that they are going to have to pay back with rising interest rates.

The last point is taxation. The Liberal government often talks about having Canadians' backs and being there for the middle class. "Hear, hear," they say, yet the budget is tax after tax. It is unbelievable. Look at the escalator on wine excise taxes, for example. It is unbelievable. The escalators automatically drive up the taxes on goods that Canadians purchase every single day. It is tax after tax. What is worse is the fact that with the dramatic escalation in the price of gas at the pumps, Canadians who already had a tough time filling up their tanks are now realizing, because we Conservatives are telling them, that on top of that gas price, they are paying GST, which means more revenues for the federal government but less disposable income for them.

We, as Conservatives, brought forward a proposal, because we are solution-oriented. We are problem solvers on this side. We came forward to the Prime Minister and said that we could at least temporarily suspend carbon taxes and temporarily suspend the GST on gas so we could give Canadians a break. The Liberals said no.

Let me close by saying that there is no way the Conservatives, the official opposition and the loyal opposition, can support a budget bill that is irresponsible. I have a motion that I would like to table in this House.

I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "that" and substituting the following: "the House decline to give second reading to Bill C-19, an Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 7, 2022 and other measures, since the bill fails, among other things, to address inflation, provide tax relief for Canadians and take immediate action to increase housing supply.

• (1645)

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

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

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 Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Fisheries and Oceans; the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship; the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill, Public Safety.

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to go to the central, core point that the government is apparently entirely responsible for the inflationary aspect of our current economy.

An hon. member: Hear, hear!

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, I would say that my hon. friend from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is a little premature in his enthusiasm.

Has the hon. member thought about how much the Putin war is contributing to the rate of inflation with respect to oil, gas and commodities in multiple trillions of dollars? Has he thought about how the clogged supply chains, created largely by COVID, have contributed multiple trillions of dollars to increased prices? Has he thought about the pent-up demand created by COVID that created multiple trillions of dollars? Has he thought about the U.S. economy, which has an inflation rate considerably in excess of Canada's, and that being our major trading partner? Also—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, I have to allow for other questions.

The hon. member for Abbotsford.

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, I would be glad to answer the member's question. I do not know if he was in this House for the full speech I gave, because I acknowledged that supply chains do have an impact on inflation and that rising commodity prices around the world, exacerbated by the war in Ukraine of course, do have an impact, but I also mentioned that housing affordability and the housing inflation we are experiencing today in Canada are largely a made-in-Canada phenomenon. That is backed up by many economists, and I think he knows that.

Let us be fair here. I acknowledge that some of the inflation that we experience in Canada is a global phenomenon, but a lot of it is driven by the actions of the current government in borrowing and spending in a way that is irresponsible.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, earlier today the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands was bragging about the parliamentary system, about the debate and other debates that would take place in committee.

What does not help, as we know, with the implementation bill is to have a 500-page bill that amends 37 acts and includes three bills that have already been introduced. If ever anyone wants to kill debate, that is exactly how to do it.

I would like my colleague to tell me whether he thinks the Liberals are using their deal with the NDP to ram all this down our throats. I would also like him to tell me whether the Conservatives are happy with the fact that this new coalition is using the Harper method to get everything they want through us.

[English]

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, it is seldom that we Conservatives are on the same page with the Bloc, but in this case I have to agree with the member. This is an omnibus bill that the Prime Minister promised he was never going to table in this House. That is exactly what he did.

Do members know how ridiculous it became? This is a budget, a money bill. It is about money, but there is a provision in here that creates a new Criminal Code offence for activity that takes place on the moon. It is true. If we look at this bill, we will see that there is a specific provision that creates a new Criminal Code offence for activity that takes place on the moon or on a shuttle that is travelling to the moon. That is how crazy the current government has become.

• (1655)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am going to circle back to the hon. member's comments about housing and the housing market.

We have heard a lot of discussion, particularly from my Conservative colleagues, but also from elsewhere in committee, on the role that government expenditure may play in the housing market. Prior to the pandemic and prior to quantitative easing, we also saw astronomical increases in housing prices over a long period, including when the hon. member was around the cabinet table.

We know that private capital is also playing a significant role. There is a significant domestic investor presence in the Canadian market that is eating more and more of the housing stock, and after outbidding Canadians on their dream home or what they were hoping might be their starter home, they then rent it back to them at extraordinary high prices.

I wonder if the member might want to take some time, perhaps for the first time, to talk about the role of private capital and domestic investors in the housing market, and the effect they are having on prices in the housing market.

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, I think what my hon. colleague from the finance committee is signalling is a concern over the financialization of housing in Canada, where people see housing as simply being an investment to be profited from rather than a roof over a person's head. I do share his concern that, if we are not sensible about this, it is going to cost Canadians significantly.

However, I do take issue with his assertion that, under the Harper government, somehow housing prices also spiked. No, that is not true. Housing prices were very stable during the Harper years. We had a slight appreciation in value over time, which is what Canadi-

ans expect. They want to see a return to stable house prices in Canada. We, as Conservatives, are capable of delivering that.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, these Liberals continually promise the moon to millennials, especially when it comes to housing affordability, but their new savings account for first-time homebuyers is not in this bill. The things that are in it either make the problem worse, or they do not help at all.

In Bill C-19 itself there is an assignment of sale that would only give more revenue to the government, which would be allowed to charge GST on a second unit, and that is simply going to raise the price of housing. There is also a ban on foreign ownership. I thought that the original policy was so full of holes that it was like Swiss cheese, but they left the biggest loophole to the government. What was that? It would essentially allow the government to choose if and when the actual ban ever comes into place.

Can the member please comment on a few other things that are in the bill or the budget that the Liberals have promised but do not deliver on?

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, the thing the Liberals do not deliver on is affordability. They do not deliver on their promise to fight inflation. In fact, do members know what happens with the Liberal government? The biggest beneficiary of inflation and the affordability crisis is government revenues. Every step along the way, it gets another piece of the action.

This new legislation would allow the government to now charge GST on the assignment of real estate contracts. Therefore, if somebody buys a house, but is doing it on spec, and finds another buyer who is prepared to pay more, they can say, "Hey would you like to buy this? I will sell you the contract." Well, is the government not going to take a piece of the action on that as well?

It does on gas. It does on carbon taxes. It is all the GST layered on everything that Canadians buy. At the end of the day, Canadians are the ones who pay the price, and the big beneficiary is the Prime Minister, who continues to bring in more and more government tax revenues and then spends that money wildly. That is unacceptable, and Canadians are going to call him on it.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. friend for Abbotsford.

I wonder if he was disappointed, as I was, in reading the budget to see nothing additional for adaptation, particularly after what happened in his riding in Abbotsford. There is nothing additional on flooding. I wonder if the member has any thoughts on that.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1700)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the parliamentary secretary that he should show some respect in the House and not heckle.

The hon. member for Abbotsford.

Points of Order

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, that is one of the best questions I have ever heard from the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. It was a great question.

Abbotsford, and in fact southern British Columbia, suffered the most significant rain and flood event, certainly in my lifetime, this past November. It drove home the reality that our weather resiliency and climate change resiliency are not anywhere close to being up to snuff. Our dikes failed, we had massive flooding across the Sumas Prairie, and many other communities in southern British Columbia, such as Princeton, Keremeos and Merritt, were impacted by infrastructure that was not up to snuff. We need to invest more in adaptability to make sure that our country is climate resilient. She may be surprised to hear—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but the time is up. I allowed a bit of extra time.

Before we start the time, I want to remind the hon. parliamentary secretaries, because there was quite a bit of back-and-forth, that they should wait until it is time to ask questions before they decide to have their voices heard in the House.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would seek the consent of the House to share my time with my esteemed colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have consent to share her time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, I may not be able to say that I had time to study all 500 pages of Bill C-19, but I have a few comments.

There is a lot of talk about work, workers and the importance of employment. I wanted to know what the government had put forward for workers, whether it had an ambitious agenda and vision, and whether it was able to do something tangible to support workers and improve their conditions. After all, at the end of the day, labour is an important part of the economy.

Based on my analysis, I find that the sights are set too low when it comes to workers. I will provide a few examples. In the last budget and in the Minister of Labour's mandate letter, the government promised legislation to prohibit the use of replacement workers under the fundamental right to associate and to bargain. There is nothing in this bill to indicate any intention or action in this area. What happened with that?

Another issue is fair employment. I do not know if anyone knows this, but the Employment Equity Act was passed in 2018. Currently, in federally regulated businesses, there is differential treatment based on employment status using "orphan clauses". The Act was passed in 2018, but there is still no plan or vision to move forward with this. What is going on there?

Recently, we passed Bill C-3 here in the House to give workers 10 days of paid sick leave. That legislation will come into effect at a later date fixed by order-in-council, but we still have not found anything yet.

Climate change is one of the reasons we opposed the budget. We want to see an end to fossil fuel production and a just and fair transition to green or clean energy. What is there for workers?

Last week, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development said that Natural Resources Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada were not prepared to support a just transition to a low-carbon economy for workers and communities. It is serious: There are more than 200,000 workers, and there are no plans or measures to support this just and necessary transition.

I would also say that the government is abandoning health care workers by firmly refusing to increase Canada health transfers, as Quebec and the other provinces are calling for. If we want quality health care, we must rely on these workers. To do this, Quebec needs the necessary subsidies to match the expenses so it can better support the health sector.

I looked everywhere in the budget and found only one paragraph on employment insurance. This is where workers are being totally abandoned, even though comprehensive EI reform had been promised. Once again, the government missed an opportunity to act. In one paragraph of the budget and in Bill C-19, the government announced the extension of pilot projects that provide up to five additional weeks of EI benefits to seasonal workers. That is it, nothing more.

● (1705)

The Minister of Employment's mandate letter clearly states that she is to work on modernizing employment insurance by the summer of 2022. The Prime Minister himself said that he asked the minister to focus her energy on building a more equitable system by June 2022. On January 1, she indicated that this was likely to happen.

Right now, workers everywhere, in all regions of Quebec and Canada, are struggling to qualify for fair and accessible benefits. There are serious shortcomings that need to be addressed. We know what the issues are, we know what it will take to fix them, yet there is still a delay in implementing the changes that are needed.

Surely we do not need to be reminded that the EI system is a social safety net that protects workers who lose their jobs. It also protects them in the aftermath of life events, as the minister said. For example, sickness benefits are still capped at 15 weeks when they promised to extend them to 26 weeks. We are being told that this may not happen in July, as first thought, because the computer system will not be ready. They are abandoning people.

I am quite surprised and disappointed that the orange team did not leave its mark in the budget when it comes to workers; it clearly lacks teeth.

All unemployed workers' groups and labour groups support employment insurance reform. More consultations are on the books. Consultations have been going on for years. When will the government get on with it? This is a broken promise at present.

EI reform is important for workers. I meet with workers, unemployed workers' groups, community groups and civil society groups to look at the economic and social realities in some regions. In regions where the seasonal industry holds a predominant place in the economy, five extra weeks in the event of job loss is not enough. There is the issue of the spring gap, which is when a worker does not have enough weeks of benefits to cover the period between the end of the job and when the job resumes. We could tell workers to go work somewhere else, but that is not the answer; rather, we have to support the seasonal industry when it comes to tourism, the fishery. We know that major sectors are affected. A region's economy depends on that. It is not by once again carrying forward a five- to 10-week pilot project that we are going to give the regions the capacity to support their economy and give workers the capacity to maintain good jobs and experience. We need to protect the vitality of the regions.

The inequities in the EI system for women and young people are another example of needed reforms. The current rules are outdated and significantly discriminate against them. All kinds of criteria regarding hours of eligibility need to be changed. I think the government needs to send a clear message that EI reform is a priority. It is a priority for workers and for the economy. This program is a social safety net that is very much needed, but what the government is doing is very disappointing.

I want to mention the little note about reviewing the Social Security Tribunal and creating a multi-stakeholder tribunal. All the better, since workers have been calling for this for 10 years.

Since I have just 30 seconds left, I want to conclude by saying that workers are in dire need of support. The Liberal government must send a very clear message in its budgets and financial policies that we are counting on them. If we are counting on them, then they need support and they need it now.

• (1710)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I disagree with the overall assessment the member tries to portray regarding the image of the government. Virtually from day one, we have seen a government that is very supportive of workers in Canada. I can talk about things such as labour disputes, contracts

Points of Order

that were signed shortly after we had taken government and changes in labour laws that were very well received. We have had changes in our EI program. We have provided literally hundreds of millions of dollars to training programs. We have seen legislative and budgetary measures in the past, including today, that are advancing workers, including in the area of the just transition.

I think the member is looking for a way to try to justify voting no on the legislation, from listening to the content of her speech. I am wondering if she would reflect on what I have just said. How can she advocate that the government has not been listening to and working for workers?

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, I am a fan of action. I am not saying that everything is bad, but I just pointed out that there are some big files that the government is not even working on.

I am not the one saying this. We are hearing this from workers. A just and fair transition is not a pipe dream. The government will have to allocate resources. When a door is closed in one industry, another door needs to open. That is the reality.

I am sorry, but the government and the Liberals should at least have the decency to admit that they made a commitment to reform EI back in 2015 and have yet to follow through. It is another broken promise.

Meanwhile, the government waits for a crisis or a pandemic and then improvises some emergency measures. What we need are safe, predictable measures, and the government has failed in that respect.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, we agree on the urgent need for EI reform. I would like to give my colleague the opportunity to talk a little more about what kind of reform she thinks is needed to create a good EI system, for example, the number of hours required to be eligible, the level of wage replacement or other things she thinks make up a good system.

• (1715)

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that my colleague knows very well what the answer is, since the entire labour movement, including the Canadian Labour Congress, Quebec's four central labour unions, and several other unions, such as the unemployed workers' associations, have raised a number of issues.

Furthermore, on our initiative, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities conducted a study on this subject, so I think that the solutions are known.

Points of Order

However, what I find unfortunate and do not understand is how the NDP, when it signed its pact with the Liberal government, could fail to consider the fact that the central labour unions told all the candidates during the last election that EI was a priority for the unemployed workers' associations.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, the member for Thérèse-De Blainville talked about measures that would help workers and help our industries. We heard about labour market impact assessments, temporary foreign workers and anti-scab legislation. These are measures that would not cost a penny.

We know that the government is too cheap to help workers. The member for Winnipeg North had to go all the way back to 2015, 2016 and 2017 to tell us the last things that the government did for workers.

How can the government be so cheap that it will not help workers even when it does not cost a penny?

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, I believe it is a matter of political choice. Take, for example, the anti-scab legislation that has been part of the Quebec Labour Code since 1977. It is now 2022 and the federal government still does not have such legislation. Adopting provisions for fair treatment is a choice.

Does the government really value the right of association? Does it value just and fair working conditions? Those are questions for the government, because having to look back 20 years does not give us a good idea of what it will do tomorrow.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the House for granting its consent, which gives me the opportunity to say a few words today. I hope to use this time to make some relevant remarks.

Let us get one thing straight. The member for Winnipeg North tacitly accused my colleague of finding excuses, false reasons and pretexts for voting against Bill C-19. Let me be perfectly clear. We will be voting in favour of the principle of the bill. We will work hard in committee to rework the bill, but we will vote in favour of its principle.

Incidentally, I would encourage my colleague not to applaud me too quickly. I would be concerned. Several things need to be addressed. The only reason we are voting in favour of the bill is to amend it, and quite extensively in certain areas.

Let us talk about the process first. We are dealing with a bill that is a real juggernaut. It is a thick tome of some 500 pages with about 60 measures that amend 37 laws, along with several concurrence amendments. The summary alone is eight pages long. This is a bit of a kitchen-sink bill. It includes budgetary measures, non-budgetary measures, minor measures, as well as apple pie measures, as we say back home. At the same time, it also includes much more substantial things. I think a distinction should have been made between minor legislative amendments or small measures and much more substantial and profound measures that should have been examined separately. It includes measures to update certain things, as well as provisions from three bills that presumably would have died on the Order Paper.

That is the issue we have with this government and this parliamentary culture. We are constantly having these tomes forced on us and have to live with “all or nothing”. We have to agree with it all or reject it all. What we call a parliamentary monarchy is a bit of a paradox that way. We are told that, in this system, Parliament is the ruler. However, we are still in a system where, as the word “monarchy” implies, transparency is sorely lacking and where, all too often, a parliamentarian's purpose is to rubber-stamp mammoth bills, legislative monstrosities, like the ones that have been surreptitiously foisted on us.

What it boils down to is that the Bloc Québécois opposed the budget statement. As everyone knows, we voted against the budget. However, we are prepared to live with the principle at this point. I said “principle” because we are not ready to commit to supporting it to the full extent, unlike a certain other opposition party. We will see what happens next, when it is studied in committee, but we are willing to live with the principle because we think that many of the bugs that were in the budget are not in this bill. For example, the budget announced massive oil subsidies, including for carbon capture. There was also the issue of small nuclear reactors, and the budget contained major conditions and major intrusions on the health care systems of the provinces and Quebec. Fortunately, none of that is in this bill.

In addition, there are a few urgent measures that have been mentioned and on which we agree, particularly with regard to EI. My colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville explained that well, and there are some significant grey areas that were well clarified in the last speech.

There are also some measures that look interesting on paper and several that require closer inspection. One that I find particularly interesting is the obligation for federally regulated pension fund managers to disclose climate-related information. That is a first step towards what we call green finance, which is an important issue for my colleague from Mirabel. What we need to do is reorient our banking and financial systems toward supporting the energy transition instead of the energy of the past, fossil fuels. That calls for political will.

Some things look interesting on paper. One of those is aerospace, which is a very important file.

• (1720)

Bill C-19 includes a tax on select luxury items. This was already in budget 2021, which reads as follows:

... it is also fair to ask those who have prospered in this bleak year to do a little more to help those who have not. That is why we are introducing a luxury tax on new cars and private aircraft [manufactured after 2018 and seating up to 39 passengers] worth more than \$100,000 and pleasure boats worth more than \$250,000.

Here is another excerpt:

If you've been lucky enough, or smart enough, or hard-working enough, to afford to spend \$100,000 on a car, or \$250,000 on a boat – congratulations! And thank you for contributing a little bit of that good fortune to help heal the wounds of COVID and invest in our future collective prosperity.

When we read that on paper, there is no problem. The Bloc Québécois is fine with the wealthy contributing more. The division of wealth takes political will as well. It is too bad there is not as much will to combat tax havens, but that is another story. The Bloc Québécois agrees with the division of wealth because it is a social democratic party. We have no problem with that.

Now, the problem is that, unfortunately, the devil is all too often in the details. The way the bill is written, all new aircraft designed after 2018, including planes, helicopters or gliders with a maximum capacity under 40 seats, including corporate aircraft, will be subject to the tax. Aircraft usually used for commercial activities, like the ones equipped for carrying passengers or designed exclusively for transporting goods, are excluded.

As I was just saying, the Bloc Québécois agrees in principle. The idea of a tax on luxury items and luxury jets sounds good.

However, we do have major concerns about the negative impact of the tax. As described in Bill C-19, it is a tax on the Quebec aerospace industry. I can say that we have had various meetings with the aerospace industry, which is a key sector. The late Jean Lapierre used to say that aerospace was to Quebec what the auto sector was to Ontario.

Quebec is the third-largest aerospace cluster in the world, after Seattle and Toulouse. These three clusters are in three different countries. Canada is the only country with such an important cluster that does not have an aerospace policy, and Bill C-19 does nothing to fix that.

I want to come back to the luxury tax. We have had meetings on this. I have had meetings with several industry players. Both the unions and the companies, including Bombardier, are concerned about this, as are the associations that represent small and medium-sized businesses in the industry. Obviously, when we think of aerospace, Bombardier immediately comes to mind, but there are a lot of very innovative, powerful and dynamic SMEs in the greater Montreal area, especially in Longueuil and on the north shore. There are a lot of them. Everyone is worried. Generally speaking, workers' associations can hardly be said to favour seeing the bosses line their pockets and not getting a share of the income and wealth, so when workers' associations, SMEs and large companies are in agreement, it is a sign that there is a real consensus on the fact that this tax must be reviewed and reworked. As it stands, it will fundamentally harm an industry that has not gotten the policy it deserves.

Last November, my colleague from Mirabel and I issued a statement. We would have liked to see the government get involved in aircraft salvage. North America is a huge aircraft graveyard right now. Given that Airbus has announced that it intends to accelerate aircraft recycling by creating partnerships with several regions in the world, we would have liked to see Ottawa hurry up and seize this opportunity.

Points of Order

● (1725)

We therefore reluctantly support this bill, but the Bloc Québécois will be extremely active when studying it in committee in order to fix its many problems.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's comment with regard to supporting the principle of the bill and it going to committee. We look forward to having an ongoing discussion on the aerospace industry, which is an industry we are all concerned about. We know how prominent the province of Quebec is in that industry worldwide, but the province of Manitoba also has a very healthy aerospace industry. I do not think it will be affected as much by what is being proposed, but yes: Let us have that dialogue in committee and see what we can come up with.

I would ask the member to provide his thoughts on the difference, let us say, between a \$350,000 luxury boat and a \$350,000 light aircraft or private aircraft. Does he distinguish a difference in terms of the value of taxation potential or whatever it might be?

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, the member raised many points and I wonder which one to respond to and how. Like the 500-page bill, there are both good and not-so-good aspects. Let me try to summarize.

I recognize that Manitoba has an aerospace sector, as do other provinces. However, it cannot be denied that this industry's main hub is in the greater Montreal area. Trying to make this distinction, or watering down this interpretation, plays into the fact that there is no aerospace policy or concrete strategy.

With regard to that aircraft, the problem with this tax is how it is applied. Why does it apply to the aircraft, not the travel, and why is it based on criteria that often focus on the number of seats? That creates problems.

We spoke to Bombardier, which estimates that the impact on its cash flow could be in the range of \$50 million to \$150 million per quarter. That is huge. The government is carving up our cherished aerospace industry. It took generations to build, but the government's actions will destroy it all in just a few years.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot will have two minutes and 48 seconds the next time this bill is before the House.

● (1730)

[English]

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[Translation]***IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT**

The House resumed from March 1 consideration of the motion that Bill C-242, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (temporary resident visas for parents and grandparents), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be able to comment on the bill introduced by the member for Dufferin—Caledon, Bill C-242, an act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act regarding temporary resident visas for parents and grandparents.

This bill would amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act by making a number of specific changes. I know these changes may seem quite minor in theory, but despite its modest appearance, the bill will bring about major changes for many families in Quebec and Canada.

Before I begin, I would like to put things in context. In my riding, Trois-Rivières, an organization called La Maison des Grands-Parents celebrated its 20th anniversary yesterday. The connection to Bill C-242 is that, for the past 20 years, La Maison des Grands-Parents has been a place for civic engagement, a place where senior volunteers strive to make life better for the children and families they work with. By sharing their knowledge, these volunteers cultivate a meaningful intergenerational connection and contribute to the well-being of their community. I would actually like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all the volunteers as well as board chair Éliane Touchette.

Having said that, I want to say that it is impossible to be unmoved by the member for Dufferin—Caledon's bill. This bill makes very significant changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. Bill C-242 will make it easier for parents and grandparents to immigrate if they are sponsored by a child or grandchild who is a permanent resident or citizen of Canada. Since they have temporary status, these immigrants do not cost the government anything. Furthermore, although I do not have precise statistics on the number of super visas issued per year, we know that there are fewer than 20,000 nationwide. This represents a fairly marginal proportion of 1% to 2%. For the years 2017, 2018, and 2019, about 1.6 million, 1.9 million, and 1.7 million temporary resident visas were issued annually.

Moreover, the few thousand people who currently qualify for a super visa are generally people of considerable means. Both the children in Canada and the parents who come over are financially secure.

However, what can the less well off do?

First off, allow me to clarify a few things. It is not possible to exist in society without creating ties or links. The word “link” comes from the Latin word *ligare*, meaning to encircle or surround. Links imply proximity, meaning nearness. Back when the word “religion” was invented, it was a combination of “re-” and “ligare”, or re-link. It always comes back to proximity.

There is also the word “reliance”, which we hear a lot about these days. It refers to creating links between people or systems. “Reliance” is a psychosocial need to break out of isolation. No one wants to be alone in the world. We all need family in order to know who we are.

When we talk about parents and grandparents, we are talking about blood ties, filial relationships, an emotional and moral connection that is impossible to deny. Victor Hugo once said, “There is no grandfather who does not adore his grandson”.

Obviously, a bill is not a simple thing. The Department of Immigration sometimes provides a practical illustration of boundless Kafkaesque absurdity. There needs to be a framework to ensure that the purpose of the bill is achieved and that the people it is meant to serve can benefit from it.

Beyond giving families the chance to obtain permanent residency, there are many socio-economic benefits to the bill. Having grandparents around will allow parents to dispense with child care for a few moments or even free parents from having to pay for child care. In that sense, the arrival of family members allows working-age immigrants to fully participate in the workforce and in the Quebec and Canadian economy.

It is estimated that between 38% and 50% of children under six will have an immigrant background by 2036, so the availability of child care options for the parents of these children will be all the more important. A number of studies are highlighting the socio-economic difficulties often associated with this new start for families. It seems pretty clear to me that bringing parents and grandparents over will make life easier for many of our fellow citizens who have immigrated here.

● (1735)

This will give the entire reunited family more quality time together.

However, it concerns me when I read that immigrant parents are currently less likely to use child care services less than non-immigrant parents.

Bill C-242 aims to address this by providing alternatives to paid child care, which will be beneficial for immigrant families.

Quebec has a public child care system that is a source of pride. It is an accessible service that was established in 1997, and it remains just as relevant and useful today as it ever was. This service enables women in particular to enter or return to the labour market.

We need as many workers as we can get. No one should be left behind. Neither Quebec nor Canada can afford to lose talent. We know that many immigrant parents do not use child care services because they are too expensive. Although the changes brought about by Bill C-242 will affect only a small portion of the immigrants entering Quebec and Canada each year, if this bill can help create alternatives to paid child care for immigrant families, it will be worth it.

I want to ask the following question in a broader sense. What is keeping us from moving forward? What is keeping us from doing for immigrant families what the Maison des Grands-Parents does for the people of Trois-Rivières? Nothing, absolutely nothing is keeping us from doing better.

To be human is to share the world with others. No one wants to be alone. We all want to find our family, those with whom we share a common origin. We must break the isolation. Let us rebuild the link that has been broken by circumstances.

I confirm that the Bloc Québécois will support Bill C-242 introduced by the member for Dufferin—Caledon.

[English]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today in support of Bill C-242. I would like to thank the member for Dufferin—Caledon for bringing it forward as a crucial step in reuniting new Canadians and refugees with their families.

Separation of families, parents and children, or grandparents and children is often a by-product of Canada's deeply broken immigration system. It is something we are all very much aware of. In the past few years, with the COVID pandemic and many humanitarian crises around the world, we have witnessed disturbing trends with regard to the functioning of our much-needed immigration system, whether it is the thousands of refugee applications pending as people face imminent danger in their home countries, or the backlogs or strict restrictions for temporary resident visas for parents and grandparents that prevent the reunification of families.

I am deeply disheartened by the effects that these delays and restrictions have had on real people: families and individuals who are simply seeking peace. I know first-hand the devastating effects of not being able to be with loved ones. Canada has a history of separating families, and particularly indigenous families. Let us not repeat and continue this legacy.

Families should not have to go through long and very difficult ordeals just to be together. Families are an important and critical aspect of how we understand our quality of life, and when we do not have our children, our parents or our grandparents with us, especially after a very difficult life, where does the healing begin?

New Democrats strongly support making family reunification processes easier so that people can reunite with their loved ones. It is critical. I am positive that the measures contained within this bill would help to fill some of the gaps, such as the increase in the length of time, for example, that a temporary resident can stay in Canada while visiting their child or grandchild. It would raise the cap from two years to five years. The reduction of the minimum in-

come requirement is also a helpful course of action. These are real, tangible solutions.

However, I recognize that this bill is simply a short-term solution to a deeply seated problem in our immigration system. For years, Liberal and Conservative governments have made grave errors in the way temporary foreign visas and the parent-grandparent sponsorship program applications are processed. During the Harper government, for example, in 2011, records that were found through access to information requests demonstrated that over 150,000 applications were ultimately denied, and these were all contained within a backlog.

The government at the time then doubled down and created a restriction for further applications to limit the wait. It refused to learn from previous mistakes and made matters worse. The two-year moratorium on applications created a massive backlog that families are still reeling from today.

Then, the Liberal government promised voters a reformed, streamlined immigration process to fix decades or years of pain. It went on to introduce an arbitrary lottery system that made the parent-grandparent sponsorship program the only immigration stream in Canada based on a lucky draw. This meant that a random selection system determined the fate of thousands of families while throwing out many of the applications because they did not pre-screen for eligibility.

Clearly, this system failed horribly. It was replaced by a first-come, first-served basis. This process took eight minutes to fill to capacity, disadvantaging many others who were unable to attain an online connection because they did not have the technology, such as a cellphone or computer, in their place of origin to file online.

● (1740)

What happened to the many applications that were unable to get in by the first-come, first-served basis? They waited. The families waited. In fact, at the time of this program and the first-come, first-served debacle, 70 families filed a lawsuit because they were unable to get the application in time. The government quietly settled that. The government proposed a visa application process that continues to remain inaccessible and to cause deep hardship to deserving families. It is an unfortunate reality continuing to be faced by thousands in our country.

In my constituency of Edmonton Griesbach, we are home to many new Canadians, refugees and immigrants who have waited a long time to come to safety, to seek refuge and peace, and to seek a new way and a new life. They finally have a chance to breathe, to catch up with loved ones and make up the lost time due to crisis and international conflict. It is something that will take many supports and much family to heal.

Private Members' Business

I know personally of a constituent in my community who has been in Canada for over 10 years. This whole time, his family has been stuck in South Sudan. When the situation got too difficult in South Sudan, their family had to flee to Egypt, where they continued to wait for their family to be able to sponsor them to bring them here. He was separated from his wife and children.

He applied and fortunately the application for his wife went well. The application for the three children, however, did not. As South Sudanese people are not issued a birth certificate at birth, he had to obtain them through a separate process altogether. The visa officer, however, did not consider their certificates to be valid and the children's eligibility was not approved. They were asked for DNA testing. The embassy refused to help with this.

Finally, the mother, in order to satisfy the permanent resident request, did have to come to Canada, but that meant leaving three of her children behind. Those three children are ages four, eight and 12. They are now expected to find some way to figure out DNA testing all by themselves, while also simultaneously not having a birth certificate that is recognized. How is a four-year-old supposed to do that? It is devastating and heartbreaking.

Another constituent of mine is a Syrian refugee. His wife and one of his kids are in Canada. However, his 12-year-old daughter is stuck in Saudi Arabia by herself. One son is stuck in Turkey. Both kids have deep mental health breakdowns and hardships every single day. There is nothing wrong with their applications, but the processing time is literally killing them. This time away from family and away from loved ones can leave scars that last a lifetime.

Again, I would like to further recommend that the government address the long-standing failures of IRCC as a department and reallocate funds for other streams in order to reduce the backlog. I want to conclude by thanking my hon. colleague for tabling this critical, shortstop measure, which would reunite families and save lives. I look forward to hearing my colleagues' speeches.

• (1745)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by congratulating the member for Dufferin—Caledon, a member of the Conservative caucus, for putting forward this bill. It is a bill that very much reflects Conservative Party values and emphasizes the importance of open and fair immigration. It is also a bill that is very pro-family. It recognizes the value of strong families and of families being able to spend time with each other, and the need to have creative measures that allow for families to spend time together.

What we really need to reflect on in terms of reforms to our immigration system is the value of family and extended family and how we can promote family connectedness so that people do not have to suffer through these processes and spending long periods of time away from close family members in the context of waiting for applications to be processed or in the case of other situations. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to that a bit today.

Specifically, the bill put forward, Bill C-242, by the member for Dufferin—Caledon, would amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act as follows:

to allow a parent or grandparent who applies for a temporary resident visa as a visitor to purchase private health insurance outside Canada and to stay in Canada for a period of five years.

It would also require the Minister of Immigration to prepare a report on possibly reducing the minimum income requirement for a child or grandchild. This recognizes the value of what is often called a “super visa”, supporting family members so they can be together and support each other.

A bit of context is important here. Very often, families are looking at sponsoring members of their immediate or extended family to come to Canada for permanent immigration. That is a valuable channel, but there are limits to it. There is an additional option, one that maybe reflects the desire of some family members who would like to come and stay for a long time in Canada but do not plan on permanently immigrating here. I believe it was a Conservative government that developed the idea of having a super visa program as an additional channel for people. The super visa is for people who are not immigrating permanently to Canada but would simply like to come here, be with family members, like children and grandchildren, and spend extended periods of time with them.

As a condition, those who come are expected to purchase private health care and are therefore not relying on the public system. This is very reasonable. We should not stick ourselves in this binary of saying that either people do not come or they come and immediately have all the social services associated with someone who has a permanent presence in Canada. Instead, we can create mechanisms that allow people to come and spend significant amounts of time in Canada with family members, while paying privately for insurance. At the same time, we should look to make these channels more accessible and more reasonable so that more people can take advantage of these opportunities to be together as a family.

The super visa program is a very good program and a very popular program, and for those who are able to fit into this stream, it really achieves the best of all possible worlds. It is beneficial to Canadian society to have these folks come and be with family members and provide various kinds of support to their families. Also, again, it recognizes the fact that there are some limits in the permanent immigration stream regarding parents and grandparents. It strengthens this particular stream and allows those who may not wish to be here permanently to nonetheless come and be present in and supportive of their families.

Needless to say, the value of extended families is well known, I think, to all Canadians. For many cultural communities, there is a particular recognition of and appreciation for the role being played by extended family members. As I give this speech now, I have five children at home, and I am very glad that my mother-in-law is able to visit and play such a key supportive role in our family. That enables me to travel and enables my wife to do all the things she does. For newcomers to Canada who do not have the benefit of grandparents being here in Canada, that can create some really significant challenges.

• (1750)

Having that super visa channel available and extending it to five years, making it more accessible and making it easier for people to make those health care insurance purchases by giving them a broader range of options of who they can purchase from, makes that transition so much easier for people who are living and working here in Canada. This is really designed to ease that process. Again, it reflects a Conservative understanding of the value of family connections, both within the idea of a nuclear or immediate family, but also within the extended family and the supports that are provided there.

This is an excellent bill, but there are many more things that the government needs to do, and that Conservatives are calling on the government to do, to address the unnecessary pressures on families that are associated with our immigration system right now.

One of the main complaints we are hearing in our offices is the strain that is created for families by backlogs. The fact is that across a broad range of immigration categories, there are huge delays, and this forces families to be apart from each other for much longer than they should be. The idea that people have to wait years, for instance, to have a spouse come to Canada, or that they have to wait years for other members of their families or for caregivers to come to Canada who meet all the requirements and are very much needed, is an issue that we need to really get to the bottom of.

This affects the issue of refugee sponsorship as well. The delay, I think, is three years for private refugee sponsorship, so Canadian community groups, church groups and others who are waiting to sponsor vulnerable refugees have to wait for a three-year period. It may be that those refugees are in a vulnerable situation: they may be in need of ongoing financial support where they are or their security may be in question, yet they are sitting and waiting while the Canadian sponsors are sitting and waiting for that long processing delay. Those lengthy delays are simply unacceptable, and they require urgent action by the government and by all of us.

In our last concern of the election platform, I was very proud of some of the concrete proposals that Conservatives put forward in terms of expediting, processing and addressing the long backlogs. Of course, the adjudication process is critically important, but it needs to be timely. It is always tragic when families are forced to be apart for years for no reason other than bureaucratic delay, so we need to do much better. The government needs to do much better in terms of ensuring a lean, effective and results-driven immigration system. We all see these frustrations in our offices right now, and this is why we have really been pushing forward on the issue of backlogs across the range of categories.

As well, my colleague for Dufferin—Caledon gave notice of motion at the immigration committee today on a motion to call for addressing the backlogs in citizenship applications, which is a different issue from immigration applications. There are various elections coming up in different parts of the country. Here in Ontario, there is going to be a provincial election relatively soon, and people who would otherwise be eligible for their citizenship and would participate in that election are waiting in longer and longer queues to get their citizenship applications processed. It is not just on the front of families being together, but it is on other fronts, such as

Private Members' Business

people being able to exercise their democratic rights and other things where the issue of delays, inefficiencies and backlogs within the immigration system has concrete negative effects for families. We put forward some concrete proposals in our last election platform around addressing this. I think it is very important.

I will conclude by congratulating the member for Dufferin—Caledon and recognizing the work that he is doing in trying to strengthen and make more accessible the super visa program. This very much aligns with our vision of a family-friendly immigration policy: one that recognizes the value of strong families and of families being able to be together.

• (1755)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon for his work on this legislation.

[Translation]

The government is firmly committed to reuniting families and their loved ones abroad. Family members are an important part of our immigration system.

[English]

Canada has one of the most generous and comprehensive family reunification programs in the world. Through this program, we help to keep families together and contribute to the integration of immigrants, who are an important part of the success of our communities across our country. Parents and grandparents want to visit their adult children and grandchildren. Likewise, Canadian citizens and permanent residents benefit from the support of their parents and grandparents.

[Translation]

Parents and grandparents of Canadian citizens and permanent residents who wish to visit their family for a longer period can apply for a parent and grandparent super visa. This process is authorized through ministerial instructions.

[English]

The super visa is a multiple-entry visa that is valid for up to 10 years and allows for stays of up to two years at a time. Super visa holders may also request an extension of their stay for up to an additional two years while in Canada, and there are no limits on the number of extensions they can request.

Since the super visa allows for longer stays than a regular temporary resident visa, applicants must meet additional medical and financial criteria. These criteria include a medical exam, private medical insurance from a Canadian company and financial support from a child/grandchild host, who must meet an income cut-off minimum based on their family size.

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

These important safeguards are in place to ensure that this potentially vulnerable population has financial support and protection in the event of a medical emergency while in Canada.

[English]

They also ensure that there is no undue burden on the Canadian taxpayer through unpaid medical bills. This is particularly important, as demonstrated by our experience during the pandemic, when many health care systems across the country are strained. This private member's bill, Bill C-242, proposes to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to allow a parent or grandparent to stay in Canada for five years under the super visa and to purchase private health care insurance from outside Canada. It also requires the minister to table a report on reducing the income requirements that the child or grandchild must meet for the parent or grandparent to qualify for a super visa.

While the government supports many principles of Bill C-242, we have concerns that it would reduce our ability to ensure that parents and grandparents are arriving with adequate supports during their stay. We also continue to look out for the best interests of Canadian taxpayers.

First, the act is not the appropriate instrument to make program changes to super visa conditions. Parliament intended for the act to serve as framework legislation, which authorizes the making of regulations and ministerial instructions. As I stated, the super visa is authorized through these ministerial instructions. As such, we propose amendments to Bill C-242 to maintain the authority for super visa conditions under ministerial instructions. This would allow the government to respond quickly to the emerging needs of clients, rather than necessitating a lengthy legislative process.

The government supports the member's proposal to increase the length of stay per entry. However, we propose to extend this from the current two years to three. Once again, this would be changed through ministerial instructions. Since super visa holders already have the opportunity to extend their stay in Canada for up to two years, this means parents and grandparents could then stay in Canada for up to five years without needing to leave the country.

The government believes that increasing the length of stay any further would negate the spirit of the super visa, which is to support temporary residence in Canada. Increasing the length of stay beyond three years without needing to request an extension could lead to visitors establishing more permanent connections to Canada, and this would undermine the purpose of having a legal framework to address temporary residents.

● (1800)

[Translation]

The government does not support the member's proposal to allow super visa applicants to purchase private health insurance from foreign companies.

[English]

Private health insurance is required through a Canadian company, and this is to ensure super visa holders, who are a potentially vulnerable population, have sufficient and reliable medical insur-

ance in case of a health emergency while in Canada. This is an important component of the super visa. The government believes that allowing super visa holders to purchase insurance from companies outside Canada could introduce various risks. Applicants might purchase coverage from unregulated or fraudulent providers, for example, and this could have devastating consequences to parents and grandparents, as well as for our health care system.

We have actually seen what can happen when parents and grandparents arrive on regular visas that do not require emergency medical insurance. We know of several cases when parents were visiting on a regular visitor visa and experienced a medical emergency, such as a stroke, during their stay. They did not have health insurance and incurred medical bills worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. These stories underscore the importance of ensuring that super visa holders are protected with appropriate health insurance during their visit.

I would like to also note that allowing super visa holders to obtain coverage from international health insurance providers, as proposed in the hon. member's bill, could pose significant complexities for the government to verify the coverage. To ensure the validity of foreign health care providers for coverage and billing purposes, IRCC would have to establish a complex and costly designation framework to establish pre-approved insurance options from abroad. With respect to Bill C-242's final proposal, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship commits to tabling a report to Parliament to review the current financial requirements for children or grandchildren.

While the Government supports a review of this requirement, I wish to underscore that we believe a financial requirement remains a necessary and important component of the super visa. While family reunification is an important part of our immigration system, it should not place undue financial burdens on Canadian taxpayers, and visitors should be adequately supported during their stay.

I will state once again that the super visa's minimum necessary income requirement is in place to ensure the host child or grandchild can provide for the basic requirements of their visiting family members while they are in Canada. This is also key to maintaining public support for the super visa, which facilitates longer stays of parents and grandparents.

● (1805)

[Translation]

The government is committed to family reunification. We must maintain an immigration system that meets the needs of Canadians if we want to take full advantage of this system.

[English]

The government believes the current conditions of the super visa adequately balance the interests of families that wish to reunite with their loved ones, as well as those of all Canadians, as it protects their hard-earned taxpayer services.

The super visa enables us to reunite families quickly and for longer periods. At the same time, the government is able to adequately manage the operations of this program under its current framework. For over a decade, the super visa has remained a popular and accessible option for Canadian citizens and permanent residents to reunite with their parents and grandparents, with approximately 17,000 super visas issued each year.

I believe it is a highly successful program by any measure. That being said, the government always remains open to finding ways to improve our programs and policies.

[Translation]

Although the government supports the spirit and intent of Bill C-242, it will only support this bill with the proposed amendments. The goal is to ensure the integrity and long-term viability of the highly successful super visa program.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if she is listening, but I must commend the member for Saint-Jean for the thorough job she has done. She gave a remarkable speech during the previous reading of this bill, which has greatly inspired my speech today. She was again inspiring today when she asked her question to the House and especially when she moved the motion about a woman's right to have free reign over her own body. Unfortunately, this motion was defeated, because some dinosaurs, primarily on the Conservative benches, voted against it. I think it is a disgrace, in the history of this country, to have voted against that motion. I hope that those who did will look at how they voted today. It proved to me that I am not truly Canadian. Today, in Quebec's National Assembly, a similar motion passed unanimously. Once again, that proved to me that Quebec is my country.

I will come back to the bill. I also want to commend the member for Dufferin—Caledon for his patience, as he has been waiting a number of months for his bill to move forward. To start, I will quickly explain what a super visa is, for those who are listening today. Basically, it is a visa, a travel document, designed for parents and grandparents. It does not permit the holder to work during their stay. It allows multiple entries of a period of up to two years. There are certain requirements, but the two most important ones are that the applicant must have medical insurance from a Canadian company and must prove that the child or grandchild who will be hosting them here has the financial capacity to support them. This means that there is a minimum income threshold that must be proven by the child or grandchild in order for the parent or grandparent to be issued the visa.

It will shock no one to hear that I am in favour of this bill.

For many families that want to bring their parents and grandparents to Canada, the logistics, paperwork and delays are an onerous and immense administrative burden. What these families often want is to sponsor their parents or grandparents and bring them

Private Members' Business

here permanently. The super visa being considered provides the opportunity to have one's parents here while the sponsorship and permanent residence application is being processed. It is also another option for those not picked in the lottery.

That system is very restrictive. Few people manage to get a sponsorship application for parents or grandparents. I would like to add one thing: Right now, every time we check, the government has a backlog for almost all immigration programs.

It would be a good idea to fast-track and simplify the process for those who in all likelihood would receive a favourable decision. I think that would be all right.

The bill would also make some minor but specific changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. We know this will apply to a relatively small number of the temporary residence visas granted every year. We also know that, because they have temporary status, these immigrants will not end up costing the federal or provincial governments anything. Lastly, we know that the few thousand people granted the existing super visa are generally people of significant financial means. Applicants have proof of funds, and parents and grandparents have prepaid health insurance. In essence, they have to be financially secure. They pose no risk to anybody.

What exactly is a super visa? What will this bill change? Bill C-242 makes four changes. First, visitors must purchase private health insurance outside Canada. Current eligibility criteria require applicants to purchase insurance from a Canadian company. Yesterday, I was talking about supply and demand in a previous speech, and it is the same idea. This could expand the pool of insurance companies, which will probably reduce insurance costs for super visa applicants.

As my colleague, the member for Saint-Jean, mentioned, all it takes is a quick search to see that this kind of insurance coverage is extremely expensive. For a young person in their forties with no known health issues, it can cost between \$1,000 and \$1,500. For people slightly older or with any health problems, insurance coverage can cost up to \$6,000 or even \$7,000 a year. For parents or grandparents, it can cost about \$10,000 annually. This does not include all the costs associated with the immigration process.

As I said, yes, these people do have resources, but that is no reason to stop them from shopping around for insurance. Just because they have resources does not mean that they should not be able to shop around.

The bill requires that foreign insurance companies be accredited by the minister, which ensures that the company is legitimate and that its coverage is compatible with our health care systems.

Private Members' Business

• (1810)

By opening up the market to competition, we take away Canadian companies' monopoly on this type of insurance coverage. I am not an economist, but I have friends who are, and they confirm that I am right to believe this is a basic way to reduce the cost of coverage.

It will also allow some foreign nationals to combine this insurance coverage with a policy they already have for their home or vehicle. People might be able to save money, which, I imagine, could be used to settle here, buy goods and contribute to the economy.

What is more, Bill C-242 extends the period of time a person can stay in Canada without having to renew the document from two years to five years. This would help minimize several current irritants. The super visa is a multiple-entry visa, and it is valid for a maximum of 10 years.

The number of round trips that parents and grandparents have to make between Canada and their country of origin increases airfare costs. This measure alone would be significantly reduce those costs.

As well, renewing the permit every two years very often requires a medical exam for the insurance premium. It is obvious that, over a total span of 10 years, the grandparents' health could change, which could result in higher premiums and, more importantly, add some unpredictability to their stay in the country.

Going back to what I was saying, it is clear to me that as long as these people do not pose a financial risk to taxpayers, we should try to make life easier for them and their children who are hosting and taking care of them.

I mentioned earlier that these children, who are permanent residents or outright citizens, must have a minimum of financial means. Bill C-242 does not propose to reduce or abolish the requirement to prove that someone has the financial means to look after their parents or grandparents.

Instead, the bill proposes that the minister review the need to maintain the income requirement or threshold. Thanks to my colleague from Saint-Jean, I have learned that many people are talking about repealing it altogether. If the minister decides in the next two years to maintain this low-income cut-off at its current level, he will have to explain why he wishes to keep it in place.

This bill is therefore not very compelling for parliamentarians. It seeks a review of the relevance of a legislative measure, something that I think is ultimately reasonable and commonly done.

When it comes to spousal sponsorships, Quebec does not even assess the spouses' financial capacity, and it nevertheless works very well.

The Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration has already looked into something similar and made a recommendation regarding the sponsorship of parents and grandparents.

The study on this aspect could help determine whether this threshold is appropriate in different places across Canada. The cost of living is not the same everywhere, as we know. Could there be

different sponsors depending on where the individuals will be living? I think this would be a positive thing.

It would also acknowledge the fact that many families see a positive financial impact when parents and grandparents come to stay with them, since it allows them to rejoin the job market.

I could go on at length, but as parliamentarians we have a duty to set partisanship aside and address our constituents' problems.

I want to reiterate that what happened today in the House of Commons with respect to the motion the member for Saint-Jean tried to move is unacceptable and shameful for this Parliament. It just reinforced my belief that Canada is not my country. My country is Quebec.

• (1815)

[English]

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am quite delighted to rise today to speak to this very important issue of Bill C-242: the reuniting families act. This bill proposes to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to allow a parent or grandparent who applies for a temporary resident visa as a visitor to purchase private health insurance outside Canada, and to stay in Canada for a period of five years. I am hoping that we can bring this bill into committee to study this very good idea more, and really understand the implications of this idea and how it would impact constituents in my riding and across Canada.

One of the main issues that I face in my riding of Mississauga—Erin Mills, with over 50% of the population being first-generation immigrants, and a population of professionals and double-income households, is the issue of child care and raising kids within Mississauga—Erin Mills and the impact of grandparents. I immigrated to Canada when I was 12 years old, and one of the most beneficial things I was able to experience in my childhood was spending my summers with my grandparents from both my mom's side and my dad's side. I learned a lot from them. I learned the value of family from them. This is what I hear a lot from my constituents who are first-generation immigrants and who want their kids, born in Canada, to have that same experience.

The importance of having family here in Canada is paramount not just in building strong communities and strong families, but also in terms of our economic prosperity. As I mentioned, we have double-income households in my riding. One of the main issues that my constituents face is child care. I do not just mean having somebody to look over kids throughout the day, but having quality child care with family values and that all-encompassing upbringing that our kids deserve. Grandparents really fulfill that role.

Over the past seven years that I have been serving as the member of Parliament for Mississauga—Erin Mills, this has been one of the top issues that my constituents have raised. They apply for the super visa, as we call it, so that their parents can come and go as they please to make sure that they are well connected with their grandkids and with their kids, who are living meaningful lives here in Canada. Often, especially over the past two years, I have seen that there is a huge delay in how these super visas are being processed, wherever in the world they are being processed, and there is an impact on families. I have a constituent who recently went through a major surgery and she wanted her mom be here with her, but her visa had expired. She had applied for another super visa and waited and waited. The surgery came and the surgery went, and she still did not have a decision on her super visa.

That issue of private health insurance is a really big one. When and if we move this private member's bill into committee to study this issue further, I think we could really help constituents such as mine to be able to support their families here in Canada and be able to get the support they need, not only in terms of how they are operating but also how they are raising their kids, how they are doing their jobs and how they are taking care of their health and their well-being and also the health and well-being of their parents, who are trying to come to visit Canada on occasion.

It is really important to have the blessings, in my opinion, of our parents as we continue to grow, to evolve and to set down roots as first-generation immigrants here in Canada. Exploring how this bill can impact how we do that is important. I am hoping that we can explore this issue further in committee.

• (1820)

I am hoping that we can explore the issue of how private health insurance, especially international private health insurance, would impact the whole regime, the whole scheme of super visas here in Canada.

I am hoping we can explore how and what the impact of extending the time of the expiry of a super visa would have on constituents like mine in Mississauga—Erin Mills. I am also really hoping that we can explore and understand how delays happen and what the economic impacts and social impacts of those delays are on families in ridings like mine in Mississauga—Erin Mills. I am hoping we can explore how we can really expand, for example, the parents and grandparents sponsorship program, to make sure that Canadian families have the support that they need, not just in fulfilling the well-being of a family in a riding like mine but also understanding how important the social aspect of it really is.

I am a big believer in family. I know and understand and have benefited from having grandparents around as I grew up. I know my nephew and my niece benefit from having my parents around in how they are raised, and I can tell members that they are a lot sharper for it.

I am hoping that we can continue to improve our immigration system here in Canada to ensure the well-being of families in ridings like mine of Mississauga—Erin Mills, that we are raising our kids right, that we are providing that support that young families need in order to thrive and to survive as they go about their double-income households trying to manage life events such as unfortunate

health instances. We need to try to ensure that we are finding that balance between the economy and society and making sure that our families are being raised right.

I am really hoping that the committee really digs deep into how we can really improve not only the temporary resident visa process but also the parents and grandparents sponsorship program, and I am hoping that the committee will hear from experts on the direct and indirect impact and how we can continue to improve that process.

Over the past number of years, we have been really digging deep into this question about parents and grandparents and the role that they play in Canadian families. Over the past year, we have had 10,000 people come and visit Canada through the parents and grandparents sponsorship program, despite COVID. The demand has never been higher. In my riding, it is a conversation that I have almost on a daily basis, regarding young families who want their parents to come and have that positive impact on the families they are raising here in Canada.

I think there is so much we can do with this. I think that there is so much that we can expand on, that we can tweak and fix, to ensure that families here in Canada are being well protected and are being raised effectively while we fix the parents and grandparents sponsorship program and also the super visa program, which Bill C-242 would ensure.

I am really looking forward to continuing to watch this study of Bill C-242 and seeing how it will impact Canadian families, especially those in Mississauga—Erin Mills and first-generation Canadians.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled to hear that both the Bloc Québécois and the NDP will be supporting this bill when it comes to a vote tomorrow. I am disappointed to hear the parliamentary secretary indicate that she is not supportive of the legislation, especially for the reasons why the Liberals are saying they are not supportive.

We just heard they are looking forward to having this bill studied. Family reunification was extensively studied at the immigration committee in 2016. The committee delivered a report, which included a report on the super visa. Witness after witness came to the committee and talked about the problems with the super visa. They said that, one, the time to stay should be extended from two years to five years, and two, the low-income test is disenfranchising so many Canadian families from reuniting.

I was moved to hear the member talk about how important it was for her to have her grandparents around when she newly came to Canada. Why are we disenfranchising so many other Canadians? In fact, the Canadians who most need the support of their family, in my humble estimation, are Canadians who have just newly come to this country, because they are in a new country and they are trying to make their way. What better way to do that than with the support of their family, which would include their parents and their grandparents.

Adjournment Proceedings

The low-income cut-off disenfranchises so many of those hard-working Canadians. They come here and take lots of jobs, sometimes working two or three jobs to make ends meet. Then the government says, “Well, sorry, you do not have enough income in order for your parents to come and stay with you.” All the evidence shows that when a parent or a grandparent comes to stay with a family here in Canada, it adds to their economic success. Maybe it lets them take an extra shift at work. It actually allows them to have some extra child care. It is an economic boon to the family, which is an economic boon to the country. Why the government does not realize this, I really do not understand.

With respect to insurance, I cannot imagine that the government cannot figure out if there is a reputable insurance company in India or in the Philippines or in Burkina Faso. My point is that there are reputable insurance companies all across the world that could offer health insurance. All the government has to do is figure out which ones they are. I do not think it would take a complicated program, as the parliamentary secretary has suggested. There are large multinational insurance companies operating all over the world. It would create competition, which would lower the cost of health care.

One of the biggest impediments for families is the low-income cut-off, but even if they meet that, there is the cost of having their parents come, such as air tickets, and there is the very expensive cost of private health insurance. I am not saying no health insurance. All I am saying is, let us expand the suite of health insurance so that maybe it would be more affordable for Canadians, and therefore more families would take advantage of the super visa and more families would have those wonderful experiences, like the member just talked about.

To me, this is a bill that everyone should support. I am shocked to hear that this is something that may not be supportable. The thing I found most shocking was the parliamentary secretary saying that the Liberals were concerned about taxpayers and the effect it would have on taxpayers. The only time I have heard them mention being concerned about taxpayers or the effect on taxpayers is with respect to immigration and new Canadians. They do not worry about it in any other thing. I find that shocking.

This is a bill that would be fantastic news for families from coast to coast to coast. I am so proud that this is a bill that is going to do that. I am so proud that members of the Bloc Québécois and members of the NDP recognize it. I look forward to their supporting this bill tomorrow when it comes to a vote. I am hopeful that some Liberals would stand up, remove themselves from the whip, and vote for a bill that would be great for Canadian families, especially new Canadian families.

• (1825)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:29 p.m., the time provided for debate has expired.

The question is on the motion.

[English]

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

The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

• (1830)

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I would like to have a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 4, 2022, at the expiry of the time provided for in Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand again to speak to the critical issues surrounding support for a just transition for workers in Canada's fisheries. Over the past year, we have seen the devastating impacts of the climate emergency. In my home of British Columbia, in just the past year we have seen a devastating heat dome, wildfires and flooding. The waters keep warming, and the impacts on our communities are increasingly severe. These are all terrible reminders that, both in Canada and around the world, we have failed to act to prevent the climate emergency.

It is vital that alongside bold emissions reduction targets, we set out to build a more sustainable economy for the future. Creating a viable fishery that prioritizes the conservation of our marine ecosystems is a key pillar of this plan.

This is all the more important because we have seen such drastic declines in the fish populations and consistent failures by consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments to protect our marine ecosystems and successfully rebuild stocks. Last year, almost 60% of British Columbia's salmon fisheries were closed as part of the Pacific salmon strategy initiative, also known as the PSSI, to try to help protect incredibly depleted stocks.

While the program includes a voluntary licence buyback program, it falls short of the robust transition supports individuals in the industry require.

In order to move forward, first nations, fishers, local organizations and coastal communities are asking the federal government to work more collaboratively. Those on the water and along our coasts understand best what is happening. They need to be part of the plan.

There are examples we can turn to. Forestry and agriculture workers in British Columbia, for example, saw a dedicated transition plan and financial supports from the B.C. NDP. These are the types of proactive solutions we need to see in the fishing sector to ensure that workers have a future as our economy continues to shift. All workers deserve assurance that they will not be left behind.

UFAWU-Unifor president James Lawson said it well when he remarked:

While our pleas for support...for displaced fish harvesters continue to go unanswered, forestry and agriculture workers are being rescued by exactly the kind of funding programs our Industry so desperately needs.

We know that fishers have ample transferable skills to take on related work including marine transport, coastal and marine tourism and countless other careers. It is time for the government to implement a clear plan that supports all those impacted, including those who are looking to start a new career or to retire with dignity.

This year's budget makes it clear that the protection and prioritization of our marine environment, coastal communities and all those impacted are an afterthought for the government.

It is also worth highlighting that in the almost 13 months since the PSSI was announced, we still have not seen any plan to rebuild wild salmon stocks. It is not good enough just to close our commercial fisheries and hope that fish populations bounce back.

Fishers, coastal communities and all Canadians want to believe that there is a bright future for Canada's marine ecosystems and our fishing sector, but that future is not possible until key funding commitments and a plan are delivered. The longer we wait, the more dire the situation will get and marine ecosystems, coastal communities and fishers' livelihoods will be lost to government mismanagement.

People are desperate to know: When will the government deliver a real plan that supports all those in the fishing sector, first nations, coastal communities and our marine environment?

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the question from the member. I serve on the fisheries committee with her and have a great deal of respect for her.

Our department is focused on improving the status of some of Canada's most important fish stocks to allow them to regenerate to provide sustainable fishing opportunities now and for years to come. The department takes a science-based approach to fisheries management. Science advice continues to indicate that some fish stocks are indeed in trouble, and some have been in trouble quite some time despite progressive management measures employed to date.

To support these difficult fisheries management decisions, my department has policies in place that guide management responses to changes in the status of fish stocks. The precautionary framework prescribes rebuilding plans for depleted stocks and also indicates that any harvest of fish from a depleted stock must be kept as low as possible to allow the stock the chance to recover. Rebuilding plans developed with indigenous groups and other fish stakeholders

are a key tool to promote the growth of depleted stocks so they can come back to the abundant levels that they need to be.

Adjournment Proceedings

I recognize that fishing restrictions aimed at rebuilding fish stocks can have an economic impact during the rebuilding period. However, more significant impacts can result from delaying action or not taking sufficient action to promote the rebuilding of stocks. Healthy fish stocks support resilient ecosystems while improving the potential for economic returns in the long term. The protection and regeneration of our natural environment, particularly in the face of biodiversity loss and accelerated climate change, will be critical for the economic vitality of our fisheries.

Commercial fishing is incredibly important to the local economies of Canada's coastal regions, like mine and like the member's, and to the well-being of indigenous and non-indigenous communities throughout this country. That is why we are working closely with stakeholders and communities in making decisions with regard to the protection of the resource.

I am conscious of the fact that predictability is important for those who make their living from Canada's fisheries. Through advisory board processes, those who depend on the resource are engaged and informed regarding the potential impacts to stocks and regarding access to the very resource we are talking about today. The common goal of supporting the long-term health of the industry underpins these discussions.

It is important to recognize that Canada's fishing industry has faced many challenges over many decades by the nature of the dependence on a natural resource. Changes in access to the resource to support both environmental and socio-economic objectives are not unprecedented. It is because of this that the department has supported the industry by adopting mitigation measures to better adapt to such changes. For example, most fishery licence holders in Canada have access to multiple species that allow for diversification and avoid dependence on one particular fishery. Through setting the legislative and regulatory environment to support industry through adjustment periods and ensuring regular communication on science-based decisions, the department provides the necessary conditions for continued economic vitality and viability in Canada's fishing industry.

Adjournment Proceedings

In closing, in addition to working with Canada on a specific fisheries management decision, my department is taking a lead role in actively exploring and facilitating a transition to the future blue economy. Throughout the previous year, the department conducted numerous ministerial round tables and engagement processes to hear from Canadians, particularly in the fisheries and oceans sectors, with regard to the challenges that all of us may be facing with the responsible growth of the sector.

A comprehensive blue economy strategy will outline the vision for our ocean-related sectors and help guide future government action that will enable long-term growth. As a government, we are super committed to science-based decision-making. It will ensure that fishing opportunities are sustainable now and for future generations of fishers.

● (1835)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's response, but we are not seeing the urgency needed from the government to deliver a real transition plan for workers.

This year, we have seen more talk about a blue ocean strategy to revitalize Canada's coastal economy. These types of initiatives should be exciting and hopeful, but based on the Liberal government's track record of failing to protect our marine ecosystems and workers, it just feels like a pipe dream. That is why it is so important that we get to work to implement stock rehabilitation programs and support the transition of our industries to a more sustainable model. Canadian workers should not have to fight their government for support.

We know that Canada's response to the climate crisis will be stronger when we are all working toward a shared vision of a healthier economy and a clean-energy future, so I will ask a simple question: When will the Liberal government finally do the right thing and deliver a real plan?

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Mr. Speaker, our department is focused on improving the status of some of Canada's most important fish stocks. Again, I recognize that fishing restrictions aimed at rebuilding fish stocks can have an economic impact during the rebuilding period. I have seen it in my own community.

However, more significant impacts can result from delaying action, as I mentioned, or not taking sufficient action to promote the rebuilding of stocks. Commercial fishing is incredibly important to so many coastal communities, if not all communities that have a fishery. That is why we are working closely with our stakeholders and communities at making decisions that protect this resource through things, as I mentioned earlier, such as board processes. Those that depend on the resource are engaged and informed on potential changes to certain stocks or access to the resource.

As a government, we are committed to science-based decision-making. We are working to ensure the fishery opportunities are sustainable for future generations to come, and I look forward to working with the member to achieve those agendas.

● (1840)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak today on the

Conservatives' ongoing push for the government to allow visa-free travel for Ukrainians.

Up until now, unfortunately the government has opposed these efforts. In a constructive spirit, we are continuing to push hoping that the government will do the right thing to allow Ukrainians to come to Canada to flee the challenges they are facing right now as a result of this horrific invasion, and to find safety and security in Canada.

I want to remind the House that right after the invasion, my colleague, the member for Calgary Forest Lawn, who is our lead on the immigration file, put forward a motion at the immigration committee. That motion supported visa-free travel. The motion was adopted because Conservatives were able to work constructively with members of the Bloc and the NDP, but that motion was, at the committee level, opposed by the government.

This House subsequently voted in the majority to support visa-free travel for Ukrainians. Again, the entire Liberal caucus, without exception, opposed it. There were some members who were not present for that vote, but every member who was present voted against allowing visa-free travel for those coming from Ukraine.

At this point, we have seen this shared view with the Conservatives leading and putting this issue forward, but having support from the other opposition parties, emphasizing how crucial it is for the Liberals, the government, to move on this. As of yet, the government has not been willing to implement the will of the House of Commons expressed through that concurrence vote.

Why do we support visa-free travel for Ukrainians? At a basic level, we want to help those in need to find safety and security, and to be able to do so in Canada. Many people have stepped up. They want to offer support. They want to open their homes. However, the government has to get out of the way and allow them to offer that support.

It is also important to acknowledge that many of those who are coming want to have security while the war is going on, but they also want to return. In many cases, we are talking about mothers and children and the father in the family is still in Ukraine and is participating in the defence of Ukraine.

When we have some members of a family and not others looking for refuge, it is very clear that people are not planning on staying permanently. In general, and the government has acknowledged this, the intention of those who are coming here is to be safe until the war ends. Hopefully it will end soon, and people will then be able to return.

Let us acknowledge that other countries are doing this. We want to share in that support, recognizing that countries in the region, such as Poland, the Baltic states, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, as well as Romania, and countries throughout Europe, are doing a great job offering that visa-free support. It is a simplification of this system.

The government has presented counter-arguments. Some members of the government have said there is a security issue because we need to be able to do this review. Security precautions can be taken, and they can be taken as they have been in other countries.

The minister has also said that time is an issue. He said that regulatory changes, and changes to IT systems and other things, would take 12 to 14 weeks to implement. I do not know why that would be the case since we are simply removing a requirement, but we are almost at the 12-week mark anyway, and people are still having problems accessing these visas. We have actually almost come to the completion of the time frame the minister said would be in place.

I want to share some really compelling stories from people in my riding. There is a case of two mothers who are friends and who have young children. They applied at the same time. One got a visa accepted and one is still waiting. They would like to travel together and have the security of being together. There is another case of a family with four children who all applied at the same time. One was asked for biometrics and nobody else in the family was asked for biometrics. There is another case of a mother and her children who applied on March 16, and they are still waiting for processing.

Let us just get this visa-free system in place so we can get it done and stop the pain and suffering for those who are waiting.

• (1845)

[Translation]

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): I am honoured to rise this evening to respond to the hon. member's question. I want to start by saying that Canada remains steadfast in its support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Ukrainian immigrants have helped build this country, and we will continue to stand with the courageous people of Ukraine in upholding the values that our countries share.

More than 24,000 Ukrainians have arrived in Canada since January 1 of this year. As the hon. member knows, Ukraine shares borders with the European Union. IRCC has offices and visa application centres in neighbouring countries. We have implemented strong contingency plans to ensure that we can continue to support Canadians, permanent residents, their families and our clients.

We continue to prioritize applications from Ukraine across our global processing network. As part of the Government of Canada's response to Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine, IRCC introduced the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel. This is a special, accelerated temporary residence pathway for Ukrainians who are seeking a safe haven while the war continues in their home country.

Adjournment Proceedings

With respect to the hon. member's suggestion regarding visa-free travel, I would say that our new program is the fastest, safest and most efficient way for Ukrainians to come to Canada.

All Ukrainian nationals and their families can apply through this new pathway while waiting for the security check. The security check is how we confirm the identity of those seeking to come to Canada and how we protect the safety and security of Canadians.

We have exponentially increased our biometrics collection capability. We have also exempted applicants under the age of 18 and over the age of 60, as well as those who have previously travelled to Canada and abided by our rules and laws. The vast majority of these three low-risk cohorts will no longer need to provide biometrics.

Between March 17 and May 1, we received about 196,000 applications through this new program and approved over 85,000. I would also like to point out that we are meeting the 14-day processing target. We are committed to processing 80% of applications within 14 days, and we continue to meet this standard.

All Ukrainians and their family members who come to Canada under this program can work immediately upon arrival, thanks to an open work permit that they apply for when they receive the authorization, allowing employers to quickly hire Ukrainian nationals. This would not be possible with visa-free travel.

In addition to this program, the IRCC is also issuing open work permits and study permits to Ukrainian nationals and their families who are currently in Canada and who cannot safely return home. This will allow them to extend their stay in Canada for up to three years.

We also know that Ukrainians will need support when they arrive. That is why we recently announced that Ukrainians will have access to hotel accommodation for a maximum of two weeks and income support for a maximum of six weeks.

I would like to close by stating that we recently partnered with Air Canada, The Shapiro Foundation and Miles4Migrants to establish the Ukraine2Canada travel fund, which lets Canadians donate their Aeroplan points with the goal of providing at least 10,000 free plane tickets to Ukrainians who want to come to Canada.

We will continue to do more, as quickly as possible, to welcome Ukrainians fleeing Putin's war and to take care of them upon their arrival.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, with great respect for the parliamentary secretary, I think that answer provides some obvious effort to distract and to say, "Look at some of these other things happening over here. Isn't it great that people have an opportunity to work when they come to Canada?" Yes: People should be able to work when they come to Canada, obviously, but the question was specifically about visa-free travel.

Adjournment Proceedings

This is the issue that was raised in this question. This is the issue that was raised when a majority in the House of Commons voted to have visa-free travel. It does not make sense at all to say that having the visa requirement in place is necessary for us to be able to do all of these other things over here.

What we are saying is that there are other measures that are valuable, of course, for supporting Ukraine and supporting Ukrainians, but one of those measures is lifting the visa requirement. There is no reason that the government cannot proceed with, for instance, having an open work permit while also lifting the visa requirement. I would submit that it obviously would be easier and faster if the requirement for the issuance of the visa was no longer there.

Why does the government not do this simple thing? It would make life easier, because it is not meeting its targets in many cases that I am hearing about from constituents. Let us lift the visa requirement.

• (1850)

[Translation]

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I realize how much my colleague wants to make this happen, but the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel really is the fastest, safest and most efficient way for Ukrainians to come to Canada.

I also want to point out to my colleague that we have approved over 85,000 applications under this special program, and we have welcomed 24,000 Ukrainians to Canada since the start of the year. Hundreds more are arriving every day.

We have also worked closely with the provinces and territories, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, resettlement organizations and the business community to ensure not only that Ukrainians can come to Canada, but that they will be taken care of once they arrive.

We have partnered with the Red Cross, and I have had the great pleasure of going to see the people. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the organization for helping us with this process.

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the last couple of years have been hard on Canadians across political stripes. Whenever I talk to somebody, there is something about the last two years that has caused them a trauma. I would argue that every person sitting in here right now has probably had a similar experience, but what worries me now is that after these two years I feel like we do not know how to talk to each other. I feel like we do not know how to be kind to each other, and I feel like we do not know how to be human. That does not mean that we cannot passionately fight for our ideas or advance things, but what I worry about is that we are so focused on calcifying our beliefs, entrenching our beliefs and being convicted in our beliefs as opposed to trying to listen and do something to better the country, that I feel like Canadians are feeling like they have to resort to civil disobedience to be heard. This is on the right and on the left; it is across demographics, and it really bothers me. It is the thing that keeps me up most at night.

I could use examples from any political party, but one example that sticks with me the most is calling a certain group of people who believe a certain thing racist and misogynist during the political campaign in 2021. I firmly believe vaccines had a major, incredibly positive impact on limiting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, but there were people in Canada who had legitimate concerns or were vaccine hesitant. Instead of trying to listen to their concerns or address those concerns in a meaningful way, name-calling was used, and I think that pushed civil disobedience. I am not justifying civil disobedience. There should be no room for that, but what I am trying to say, and we could use any example, is that maybe we need to do a better job of listening to each other on all sides. Even people who hold a certain belief should ask why this is happening and try to listen.

I have not seen a lot of movement on our ability to listen or treat each other kindly, so tonight, to follow up on a question I asked several months ago, my question to the government is this: In the spirit of collaboration and in trying to actually fight for some dignity in this country, what is the federal government doing to lower the temperature on political rhetoric, to actually try to listen to Canadians and to bring us together after a significant event and a significant crisis in our country over the last two years?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that Canadians are weary, and I am happy to speak tonight about lowering the rhetoric. I do not think the member will be surprised to find out that I agree with most of what she has said. I find that we Canadians have forgotten how to be kind to each other, and how to listen and how to disagree in a respectful way.

The two of us were sent to this place from different provinces and with different priorities, but we were sent here with a shared calling. That calling prioritizes public service and collaboration. While it will surprise none of the hon. members in this place that we often disagree, it is really important that we disagree in a respectful and kind way. I want to thank the member for Calgary Nose Hill for always coming to this place in good faith with an eagerness to work with members of all parties and with a steadfast commitment to representing the interests of her constituents and Canadians. I know that, like me, the hon. member has been subjected to threats and harassment due to the rising rhetoric, and that is just wrong.

The hon. member has told me before that our constituents have much more in common than they have differences, and she is right. It is why, on a day like today when news has broken about the United States rolling back a woman's right to abortion, it is important that members from all parties stand up proudly to affirm that Canadian women have the right to choice, and that when access to reproductive health care is rolled back we are telling women their health and safety is less important than men's health and safety. It is why I was happy to second the bill introduced by the member for Calgary Confederation to make it easier for all Canadians to become organ donors, and why I am happy to see that the member for St. Albert—Edmonton has reintroduced his bill that would ensure that Canadians who serve on a jury can speak about the trauma associated with the experience when seeking mental health care. All of us who have the honour of being elected to this place have a responsibility to treat it with the reverence that it deserves.

We certainly saw things bubble to the surface in late January and early February, with protests in Ottawa, at the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor, in Coutts, Alberta, and eventually at crossings and other cities across the country. It is something that none of us wanted to see in Canada.

It is critical that we continue to speak to each other in a respectful way. I agree with the hon. member that we need to be listening to each other and not just talking. I have had the pleasure of having conversations with the hon. member where we do disagree, and we disagree quite strongly.

How do we lower the temperature and the rhetoric in Canada and restore faith in democratic institutions? We need to show Canadians that we can work together on shared priorities. We need to condemn what we know is wrong, and when we work together to accomplish a shared goal, we need to do a much better job of sharing credit and telling Canadians about how, together, we were able to pass laws that will make our country a better and fairer place to live.

• (1855)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her thoughtful and kind response. There will be

Adjournment Proceedings

people who watched that response and will disagree with some of the things that she said in terms of policy, but I would hope they would agree in terms of the approach: When we disagree, we are disagreeing on something and we are not hating someone, and we are actually trying to build consensus on issues that we feel convicted about very strongly, one way or the other. I believe that our country has the capacity to do this. I believe that people in this place have the capacity to do this.

With the time I have left, I would just like to ask my colleague what she thinks we need to do to show Canadians, by example, that this is something that we all need to do, starting here in this place and then across this country, for the betterment of the nation that we all serve and benefit from.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, I would say to the hon. member that it is by having conversations such as we are having tonight in the House of Commons. It is by taking these conversations and applying the same principles when we leave this place. I see the good work that is done in committee, and I know that the hon. member has seen the same thing. Good things happen in this place; unfortunately, for some reason, the media do not talk about it, and we ourselves do not talk about it nearly enough when we do collaborate.

I will give her my commitment right now, and I suspect she feels the same way. Maybe the two of us can work together to try to lower the temperature and show that it does not matter what political party people belong to: They can work together for the betterment of this country.

• (1900)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Tuesday, May 3, 2022

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Government Response to Petitions

Mr. Lamoureux 4663

Fighting Against Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act

Mr. McKay 4663

Bill S-211. First reading 4663

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time) 4663

Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls

Mr. Lamoureux 4663

Motion 4663

(Motion agreed to) 4663

Committees of the House

Fisheries and Oceans

Mr. Perkins 4663

Motion for concurrence 4663

Mr. Lamoureux 4665

Mr. Julian 4665

Mr. Epp 4666

Mr. Arnold 4666

Mr. Lamoureux 4667

Mr. Julian 4667

Mr. Genuis 4668

Mr. Lamoureux 4668

Motion 4669

Motion agreed to 4670

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Economic and Fiscal Update Implementation Act, 2021

Bill C-8. Third reading 4671

Mr. Rogers 4671

Mr. Epp 4672

Mr. Trudel 4672

Ms. Mathyssen 4672

Ms. Martinez Ferrada 4672

Mr. Trudel 4673

Mr. Kurek 4674

Mr. Cannings 4674

Mr. Steinley 4674

Mr. Gerretsen 4676

Mr. Perron 4676

Mr. Garrison 4676

Mr. Caputo 4677

Amendment to the amendment 4678

Mr. Gerretsen 4678

Mr. Desilets 4678

Mr. Johns 4678

Ms. Lambropoulos 4679

Mr. Caputo 4680

Mr. Trudel 4680

Mr. Davies 4680

Mr. Morrice 4680

Mr. Blois 4680

Mr. Steinley 4682

Mr. Epp 4682

Mr. Desilets 4683

Mr. Zimmer 4683

Mr. Gerretsen 4684

Mr. Perron 4684

Mr. Cannings 4685

Mr. Kurek 4685

Mr. Gerretsen 4686

Mr. Trudel 4687

Ms. Blaney 4687

Mr. Perron 4687

Mr. Lamoureux 4689

Mr. Epp 4689

Mr. Davies 4689

Mr. Gerretsen 4689

Mr. Steinley 4691

Mr. Savard-Tremblay 4691

Mr. Johns 4691

Mrs. Kramp-Neuman 4692

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Burnaby Firefighters

Mr. Beech 4692

Princeton, British Columbia

Mr. Albas 4693

Affordable Housing in St. John's East

Ms. Thompson 4693

Mental Health Week

Mr. Desilets 4693

Bagelmania Bagel Shop

Ms. Koutrakis 4693

Gaelic Nova Scotia Month

Mr. Barlow 4693

Mental Health Week

Mr. Jowhari 4694

Student Recruitment Innovation

Ms. Bradford 4694

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

Mr. Seebach 4694

LGBTQ2+ National Monument

Mr. Carr 4694

231st Anniversary of the Polish Constitution	
Mr. Kurek	4695
Mental Health Week	
Mr. Schmale	4695
Abortion Rights	
Ms. Martinez Ferrada	4695
Domestic Violence	
Mr. Garrison	4695
World Press Freedom Day	
Mr. Champoux	4696
Anti-Semitism	
Ms. Lantsman	4696
Islamophobia	
Ms. Khalid	4696

ORAL QUESTIONS

Public Safety	
Mr. Berthold	4696
Mr. Mendicino	4696
Mr. Berthold	4696
Mr. Mendicino	4697
Mr. Berthold	4697
Mr. Mendicino	4697
Ethics	
Mr. Brassard	4697
Mr. Holland	4697
Mr. Brassard	4697
Mr. Holland	4697
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Mr. Therrien	4697
Mrs. Lalonde	4697
Women and Gender Equality	
Ms. Normandin	4698
Ms. Freeland	4698
Taxation	
Mr. Singh	4698
Mrs. Lebouthillier	4698
Natural Resources	
Mr. Singh	4698
Mr. Wilkinson	4698
Public Safety	
Mr. Lloyd	4698
Mr. Mendicino	4698
Mr. Lloyd	4698
Mr. Mendicino	4699
Ms. Dancho	4699
Mr. Mendicino	4699
Mrs. Goodridge	4699
Mr. Mendicino	4699
Mrs. Vien	4699

Mr. Mendicino	4699
Mrs. Vien	4699
Mr. Mendicino	4699
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	4700
Mrs. Lalonde	4700
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	4700
Mrs. Lalonde	4700
Mr. Perron	4700
Mrs. Lalonde	4700
Health	
Mrs. Kusie	4700
Mr. Alghabra	4700
Mr. Steinley	4701
Mr. Duclos	4701
Mrs. Vecchio	4701
Mr. Duclos	4701
Mr. Viersen	4701
Mr. Alghabra	4701
Natural Resources	
Ms. Collins (Victoria)	4701
Mr. Wilkinson	4701
Mr. Angus	4701
Mr. Wilkinson	4702
Airline Industry	
Ms. Sahota	4702
Mr. Alghabra	4702
Housing	
Mrs. Gray	4702
Mr. Hussen	4702
Mr. Paul-Hus	4702
Mr. Hussen	4702
Mr. Richards	4702
Mr. Hussen	4702
The Economy	
Mr. Richards	4703
Ms. Freeland	4703
Official Languages	
Mr. Beaulieu	4703
Ms. Petitpas Taylor	4703
Mr. Beaulieu	4703
Ms. Petitpas Taylor	4703
Canada Revenue Agency	
Mr. Bezan	4703
Mrs. Lebouthillier	4703
Mr. Lawrence	4704
Mrs. Lebouthillier	4704
Mr. Albas	4704
Mrs. Lebouthillier	4704
Innovation, Science and Industry	
Mr. Dubourg	4704
Mr. Champagne	4704

National Defence	
Mr. Zimmer	4704
Ms. Anand	4704

Health	
Mr. Small	4705
Mr. Duclos	4705
Mr. Calkins	4705
Mr. Duclos	4705

International Trade	
Mrs. Valdez	4705
Ms. Ng	4705

Health	
Mr. Johns	4705
Ms. Bennett	4706

Indigenous Affairs	
Ms. Idlout	4706
Ms. Hajdu	4706

Presence in Gallery	
The Deputy Speaker	4706

Points of Order

Remarks by Russian Foreign Minister

Mr. Housefather	4707
Motion	4707
(Motion agreed to)	4707

Unanimous Consent

Mr. Genuis	4707
------------------	------

Unanimous Consent—Speaker's Ruling

The Deputy Speaker	4707
--------------------------	------

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Economic and Fiscal Update Implementation Act, 2021	
Bill C-8. Third reading	4708
Mrs. Kramp-Neuman	4708
Mr. Gerretsen	4709
Mr. Thériault	4709
Ms. Barron	4709
Mr. Genuis	4709
Division on motion deferred	4712

Budget Implementation Act, 2022, No. 1

Ms. Freeland	4712
Bill C-19. Second reading	4712
Mr. Fast	4714
Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné	4714
Mr. Blaikie	4714

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	4715
Ms. O'Connell	4715

Points of Order

Use of Props in the House

Ms. Kwan	4715
----------------	------

Budget Implementation Act, 2022, No. 1

Bill C-19. Second reading	4716
Mr. Fast	4716
Amendment	4718
Mr. McKay	4718
Mr. Garon	4718
Mr. Blaikie	4719
Mr. Albas	4719
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	4719
Ms. Chabot	4720
Mr. Lamoureux	4721
Mr. Blaikie	4721
Mr. Garon	4722
Mr. Savard-Tremblay	4722
Mr. Lamoureux	4723

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Immigration and Refugee Protection Act

Bill C-242. Second reading	4724
Mr. Villemure	4724
Mr. Desjarlais	4725
Mr. Genuis	4726
Mrs. Lalonde	4727
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	4729
Ms. Khalid	4730
Mr. Seeback	4731
Division on motion deferred	4732

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Fisheries and Oceans

Ms. Barron	4732
Mr. Kelloway	4733

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Mr. Genuis	4734
Mrs. Lalonde	4735

Public Safety

Ms. Rempel Garner	4736
Ms. Damoff	4736

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