



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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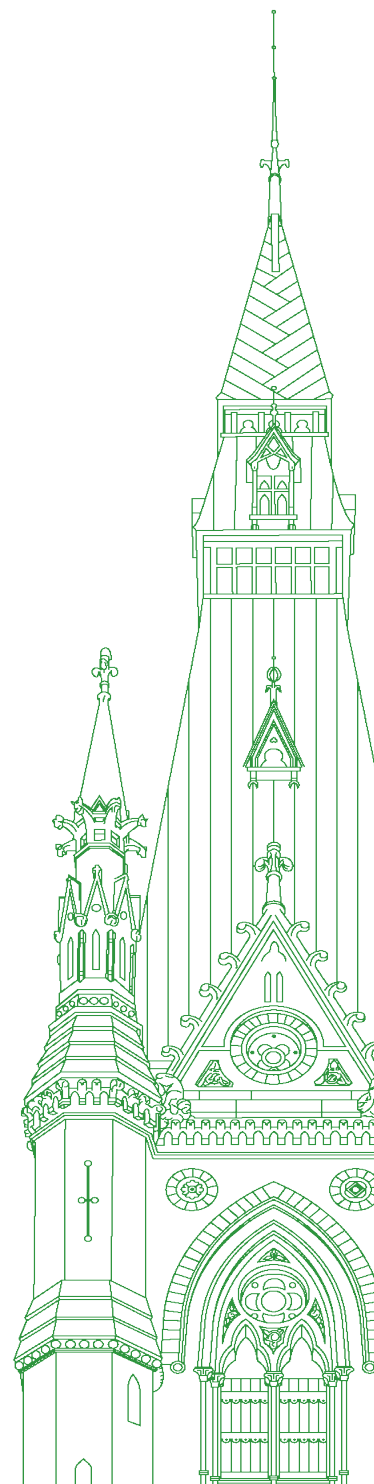
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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, September 26, 2022

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

AN ACT RESPECTING THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

The House resumed from May 9 consideration of the motion that Bill C-238, An Act respecting the French language, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to the House about Bill C-238 regarding the French language.

Everyone in Canada cares about protecting the French language. The latest census data show that French is in decline in Quebec and the rest of Canada. We must act swiftly and collectively. Our government agrees with the Government of Quebec on this matter. I think that everyone in the House has a shared objective to protect and promote the French language, although we disagree on how to do so.

The approach to the future of French in Canada set out under Bill C-238, introduced by the Bloc Québécois, is very narrow. This bill takes a Quebec-centric approach to our language regime without regard for francophones across Canada, from coast to coast. In addition to the millions of Quebecers who share the common language of French, there are more than one million francophones outside of Quebec who live, work and thrive in French. My francophone community in Orléans is just one example.

The Bloc Québécois is calling for the recognition of Quebec's language regime, enforcement of the Charter of the French Language for federally regulated private businesses located in Quebec and the requirement that those hoping to obtain Canadian citizenship while living in Quebec have an adequate knowledge of French.

Although we share the Bloc Québécois's concern over the future of French in North America, we do not agree with their solution. We believe that we must take a targeted approach to protect and promote French across Canada. That is what our government proposed in Bill C-13, an act to amend the Official Languages Act, to

enact the use of French in federally regulated private businesses act and to make related amendments to other acts, which we introduced in the House on March 1.

It is important to note that Bill C-238 adopts a narrow view of the future of French, while our Bill C-13 recognizes not only the linguistic reality of Quebec, but also the language regimes of other provinces and territories in Canada. Let us be clear, Bill C-238 does nothing for francophones outside Quebec, while Bill C-13 plans to create new rights for consumers and employees who work at federally regulated private businesses in Quebec, but also in regions outside Quebec with a high francophone presence.

Comparing the provisions of both bills, it is clear that the vision is narrower in one case and broader in the other, that the approach is exclusive in one case and more inclusive in the other, and that the priority is provincial in one case and national in the other. Bill C-238 will fail to meet the expectations and demands of the majority of Canadians with respect to our two official languages.

This Bloc Québécois bill simply does not meet the priorities of francophone minority communities in provinces and territories outside Quebec. Bill C-238 does not meet the needs of English-speaking communities in Quebec.

For these reasons, the government cannot support Bill C-238. As I mentioned at the beginning, we are not against Bill C-238's objectives. We are opposing the bill because there is so much missing in terms of adapting it to the reality of official language minority communities.

• (1105)

In other words, its vision is too narrow and lacks ambition. We are against Bill C-238 because we want to go much further. The measures in our Bill C-13 are ambitious and fine-tuned to meet communities' current and future needs.

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Bill C-13 covers broader segments of our Canadian linguistic regime and will have a real impact on the lives of Canadians. It covers the appointment of Supreme Court of Canada justices, enhances the Commissioner of Official Languages' powers, supports official language learning and addresses francophone immigration. In short, Bill C-13 does more of what Canadians want than Bill C-238 ever could.

Bill C-13 offers a vision for francophones in Quebec and for all Canadians, because the Official Languages Act must reflect their needs and realities too. We are all aware of the facts. Canada's francophone population is declining; our government has clearly acknowledged that. We are also aware that Canadians want to be able to learn official languages. They want to be able to use them in their everyday lives. They want to enjoy the benefits of having French in Canada and of living in an officially bilingual country. Our Bill C-13 meets those needs and puts forward a real, pan-Canadian vision for Canadians.

It is just such a pan-Canadian vision that is lacking in Bill C-238. That is why we cannot support this bill. Together, we can reverse the decline of the French language, but we all have to work together to make that happen. That means reaching out to official language minority communities and coming up with policies and programs that meet their needs.

To conclude, let me say to my fellow members that I hope all parties will work with us to pass Bill C-13 as quickly as possible.

• (1110)

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, it would be a mistake to oppose Bills C-13 and C-238, so I cannot agree with my colleague.

Bill C-238 aims to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Official Languages Act, the Canada Business Corporations Act and the Citizenship Act. I would like to start by telling my colleagues that, when they vote on this bill, they will not be doing Quebec any favours. What they will be doing by voting for Bill C-238 is correcting a historical error and giving justice where justice is due.

Everyone understands that Canada was founded by the French then conquered by the British a very long time ago. The two peoples have since lived together in times of peace and in more difficult times. Our history includes victories for some, and bitter losses for others. French Canadians became Quebecers and chose to assert themselves, shouting until they were blue in the face that their culture, their identity and their language were precious to them.

In 1977, under Camille Laurin, Quebec enacted the Charter of the French Language, also known as Bill 101. Bill 101 made French the official language of the Quebec government and courts. French was now recognized as the normal and everyday language of work in education, trade, communications and business. Bill 101 enshrined in law the fact that French was the language of the majority. The French language was precious and statistically a minority language within English-speaking North America. That is why it needed protection.

Of course, not everyone was happy about Bill 101. Although it protected the anglophone minority in Quebec, which, incidentally, is the best-protected minority in Canada, the bill was challenged

and cut back. Opponents tried to render it meaningless, and some of their efforts were successful.

Now we are in 2022, and statisticians have confirmed that the French language is in decline in Quebec, especially in the magnificent island of Montreal. I remember walking with my son on Notre-Dame Street in the middle of Saint-Henri, a neighbourhood Yvon Deschamps described as a place where francophone workers and the poor lived and worked. I remember seeing that the snack bars had been replaced with Internet coffee shops with English names. A very nice student from Toronto who had come to work there as part of a French immersion program spoke to us in English and understood nothing of our "gibberish" as we spoke French. I asked for "un espresso, s'il vous plaît", and he answered, in as friendly and innocent a manner as can be, "Sorry, I don't speak French". This experience was repeated throughout our walk down Notre-Dame Street. Not only was the street anglicized in terms of language, but also in terms of social context. We could have been in Toronto, or anywhere in the globalized world. There is not much difference between "un espresso" and "an espresso", but, still, French did not seem to be important.

Make no mistake: I have nothing against English. Rather, I am simply saying that I am pro-French. Coming back to the example I gave earlier, I find it curious that a student from Toronto who wants to broaden their horizons would come to Montreal, just to work in English in a café located in an area that was historically francophone but has since become primarily anglophone. So much for French immersion.

Beyond the statistics pointing to the decline of French in Quebec, simply walking through the streets of Montreal confirms it. From Second Cup to Five Guys, my beloved French is suffering.

It is important to understand that beyond fulfilling a simple communication function, language is also a political statement and, above all, a mindset. A bit of an explanation is in order.

Let us start by asking the following question: What is language? It is, first and foremost, a matter of linguistics. Language must first be regarded as a system of signs connecting words, drawn from a lexicon and according to specific grammatical rules established by a syntax. Language is the ability to express an idea and communicate through a system of signs. This is where we have a problem.

The rampant anglicization of Quebec society prevents people from thinking in French, creating in French and being French. Globalization, which made Céline Dion popular from Algeria to Indonesia, has also flattened cultures, all cultures except for one, the Anglo-Saxon culture. We were told that globalization liberated cultures whereas, in reality, it simply made people want to or have to live in English.

Language is all about communicating and thinking. Globalization has brought with it the danger of what I call a single mindset, which occurs when what is essential is no longer distinguished from what is secondary, when far-reaching intellectual projects face the powerful inertia of pervasive mediocrity and small-mindedness, and when tastes and ideas become homogeneous.

• (1115)

It is the very perception of existence that is at stake when we talk about a single mindset. English dominates the world and now serves as the platform for this single mindset. That is why we must resist. That is why we are studying Bill C-238 today.

Six living Quebec premiers supported the Quebec government's motion to the effect that the French requirement should apply to federally regulated businesses in Quebec. The fact that it is not being applied is anachronistic and can only be aimed at exacerbating the decline of the French language.

The former Bill C-223 proposed that those applying for citizenship in Quebec would need to possess an adequate knowledge of French. The fact that this requirement has not already been implemented is equally anachronistic and again can only be aimed at exacerbating the decline of the French language in Quebec.

This is why the Bloc Québécois is categorically opposed to the federal government's attempt to supersede provincial legislation in Quebec with its own law.

The federal government needs to recognize that the Government of Quebec must remain in charge of language planning within Quebec. Language is a fundamental aspect of the specificity and identity of the Quebec nation.

This is the most important part: We must preserve French in order to preserve freedom of thought. That is why I suggest that members of Parliament right a historical wrong and vote in favour of Bill C-238.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to be participating in this debate. Before getting to the crux of the matter, I would like to send my best wishes to all of the Canadians and Quebecers affected by hurricane Fiona. We were all stunned to see the devastation in the Atlantic provinces, as well as in the Magdalen Islands and on the Lower North Shore in Quebec. Our hearts go out to the brave residents who must now cope with the aftermath.

As the Deputy Premier of Quebec said, there were no serious injuries or deaths in the Magdalen Islands or on the Lower North Shore. The rest is just material things, but I do realize that people need material things to live. I would like to send my regards to the people who are facing this reality today, and I extend my heartfelt thanks to the first responders helping out on the ground in every province, including the military and public safety personnel.

I just want them to know that all of us in the House of Commons are here for them. If anyone needs anything at all at the federal level, Canada will be there to respond. This situation affects us all. Nature is bigger than any of us could ever be.

Today we are discussing the French language. Today we are discussing the official languages. Today we are discussing a reality

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that is demographically indisputable: The French language is in decline in Canada and Quebec.

This is nothing new at the sociological, demographic or geographical level. Consider the following: The population of North America, by which I mean Canada and the United States, our closest neighbour, is almost 380 million. Of that number, fewer than eight million speak French. Everyone else speaks English as their primary language.

That is like meeting a group of six people, five of whom speak English and one of whom speaks French. That is not quite precise, but I am rounding off the numbers to give an example that speaks for itself. From a mathematical point of view, the French-speaking person will feel dominated by the other five, who speak English. That person will feel strongly tempted to speak the language of the other five.

As I will explain later, wanting to speak two languages does not mean that we want to obliterate our first language.

In addition to this demographic reality that speaks for itself, the figures and the science show that the French language is indeed on the decline in Canada, especially in Quebec. According to the most recent figures from Statistics Canada, between 2016 and 2021, the number of French speakers went from 7.7 million to 7.8 million. Some of my colleagues may say that the opposite is true and that I am misleading the House by saying that the French language is in decline in Quebec when more people now speak French.

It is important to put this in perspective. The proportion of French speakers has declined from 22.4% to 21.4%. Yes, Statistics Canada's figures show that the French language is in decline throughout Canada. The situation is the same in Quebec, only worse. Five years ago, there were 6.4 million people in Quebec whose first language was French. Today, there are 6.5 million. This is an increase in number, but a decrease in percentage, from 79% to 77.5%. We completely agree that the French language is in decline and that something must be done.

We know that the New Brunswick, Quebec and federal governments are working to improve the situation. Bills have been tabled and passed. Quebec passed Bill 96 in June. It is now law.

I will always sincerely respect my commitment. As an elected official at the federal level, I do not get involved in provincial affairs. I have enough on my plate without playing armchair quarterback. A bill was passed at the end of a debate last year to protect the French language. Was that a good thing or a bad thing? We will let the public decide.

At the federal level, the government tabled Bill C-13, which is currently being considered.

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• (1120)

I will get back to this later, but I must say something first. It brings me no happiness to say it. I have the utmost respect for the woman herself, but when the government appoints someone as head of state who cannot speak both official languages, it is sending the wrong message. I have nothing against her, but I have a lot against the choice made by this government, which claims to be the great defender of the two official languages.

It sends a very strong message about the person representing the British monarch, not only symbolically but in actual terms. The late Queen spoke both official languages remarkably well, as does the current King, perhaps not as well as his mother, but we salute his outstanding effort. The government's appointee speaks French less proficiently than the person she is representing. The government is sending the wrong message.

We also understand that there is not a law in the world that could change anything about the reality people find themselves in today, whether they are accessing social media or any information that is disseminated around the world.

That is what I want to talk about. It is not because francophones learn English that they want to set the French language aside. The two languages are not mutually exclusive. We need to stop seeing English as the language of the Plains of Abraham. Rather, it is the language that is often used around the world today. It does not mean that we want to eradicate the French language. On the contrary, we must share with the world the fact that we speak French, that we are proud to speak French and that this country received the first Europeans who just happened to be French, like Jacques Cartier and Champlain.

Let us not forget former prime minister the Right Hon. Stephen Harper's lovely and meaningful custom of always starting his speeches in French wherever he was in the world, reminding people that Canada's first language was French.

Yes, people will be tempted to learn English. The two languages are not mutually exclusive.

One way we can make sure that francophones have an important place in our future is immigration policy. This is currently being debated in Quebec. Our history shows that the current debates on immigration in Quebec are nothing new.

In 1968, the Union Nationale government of the late Daniel Johnson Sr. created the ministry of immigration. In 1971, Pierre Elliott Trudeau's Liberal federal government entered into the Lang-Cloutier agreement with the Quebec government, allowing it to deploy agents abroad to recruit French-speaking immigrants to Quebec. The agreement was renewed in 1975. We mentioned the Andras-Bienvenue agreement, which recognized Quebec's special needs. There was also the milestone Cullen-Couture agreement in 1978. That is important because it was entered into by a sovereignist government. Minister Couture reached an agreement with the federalist Liberal government of Canada led by Mr. Trudeau: it was this agreement that recognized Quebec and gave it decision-making powers over its choice of immigrants. In 1991, there was the extremely important Gagnon-Tremblay-McDougall agreement be-

tween Mr. Bourassa's provincial government and the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney's federal government.

In short, negotiations between the federal and provincial governments have been positive and productive for over 50 years now. Of course, they can always be better, but no one should think that the debate on immigration to strengthen the French fact in Quebec is brand new or that it was only sparked by some electoral fervour. Quebec and Ottawa have been getting along for more than half a century.

I had a lot more to say but, unfortunately, my time is running out. I would remind the House that Bill C-13 provides an opportunity to overhaul the Official Languages Act. The Official Languages Act was created in 1969 by a previous government under Trudeau senior, and has been updated only once, in 1988, under Brian Mulroney. This needs to be done, and it must be done properly. We hope that Bill C-13 will be given a lot more teeth in order to help ensure the survival of the French language.

• (1125)

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the second reading debate on Bill C-238, An Act respecting the French language. This bill was introduced by the member for Salaberry—Suroît, and I thank her for her work on it. The member has concerns about the future of the French language, as do I, and as do we all.

I am proud to be a long-time member of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, which has been doing some very interesting work during this Parliament. I would also like to recognize my colleagues on the committee and to highlight the outstanding work being done by our official languages critic, the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

French is declining in Quebec. That is unfortunately a fact. The proportion of French speakers across Canada has fallen since the last census in 2016. In fact, even though the number of Canadians who speak French has increased from 7.7 million to 7.8 million, an increase of 100,000 people over five years, the proportion of Canadians whose first language is French has decreased. According to Statistics Canada, that number dropped from 22.2% in 2016 to 21.4% in 2021.

If the trend continues, according to the famous formula, the weight of French in Canada will go into an irreversible decline. The same thing is happening even in Quebec. The proportion of people who use French fell from 79% to 77.5% over the same five-year period. It is urgent that we take action to halt the trend. The Conservative Party has always been a strong advocate for the French fact in Canada. Our country was born in French and must continue to live in French.

The bill we are discussing today contains four parts that address four very different issues. Although all four parts involve the French language, the fact remains that it is difficult to combine four subjects, four issues, four laws in one private member's bill.

I must say that one of the proposed changes rings a bell. I remember having the opportunity to study and vote in favour of Bill C-223, which the Conservatives supported at second reading before the last pointless election was called by the Liberal government less than a year ago. Yes, immigrants residing in Quebec should have an adequate knowledge of Quebec's French language. That is clear. No one is disputing that.

At the time, my colleague from Kildonan—St. Paul explained that the Conservatives supported the principle behind Bill C-223 based on two fundamental Conservative Party principles. The first is the recognition of the Quebec nation, as recognized by former prime minister Stephen Harper. The second is our commitment to protecting its language and culture. At the time, we did not even get to vote on the bill at second reading. We did not even get a chance to study the bill in committee, which is unfortunate.

I noticed that Bill C-238 contains three other measures. In addition to amending the Citizenship Act, the bill proposes amendments to three other acts, namely the Canada Business Corporations Act, the Official Languages Act and the Canada Labour Code.

Bill C-238 proposes that the Canada Business Corporations Act be amended to add the following: “the name of a corporation that carries on business in the Province of Quebec shall meet the requirements of the Charter of the French Language.”

It is important to bear in mind that Quebec passed Bill 96 only in June, which is not that long ago. On June 1, 2022, An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec, also known as Bill 96, received royal assent, bringing into effect several provisions amending the Charter of the French Language and about 20 other acts and regulations.

The new charter sets out stricter requirements for public signs and posters bearing the company's name that are visible from outside premises, and French must be markedly predominant over any other language. The transition period for public signs and posters will end by May 2025. The Quebec government understood that it had to do something about the quality of signs and posters.

However, the bill we are currently discussing focuses the name of a business or corporation as it appears in the articles of incorporation. I own a business myself, and that is how I interpret it. It is also important to note that the decline of French will not be solved by fixing articles of incorporation.

• (1130)

Even if changes were made to company names in Quebec's business registry but not reflected in signs and posters outside, it would obviously not make a difference. The French language is in decline, and we need far more effective measures.

Bill C-238 also amends the Canada Labour Code to subject it to the Charter of the French Language. As it happens, with respect to working in French, my colleagues and I will be studying the application of the Official Languages Act to workers.

I would also like to ask the following question: Would it not have been better to propose a bill like Bill C-238, which amends the charter, after the final version of the National Assembly's Bill 96 came out in June? We shall see. Perhaps this bill should have been

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tabled after Bill 96 was passed in Quebec. That would probably have made it easier to understand.

Lastly, with respect to the Official Languages Act, as I was saying, the Standing Committee on Official Languages is already working to improve the substance of Bill C-13. If we want to amend the Official Languages Act, the committee study of Bill C-13 provides the opportunity to do so. That is why I am convinced that it is by working hard to improve Bill C-13 that we will achieve the objectives I share with Bill C-238's sponsor, who is concerned, as I am, about the future of French not only in Canada, but in Quebec as well.

It is no secret that this government has been rattled by non-stop scandals involving official languages since Bill C-13 was tabled. The Minister of Official Languages only seems to be working part time, since she is responsible for two totally different departments. This government almost sued B.C. francophones because the Minister of Justice was working against the Minister of Official Languages. There is a lot of coordination that should be done, but the government is not doing it. This government holds unilingual briefing sessions and is not even ashamed of it.

The Standing Committee on Official Languages regularly hears from witnesses who very clearly tell us that there has to be an agency within government that is responsible for official languages, and that is the Treasury Board. This has been repeated ad nauseam. I sincerely believe that we will have to present an amendment to Bill C-13 in that regard.

There is clearly a lot of work to be done to address the French language issue, not just in Canada but also in Quebec. We have to look to legislative measures to stop the decline of French all across Canada. I believe we will achieve that by working together. I would like to again thank my colleague for introducing this bill. Unfortunately, it is very unlikely that it will go very far, because it proposes changes to too vast a body of laws and regulations. However, on a positive note, Bill C-13 gives us a real opportunity to change things.

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In fact, before leaving for the summer break in June, the government wanted to rush the bill through, and just yesterday we resumed hearing from witnesses in committee. These witnesses more or less unanimously agree that if we really want to stop the decline of French in Canada and Quebec, then we must, especially in Canada, have a government agency that manages our official languages, and I nominate the Treasury Board. The Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, or FCFA, is saying, along with everyone else, that the government will have to think long and hard before passing this bill that will make fundamental changes within the machinery of government.

One thing is very clear: We are getting complaints. The Commissioner of Official Languages is also receiving a whole lot of complaints. There is still much work to be done, but we will work with my colleague and her party to improve the future of French in Canada.

• (1135)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to express the NDP's support for Bill C-238 at second reading.

Later in my speech I will talk about our concerns with some aspects of the bill, in particular regarding citizenship granted to immigrants who come through the family reunification stream and to refugees. I will get back to this, but this is a significant concern that has been debated at length in parliamentary committee.

There is no problem with the first part of the bill, which deals with federally regulated businesses, and that is why we will support sending Bill C-238 to committee. That said, as members know, the NDP has always been the only party in the House to champion and advocate for the rights of linguistic minorities and the French language, not just in Quebec, but all across the country.

To illustrate, I can point to British Columbia, where a provincial NDP government created the existing French-language school board network and umbrella programs in francophone schools across the province. This was a unique, important initiative from the NDP.

I could also give the example of the New Democrat government in Saskatchewan. It did the same thing: It opened French-language schools throughout the province. The New Democrat government in Manitoba established a network of French-language schools and school boards across the province.

We also mentioned New Democrat member Léo Piquette, a Franco-Albertan and the strongest advocate for French-language rights in Alberta. New Democrat governments in Ontario and the Atlantic provinces expanded the network of French-language colleges.

I could give numerous examples of New Democrat governments and members that have always pushed to advance the rights of francophone minority-language communities and, of course, to defend the French language.

These are undeniable facts no one can challenge. It may be easy to speak before the House, but it is more difficult to talk to people across the country, as we did. We are also proud of our past record in this respect, and our efforts continue into the present. New

Democrat members always advocate for the French language and linguistic minorities, which, of course, include francophone linguistic minorities.

Since adopting the Sherbrooke Declaration, the New Democrats have been pushing for legislation concerning federally regulated businesses. As our members know, it has been years. Obviously, I am referring to the party under Jack Layton, Thomas Mulcair, Nicole Turmel and, of course, our current leader, the hon. member for Burnaby South.

At every opportunity, the NDP has taken a stand and tabled bills on the subject. We have fought for this in the House. It only makes sense that workers in Quebec have the right to work in French. This is not currently the case, since federally regulated businesses are exempt from the obligation to provide a workplace in which people can communicate in French.

It also makes sense that workers in caisses populaires be able to speak, communicate and work in French. When it comes to the major Canadian banks, workers no longer have these rights. That is why the NDP has been demanding for years that federally regulated businesses be subject to the same obligation to create a work environment where employers and workers have the right to express themselves, communicate and work in French.

• (1140)

It only makes sense. It is like what I said earlier. We have always advocated for the right of francophones to have access to services. It is a basic right to be able to work in French, whether one is in Montreal or Quebec City. If someone works in a federally regulated business, it is only logical that they have the right to work in French.

It is precisely this first part of the bill that we fully support. For years now, our party has been saying that workers in businesses under federal jurisdiction should be granted this basic right. It only makes sense.

As I mentioned earlier, I have a big problem with the second part of the bill. When it comes to economic immigration, Quebec already has tools to choose the immigrants it receives and to make sure they are able to express themselves in French. Of that there is no doubt. Now, extending this requirement to immigrants received under family reunification and to refugees, and making them wait for their full rights as Canadian citizens, that, we find very worrying. As the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie so eloquently said a few weeks ago, applying this requirement to refugees is abusive.

We know full well that immigrants to Quebec want to learn French. Clearly, there was not enough money to ensure that they were given the opportunity to learn French. As members know, I spent many years in Quebec, first in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, then in the Eastern Townships. These are very beautiful regions in Quebec. I find them magnificent. Then I went to Montreal and the Outaouais. During all my years in Quebec, I saw that immigrants were interested in learning French.

Often, there were not enough resources or programs to enable them to learn French. We should focus on having the resources for these people who bring their skills and interests to Quebec and Canada. Refugees are often fleeing horrible situations, human rights violations and war. When they come to Quebec and Canada, they want to contribute. We need to have the resources to enable them to learn French. It is crucial. Saying that if they do not learn French well enough they will be refused Canadian citizenship, the right to vote and any other rights dependent on Canadian citizenship is definitely not the right thing to do. As a progressive party, we believe we need to have the necessary resources to enable them to learn French.

People I have met throughout Quebec want to learn French. There are not enough programs. Let us then implement programs to make it possible for them to learn French.

We support sending the bill back to committee specifically to fix these flaws.

• (1145)

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have been following this morning's debate and, in my view, there seems to be a bit of a cat fight in the House between Bill C-238, which seeks to comply with the will of the Quebec National Assembly on matters relating to Quebec's only official language, and Bill C-13.

I was surprised to hear the parliamentary secretary say earlier that Bill C-238 takes a Quebec-centric approach and fails to respect the rights of francophones outside Quebec, let alone even acknowledge the reality of francophones outside Quebec.

Unlike Bill C-238, what the government is offering us in Bill C-13 is essentially English in Montreal and English in Quebec. It is really important to compare and contrast these two bills. Unlike Bill C-238, Bill C-13 gives federally regulated businesses in Quebec the pretense of choice. It is merely a pretense of choice, giving them the option to operate in one official language or the other. Government members, some of whom have actually stood here in the House and publicly denied that French is in decline, seem to magically believe that a bank headquartered in Toronto, with the majority of its staff in Toronto and 80% of its market in English-speaking Canada, will be naturally inclined to offer services of equal quality in both English and French. Saying something like that is akin to leaving the future of our language in the hands of Michael Rousseau of Air Canada or in the hands of the Royal Bank of Canada, which once was "La Banque royale du Canada".

The fact is, when these companies located in Quebec are given some semblance of a choice, they choose English. They choose English because it is easier, cheaper and more efficient for their accounting departments. Quebecers are the ones who end up paying

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the price. This is happening despite the fact that French as a language of work works. It works for big corporations and multinationals, and for the flagship companies we are so proud of. That same model should apply to our federally governed enterprises.

Can anyone explain to me why the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, one of the largest pension funds in the world, which is governed by Quebec law, is able to operate in French and abide by the Charter of the French Language while making investments around the world? I would like someone to explain to me why the Caisse is able to do that.

Can anyone explain to me why Couche-Tard, headquartered in Laval, Quebec, can operate entirely in French at its headquarters while doing business internationally in pretty much every language of every country in which it does business? Couche-Tard can do that because the right signal and the right message have been sent. Do not try to tell me that an anglophone who goes to a Couche-Tard cannot buy a bag of chips in English.

The model that is working in Quebec should be replicated in businesses under federal jurisdiction. That is hardly small potatoes. We are talking about a major group of businesses with a large number of employees located for the most part in downtown Montreal, working mainly in English in some cases, which contributes to the anglicization of Montreal, its downtown and its cultural life.

Take telecommunications, for example. BCE has more than 14,000 employees, Rogers has 3,000 and Cogeco has 1,700. That means Quebec's telecommunications sector alone employs about 18,000 people. That is equivalent to the population of Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines, a town in my riding. That is a lot of people.

Then there are the banks. National Bank has 10,200 employees. I am not saying that they all necessarily speak English at work. What I am saying is that these thousands of workers have the right to work in French. They should not fall under a legislative regime where if just one person comes from Toronto or if just one person speaks English, everyone switches to English. We know what happens when there are 10 francophones and one anglophone at the table: They speak English over lunch. That is exactly what happens.

• (1150)

Quebeckers must be guaranteed the right to speak French at work. French is the only official and national language of Quebec. It is an inclusive language because it is our common language. The French language allows us to understand one another, integrate and grow together.

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Quebec's banking sector alone employs 23,000 people. The aviation and rail transportation sectors would add another 9,000 or 10,000 people. The Liberals' bilingualism model is to linguistic policy what tax evasion is to taxation. It allows these businesses to be different from others. It gives these businesses a free pass and lets them break the rules. Francophones who want to work in telecommunications or in the rail transportation sector are subject to a regime that prevents them from working in Quebec's historical, national language.

The purpose of Bill C-238 is to implement legislation that acknowledges the reality, the facts, the history and, most importantly, the unanimous will of the Quebec National Assembly. This is a bill that reflects the realities of Quebecers and addresses the current confusion, which leaves Quebecers under the impression that they are free to work in French in all federally regulated businesses. One does not need to have visited these businesses to understand that this is not the case.

There is another positive aspect to Bill C-238, specifically asymmetry. It is something that Canadian federalism has rejected all too often. In many provinces, such as Quebec, people's preferences and expectations, history, culture, the working world, practices and legislative agendas are not the same. Language in the workplace must also be dealt with a bit differently.

The principle of asymmetry is accepted in numerous areas, for example, in health care. The very fact that we are a federation implies that different provinces with different needs should work differently. There is also a certain asymmetry in the immigration system. Quebec has a certain number of targets in a certain number of programs, but not in all of them. For some time now, job training has been delegated to the Quebec government through special agreements. Why? Because Quebec has its own business ecosystem, its own community sector, its own institutions, and its own expectations. Bill C-238 does exactly the same thing.

What worries me about some of the speeches I have heard today, including the one from the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, a colleague I hold in high regard, is the fact that we are still having debates about whether francophones are or are not disappearing, whether French is or is not declining, and so on. Some Conservatives in the House, including the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, claim to be experts in mathematics. They look at three or four data points, see that such-and-such a statistic shows that there are three or four more francophones in such-and-such a place, and then some claim that there is no loss of francophones and no need to protect French. Just the fact that we are talking about it, that it is being brought up again, and that it is on the agenda demonstrates that there is a problem in Quebec. Can anyone tell me where in Canada there are debates about the disappearance of English? Nowhere. That is because it is obvious that English is not disappearing. French needs to be protected.

Bill C-238 is balanced, respectful, asymmetrical and well-thought-out. It will ensure that the real language of work in Quebec is French. Large companies will still be able to do business in English because that is the language everyone naturally gravitates to in North America. If we do not pass Bill C-238 but do pass Bill C-13, that force of gravity will simply lead us to unilingualism, eventually.

It is important to note, and I appreciated the speech by my colleague from the NDP, that the law applies only to Canadian citizens. Refugees and new immigrants under the family reunification program are exempt. This is an inclusive bill. I congratulate my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît for introducing this bill. Of course, I am looking forward to voting for it.

● (1155)

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, as you probably know, the International Day of Older Persons is coming up soon. I would like to take advantage of the debate on my bill to draw everyone's attention to this important day, because the generation before mine did so much for the French language. As a society, it waged major battles. Its story is the story of a nation that owns its uniqueness. It is therefore fitting, on the eve of the International Day of Older Persons, to thank those who have done so much for our national language and who, quite frankly, are just as concerned about the decline of French as we are.

For some, conversations about the decline of French elicit a shrug of the shoulders. Members of Parliament say we are getting too worked up about it. They say we are misinterpreting the statistics, that the indicators do not accurately reflect new linguistic dynamics. It is a tempest in a teapot, they say. That was the message during the first hour of debate on Bill C-238. However, Statistics Canada shed new light this summer on what is happening with French across Canada and in Quebec.

We knew it, but now it is clear. My colleague, the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île, predicted it. No matter what measure we use, we see a decline in French. In Quebec, there are fewer people whose mother tongue is French. The same goes for the primary language spoken at home and the language spoken in public, and that is key. It is a serious slide, to the benefit of English. What will my bill, which I have the honour of introducing on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, do to stop this decline?

It addresses two things: language of work and the language of newcomers. For language of work, Bill C-238 incorporates the National Assembly's unanimous request to apply Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses. Again, this was a unanimous request. Every Quebec member thought about the issue and came to the same conclusion. I hope that the House will be able to show a bit of consideration for democracy in Quebec.

During the first hour of debate, I heard someone say that Bill C-13 would be better at protecting French at federally regulated businesses in Quebec. To say that is to flat out say no to the National Assembly. That is serious.

I have to say what I think. I do not trust the federal government to truly fight for the French language. It is the federal government that is responsible for the fact that, as we speak, a francophone veteran has to wait an average of 45 weeks for a decision on their file. An anglophone waits only 24 weeks. In Canada, discrimination based on language is tolerated. It is the federal government that is responsible for the fact that, in the House, ministers hold important briefings on their bills with no consideration for French. It is the federal government that tolerates the fact that it is very difficult for francophones to get top jobs in the government even though many francophones work in the public service. Despite efforts made in recent decades to protect French in Canada, everything is done in English.

I therefore place my trust in the Quebec government to ensure respect for Quebecers' language rights, which is why Bill 101 must be applied to federally regulated businesses. Bill C-238 has a second element, namely knowledge of French as a requirement for Quebec citizenship. To be clear, knowledge of French would be a requirement to obtain citizenship for people residing in Quebec. This would change nothing for people claiming refugee status or permanent residency. I think that this is a very reasonable provision.

There are all kinds of ways for people to step up and help stop the decline of the French language. I know that my bill is just one among many others. If I have not been convincing, I ask members to send Bill C-238 to committee so that experts can come explain why it is so important. That is what Wednesday's vote will be about. My bill represents the first opportunity for all members of Parliament to show that they are concerned about the decline of French. My bill would give Quebec two new tools to help it wage this crucial, magnificent battle for the French language, for its words, its accents and its future. I urge members not to undermine the efforts of such a resilient nation. Let us pass Bill C-238.

• (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, September 28, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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[English]

COST OF LIVING RELIEF ACT, NO. 2

The House resumed from September 23 consideration of the motion that Bill C-31, An Act respecting cost of living relief measures related to dental care and rental housing, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are here in Parliament today talking about the affordability crisis that so many Canadians are dealing with, and in a way it feels like progress that we are even talking about this, because most of the debates that happen in Parliament are scheduled by the government, and for two years the government has been ignoring the problem of “Justinflation” that so many Canadians have been dealing with. For two years the government has been ignoring the cost of living crisis, but the election of the member for Carleton as Leader of the Opposition has really focused the mind of the government. Immediately after the Leader of the Opposition took his position, the government started saying that now it needs to try to talk about the affordability issue.

However, unfortunately, the measures the government has put in place are not moving us forward. They are not actually addressing the problem. In fact, in some respects they are making the problem worse. The government still does not appreciate the degree to which it really is its policies, the policies of the current Prime Minister, that have created and continue to create the kind of affordability crisis we are talking about.

At the outset, I think it is important to go over a bit of the history of this. Back in 2020, the member for Carleton, who was at the time our shadow minister for finance, said that Canada was about to face this problem of significant increasing inflation. He said that the significant increase we were seeing in government spending was going to drive inflation. Government being more expensive was going to make it more expensive for everyday Canadians to buy the various goods they needed.

At the time, those concerns were dismissed by the government, including the finance minister, who is still the finance minister. She was more concerned about apparent impending deflation, and that of course turned out to be very wrong. It was clear from the arguments being made at the time, and it is clear now, that when we have the government pouring more and more money out there, borrowing more and spending more but not actually driving increases in production, that is simply going to be inflationary. When we have more money chasing fewer goods, that is going to make everything more expensive.

These arguments were made and have been made over the last two years, but they have been continuously ignored by a government that clearly would rather talk about other issues. It clearly would rather be trying to shift attention away from those things, which really are the fundamental priorities of Canadians.

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The government also, first of all, denied it. It was refusing to acknowledge the inflation crisis that it was causing, but as the numbers have come out and as we have seen increasing inflation, it has been harder and harder for the government to deny it. The new form of denial is for them to say, "It is not our fault," and that they have nothing to do with it. They say that inflation is happening everywhere and is the result of the invasion of Ukraine and other such events, or it is supply blockages and is really an issue of the challenges in global supply chains.

I have a few responses to that. Number one is that this inflation was clearly an issue prior to the invasion of Ukraine, but it was two years ago that we started sounding the alarm on this issue of inflation. Of course, the invasion of Ukraine, as such, started in 2014, but this particular further invasion of Ukraine started six months ago.

It is also hard to make sense of the claim that global supply chains are responsible for instances where the goods are produced here in Canada yet the prices have been going up. Global supply chains can hardly be blamed for the escalating price of property and real estate that makes it increasingly difficult for Canadians in my age demographic and younger to be able to afford housing.

The government is constantly looking for other people to blame. It no doubt will blame the previous government at some point in today's debate, as well as global events that are beyond its control, but the reality is that the government is pursuing policies and pouring more money through borrowing and spending, without proper controls or encouraging more production. These economic policies of the government are driving inflation.

• (1205)

Canada is not the only country with rising inflation, but the point is that other countries that have this problem have pursued the same policies that the Liberal government has pursued. Some countries that are pursuing policies that entail exactly the same problems are getting the same results. However, other countries that are being more prudent and responsible in their spending are not experiencing the same challenges, and that is the reality. The escalating inflation is the result of the economic policies of the government, and it needs to own that challenge.

This is where we have been for the last two years. The government has been trying to distract attention on other issues, but then we have the Leader of the Opposition come into his position and continue his laser focus on issues of affordability and cost of living. Then, right away, the government says that perhaps its needs to talk about this affordability and cost of living thing, so it has tried to come up with a solution. Unfortunately, when we have a hammer, every problem looks like a nail. The government's approach when it comes to the economy is always the same: more spending, more borrowing and higher taxes. That solution to the inflation crisis is going to make the problem even worse.

The government wants Canadians to believe that their lives will be made better and more affordable by giving away more money. I will share a little story.

I have five children and my three-old son recently came to me with a wad of U.S. dollars. I knew exactly where he got them from,

because I had just returned from a trip to Washington and had left the money on the counter. He said, "Daddy, look what I got." Then he very generously said he would give me one. I told him that was great, but asked him where he got it from. I think that is how Canadians feel when the government offers them more money. The government says that it will be generous and give more money to people, but Canadians want to know where that money has come from.

The government does not generate any money of its own. Government does not work to produce money. It takes money from taxpayers and then redistributes it. Just like my son, who I know is not going out, earning that money and generously offering it to me. I know that he is finding it somewhere around the house. When the government says that it will give more money, it clearly has to find it somewhere around the house, and that is the issue with it. It wants everyone to see how generous it is being, that it is giving away more money. In question period the other day, the Deputy Prime Minister said that the government was giving \$1,000 to these families and \$500 to those families, but Canadians are asking where the money is coming from.

We have run up more debt under the current Prime Minister than in the entire country's history prior to 2015. That is incredible. That is more debt than in the country's entire history from 1867 up until 2015. This is driving the challenges in the cost of living and inflation. Then the government's solution to the problem it has caused is to do more of the same. We have inflation because of high taxes, high borrowing and high spending and the government tries to solve that problem through more taxes, more borrowing and more spending.

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. The Liberals' approach is going to cost more, and any of these giveaways that they are promising to Canadians, such as these \$500 here and \$1,000 there, is real money. This is significant money for people, but I think they also understand that the money comes from somewhere and that those dollars are eaten up every day by higher prices. The same government that is saying that it is going to do more on these spending items is actually eroding the value of that money as it is handing it out.

This is a failed policy. Again, doubling down on the same failed approach of more borrowing, more taxes and more spending is not going to achieve a different result. It is "Justinflation" from start to finish. This is what we predicted two years ago. That is what we are seeing now and that is what is going to be further exacerbated by these new policies.

I note that expert analysis from Canada's leading banks said that these policies from the government are going to be inflationary.

• (1210)

I listened to the leader of the NDP, the coalition partner of the government, talking about this issue on CBC's *The House*. I think it was this past weekend. He said that the NDP did not agree with the analysis from the big banks. The leading economists in the country are saying that the government's policy is going to be more inflationary. Dismissing that expert analysis because people have an axe to grind with the big banks is really missing the point. The government talks about drawing from experts. It should listen to experts and acknowledge that its policies will continue to be inflationary going forward.

The Conservatives are offering a better approach, a common-sense approach for moving us forward.

First, we need a dollar-for-dollar rule when it comes to new spending. If the government is going to approve new spending of \$1, \$10, \$1 million or \$1 billion, it should first find an equivalent amount of savings. If there are new areas needing money to be spent, it should identify areas for those savings, areas to find efficiencies, and then put those dollars to toward the new areas.

There are new emerging priorities. There are always going to be new things needing money, but there are also going to be plenty of examples where dollars that were spent in the past no longer need to be spent or, perhaps, should not have been spent in the first place.

I think about some of the things that the government has spent money on, like the \$25 million on the ArriveCAN app, which could have been easily saved. We could talk about the failed \$35-billion Infrastructure Bank. We could talk about the subsidy package for private media, which is unfortunately eroding confidence in the media. We could talk about the government's various corporate welfare programs. All of those things have, frankly, hurt Canadians instead of helped them.

There have been many opportunities with respect to wasteful spending within the government or spending that was poorly targeted toward objectives. It is great to find new areas to make investments. Let us apply the same discipline that households and businesses have to apply by having a dollar-for-dollar rule.

A great way to help make life more affordable for Canadians would be to stop increasing taxes. Of course, we would like to see lower tax on this side of the House, but as a first step for the government, stop making the problem worse. Right now, the government has automatic scheduled tax increases for next year. On January 1 of next year, happy new year, and on April 1 of next year, which is sadly not an April fool's joke, tax increases are currently scheduled: increases to the carbon tax, which will drive up the cost of gas, groceries and home heating; increases as well to payroll taxes. Those payroll tax increases will take effect on January 1 and then subsequently the carbon tax hike.

It would be a very basic first step for the government to acknowledge it is in a hole right now, so it should stop digging, stop making the problem worse and stop inflicting more pain on Canadians by raising their taxes. Although that would be against the basic instincts of the government, that would be an important step to take, to recognize there is actually a problem that needs to be solved. If

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the government is unwilling to listen to us and reverse these planned tax increases, then I think it will be clear that the government's words about affordability are just that, only words. We have seen this before. When Canadians are connecting with and responding to a Conservative message, sometimes the government tries to use the same words. It tries to talk about the same things.

The proof is going to be in the pudding. The proof is going to be whether the government follows through with its planned tax hikes, or whether it continues with its approach of borrowing, spending and taxing always going up, or whether it will listen to Canadians, who are feeling the squeeze as a result of "Justinflation", stop this damage and try to reverse the planned tax—

• (1215)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I have been somewhat patient with the member. This was the third time the member has made reference to the term "Justinflation". He is obviously doing something indirectly, knowing full well that he cannot do it directly. It has been ruled on previously by the Speaker that it is an inappropriate phrase, and this is the third time he has used it. I would suggest it is being done intentionally by the member and that he should try to improve by not using that term, which is unparliamentary, as previously ruled.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, we have heard the member use that term all the time. It is a little lame and I do not think it is appropriate. We can lead a horse to water, but we cannot make it think. The Speaker should ask the member to withdraw his lame comment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will remind the hon. member that using that term was already ruled on. I know the member is working it into his speech a little differently, but again I want to caution him on the use of that word.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I know the member for Timmins—James Bay is excited to hear the rest of my remarks and it sounds like he is chomping at the bit for the privilege of debate that may be coming. I look forward to his remarks. I would encourage him to make sure he has consulted with the rest of his party around the position he takes on that, because there may be some differences of opinion around that important and sensitive issue.

With respect to the remarks I was making, it is very clear that we have two different approaches in front of us when it comes to responding to the economy. The Liberals have started to try to adopt Conservative language, although not all of it, as maybe the point of order demonstrates. They do not want to acknowledge their own responsibility when it comes to inflation, but they have started to acknowledge that there is a problem of inflation. They just think it has nothing to do with the policies of the government, which obviously stretches credibility.

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The government has, in the last two years, pursued a radically different direction. In some respects, it has the last seven years, but it has escalated in the last two years. They have pursued a radically different direction with respect to economic policy. We have gone from tens of billions of dollars of deficit, which felt quite significant, and was quite significant, to hundreds of billions of dollars in terms of deficit, and they want to pretend as if that approach has had no consequences with respect to affordability. The reality is that it obviously has and Canadians are seeing the direct impacts on their lives when it comes to rising costs of all sorts of different goods. The government's efforts to pass the blame for this onto everybody but themselves really stretches credibility. Now their proposals of more taxes, more spending and more borrowing are simply going to make the problem worse.

I appeal to the government, on behalf of my constituents and many Canadians who have raised concerns about affordability, that if it wants to show that it has a modicum of sincerity when it comes to the issue of affordability, it should cancel the planned tax increases for next year. It would be a simple way for the government to show that it is actually listening to Canadians.

I want to talk specifically about the issue of the carbon tax. The Liberals think that a tax increase is a replacement for a meaningful response to the challenges we face with environmental policy. It is clear from various reports that their carbon tax is not working to achieve environmental objectives. Many of the groups that have supported them on this are saying it is a dramatic increase they want in terms of the carbon tax, and the Liberals are planning, I believe, and forecasting it.

Before the previous election, they had promised that they would not increase the carbon tax, but then they did increase it. It is continually going up and up. When is it going to stop? Every time their carbon tax fails to achieve their environmental objectives, instead of changing approach and realizing that we actually need an approach that emphasizes technology instead of taxes, they are just doubling down on the taxation approach. It is just not working; it is not achieving the objectives they said it will.

The government really needs to be responsive to what Canadians are telling it and it needs to be willing to make changes in its direction when the evidence clearly suggests it. I repeat that appeal again: no new taxes. The least the government can do is stop the damage, and that means to commit to not proceeding with the tax increases that it has scheduled for next year.

It is a clear choice and a clear contrast. We have a government that is talking about borrowing, spending and taxation, and that is leading to inflation. Then in the official opposition, we are talking about more freedom, giving individuals back control of their lives, reversing tax increases, lowering taxes and fundamentally replacing big government with big citizens, with a big society, as David Cameron talked about, with the idea that a strong society, with people standing together and supporting each other's needs, is much better at bringing us together as communities and moving us forward than the government. I am proud to continue to champion that vision and make the case for that vision in the House and beyond.

• (1220)

At this point, I would like to move an amendment. 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-31, An Act respecting cost of living relief measures related to dental care and rental housing, since the bill will fuel inflation and fails to address the government's excessive borrowing and spending that lead to the inflation crisis in the first place."

• (1225)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The amendment is in order.

We will move on to questions and comments with the hon. member for Kings—Hants.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I had the privilege of sitting in the 43rd Parliament, and I listened to Conservatives saying both that the government was spending too much and that the government needed to spend even more in certain areas.

I heard that reiterated today when this member was talking about debt levels and the need for government to rein in spending. I did not hear him once mention that the government is actually in a surplus position for this current fiscal year. I think that this is really important to recognize, that the government is reining in spending.

However, that is not going to create an affordability element overnight. His proposition is, essentially, that the government should stop spending and that would create affordability.

Why will this member not support targeted measures for vulnerable Canadians? What he is proposing would not have any direct benefit on households for, probably, a couple of years' time.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I will be very clear. I am proposing, fundamentally, as a first step, that the government commit to reversing planned automatic tax increases for next year.

The member thinks that this is not going to matter to Canadians for a long time. It will matter to Canadians right away. Canadians who are struggling to pay for gas, groceries and home heating will immediately be affected by the tax increase that his party wants to bring in next year.

Working Canadians and small businesses will be immediately impacted by the increase in payroll taxes that his government plans to bring in next year. This would be immediate relief to the affordability crisis.

There is more that it needs to do. I talked about the dollar-for-dollar rule, and I support tax reductions to make life more affordable for Canadians. As a basic first step, which would have an immediate impact, I am calling on the government to reverse its planned automatic tax increases for next year. I hope that he will speak for his constituents and join me in opposing those tax increases.

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[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is quite something to watch the NDP defend the Prime Minister. I would say that undermines their credibility just a bit when they ask questions.

My colleague talked a lot about the fact that it is just inflation and so on and that spending needs to be reduced.

Previously he said that he agreed with increasing health transfers to the provinces and Quebec. I assume that he is aware that in July, not just Quebec, but all the other provinces asked for an increase in health transfers.

Does he agree with that approach?

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I would be happy to have that debate in detail at another time. I think that, in front of us, we are discussing the issue of affordability for Canadians. There is a lot of work to be done on the health care front. There is no doubt about that. There have been many challenges that have been exposed through the COVID pandemic that require significant work.

I look forward to further analyzing, discussing and debating those issues when that issue is up for debate in the House.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I did not hear very much from the member about his thoughts on dental care. As I am sure he knows, the biggest reason that children under 12 end up in the emergency room is because of dental emergencies. I am sure that he knows that this happens because children do not have access to good preventative dental care.

I am sure that he has heard from his constituents in Alberta, as he is my neighbour in Alberta, that they are very supportive of dental care. In fact, a massive majority of Albertans support having public dental care available to children.

In the last Parliament, I was the only member of Parliament from Alberta who did vote for dental care. He voted twice against dental care. I am wondering if he will be supporting dental care for children who cannot access dental care in this country, to prevent them from having to go to the hospital, to our overburdened emergency rooms, for care.

• (1230)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, respectfully to my colleague, I have a number of points on this. Number one is that we have major challenges in our existing health care system. Rather than address those challenges, the parties of the left—

Mr. Peter Julian: Thanks to the Conservatives. You gutted Alberta—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): If the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby happens to have questions or comments, he should stand at the appropriate time to do so and not interrupt members while they are attempting to answer the question.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I do not mind the heckling from the government minister over here. I know he has strong views in support of the Liberal agenda, and he is using his voice in the House to defend Liberal policies.

Many Canadians are disappointed by the fact that the NDP have really sold out. They have sold out on principles they used to articulate. I look at the bill before us, and regardless of what the member for Edmonton Strathcona said previously, she would have to agree that the legislation is not a dental care program. The Liberals have already reneged on their commitment to the NDP, yet the NDP is still persistently supporting and defending the Liberal government. If the NDP is not even going to extract the price that was offered and is still supporting the Liberal government's failed approach, it is a real betrayal of the people the NDP said it would represent.

Canadians are realizing that it is only the Conservative Party that is going to speak on behalf of Canadians and workers, and on behalf of defending our systems and defending Canadians from the attacks on their pocketbooks that we are seeing from the government.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that we are hearing several members describe an increase to the Canada pension plan as a payroll tax.

Putting that aside, I am aware that the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is concerned with increases in government spending. What is also true is that he supported a Conservative motion that would have increased defence spending by over \$18 billion. If he is now also supportive a dollar-for-dollar offset, and if he remains supportive of increasing defence spending by \$18 billion, could he share where he would cut \$18 billion to make room for this new spending?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I have already identified a number of areas of spending that I think are not only not necessary but actually make Canadians worse off. It is a reasonable principle to have dollar for dollar to be able to identify those areas while talking about spending increases.

Just to zero in specifically on the Green Party's emphasis on defence spending, it kind of misses the reality of what is happening in the world right now to pretend that a greater focus on national defence is not necessary. We have the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Canada has been significantly involved in sending weapons to that. We think they should be doing more, in terms of sending support to Ukraine.

However, to pretend that we could do these things, which I think are required for basic justice and our security, without thinking about the cost is a bit naive. The threats we face, and the emerging threats we face, are very significant. I know there are some members who, for philosophical or ideological reasons, are against more spending on defence, but there are realities we face in the world today, and members need to take stock of those realities and acknowledge that, if we are going to be in solidarity with Ukraine, if we are going to protect our security, and if we are going to secure our own Arctic, those things do involve costs, and we have to live up to our obligations.

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Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am actually struck by similarities. This member does not have the benefit of the years that I do, but I remember during Pierre Elliott Trudeau's time there was stagflation, which is high inflation, low economic growth and serious economic problems.

My question for the member is this: Is this a return of "Trudeauonomics" or is it "Justinflation"?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I ruled a little while ago about using that term, and I would like to remind members to be extremely careful given the ruling previously made by the Speaker himself.

• (1235)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, that is the best question I have received all day. I did not live during the tenure of the previous Trudeau government, but I can say that my grandfather made sure that I knew about what happened. My grandfather was working as an engineer in Alberta during the national energy program, which was the last time we had a prime minister named Trudeau, and the last time we saw those kinds of really aggressive attacks on our regional economy.

We have seen a repeat of that dismissive attitude towards Alberta and the energy sector. We are seeing a repeat of those kinds of economic policies when it comes to inflation and making life less affordable for Canadians. The idea could come from various sources, but the bottom line is that these are failing policies. Canadians realize these policies are not working and are asking the government to change its course. The government is now trying to change some of the rhetoric. It is saying it is prepared to talk about these issues, but it is not delivering the results Canadians want.

I will repeat the simple appeal that, if the government really cared about these issues, it would cancel scheduled tax hikes for next year. Will it cancel those tax hikes?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

As this is the first occasion I have had to speak in the House now that we are back after the parliamentary recess, it is an honour to be back with colleagues. It is great to see people again and I look forward to the work ahead.

I am speaking on the Canada dental benefit today, but I would be remiss if I did not first mention hurricane Fiona. A lot of constituents back home in London will have family members and friends in areas impacted. All members of Parliament are thinking of those impacted, but for members of Parliament from the Atlantic provinces, including our Minister of National Revenue, who represents, among other places, the Îles de la Madeleine, this is a tragedy that has unfolded and our hearts go out to all impacted.

We have in front of us a truly historic bill, a historic bill that has been called for from people across the country for a long time. The proposed Canada dental benefit is the result of a great deal of work that has been carried out, not just in this House but across the country by activists focusing on social policy, going back decades. It represents the culmination of that work, and it is the first stage of it.

It would apply, in this first instance, to children under 12. In order to understand the importance of it, let me take a step back and put things into a broader context. I do so by referencing a philosopher my Conservative colleagues are very fond of quoting. Usually they quote him entirely out of context, but it is important to put on the record the thoughts of Adam Smith and apply it to this particular social policy. It is something that is not often done, but it puts things into good perspective.

Adam Smith said, "No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable." What he meant by that is that, when a society experiences and sees poverty in ways that limit its members from fulfilling their true potential as human beings, then that society cannot be said to be thriving, successful or prosperous.

That is a timeless insight and universal in its validity, whether it is Canadian democracy we are talking about or beyond. I use it as a way of understanding the importance of this policy innovation, the Canada dental benefit, because over 30% of Canadians do not have dental insurance. In fact, in 2018, over 20% said they did not see their dentist because the visit would be too expensive.

We are talking about kids here, who are perhaps the most vulnerable in our population. These are kids under 12 whose parents could not afford to take them to the dentist. Canada remains one of the most prosperous countries in the world, but when one has an outcome like that, it is tragic, it is unacceptable and it requires a government response. I am glad to see the government is moving in this direction.

As a result of Bill C-31, 500,000 children would be supported. Kids under 12 would be helped via a tax-free benefit. To get technical, and just so we are on the record with that, it would see support go in three different categories. Children under 12 with family incomes of less than \$70,000 would see \$650 per year per child. Children in families with incomes ranging from \$70,000 and \$79,000 could receive \$390 per year per child, and in families where incomes range from \$80,000 to \$89,000, a child could receive \$260 per year.

The Canada Revenue Agency would administer the benefit and it would be available online via My Account, or on the phone if that is the option available for individuals. There would be an attestation process individuals would need to go through. For example, they would need to attest they are not already receiving private dental insurance and that the benefit would be used for dental expenses. They would also need to keep receipts.

There are also other steps they would need to ensure. They would need to have filed their taxes in 2021. When applying, they would need to confirm they are the parent in fact receiving the Canada child benefit for their child, and they would need to set up direct deposit.

• (1240)

The fact that it is administered by CRA is a very good thing because throughout the pandemic we saw the CRA and its public servants step up and support Canadians in need, including Canadian individuals, families and business. CRA, after all, was the agency tasked with the responsibility of overseeing and administering the various emergency response programs. Those programs proved absolutely vital.

Sometimes we hear criticism, particularly from our Conservative friends. They cast aspersions on the programs that were made available. They voted for them, but now, all of a sudden, they are having second thoughts. It is important for Canadians, and all of us in this House, to think about what would have happened to the country if it were not for programs like the Canada emergency response benefit. If it were not for the Canada emergency wage subsidy or the rental subsidy, what would have happened to businesses?

Those programs among others, of which there were several, kept the country going during the worst economic crisis that we have seen since the Great Depression. That is a fact. I hear my Conservative friends at length these days go after these particular programs. In fact, I worked with the new leader on the finance committee and I remember that, at the time when we were tasked with the responsibility of looking at the emergency response programs and understanding how they would work, he called these “big, fat government programs”. He went on record at a famous press conference to say that the Conservatives were not in favour of such programs. The Conservatives did vote in favour because there was enormous public pressure to go in that direction. However, now, taking on a sort of populist hue, although I am not sure what is going on, the Conservatives continue to speak out against those particular programs.

In any case, the benefit itself is reflective of a view of government that says that government has a responsibility to help individuals in need. Again, 500,000 kids would benefit as a result of what is happening here. I heard my colleague opposite in the Conservative Party just a few moments ago go on at length about how he is opposed to Bill C-31.

Let us look at it another way. What about all those kids who are currently not getting support who would get support? What would they prefer? Would they prefer that we ignore that child who has a genuine health care need? That is not just insensitive. It is cruel because it is proper to view dental care as health care. We have a responsibility from so many different perspectives to look at these issues in a compassionate way. That child in need is our collective responsibility.

In Parliament, we are looking after our constituents. That is what we are sent here to do. In my own community, there are kids whose parents cannot afford to take them to the dentist. I gave the number earlier that about 20% of Canadians, at least in 2018, said they could not afford to go to the dentist and that would include taking their kids to see the dentist. That is not acceptable and that is why this bill is absolutely suited to the time.

The other thing I need to put on the record is that we have a view in this bill that takes very seriously that individual rights matter, certainly, but that individual rights unfettered have no place in a

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modern democratic society that aims for prosperity. The aim absolutely is to put individual rights front and centre. Individuals, including kids, have the right to health care and when they do not our society is diminished. As Adam Smith rightly said, if we have poverty in society that limits people from ultimately fulfilling their true potential, then that society is absolutely not what it can be. The society does not have the ability to live up to its potential and that applies to its citizens as well. Therefore, when kids cannot get dental care, we are all brought down as a result.

I appreciate the opportunity, Madam Speaker. I will stop there and I look forward to questions.

• (1245)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have two questions for the parliamentary secretary.

My first question is as a person who was formerly on a board of a homeless shelter. We are seeing across the country and in my riding an increase in homelessness and an affordable housing crisis. How is \$500 going to help the many people who are losing their homes in this affordability crisis? It is more like a band-aid on a gaping wound.

Second, my understanding of the deal that the NDP signed with the Liberal Party was that the Liberals were going to put in a dental care program that would cover everyone. This one covers children under 12. With respect to the amounts we are talking about, I just got my teeth cleaned and it was almost \$300. Seventy per cent of the folks are covered by programs and the rest who are on social assistance already receive this. How is this anything like the promise that was made? Why did the government break its promise to its partners?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Speaker, if the Conservatives are now coming on board calling for a full-blown dental program, that would be welcomed, but somehow I think that is not the case.

As I said at the outset of the speech, perhaps the member was not in the chamber at the time, this is the case in the first instance. It applies to children under 12 in the first place, then to kids under 18, and by 2025 it will be a full program. We are working toward this incrementally, one could say, but from a Conservative perspective that would be a good thing. We will get there. We will get to a full-scale program.

As far as homelessness is concerned, I would simply point out to the member the number of investments that have been made in southwestern Ontario, where I know she is from. I have announced a number of projects certainly in London. We are seeing people housed who were not previously housed. We have more work to do. I hope the Conservatives come on board finally and recognize the importance of it.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to know whether the parliamentary secretary, who seems to fancy himself as having some sort of monopoly on empathy for children, realizes that Bill C-31 does not provide dental care. In fact, it denies children in Quebec the increase in the Canada child benefit and makes families have to wait for the Canada Revenue Agency, wait for officials, and wait for forms to be entitled to a simple increase in the Canada child benefit. That is what the bill does.

If children's health is truly important to him, he would be in favour of increasing health transfers to the provinces and Quebec so that the existing Quebec dental insurance plan can be improved.

[English]

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Speaker, there is so much there I do not know where to begin.

With respect to the Canada child benefit, and I know the hon. member is concerned with poverty in Canada, it has lifted hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. I will put that to the member if he was not already aware.

With respect to his understanding of how this particular dental benefit will work with respect to kids, I think there is some misunderstanding there. As a result of the Canada dental benefit, 500,000 kids will be supported. I look forward to hearing the member's thoughts further. I think he has some concerns with respect to provincial jurisdiction, but that is a matter that I am sure he and his party will continue to take up.

With respect to health transfers, I leave that to the government and the Minister of Health to take up in due course in the upcoming weeks and months, as I think will be the case.

• (1250)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, as the member knows, 50% of low-income Canadians have no dental coverage. In preschool children, the most common surgery performed in pediatric hospitals is for dental decay, and poor oral health in seniors increases the risk of pneumonia.

Does the member agree that preventable dental care is long overdue due to continuous Liberal and Conservative inaction and would prevent costly and serious health conditions?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Speaker, I think what we have with respect to this bill is one of the greatest advances in social and health policy the country has seen. Therefore, I applaud colleagues in the NDP for helping to raise this issue. I know Liberal colleagues on this side of the House have been advocating for something like Bill C-31 for a long time. In the first place we see kids supported. We are going to see that expanded. When oral care is put front and centre, a person's overall health is certainly ensured. I look forward to hearing more from the member in the coming weeks on these issues.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is one of the important debates we have had over the years in the House of Commons. We can think back to more than 50 years ago when the Tommy Douglas health care bill

establishing universal health care in this country was debated. It was an NDP initiative. The government of the day was forced to put it on the floor of the House of Commons. Canadians, 50 years later, have benefited from that enormously. In fact, as members are well aware, when Canadians are asked what institution in Canada they are most strongly supportive of, it is universal health care.

I was pleased, and my colleague from Timmins—James Bay was in the House as well, when we debated the famous Jack Layton budget. A former Liberal government was forced, by the NDP's presence in the House and a minority government status, to gut and rip up a budget that would have given massive tax breaks, which the Conservatives and Liberals favour, to big corporations and the ultrarich, and instead invest that money in public transit, education, seniors, families and housing. That was an important debate as well

The debate today is very similar because this is an NDP initiative and an NDP bill. There is no doubt. What it would do is establish the principle of dental care in this country and establish supports for Canadians who are struggling to pay their rents and keep a roof over their head.

First, I will talk about the dental care provisions. The reality is that Canadians right across this country are suffering from a lack of dental care. It has been pointed out in the House by the member for Burnaby South and by many others that over a third of Canadians have no dental insurance. That means there are millions of Canadians who cannot afford to visit a dentist.

I know the results of this. I have met with constituents who have teeth that are literally rotting out of their mouth, and we know that the most common surgery performed on preschool children at most pediatric hospitals in Canada is treatment for dental decay. We know as well, from emergency room physicians, that hundreds of millions of dollars of expenses come from Canadians who do not have access to dental care and have to go to emergency rooms because of dental emergencies and the intense pain of not having dental support. Emergency room physicians know that without dental care in place for all Canadians, there will continue to be a cost to the health care system, but more importantly, an intense pain and suffering that is not needed. Instead, we can take up this NDP initiative and put in place dental care.

As members well know, the provisions of the bill start to lay the foundation around dental care and provide supports to half a million Canadian children under the age of 12 who do not have access to dental care now. The Conservatives have just moved a motion to gut the bill, which means they disagree with ensuring half a million Canadian children have access to dental care and that families receive the money so they can do the cleaning and maintenance to avoid the intense pain and suffering that comes from dental decay. Conservative MPs are going to have to answer to that on their doorsteps and will have to explain why they are opposed to dental care.

As members know, what the NDP has forced as well is a commitment by the government to next year roll that out to youth under the age of 18, seniors and people with disabilities. In the final year, the full program would be brought to bear for all families across the country. The reality is that dental care will make a big difference for Canadians. Tommy Douglas said in this House more than a half a century ago that the intent of putting in place universal health care was to ensure that we had health care from the top of our heads to the soles of our feet. The member for Burnaby South has said that very articulately many times in this House and that what we need is a full health care system.

Dental care is a fundamentally important component of that, and I am profoundly dismayed that Conservative MPs are not standing with, in each case, the 30,000 constituents in their ridings who do not have access to dental care. That is the average across the country. There are about 30,000 such Canadians in each and every riding across the country, which is millions if we put the 338 ridings together, and we have Conservative MPs saying they are not going to support that access to dental care.

• (1255)

What profound disrespect that is to Canadians in their ridings, the Conservatives' constituents and bosses, who vitally need access to dental care and need that foundation. Those initial payments are for families that have children 12 and under. They need that dental care, dental support and dental maintenance.

The second component of the bill deals with the housing supplement. About 1.7 million Canadians would receive a housing supplement and housing support so they can pay their rent and keep a roof over their head. The new Conservative leader, the member for Carleton, likes to point out that housing prices have doubled under the Liberals, which is true, but what he fails to point out is that housing prices doubled under the dismal decade of the Harper government. We have actually seen, over the past dismal decade and a half, housing prices quadruple.

Now, I do not understand how the Conservatives will campaign in the next election. Is the member for Carleton going to say, "Well, vote for us because the Liberals have done just as badly as we did", or "Vote for us because the Liberals have handed out just as much to the banks as we did"? With the incredible extent of overseas tax havens, would the Conservatives say, "Vote for us because the Liberals have been just as bad on overseas tax havens"?

The reality is that the Liberal government has, at least, permitted itself to be forced, prodded, pushed and pulled by the NDP to put in place rental supplements that will help people and put in place den-

tal supports, the foundation of dental care in this country. These are important steps, and this is why we are proud to have this NDP legislation being brought forward. It would make a difference in the lives of Canadians. It would make a difference in the lives of families. For the 1.7 million Canadians who are struggling to pay their rent right now as rent increases, this would help put food on the table and keep a roof over their head.

However, if the thought is that NDP members will stop there and rest on their laurels, members know that is not the case. We believe firmly and fundamentally that we need to keep pushing on behalf of Canadians, and we will continue to push NDP initiatives on the floor of the House of Commons. We believe in a health care system that is comprehensive. We believe in restoring health care funding. We have also pushed the government, and have had some success, on building new, affordable co-operative and social housing. For a decade and a half, both under the Conservatives and the Liberals, we have had hollow promises. Now, as a result of the NDP initiative, there will be tens of thousands of units of affordable housing where rent would be capped at 30% of a person's income. That is fundamental.

As members well know, in the past, when we had a national housing program and had provisions for the federal government to actually fund housing and ensure co-operative and social housing, we found that homelessness in this country had almost disappeared. However, then we found otherwise under successive governments. It started with the Paul Martin government, which gutted the national housing program, but we never forget that it was Conservative governments that maintained that irresponsible act. What we have found over those subsequent decades is that more and more Canadians are finding it difficult to even keep a roof over their head. The rental supplement will certainly help, but we need to go further. The NDP has pushed the government to go further to ensure that we actually have in place the provision of affordable housing that would allow for Canadians, particularly of lower income, to have a roof over their head throughout their lifetime.

These are important initiatives, and these are things we will continue to push. We will not stop, because we believe that Canadians really need a party that is going to fight for them in the House of Commons. That is what the 25 NDP MPs have done. We have delivered it this time with this bill, but we will continue to push on behalf of Canadians, who are our constituents and bosses, so that we get more things done, because Canadians need help at this critical time. Canadians need support to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads, and they can depend on the member for Burnaby South and the NDP caucus to continue to fight so they can do just that.

• (1300)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with the majority of what my hon. colleague had to say today. Of course, he talked about dental care, particularly for those who are most vulnerable, and I could not agree more, frankly. I think it is an important public policy. It is shared between our two caucuses, and it is great to see that spirit of collaboration here in Parliament.

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I am not privy to the ongoing working relationship between some of the ministers on this side of the House and the NDP, but it seems that the NDP wants a permanent federally delivered program. My question for the member is not on the merits of dental care but on the delivery. Why does the NDP feel that it should be administered by the Government of Canada when there are existing programs at the provincial level that are focused? Why not work with each province to make sure the outcomes we want at the federal level can be delivered by the provinces, which are closest to health care, and the providers that want to see this good work completed?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, the bill is very clear that this is a federal initiative. The reason it is so important to do that, as members know, is to ensure there are supports right across the country for dental care. What this means is that half a million kids and their families will have access to payments for teeth cleaning to avoid dental decay and for fillings, ensuring there is proper dental oral health for all those kids. That will extend to people with disabilities, seniors and all families.

The alternative would be, as we have seen over the last seven years, consulting in circles for years and nothing being done. That is why the NDP pushed for a federal program. We are happy to see in this bill that we are laying the foundation for that and families will benefit.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just listened to the hon. member speak about everything except what is happening right now with how much Canadians have to face. They are paying extra taxes, and with inflation, everything is expensive. It seems like he spent time giving himself credit and attacking the Conservatives, when he should have probably focused on examining this and telling Canadians that he does understand what is happening right now regarding inflation and the cost of living, which is going through the roof.

Why did the member not talk about cutting taxes to help Canadians? Why did he not speak about reducing inflation so Canadians can have better ways of living, instead of attacking and attacking and giving himself all the credit?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I do not really know what to make of that. We have Conservatives in the House who say they are concerned about the cost of living for Canadian families, but they are not going to accept dental care and are not going to support it. In fact, they moved a motion to gut the bill, which would help families pay for their children's dental expenses. How can they square that hypocrisy?

We have Conservatives standing in this House saying they are going to cut back pensions and that they do not want the CPP to be a sound foundation of support for people's retirements. I remember the Harper government saying to 65-year-old and 66-year-old Canadians that they were going to rip off their pensions and take them away.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: That is misleading.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, Canadians judged them on that in 2015 and that is why the Conservatives remain in opposition.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is a point of order, but I do want to remind the hon. member for Edmonton Manning that he had an opportunity to ask a question. When the answer was being given, he should not have been interrupting. I hope the hon. member has a point of order and not a point of debate.

The hon. member for Edmonton Manning.

• (1305)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, it is a point of order. I did not mean to do so, but it is misleading and I would ask the member to apologize—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is a point of debate.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for La Pointe-de-L'Île for a brief question.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to know what my colleague thinks of the government's refusal to increase health transfers, which would allow Quebec and provincial governments to improve dental care.

How will this plan not penalize Quebec and New Brunswick, which already have programs to cover dental care?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, as the member for Burnaby South and the member for Vancouver Kingsway both said, the NDP has always pushed for increased health transfers. I can say with absolute certainty that if the NDP were in government, if we had enough members to form the government, we would have already increased health transfers. How would we pay for it? That is a no-brainer. We are losing \$25 billion a year to tax havens; we could put that money for health transfers. That is what the Parliamentary Budget Officer has said. We believe that investing in health is more important. We need to increase funding for our health care system to ensure an excellent system for all Canadians.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by saying that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Laurentides—Labelle.

We are hearing all sorts of things today, but let us get back to the basics of Bill C-31. This essentially provides financial support to the parents of children under 12. It is not a dental care plan. I will illustrate that later.

It also creates a rental housing benefit. The Bloc Québécois is not against the principles of the bill in general. However, there are important problems that will need to be carefully examined. I hope that in committee, the parties will be open to the idea of supporting an increase in payments for health care.

The first problem I see is that, as I mention all the time, health falls under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. They are the ones that have the expertise. As recently as July, they reiterated their request that the federal government increase health transfers to cover 35% of spending, which amounts to \$6 billion for Quebec. That is a lot of money every year. When I hear about small, one-time, stopgap measures for housing, for example, and I hear politicians delivering somewhat rehearsed speeches about what they are getting done, to me, it is but a drop in the bucket. Let us get serious and increase health transfers.

My colleagues have become accustomed to my saying this, but I want to quote the Canadian Dental Association: “The single best way to quickly improve oral health and increase access to dental care is to invest in, and enhance, existing provincial and territorial dental programs.” It is talking about investing in provincial and territorial programs. “These programs are significantly underfunded and are almost exclusively financed by provincial and territorial governments.” The association points out that it is “important to ensure that any new initiatives do not disrupt access to dental care for the large majority of Canadians who already have dental coverage”. That is coming from the experts and not just the Bloc.

I had the privilege of replacing my colleague from Mirabel at committee last week. We heard from Ms. Tomkins and discussed this point. The committee heard from many people, including Mr. Ungar, a researcher attending as an individual, who explained the importance of keeping decision-making in the regions, close to the people with needs because the needs are not the same in Nunavut, Ontario or Quebec. That is why there are local governments that are in the best position to make these decisions. The greater the distance between the decision-making and the need, the less appropriate decisions will be.

On the second point, there is no evidence in Bill C-31 that this money will go to dental care. It pains me to have to point that out in the House. However, I am somewhat surprised that I am one of only a few people talking about it this morning. A parent will be able to submit a dental bill for \$100 and automatically receive a cheque for \$650, with no further follow-up. That is not necessarily what we want. Imagine the amount of paperwork this could create. Plus, it allows another level of government to dabble in an area that Quebec is already responsible for.

It is so tiring to come to Parliament and see how far Canada lags behind Quebec in social matters and to see that we are always paying for others.

In 1974, Quebec insured children under the age of 10. It is not perfect, and we would never claim that it is, but it started in 1974. I think Canada is behind.

In 1979, we also gave support to people on social assistance. Now, the great, all-knowing Canada is going to swoop in and add another program on top of that, using our taxes, but distributing money elsewhere, not just in Quebec. Quebec has already figured out what it is doing with its half of the budget.

Once Quebecers comprehend how much we manage to do with half a budget, they will realize we should be using our whole budget and claiming political independence to get rid of useless dupli-

cation. There is a reason the Bloc Québécois wants independence, and it is not because it is cute.

I have already moved on to the third item. I got a little carried away again, but it is important to tell it like it is.

● (1310)

This bill is more about politics and optics than anything of substance. The Liberal government is stubbornly rejecting the opposition's ideas. It has no respect for the opposition; all it cares about is a majority. How did it get that majority?

First, it called an election in the middle of a pandemic, which was a bust. That did not work; we wound up with the same government. It activated Plan B and got into bed with the NDP, making promises to that party it never intended to keep. I am sad for the New Democrats. This benefit is for children. It is not dental insurance.

Members of the House are supposed to be able to read. People read documents properly. I would like people to open their eyes to what is going on.

Earlier this summer, Liberal ministers realized that there was absolutely no way they could set up a universal dental insurance plan across Canada by year's end. That was the NDP's fabricated ultimatum, so there were supposedly threats issued that I do not believe meant a thing because I will be very surprised the day the NDP votes against the government in this Parliament.

The NDP led the government to believe that their agreement was hanging in the balance. So the government is proposing a phoney monetary benefit. It is pretending to give money for dental care. In the meantime, young people and seniors will not necessarily get more care.

Ironically, the day the bill was introduced, there was a media release by different groups that were on the Hill, including unions, people who represent the less fortunate and seniors groups. They told us that even though they all agree with the government offering dental care to children, the people who are having the most difficulty affording dental care are seniors. There is still nothing for seniors.

I would like the people from the NDP to explain that to me. Maybe I will get some answers in the questions they ask, but I would love to chat a bit.

What are they doing about increasing old age pensions for seniors to help them afford groceries and pay their rent? What is being done about that? Is that seriously being traded for a single \$500 payment for housing? During an election campaign or in front of the cameras they will make fine speeches about how they took action, when these are totally ineffective half-measures.

Let us look at what the federal government is actually doing. The federal government's approach suggests that it alone has the corner on the truth. It is imposing conditions and has decided to take over health care, despite the 1867 Constitution that it signed behind our backs. It is all-knowing.

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If the government is indeed all-knowing, why can it not manage its EI program properly? Why did the EI temporary measures expire yesterday? Why has the minister done nothing over the past year, despite her mandate letter to improve this program and adequately protect our workers? No, the government would rather continue to steal from people. At present, EI pays just four out of 10 workers. If that is not stealing, I do not know what is.

Let us talk about passports. What a mess. That falls under federal jurisdiction. The government needs to take action and do something. In early July, my office was dealing with about 15 passport cases a day. I have three employees in my office, four, including the person working in Ottawa. Just with immigration delays and border problems, I think the government has a lot on its plate.

Yesterday I watched *Tout le monde en parle*. They had people on to tell their stories. Incidentally, I have a lot of respect these people. I think they showed incredible strength. Honestly, in their situation, I do not think I would have been able to speak so calmly about my child having been killed. That is what we are talking about. Faced with this, the Liberal government has introduced a bill that will reduce the number of legal guns while doing absolutely nothing about the illegal ones.

Start by doing what you are supposed to do. We, in Quebec, will take care of the rest. Give us our money.

• (1315)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): First, I must remind the member that he is to address questions and comments or his speech through the Chair and not directly to the government.

Second, he used the word “steal”. It is really not accepted parliamentary language here in the House. I would therefore ask him to be careful of what he says in his speech.

The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. opposition colleague for his speech this afternoon.

I understand the principle of provincial and territorial jurisdictions, in particular with respect to dental care. However, I do not understand why my colleague is against direct payments for rent support and dental care support until a potential agreement is signed with our partners in the confederation regarding the implementation of this strong federal program.

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to rephrase the last sentence of my speech. I urge Parliament to mind its own business and look after its own affairs, instead of interfering with the provinces. I think that is worded better. I will be careful in the future.

Now, to answer the question from my esteemed colleague, I would say that we are not against the bill. We will vote in favour of the bill at second reading so that it can be studied. However, as I said at the beginning of my speech, I hope that the government will be open to making amendments so that we can support the bill.

Yes, children need care, but, as I said, we already have a program. We obtained the right to opt out of the day care program with full compensation. That was just before the election and, as we

know, that can sometimes change decisions. This is one unfortunate aspect of politics in Canada.

Since the government made an agreement for day care, why not do the same for dental care, since we already have our own program?

We are not against the direct payment for rent support, but this measure is just a drop in the bucket.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his speech. I am not certain that the \$500 is an effective solution for those who cannot afford their rent.

Does the member believe that it is a good initiative?

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, as I said, it is obviously just a drop in the bucket. It adds up to \$42 a month. For someone paying \$1,500 or \$1,600 a month in rent, it does not make a big difference. However, when people are in need, every cent they receive can give them a little bit of breathing room. That is why we have mixed feelings about it. Some members are saying that this changes nothing, that it does not address the problem, but if we can give \$500 to people whose rent represents more than 30% of their income, I think we should do it.

However, that is not all we should be doing. We should also be building housing. I do not know how many of us have ever taken economics courses, but it seems to me that the basic rules of supply and demand are not difficult to understand. There is a shortage of housing, so we should invest in construction. That will lessen the pressure on housing. This will require action, however, and we are faced with a government that is doing nothing.

• (1320)

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated my hon. colleague's speech. I hold him in high regard. I serve with him on the agriculture committee.

He asked, during his speech, why seniors are not being covered. I would just encourage him to read the full text of the agreement. He would see that seniors are the next group who will be covered as part of the terms of this agreement.

I guess my frustration is that we have waited for so long for dental care to be an issue, and I know that the children in my riding need this help now.

He has seen the statistics. He knows that this is a desperate need in his community and in communities right across Canada. Would he agree, at least at this time, in this moment, that parliamentarians can come together and actually deliver something that Canadian children, Quebec children, need, so that their health outcomes do not get worse?

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[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I humbly thank my colleague, whom I hold in high regard as well. As I said in my speech, we are not against funding for dental care. What we are saying is that Quebec already has a system.

The government is just adding another layer with more paperwork. It will cost more than we get in return. The government seems to be randomly throwing money out there. We want to see things done properly. We want higher transfers for Quebec, which already has a program and can manage on its own.

Let me reassure my colleague that we have the same fundamental objective. This is a need, and we need our money. That is what we have been saying for quite some time.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will start by saying I gave myself a little challenge, and this is my first time giving a real speech with only a few notes. This is also my first speech of the session. I hope that we can all be productive here. We hear a lot about listening, but I want to focus on active listening. In other words, members who are here in the chamber must truly be present. Let us listen to one another, take notes and make sure that we understand things before debating. Otherwise, what is the point of being here today?

I am obviously going to be talking about Bill C-31, and in particular part 2, but first, I want to say that my thoughts are with those on the Magdalen Islands and the north shore. We stand with them. I visited the Maritimes this summer and this has made me emotional. I urge everyone watching us now to be very generous.

I now want to talk about part 2 of the bill, which has to do with housing.

I have mostly focused on the details of the bill, but I would like to say that before becoming an MP in 2019, I had already been working in the social development field in my community for many years as the director of a community development corporation.

A community development corporation is a form of association that brings together all the organizations that work for the community. Collectively, we sounded the alarm over ten years ago. In fact, we sounded that alarm just when the funds and the agreements that had been in place before no longer existed. There is a reason why Quebec decided to roll up its sleeves and help Quebecers.

When I arrived in the House in 2019, my first speech dealt specifically with my concerns regarding what I had observed on the ground. Across Canada, including in Quebec, we have seen an increase in the number of people who are homeless or living in vulnerable situations.

Yes, some programs have helped people cope with our northern winters, but that does not change the fact that the growing number of vulnerable people is a problem.

My colleagues from other ridings and I have talked about how often people turn to us. People want to know what is going to happen a month from now, because they have two children and they have looked everywhere but are struggling to find a place to live.

One person who comes to mind is Mélanie, who was wondering what she was supposed to do. The only place where she could live was 40 kilometres from her work, but gas cost more than she would ever have thought possible.

What can we do?

I think we need to take another look at what the government did not do. How could it have done more than provide this rental housing top-up, which is just a band-aid solution?

A break on the rent provides a little relief, but it is a drop in the bucket considering everything else people have to deal with when things move fast and it is hard to cope.

Yes, that \$500 will help people. My colleague mentioned earlier that it adds up to \$42 a month. I own rental housing, so I am acquainted with this subject. Supply and demand have completely changed the availability of housing, especially affordable housing. We all know rent has gone up a lot.

This measure may help, but, as I said earlier, there is something else we have to keep in mind. When people find a place that meets their basic needs but is not near where they need to go, they have to spend more of their household income on transportation. That is a problem.

I am concerned about the impact of that and about availability.

● (1325)

I think all members are well aware of the situation, especially in Quebec. People reach out to our offices, and we often give them the tools they need to get the money they are entitled to, even though they do not always realize it exists. There is work to be done in that regard. It is our job to let people know that we can help them. There is no denying that this bill is going to pass. Of course, we cannot be against doing the right thing, but we have to think about what happens next.

Earlier, my colleague mentioned the need to take the bull by the horns. Some will want to talk about the labour shortage and will wonder how we can get this done. We have to start somewhere. Student co-operatives are being set up, and landlords in different municipalities are eager to contribute, so I think now is the right time. Funding must be accessible and available. We cannot wait two years for a Canada-Quebec agreement, since we are wondering if it is even necessary, given that we already have measures for our citizens.

Yes, it is necessary and it is even urgent. I was looking at the numbers for access to housing. Our performance as a G7 country is especially embarrassing. This is not the first time I have had the opportunity to talk with people abroad. When we look at the picture of who we are, I am quite often embarrassed. I tell them that we are going to address the problem because we know the situation is tough. According to the Association des professionnels de la construction et de l'habitation du Québec, there is a shortfall of between 40,000 and 60,000 housing units in Quebec. Those figures are from 2016. It is unbelievable.

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My colleague next to me represents the riding of Mirabel. That town has seen one of the largest population increases. We are welcoming, but where are we going to house everyone?

Are the situations we are experiencing as homeowners normal? Three years ago, I received a phone call from an individual who told me he wanted to add his name to a waiting list because he really wanted to rent my apartment. He liked the location because it was near his work and his children's school. I had to ask him what he was talking about. He told me that my renter was leaving the following month. I learned that people wanted to add their names to a waiting list before my renter even notified me that he was leaving. I was not given three month's notice. In light of all this, I hope that action will be taken on things people have been calling for in the House, for which plenty of arguments have been made and that have repercussions on our constituents.

I would even say to members that these are the people who voted for us and we must not forget about them. I am sad when I return to my riding and have to talk about what we did during the week and what action we will be taking. I feel that this place has not acknowledged that the housing crisis is a real crisis because, had we done so, we would have taken action. During the pandemic, we demonstrated that we really can act quickly and effectively during a true crisis. That is why I am asking members to make decisions and do something for our people who are currently at risk of becoming homeless. That is all I have to say for today.

• (1330)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I like to think of Bill C-31 as progressive legislation that will ultimately meet the very high demand out there. Providing support for children under the age of 12 to get dental care, I think, will bring about profound and positive change for many children who ultimately end up in surgery situations or having to go into hospital because of not getting dental work, as an example.

For clarity purposes only, I wonder if the member could just give a clear indication about this. The previous speaker implied that they would be voting in favour. Am I to understand that the Bloc members are going to be voting against the amendment and then in favour of the bill itself?

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his question.

I really talked about just part 2. We will obviously be supporting this proposal.

We are extremely worried because we do not want Quebec and New Brunswick, which have already taken the initiative to help these people, to be penalized. That aspect worries us.

As my colleague stated, helping people who cannot afford dental care is one thing. However, this bill is not proposing a dental care program. In my opinion, as the bill states, it is a cost of living relief measure.

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have seen over the last two years that the Prime Minister has refused to meet with the premiers who have concerns about addressing health care. Perhaps if the Prime Minister had taken those meetings, he would have learned that all provinces, except for one province and one territory, offer dental care support for children in low-income families. In addition, 70% of Canadians already have dental care.

Does the hon. member think that if the Prime Minister had had those consultations and negotiated with the provinces in good faith, we could have addressed other affordability issues Canadians are facing? Does he think that perhaps instead of adding new spending that would not help children and would not help provinces because it is duplicating programs that already exist, it could have eased some of the inflationary burden that is eating away at people's ability to pay their rent and provide care for their children every month?

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, when one is in a relationship and must live together, one will obviously find all kinds of ways to maintain that relationship.

I sincerely believe that the wording of this bill is all for show. That is why we are talking about dental care and the details on how this measure will be funded.

As my colleague pointed out, this is ultimately a supplementary benefit. This is not the much-awaited outcome of the NDP-Liberal coalition.

• (1335)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I remember when Stephen Harper went to the World Economic Forum to announce that he was ripping seniors off of their pensions. He did not tell seniors in Canada, but he told the World Economic Forum.

Now the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is pushing a motion to cut off dental care benefits for children under 12. At least we are seeing a consistency with the Conservatives. They are going to kick seniors to the pavement, and they are going after children.

I know the member is normally pretty lame in what he brings forward, but I think this really sends a strong message. I want to ask my hon. colleague what she thinks about this Conservative vision, in which not only do they go to the World Economic Forum to go after seniors, but they use their member from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan to try to cut dental benefits for children in need.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to see that my interventions are now a little more polished. After three years I am getting the hang of it.

I want to talk about the benefits. I sincerely believe that my colleague must be very disappointed to have to vote on this bill. Based on what we have been told so far, the dental care is nothing like what was expected. I would tell my colleague that his party needs to keep working because they are not there yet.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I must remind the hon. member, as I mentioned last week, that she cannot use documents that have the party logo on them in the House. Advertising is not allowed.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Richmond Hill.

[English]

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Today, as I rise to speak to Bill C-31, an act respecting cost of living relief measures related to dental care and rental housing, I feel proud. I am delighted. More important, as indicated in the name of the act itself, I feel relief, relief from the fact this legislation lays out the groundwork, complements programs and through its two main elements, serves to address some of the most prominent affordability concerns in Canada, more specifically in my riding of Richmond Hill.

It is a known fact that, following the COVID-19 pandemic and all the global and domestic challenges that have arisen since, Canadians have been deeply impacted by the rising cost of living. Addressing such large-scale issues cannot happen overnight, but rather through a multi-step, gradual process, which is exactly what is offered in Bill C-31.

Allow me to provide a brief overview of the bill by breaking it down into its two main components: dental care and housing. These are two domains that affect not only the financial, but also the physical well-being of each and every Canadian. Our government's focus on enhancing each of them is widely apparent through the bill.

To give a quick summary, Bill C-31 would make life more affordable for families across the country by providing dental care for Canadians in need with a family income of less than \$90,000 annually, starting with children under 12 years old in 2022.

It would also provide immediate relief for individuals and families struggling with housing affordability through a one time \$500 supplement to the Canada housing benefit.

Canadians are entitled to good oral health, regardless of their financial situation. It is estimated that about one-third of Canadians do not have any form of dental coverage and that one in five have avoided dental care because of its overwhelming cost. This is a dark reality for many low-income families. Canadians should not sacrifice their well-being and face long-term health issues because of their inability to afford seeing a dental professional. This is why we continue to work tirelessly across provinces and territories to ensure that accessible dental care is delivered to those who need it the most.

While our government continues to develop a durable and inclusive national dental care program, which will provide \$650 a year

to eligible parents for the next two years, it will also ensure timely dental appointments and checkups for children.

As a member of the health committee, I had the pleasure of hearing remarks from the president of the Canadian Dental Association, Dr. Lynn Tomkins, during my study on the topic of children's health. Dr. Tomkins testified that tooth decay remained one of the most common and preventable childhood chronic diseases in Canada.

Beyond the risk of pain and tooth loss, the effects of the absence of dental care for children can be devastating. Missing school, improper eating and lack of sleep are among the factors that arise from the lack of dental treatment for children. In the words of Dr. Tomkins, "nothing is more heart wrenching than having to treat a young child with severe dental decay." The experience can cause lasting dental anxiety and fear.

This is why the Canadian Dental Association welcomed our government's once-in-a-generation federal investment in dental care.

The Canadian Dental Association expressed its appreciation of the phased approach being taken by government toward this issue. This gradual approach will allow time for consultation and collaboration with all relevant stakeholders on a long-term solution to improving access to dental services.

Bill C-31 also puts another key objective forward, which is ensuring every Canadian has a safe and affordable place to call home. We all know that the affordability crisis is top of mind for Canadians.

As such, during the summer, I had the opportunity to catch up with many community members and leaders through events such as our community council breakfast meeting where my constituents shared their concerns about their daily struggle to make ends meet.

● (1340)

For many renters, the high cost of living has resulted in an increasing challenge to find housing they can afford, which is why this legislation has arrived at the perfect time.

When passed, this will put hundreds of dollars back into the pockets of millions struggling with increased rent costs through a one-time \$500-top-up to the Canada housing benefit. This top-up would be in addition to the Canada housing benefit, which already provides an average of \$2,500 to thousands of working individuals and families from coast to coast to coast. I want to emphasize that this payment is part of a larger comprehensive plan to assist Canadian families nationwide.

Our housing strategies and programs have been successful in many ways. As a singular example, the launch of the affordable housing initiative back in 2016 aspired to create 4,000 units of housing. Instead, it has yielded 19,000. Following the legacy of this initiative, our plan will put Canada on the path to double housing construction over the next decade.

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These are only two highlights of the consistent initiatives our government has taken to achieve affordable and sustainable housing for more Canadians. At this time, we are on the right track to accomplishing just that, through the passing of C-31.

Allow me to demonstrate just how important this legislation is to the people of my riding and, most important, to the key community leaders and service providers that strive to provide life-saving support for people experiencing homelessness year after year in Richmond Hill and across York Region.

Blue Door, as the largest emergency housing operator in York Region, strives to provide emergency housing support services to children, youth, men, women and families at risk of homelessness. Blue Door's housing emergency program has lifted over 500 individuals out of poverty by helping them navigate through COVID-19; provided over 19,000 nights of safety for homeless individuals; and served over 64,000 meals for the vulnerable population across York Region.

I continue to hear about the tremendously positive impact Blue Door makes in Richmond Hill through programs such as the mosaic interfaith out of the cold program.

Every year, from November to June, homeless adults and youth in Richmond Hill are provided with essential support at the Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church, which is one of Blue Door's emergency housing sites.

Speaking of community leaders and heroes, the 360° Kids organization in Richmond Hill is yet another key community service provider, which provides kids in crisis with care. Day in, day out, Clovis Grant and his dedicated team at 360° Kids help youth make positive changes in their lives by overcoming barriers and moving from crisis to a place of safety and security.

I can confidently affirm that passing this important legislation will have a direct and positive impact on the lives of people, as the 360° Kids and Blue Door service users.

I urge members to support community leaders across all ridings like Michael Braithwaite, Clovis Grant and their dedicated teams from Richmond Hill, who provide housing services to our most vulnerable, by passing the legislation so we can provide a safety net for those who need it the most.

• (1345)

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Madam Speaker, with regard to my colleague's comments on direct and positive impact, you mentioned, and I can question you on this, dental care programs—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member may want to use the word “he” instead of “you”.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Madam Speaker, dental care programs for low-income children exist in almost all provinces and territories, and almost 70% of Canadians have dental coverage. Therefore, I question your statements that conject against that. Further, I acknowledge my error.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is not clear whether she is speaking directly to you or young

sheep. It is fair, for the record, to have it clear she is speaking through the Chair to the member.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member just corrected herself, so I will let the hon. member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington finish her question.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Madam Speaker, I will finish by saying that the Prime Minister has announced more inflationary spending that does nothing to help seniors and families struggling to put gas in their tanks and food on their tables.

Could the hon. member comment on the fact-checking in his remarks today?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, I had the pleasure of working with my colleague at the health committee for a short period of time. During that time, we heard from a number of witnesses, who stated that Canada, for the funds it transfers to provinces, places second in OECD countries. However, for health care delivery, we are 27th. For funds being transferred from the federal government to the provinces, we rank number two; for delivery services, we rank number 27. There is a gap.

As we can see, it is also evident in the fact that on service delivery as it relates to oral health, especially for children under age 12, this gap remains. Our government, through this progressive program being introduced in this progressive bill, is trying to address that gap.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, to begin, I would like to acknowledge the presence of the member for Richmond—Arthabaska, who reminds us that bullying has no place in politics.

With respect to Bill C-31, I would like to know whether my colleague from Richmond Hill is comfortable with the fact that the poorest parents are the ones who will suffer the most from this bill. In order to receive the increased Canada child benefit, they will have to deal with the Canada Revenue Agency's administrative hassle, not once but twice: first to qualify, and then to provide justification after the fact.

I would like to know whether my colleague is comfortable with these regressive conditions in Bill C-31.

[English]

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that I also have the pleasure of working with the member at the health committee.

As we said, this is progressive legislation and we look forward to it going to committee and studying it, ensuring that all the areas are addressed.

As it relates to the provinces, the provinces are doing their job of providing service delivery, especially in health care, to a lot of their constituents. It is great to see that Quebec is leading that. This is why we need to ensure that we take our time, work with all the provinces and ensure there are no unintended consequences. The details of how people qualify, how the money gets transferred and all of those things are yet to be determined. However, there was a need to ensure that we addressed the shortfall for children 12 and under, and we are taking concrete action on that today.

I hope my colleague and his party support the bill.

• (1350)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to quote Bea Bruske, president of the Canadian Labour Congress, who said, “Moving forward on rental and dental relief is essential and will help to ease the affordability crisis being faced by families today. The rising cost of housing and out-of-pocket dental care has put many families under water.”

Although the Liberals voted against the NDP's 2021 motion to give Canadians access to dental care, I am happy they have finally agreed to follow suit.

Does the member agree that this much-overdue dental care is necessary for all Canadians and would benefit us all?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, naturally we do. That is why we have introduced the bill and have taken leadership on ensuring that the areas where gaps exist in our health care delivery are addressed.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today in this House and speak to Bill C-31, a piece of legislation that comes at a very critical time for a lot of Canadians. Many of my colleagues here in this place speak with people in our home communities and across our ridings about the challenges they face. When I speak to folks these days, so many of them tell me about the rising cost of living and the challenge it is placing on their family budgets.

Many of these people talk to me about it and express how it feels that this is happening to them, and they have very little agency. They did not cause the war in Ukraine. They did not break the international supply chains. They did not force huge corporations to act in a time of crisis to jack up their profits on the backs of ordinary Canadians. People are working hard and are falling further behind.

This crisis of inflation affects everybody, but it affects some more than others. It especially affects those on fixed and low incomes. Some folks have the ability to shift their spending, but when they are living on a limited income and when their paycheque is a fixed amount and the cost of everything is going up, they have very few options. Everyone in this place would agree that it is there that we should focus our policy attention as legislators. Those are the folks who need help the most right now.

Part of this bill is a very simple component. The top-up of the Canada housing benefit would get a one-time \$500 payment to Canadians who qualify for that benefit. Specifically, they are families who earn a net income of less than \$35,000 a year. That would help 1.8 million Canadians with the cost of living, and it would

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make a real difference. It is something that the government should have brought in months and months ago, but the time to act is now. We need to ensure that this legislation gets through so that people can benefit from this payment.

The second part of this legislation is also related to the cost of living. It would help Canadians with their costs, but it is different. The other part of this legislation, the Canada dental benefit, is a down payment on something that is going to have a profound and long-lasting benefit for millions of Canadians. It is going to be transformational and to make a difference for generations to come.

Many would agree that universal health care is our country's crowning achievement. This is possibly our greatest policy achievement. It is something that is based on a simple but profound premise, which is that in a world in which so many of the aspects of quality of life correlate with one's financial status, health should be different. Everyone, no matter their income, should have access and the dignity of access to basic health care, yet, ever since the Canada Health Act was first passed into law in the 1960s, it has been a project incomplete. It has been a vision unfulfilled, because we all know that there are aspects of our health that were not included in the legislation that created universal health care. As New Democrats we have always held as part of the vision, right back to the days of Tommy Douglas, that things like our eyes, mental health and dental care are integral to our concept of health and to our health outcomes, and that they must be included in our vision of universal health care for all.

Nobody here in this place can argue that dental care is not a part of health care. We all know people who suffer from extreme health issues as a result of dental pain and dental issues that go untreated. Dental care is expensive; everyone knows this as well. Thirty-five per cent of Canadians lack proper dental insurance, and that number jumps to 50% when we are talking about low-income Canadians. Seven million Canadians avoid going to the dentist because of the cost. It is shameful. It is something that has to change, and the bill in front of us is the first step in heading down that road. Canada's most vulnerable face the highest rates of dental decay and disease and the worst access to dental care. This is something we have to change. We are going to change that. This bill is the start.

• (1355)

The legislation in front of us begins with the children of low- and modest-income families, and that is no mistake. We all know that if we can catch these dental care issues at a young age, we can prevent much more serious issues down the road. This is about prevention, and it is about helping young children address serious health issues before they become even more serious.

Statements by Members

In 1964, the Royal Commission on Health Services recommended precisely this. It stated that the government should, as quickly as possible, implement a dental program for children, yet here we are over half a century later, finally tackling this critical aspect of health care.

Shamefully, tooth decay remains the most common, yet preventable, chronic childhood illness in Canada. The most common reason for kids undergoing day surgery and missing school is dental decay. The most common surgery performed at most pediatric hospitals across Canada is related to dental issues. Left unchecked, these issues affect people's health in profound ways, as I mentioned, but they are preventable and we are finally on the path to making things better.

We are not going to stop at dental care for kids. I sent a mail-out to my constituents asking for their feedback on this proposed dental care program. The vast majority of the responses I received were from seniors. It is absolutely heartbreaking to hear some of the messages they sent me.

One woman wrote in and said, "My husband is working at 67 years old to keep his coverage going. It would be great to have support so he could retire." Someone else said, "We skip dental care because we can't afford it, and dread the day we might need serious attention." Another senior wrote me and said, "Last year, one tooth cost me \$5,000. That is 10 months of my CPP."

This is something we can address. What we have in front of us with the Canada dental benefit is indeed a down payment on a permanent national dental care plan. It is not only going to help kids under 12. It is going to help seniors. It is going to help youth under 18. It is going to help people with disabilities. It is going to help millions of Canadians who are struggling with dental health issues.

New Democrats have pushed hard for dental care for a long time. Of course, it was always a part of our vision for universal health care. Just a year ago, our brilliant colleague, Jack Harris, stood in this House and put forward a motion urging the government to implement a national dental care plan. It was a sad thing that both Conservatives and Liberals voted down that motion, yet here we are a year later, taking the first steps toward a national dental care plan that is going to help millions of people. We got there for one reason: We did not give up, because we hold on to that vision of universal health care.

It is no coincidence that the last time we achieved a transformational public health policy for Canadians with the Canada Health Act, it was New Democrats coming off the experience in Saskatchewan with universal health care under the leadership of Tommy Douglas, who pushed a Liberal government in a minority Parliament to do the right thing and create a change that has benefited so many people over the years. Here we find ourselves again in a position where this idea of making lives better for people by providing this care that so many people need is at a point at which we can finally move forward, and we are not going to stop until it becomes a reality. Creating a national dental care plan is about dignity, it is about health care and it is about bloody time.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Madam Speaker, I want to take a moment to thank the thousands of people in the riding of Richmond—Arthabaska, those across Quebec and Canada, as well as my colleagues from all parties, who have supported me over the past two weeks following my decision to act in line with my values and convictions and, accordingly, to sit as an independent member of Parliament from now on.

We are fortunate to live in Canada, in a democracy that is the envy of the world. I call on the leaders of the various political parties to show respect, to set an example for their members, supporters and staff, and to denounce bullying in all its forms.

A bullying campaign like the one I was subjected to 10 days ago by my former political party is unacceptable. Canadians do not want to see that kind of behaviour, and every member in the House has a duty to debate passionately but respectfully and to condemn aggressive, hateful or threatening speech. Our constituents expect nothing less from us.

For the sake of our democracy, and to combat the current cynicism, let us all raise the level of debate.

* * *

[English]

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I offer my sincere condolences to the family of Mahsa Amini, who died in the custody of Iran's odious morality police and was allegedly arrested for refusing to wear a hijab.

No government should have any say in what a woman chooses to wear or chooses not to wear. I strongly condemn the actions of the Iranian regime. Canada must demand justice, and this morality police must be disbanded.

As members can see, I wear a hijab. This is my choice and mine alone. I will always stand for choice. No one should pressure a woman, whatever her choices.

Wherever we call home, women are entitled to their autonomy. Governments should stop trying to police what we wear and do not wear. I stand in solidarity with those who protest and fight for these rights in Iran and around the world.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, our new Conservative leader will put people first: their retirement, their paycheques, their homes and their country. That is why, this past June, I introduced my first private member's bill, Bill C-286, the recognition of foreign credentials act. This legislation will streamline the process of connecting skilled immigrants with jobs that our economy desperately needs. This is a vital step in making life more affordable for Canadians.

I spent the summer consulting with stakeholders and constituents to discuss this legislation. The feedback is overwhelming. Canada's foreign credentials system is broken. It is a 19th-century system governing a 21st-century labour market.

Having doctors drive taxis is unacceptable. The NDP-Liberal coalition is too busy fuelling the inflation fire and has not done anything to help newcomers work in their fields. Conservatives, under our new leader, are committed to helping newcomers get the jobs they were trained for.

I urge every single MP to lay down their instruments, get to work and pass this important legislation for our country.

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HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, watching the growing protests in my home country in demand of justice for 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, I ask myself how I would have coped if this tragedy and murder had occurred to my own daughter.

The heart-wrenching murder of this young woman at the hands of Iran's morality police is yet another demonstration of the unconscionable atrocities and continued violence inflicted by Iran's oppressive regime. The demands of the Iranian people and those of us living in the diaspora are simple. We demand justice, accountability and an end to the cruelty of the Iranian regime.

In bold acts of defiance and at the risk of losing their lives, the brave people of Iran, led by women at the forefront, are rushing to the streets in protest, but their voices are silenced through Internet shutdowns and the killing of protesters.

When you see the news, ask yourself: What would you do if it were your mother, sister, wife or daughter in the headlines?

In solidarity with the women and people of Iran, join me in the chant that has swept the nation: "Woman, life, freedom."

Zan, Zendegi, Azadi.

* * *

● (1405)

[Translation]

HURRICANE FIONA

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Gaspé Peninsula, the Magdalen Islands, the Lower North Shore and the Maritimes are assessing the damage. Hurricane Fiona left devastation in its wake.

Statements by Members

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I want to offer my condolences to the loved ones of the two victims and express my support for all the people who suffered losses. I also want to thank all the people who are working to clean up the damage, restore power and help the victims. I want to acknowledge my stepfather, Mario, and all the Hydro-Québec teams that have been deployed to Nova Scotia.

I want to acknowledge that the federal government was active and collaborative this weekend. I appreciate that. However, the government also needs to realize that it is not normal to have a tropical storm here. Our regions are already experiencing the effects of climate change.

Ottawa should go and ask the people whose homes were swallowed up by the sea whether it is a good idea to keep approving oil and gas projects. It should explain to the people who lost their car, boat or practically all their belongings why it is taking their taxes and using them to subsidize the oil companies.

A tropical storm in eastern Quebec is not a normal occurrence, and it is up to the government to ensure that it stays that way.

* * *

FESTIVAL OF COLOURS IN RIGAUD

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 24th time Rigaud celebrates the beauty of fall. For the seventh time in the House, I would like to take this opportunity to invite everyone in Vaudreuil—Soulanges to take part in the Rigaud festival of colours, which this year will be held from October 8 to 10.

Thanks once again to the great job done by Christiane Lévesque and her team of dedicated volunteers, with the generous support of Canadian Heritage, Mayor Marie-Claude Frigault and the mayor's City of Rigaud team, everyone, young and old, can participate in the many activities and take the time to admire the magic of the fall colours on display.

The natural beauty of our region and the richness of its artisans will be showcased together this year at Mount Rigaud, and I invite all the members of our Vaudreuil—Soulanges community to come discover them at the 24th festival of colours in Rigaud.

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[English]

AUTOMATIC EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATORS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, equipping each RCMP vehicle a decade ago with an automatic external defibrillator, or AED, would have cost under \$10 million and would have saved roughly 3,000 lives over the 10-year life of the AED units, at a cost of \$3,000 per life saved. However, this Liberal government has done nothing and those lives are gone forever.

Statements by Members

I first raised this issue in the House in 2015 and again in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2020. Just before the pandemic, I met with the previous minister, and he agreed with me that AEDs should be a priority. In June of this year, I questioned the current minister, and he boasted to the House that he was spending hundreds of millions of dollars on what he called life-saving equipment for the RCMP, but in both cases there was no action.

Records confirm that the last time a minister even requested information from the RCMP or the department regarding AEDs for RCMP cruisers was in November 2014. Surely the time has come for less wheel spinning and more action.

* * *

RUN FOR VAUGHAN

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, great communities do not just happen. They are built on the values of partnership, teamwork and community spirit. Yesterday, all of these values were on display as hundreds of residents from the city of Vaughan came together for the annual Run for Vaughan.

Organized by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association, and now in its 19th year, the Run for Vaughan supports excellence in health care in our city. Since 2003, the annual event has raised over \$1.2 million, with this weekend's event adding an additional \$275,000 in support of the Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital. Impressively, this is a youth-led initiative by my dear friend Zohaib Malhi, with the run expanding this year to over 15 cities across Canada.

The community spirit and generosity of the Ahmadiyya community is something that makes the city of Vaughan a more inclusive community and underpins the phrase that diversity is truly Canada's strength.

As chair of the Ahmadiyya parliamentary association, I wish to thank the entire community.

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• (1410)

SAVANNA PIKUYAK

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour Savanna Pikuyak, a young Inuk woman who was murdered just weeks after arriving in Ottawa to study nursing at Algonquin College in my riding.

Before coming to Ottawa, Savanna studied pre-health at Nunavut Arctic College and worked at the health centre in her home community in Nunavut. All she wanted was to help people, but on September 11, at 22 years old, Savanna was senselessly murdered in the apartment she was renting.

Too often, young indigenous women come to our city and do not have access to safe housing. Violence against indigenous women is very real and very devastating. Because there was no safe place for Savanna to live, her family and her community are grieving.

I want to express my deepest condolences to Savanna Pikuyak's family and community. We will not forget her.

[Translation]

CONSERVATIVE PARTY PRIORITIES

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the House of Commons has resumed parliamentary business, and the Conservatives are back with a new leader.

In the coming months, this leader will put people, their pensions, their paycheques, their homes and their country first. For this reason, he has entrusted me with the role of political lieutenant for Quebec to ensure that our vision for Canada includes the priorities of Quebec society.

I accept this role with humility, but also with the certainty that we will rally Conservatives across Quebec and offer political orphans a new vision of a government that is proactive, unlike the one that has governed us so poorly over the past seven years.

Over the next few months and starting this week, I will be meeting with the business community, ethnic communities and various stakeholders to learn more about their vision, their challenges and especially the solutions they are proposing to improve government services. Many issues need to be addressed and that is what I will be doing in collaboration with my colleagues.

Considering the ups and downs we have been experiencing as of late, changes need to be made. If anyone can bring hope to all Canadians and rally a majority of Quebecers, it is the new Conservative leader.

* * *

[English]

SHOOTINGS IN MILTON

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on September 12, a tragic and terrifying series of gun attacks left our community shocked, scared and in mourning. A Toronto police officer, Constable Andrew Hong, and Shakeel Ashraf, a small business owner from our community in Milton, as well as his colleague, Satwinder Singh, an exchange student, were brutally murdered when a gunman terrorized our communities and the residents of Mississauga and Milton.

My sincere condolences go to the families and the loved ones of the deceased.

I would like to extend gratitude to all of the first responders and police services of Halton, Hamilton and Peel, as well as the OPP, who worked together to bring an end to the attacks. I offer my thanks for their brave and dedicated service.

Canadians deserve to feel safe in their homes and in their communities, and nobody should live in fear of gun violence. This government has done more than any in a generation to keep Canadians safe from guns and crime, but there is much more work to be done.

Milton is a strong, compassionate and resilient community. We will continue to support each other as we grieve and work through this tragedy. We will remember Andrew, Shakeel and Satwinder as community leaders, friends and neighbours. My thoughts remain with their families, their friends and their colleagues. May they rest in peace.

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HURRICANE FIONA

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, hurricane Fiona has been devastating. First and foremost, I must send condolences on behalf of this House to the family of the 73-year-old lady who died in Port aux Basques.

Further, I want to praise the resilience and comradery of the residents of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, P.E.I. and Newfoundland. To see neighbour helping neighbour without pretense or expectation warms my heart as a Canadian.

Some have lost their homes and their businesses. Power remains yet to be restored to almost 40% of Nova Scotia Power's customers. This morning I left my family at home without electricity. On a positive note, it is important to remember the Jacob Currys of the world who are fearless, giving of themselves and a whiz with a chainsaw. How does one get a 60-foot tree off a car without causing further damage? It is done with a three and a half tonne jack, a six-by-six, a couple of two-by-sixes and great help, of course.

We must remember that coming together in times of great need is what helped build this nation. When given a chance and hope, Canadians will rise to a challenge and give their absolute best. Let us continue to keep Atlantic Canada in our thoughts and in our prayers in this most difficult time.

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● (1415)

HURRICANE FIONA

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week has been quite an ordeal for Atlantic Canadians. Hurricane Fiona left desperation and destruction in her path throughout Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island, Îles de la Madeleine, and Newfoundland and Labrador. I stand with this House in mourning the loss of life, as all Canadians do.

It will take days, if not weeks, to restore many communities' power. It will take months, if not years, to pick up the pieces of our communities. It is at these times that we are proud to be Canadians. We know that through despair and destruction we will find hope and love, helping one another to rebuild and to take care of one another. In the depths of the darkness of the wind and rain, there were many points of light trying to ensure the safety of our loved ones.

I want to thank emergency measures organizations, first responders, police, fire and paramedics who were there through the hurricane to save lives and help others.

I want to thank power crews and the public works department for starting the daunting task of cleaning up.

Statements by Members

Fiona may have knocked us down, but we are Atlantic Canadians. We are already back up.

* * *

[Translation]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to sound the alarm on the critical situation of the Uighurs and other Turkic peoples in Xinjiang, China.

[English]

Today, the National Council of Canadian Muslims and the Canadian Uighur community have organized a Uighur advocacy day on the Hill.

In February 2021, this House recognized the Uighur genocide. Currently, over one million are living this nightmare. Recently, in August, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights released a groundbreaking report contributing to the mounting evidence of serious and systemic rights abuses against the Uighur people. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights further said that these may rise to crimes against humanity.

Following the UN report, our foreign affairs minister said two things: that Canada will work with the international community to hold China to account; and that forced labour in supply chains will be addressed.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with the economy on the brink of a recession and the Bank of Canada calling for the suppression of workers' wages, we already know who is paying the true cost of inflation. Central bankers and economists have always known that higher interest rates will directly result in higher unemployment and cause deeper economic suffering and further exploitation of the working class.

Just last week, the Liberal government callously allowed the extended EI supports to expire, further punishing workers by making it harder for them to access the benefits they paid into, and the leader of the official opposition has shown Canadians his real priorities, attacking the pensions of vulnerable seniors who need it most and calling for a freeze on employment insurance contributions.

In the face of even tougher economic times ahead, only New Democrats are fighting for stronger social safety nets and a co-operative economy that places everyday Canadians, and not corporate profits, at the heart of economic decision-making.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***TROIS-RIVIÈRES RACETRACK**

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Hippodrome Trois-Rivières has been holding horse races since 1830, which makes it the oldest racetrack in Quebec. After the racetrack owner went bankrupt, the track was purchased in 2012 by the Quebec Jockey Club, which got to work revitalizing horse racing and making this track the only active professional racetrack in Quebec.

Twice a week from May to November, the races are brilliantly called in French by Guy Lafontaine and presented by satellite across North America. More than 100,000 people go to Trois-Rivières every year to watch the races and admire these magnificent animals at work. I hope to be able to admire the unforgettable Kingston Panic, Apocalypse Alpha, Miss Peggy Sue and Poisson d'avril for a long time.

I congratulate the president of the Quebec Jockey Club, Claude Lévesque, for his excellent work, and I invite all horse race lovers to spend a day at the Trois-Rivières racetrack.

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*[English]***HURRICANE FIONA**

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, hurricane Fiona was not our first hurricane in Atlantic Canada. Since 1951 we have been hit by 37 hurricanes, 79 tropical storms and 140 extra-tropical storms. We know how to prepare for these. Fiona was different. It was huge, recording some of the strongest winds ever. Many in Nova Scotia are still without power. Northern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton were hit hard, so too P.E.I. and Newfoundland. Homes and businesses have been lost, critical coastal infrastructure destroyed and farms devastated. Fishing communities have lost their boats, gear and wharves.

Nova Scotians are tough, and we will come together to support each other. I would like to thank the power workers putting in long days to restore power and those who are supporting their fellow community members at emergency shelters and warming centres.

The character of our communities is most present at times of tragedy. As we start to rebuild, Atlantic Canadians know that the strongest storms bring out the best of us.

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● (1420)

HURRICANE FIONA

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, people across Atlantic Canada and into eastern Quebec have just experienced what is likely the worst system to have ever hit our shores. The images are burned into our memories forever: homes and loved ones swept into the sea; communities physically torn apart. Lives have been lost, but through this darkness stories continue to emerge of neighbours helping neighbours and incredible acts of kindness showcasing our region's resilient spirit.

Canadian Armed Forces are on the ground in Nova Scotia, in Newfoundland and Labrador and in P.E.I., helping where they are

needed the most. The government remains in constant communication with all affected provinces so that we can provide support as needed.

We are looking at a very long road to recovery ahead of us. My message to everyone affected by this is that they are not alone. The government will be there as a strong federal partner every step of the way.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[Translation]***DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to express the official opposition's total solidarity with all the families in Atlantic Canada and eastern Quebec whose lives have been disrupted by hurricane Fiona.

[English]

We offer our condolences to anyone who has lost a loved one and our support to anyone who has lost a home or a business. Would the government please tell us its action plan to help, and how members of this side of the House could join in solidarity with the government to make that help a success for our fellow Canadians in the east?

[Translation]

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader of the official opposition for his words, as well as all members who have expressed their solidarity with our friends in Atlantic Canada. Our thoughts are with everyone who is hurting as a result of this storm. Our thoughts are especially with the families who have lost loved ones.

The Canadian Armed Forces have been deployed to Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador. The government has also set up a matching fund to double donations to the Red Cross over the next 30 days. I encourage all Canadians to be generous.

Canadians are there for each other, and this time is no different.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, P.E.I. potato farmers were already suffering because of the self-imposed export ban. Now they may have lost another year's crop. Dairy farmers out east are without electricity, meaning they might lose livestock. Fishers are losing boats, wharves and other critical infrastructure.

Traditional bureaucratic government programs are very slow to respond. What will the government do to speed up a response to help those who feed all of us get back on their feet?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as early as last Tuesday, we started working with local communities on the ground and provincial leadership to prepare for what we knew would be a big storm coming. Indeed, when the storm hit, we were connecting immediately with premiers, municipalities and indigenous leaders to make sure they were getting all the support they have and need.

We will continue to be there as a federal government with immediate supports, with the military where it is needed, with investments in the short term, but we will also be there over the medium and indeed long term as people rebuild, and as we support the people who work so hard to keep us fed and supported.

• (1425)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia Power reported that the ArriveCAN app blocked American crews that were trying to rush into the province to help with the recovery response and wasted valuable time. Originally, the public safety minister denied that had happened, only to be contradicted by the emergency preparedness minister who said that, in fact, there had been an issue at the border.

Will the Prime Minister suspend the ArriveCAN app today, not Saturday, so no more holdups happen at the border for those who are trying to help those in desperate need?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously everyone's focus was on getting support to affected areas as quickly as possible. I, myself, saw off an Ottawa Hydro crew heading out to Nova Scotia to help out.

We know how important it is that people get across the border quickly. I can confirm that there were no delays at any border because of ArriveCAN or otherwise.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, hundreds of thousands of people in Atlantic Canada are still without power. Roads through these regions remain blocked, and several areas are unreachable. As we know, the Prime Minister has deployed some military personnel to help these communities, but I would remind the House that, in Quebec, in 1998, thousands of soldiers were deployed to help Hydro-Québec and to support emergency shelters.

Can the Prime Minister confirm whether 5 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group is ready to be deployed immediately?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working with our provincial counterparts since before the storm even hit to ensure that whatever supports they might need are ready, including military assistance.

We responded immediately by sending the necessary military personnel that was requested, and we are prepared to send more, if needed. The federal government will continue to be there for the people of Atlantic Canada and eastern Quebec.

Oral Questions

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as everyone knows, as of yesterday, there were 340,000 homes without power in Atlantic Canada. To make matters worse, teams coming from the United States were held up at the border because of the ArriveCAN app.

We know that the Prime Minister has asked that the ArriveCAN app be suspended for these teams, but can he confirm that it will be suspended immediately for everyone?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand how important it is for people to be able to get here and provide assistance. I saw a team from Ottawa going to Nova Scotia tonight. We have also seen teams from the United States coming to Canada to help those affected. We thank them all.

The reality is that there have been no delays at the borders because of ArriveCAN or for any other reason. There have been no delays. We are working to ensure that all necessary assistance arrives quickly.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Ottawa is ending health measures at the border. No more tests, no more masks, no more quarantine. It is over.

That brings me to the issue of health transfers. In 2021, the Prime Minister said that he was considering increasing them, but only after the crisis. He said, "We will sit down and talk with the provinces and territories about how to increase health transfers.... But those conversations need to take place after we have weathered this current crisis."

If the Prime Minister believes the crisis is far enough behind us to suspend health measures, when will he call a summit on health transfers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Canadians know, the federal government was there with record investments to respond to the health crisis that we went through over the past two years. We are talking about an additional \$72 billion that the federal government invested in health care.

For several months, our Minister of Health, other ministers and I have been in conversation with our provincial partners to determine how we can make investments to help our health care system get back on track and be prepared to meet future challenges. We are going to work together on this.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I cannot make these things up: There is one place in Quebec where the pandemic is still raging, and it is the only place where the federal government still refuses to invest money. I am talking about our health care centres.

Oral Questions

This morning, I was listening to the Minister of Health talk about exhausted health care professionals. He said we need to take care of our health care workers if we want them to take care of us. Those are fine words. That is exactly what Quebec and the provinces are asking for, and it is exactly what the federal government still refuses to do.

If the Prime Minister wants to take care of health care workers, then there needs to be a summit on health transfers as soon as possible. There is no time to wait and no more excuses. He has to keep his word.

When will he organize the summit?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our health workers and our seniors need real help, measures that will be implemented and services. That is why we have been working with our provincial partners for quite some time and, yes, we are committed to making more investments in health care.

I know that Quebecers and all Canadians expect to see results. That does not take just money, there have to be results. That is why we are having discussions with the provinces to ensure that these new investments make it into the right hands and really help people.

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TAXATION

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the price of groceries is skyrocketing. The price of bread is up 15%, fruit is up 13% and pasta is up 32%. Even a bag of potatoes costs \$8.

Families have to tighten their belts. In the meantime, the three major grocery chains are making \$3.5 billion. That is \$3,500 million. There is no question that grocery prices are increasing because CEOs want to make more profit.

What is the government doing? Nothing. What are the Conservatives calling for? That the government not interfere. Why are the Liberals protecting CEOs' pockets instead of families' pockets?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, members on this side of the House are very concerned about the rising cost of living confronting all Canadians. That is why we put forward a plan to double the GST credit, to help low-income families provide dental care for their children and to invest in helping low-income renters get through this crisis.

We are here to help people. Plus, as we announced in the last election campaign, we are asking big financial institutions to contribute more because we need to make sure that everyone pays their fair share and that we help those who need it most.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, those are all programs that the NDP forced the Prime Minister to do.

The reality is there has been no crackdown on profiteering and no attempt to make the ultrarich pay their fair share. Grocery chain

profits have hit \$3.5 billion while a quarter of Canadians are going hungry. Corporate greed is making inflation worse and hurting Canadian families. While people struggle to pay for their groceries, the Prime Minister is letting corporate greed go unchecked.

Will the Liberals put into place a windfall tax to force wealthy CEOs to pay their fair share now?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our focus on this side of the House is delivering real solutions for Canadians, which is why we are moving forward with a plan to double the GST credit for families that need it, moving forward on dental supports for low-income families that want dental care for their kids and moving forward with supports for low-income renters as well. These are things that we know will make a real difference in the lives of Canadians who are hurting. At the same time, budget 2022 included a temporary Canada recovery dividend and increased the corporate income tax on large financial institutions permanently. We will continue to stick up for all Canadians.

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will choose to believe the Premier of Nova Scotia over the Liberal Prime Minister with respect to ArriveCAN.

Sadly, there are other things to highlight. Inaction by the Liberal government has left rural and remote Canadians at a serious disadvantage. In the last several days, while cleaning up, we have seen Atlantic Canadians with very poor cellphone service. The government's promise to improve connectivity for rural and remote Canada has not materialized.

For the safety of Canadians, when will the government make connectivity a priority?

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that mobile connectivity is very important to keeping rural and remote communities safe.

For our country to be proud of its connectivity, we have to ensure access to high-speed broadband mobile services. That is why a dedicated funding envelope in the universal broadband fund for mobile connectivity in communities, including indigenous communities, is essential.

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is that kind of priority that makes us really question how soon help will get to Atlantic Canada.

We are still cutting down trees to free trapped vehicles and damaged buildings, and the people in Cumberland—Colchester sadly come up to me to say they are very concerned about the economy and the cost of living. They want the Liberal government to know that times are tough, that they are finding it hard to make ends meet and that hurricane Fiona has made things even worse. They want to know when the Prime Minister will cancel the planned tax hikes on paycheques, gas, groceries and home heating.

• (1435)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as it is the first time I rise in the House today, let me start with a message addressed directly to the people of Atlantic Canada and the people of Quebec, who have been so hard hit by Fiona. Speaking as a member of this government, as Finance Minister and as Deputy Prime Minister, I want to assure them that they will have our government's full support, and I hope this House's full support, in the rebuilding of their homes and their communities.

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DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, Atlantic Canadians were hit very hard by hurricane Fiona. Canadians across the country were shocked and saddened by the images they saw of destruction left behind in its wake. I know that those affected by this tragedy are in the thoughts and prayers of all Canadians.

In a crisis, collaboration, coordination and rapidity of response are critical. Can the Prime Minister tell this House how the government is collaborating with the Atlantic provinces and premiers in their recovery efforts? Why has the government not authorized the deployment of more troops for the removal of downed trees, in conjunction with the provinces? The Atlantic provinces need help now.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we agree with our hon. colleague that the Atlantic provinces and eastern Quebec need help now, and that is exactly what we are delivering to the communities and people affected.

I can tell my hon. friend that I spoke with the four Atlantic premiers again this morning. We have an ongoing and active conversation, as do all of my colleagues. Every request that they make of our government will be acted upon quickly. They know that. We acted before the storm hit so we would be prepared to respond in exactly the way my hon. friend wanted.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for months, the Conservatives have been calling on the government to scrap the failed ArriveCAN app, but rather than admit it was the right thing to do, the Prime Minister refused to budge on a border policy that was already plagued with issues. Incredibly, this week-

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end, that came at the cost of emergency crews from the U.S. being stuck at the border when Atlantic Canadians needed their help.

Will the government ensure now that useless red tape is eliminated so that Atlantic Canadians can get the support they need?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by attributing myself to the comment previously made by all hon. members, which is that we stand with all impacted Canadians in the wake of hurricane Fiona.

As this House has heard, the government is deploying the Canadian Armed Forces. We are matching contributions to the Red Cross, and we are also dispatching federal funds to do whatever we can to support impacted Canadians.

When it comes to ArriveCAN, I want to inform my hon. colleague that I reached out to Premier Houston, as did my colleague, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. We assured him and the members of his government that we will do whatever we can to facilitate the travel of first responders to help Nova Scotians and we will do whatever it takes to support Canadians at this time.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not the first time.

[Translation]

Nova Scotia Power and Premier Tim Houston have said that ArriveCAN created issues for American teams coming to help restore power.

The victims of hurricane Fiona need to know that their government is there for them. Sadly, the Liberal government is flying by the seat of its pants once again when it should be taking action. Unbelievably, Fisheries and Oceans Canada told people not to harvest any lobsters washed up on the shore instead of worrying about those whose houses were swept away into the ocean. That happened, and it is unacceptable.

Will the Prime Minister get his people in line and help those who have problems, who are facing challenges and just had a terrible weekend?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during times of stress and hardship it is very important to stick to the facts. That is why I am happy to confirm that, contrary to any rumours or claims we have heard, there were no delays at the border because of ArriveCAN.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is what Nova Scotia Power and Premier Tim Houston said.

The Magdalen Islands, the Gaspé peninsula and all of Atlantic Canada were hit hard by hurricane Fiona at a time when the people of those regions are already grappling with the cost of living crisis.

Oral Questions

We have a question today. Can the government tell us how it plans to minimize the red tape involved in helping people rebuild their homes and revive their businesses so that everyone can get back to normal as soon as possible?

• (1440)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I can assure him that that is exactly the kind of conversation we are already having with the premiers of the Atlantic provinces and the Government of Quebec. We are using a model the Prime Minister introduced with Premier Horgan in British Columbia. The idea is to expedite applications for federal assistance to make sure that reconstruction happens in partnership with the provinces as quickly as possible. I am going to pursue this conversation and work with our Atlantic Canada counterparts to set up a special system.

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CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, thousands of Quebecers marched last Friday to demand that governments take bolder action in the fight against climate change. The fact remains that if there is one government that is not doing enough, it is this federal government. Oil production continues to rise, and oil subsidies remain in place. Canada is still part of the problem, despite the rhetoric.

When will the minister start acting like we are in a climate emergency? When will he begin to take bold, concrete action to fight global warming?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I would also like to add my voice to those of other members who are thinking of the people and families who lost loved ones in hurricane Fiona, one of the worst storms to ever hit eastern Canada.

The barometric pressure was the lowest ever recorded on the east coast of the country. I would like to take a moment to commend the work of the Meteorological Service of Canada in helping emergency services, local populations, and local and federal governments prepare for this storm.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about Fiona and the devastation in the Atlantic region. In Quebec, the Magdalen Islands, the Gaspé and the Côte-Nord were also hit hard. This is a direct result of global warming, along with the heat waves, forest fires, flooding and melting permafrost. Things are not going well, and if we do nothing then they will only get worse.

Does the minister recognize that without bold ideas, strong action, and a solid strategy to combat climate change, we are headed for disaster?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I would remind her that we have a plan providing for investments of \$109 billion to combat climate change, which is three times more per capita than the United States is spending.

In addition, we fought for the carbon tax all the way to the Supreme Court. We are implementing programs to help phase out oil-based heating, which is three times more expensive and produces a great deal of pollution. We are working to eliminate cars and the use of internal combustion engines in Canada by 2035, as California and Europe are doing. Our government is one of the most ambitious governments when it comes to climate action.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we want to believe the minister. We want to see the Greenpeace and Equiterre activist, but we no longer recognize him. He is telling us that, yes, it is serious, but he is also giving the green light to Bay du Nord. He talks like a friend of the environment, but acts like a friend of the oil industry. He is saying that he will take action later, but we need action now. Let him tell the people of Atlantic Canada that he has objectives for 2030 and 2050.

Why is he putting off to tomorrow what he must and can do today? Will he immediately get rid of fossil fuel subsidies?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it takes some nerve for my colleague opposite to ask that question, when the leader of her own party approved the Anticosti drilling plan without any environmental assessment. I do not think my hon. colleague is in a position to lecture us.

I remind the member that our climate action plan was still supported by my former colleagues at Greenpeace and Equiterre and by many organizations across the country.

* * *

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a critical part of hurricane Fiona rebuilding is the damage caused to our fishing industry. Wharves are damaged and lost, fishing gear is ruined and vessels are totalled. Without this infrastructure, there is little economic opportunity for our coastal communities. Wharves are our fishing industry's Trans-Canada Highway. The poor DFO maintenance and management, raised in four parliamentary reports, made them vulnerable to destruction.

They are DFO's responsibility. When will the rebuilding of our wharves begin?

• (1445)

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just want to add my voice to those thinking of all of the residents of Atlantic Canada who have been shocked and impacted.

We are assessing the impact on wharves and other infrastructure in the fisheries communities. As the Prime Minister has said, we will be there for people. I can only imagine how difficult this is for Atlantic Canadians right now. We will do everything we can to support them. The Coast Guard and DFO—

The Speaker: The hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, good wishes are not enough. If this happened on the Trans-Canada Highway, reconstruction would be happening now. There are only a few weeks left until winter sets in. We cannot wait weeks for assessments, months for design and permitting, months for tendering and months for construction. DFO needs to use its enormous power now to begin rebuilding now.

When will DFO do its job, support commercial fishermen and get to work?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our officials are doing just that. Our Coast Guard officials are standing ready to help in any way possible. They are helping with cleanup. They are helping with assessing the damage.

We will be there for the residents of Atlantic Canada. We will be there for the fish harvesters and the damage to their interests and equipment.

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, hurricane Fiona has caused devastation in communities across Atlantic Canada. This lobster season has already been a tough one, with bait and fuel prices high and the price of lobster low. Fishermen have lost three days in this short but critical season. The search for gear and the resetting of traps will ruin more than a week. Fishing wharves have been heavily damaged, including Escuminac.

Will the minister show support for our fishermen and extend the lobster season?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very aware of the extensive impact on residents and fish harvesters in Atlantic Canada. We are certainly considering requests to extend seasons as we do the other immediate work to help individuals and communities with the impacts of this incredible disaster.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 23 million Afghans are dealing with drought, food shortages and the breakdown of health services. Canadian humanitarian organizations face criminal prosecution if they even try to help because of the government's restrictive interpretation of the Criminal Code. We have been asking the government to fix this for over a year and the minister has done nothing. This inaction is shocking. Canadians want to help Afghans in need.

Will the government promise to offer a workable solution for Canadian organizations before winter sets in and Afghans begin to starve?

Oral Questions

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of International Development and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada remains deeply concerned about the critical and worsening humanitarian situation that is unfolding in Afghanistan. This is why I announced that Canada is providing an additional \$50 million for a total of \$156 million in 2022 to help support the people of Afghanistan, particularly women and girls. The funding will allow Canada's humanitarian partners to provide life-saving assistance to ensure that humanitarian goods are dispatched and that workers continue to be able to support the Afghan people.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, coastal communities and marine environments depend on vital species like wild salmon. The science is clear that open-net salmon farms pollute marine ecosystems. Despite promising to transition away, the Liberals just approved three fish farm expansions in Clayoquot Sound, B.C.

Will the government get toxic fish farms out of the water for good, while protecting first nations, workers and communities, or not?

• (1450)

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to confirm that we are committed to protecting our iconic wild salmon on the Pacific coast. That is why we are investing so much in the Pacific salmon strategy. I am also deeply engaged in the transition away from open-net pen aquaculture.

I would like to confirm that the member is not correct in saying there has been an increase in the Clayoquot Sound area. It has been a shifting from one area to another, but not an increase.

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our hearts were with Atlantic Canadians this weekend as their region was hit by hurricane Fiona. With hundreds of thousands of people affected, it will take weeks, maybe months, before things can get back to normal for the worst hit communities.

Could the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs tell us how the government is stepping in to help people and businesses recover from this devastating hurricane?

Oral Questions

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as colleagues know, the scale of the storm witnessed in Atlantic Canada this past weekend was unprecedented.

As we have said, our government stands ready to support provinces and all Canadians during this difficult time. My colleagues and I are, of course, working closely with local and provincial governments as well as indigenous governments to respond to the needs of impacted people and their communities very quickly.

We obviously invite all those affected to continue to follow the advice of local authorities, and our government will continue to update Canadians on our efforts.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Atlantic Canadians have been devastated by the effects of hurricane Fiona this past weekend. They were then shocked to learn from Nova Scotia Power and Premier Tim Houston that emergency crews from our American neighbours were unable to cross the border due to the ArriveCAN app.

The Prime Minister stated twice in the House today that no delays happened, but I want to hear it from the public safety minister. Was the Prime Minister correct in saying that no delays happened, yes or no?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure my colleague that the Prime Minister was absolutely correct when he said that there were no delays caused by ArriveCAN. In fact, over the last number of days, we have been reaching out to CBSA and Nova Scotia representatives from the government to ensure that is indeed the case.

Most important, this is a time for all members of the House to be united, as the Leader of the Opposition himself said, the leader of the Conservative Party, so we can work together to do what is necessary on the ground to support everybody who has been impacted.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think you can understand that we would be confused when the Minister of Emergency Preparedness acknowledged there were delays at the border. Now the Prime Minister is saying that there were no delays, and the Minister of Public Safety is backing him up.

We are not sure what the message is coming out of the government, but I think we can all agree that given the government has agreed to scrap the ArriveCAN, that the government will acknowledge it was a failure.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a tremendous tragedy has befallen the people in Atlantic Canada. Today is a time where we stand with all of them. At the beginning of this day, that was the sentiment I heard. We have attempted to answer these questions. We have answered that ArriveCAN was not responsible for any delays.

Right now, we all need to be pulling in the same direction, asking questions about what real solutions we can offer to Atlantic Canadians. I look forward to those questions.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been unprecedented damage, homes destroyed, thousands

are without power and now we are hearing reports about fatalities. We know hurricane Fiona was certainly destructive and deadly.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety are busy denying that he Nova Scotia premier was telling the truth, that the ArriveCAN app delayed the entry of American power line crews to get to those in need in Nova Scotia and the Maritimes.

Is this the priority of the Liberal government, to deny the claims of Premier Houston and Nova Scotia Power? Is this really its priority right now or will it apologize to east coast Canadians?

● (1455)

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working every moment with Premier Houston and with emergency officials. I, again, would repeat, and I am not sure how many times different ministers and the Prime Minister can say it, that there was no delay.

I look forward to questions on how we can positively contribute to helping those in Atlantic Canada.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a way to positively contribute is not to pick a fight with the Premier of Nova Scotia in the middle of a hurricane, defending the ArriveCAN app.

ArriveCAN has disrupted travel, damaged tourism, separated families and caused thousands of Canadians undue hardship for years, but those Liberals refused to act until it was too late.

It took the delay of American power line crews' entry into Canada to get to those in need for Liberals to finally act to end the mandatory use of ArriveCAN. It is a national embarrassment.

Will the Liberals show some humility and apologize?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of collaboration in this moment of emergency, I want to assure my colleague that I reached out to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and I reached out to the Premier of Nova Scotia to be sure that he had all the support that we could provide from the federal government to help Nova Scotians at this difficult time.

That is what we are laser-like focused on: making sure that the Canadian Armed Forces are deployed, that we are matching contributions based on the generosity of Canadians and doing everything possible to help Nova Scotians and all Canadians so they can get over this difficult period, and we will continue to do that.

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[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Roxham Road is all about human smugglers exploiting poor families and ripping them off. Having skirted the issue for years, the Minister of Public Safety finally acknowledged it on Saturday, but when Radio-Canada asked him what he planned to do to shut the racket down, he dodged the question again.

There is a solution: suspend the safe third country agreement. The minister can do that without asking the Americans. It is in the agreement, and he knows it.

Why is he refusing to take action to put an end to human smuggling at Roxham Road?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have an asylum system that protects the rights of refugees and strengthens the integrity of our borders. Under our agreement with the Government of Quebec, we transfer hundreds of millions of dollars to accommodate refugees. That has helped the situation.

We have an agreement with the United States that protects a process and includes consequences if the system is abused. We will continue to invest in making sure the rights of refugees and the integrity of our borders are protected.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, come on, that answer will make the smugglers happy, since their business model is 100% based on the federal government's inaction.

If the minister suspended the safe third country agreement, migrants could cross at any border crossing in Canada to claim refugee status instead of crossing at Roxham Road. With the snap of a finger, the minister could put an end to this racket led by criminals who are exploiting desperate families. He could unilaterally make this change and could do it right now.

I therefore have to ask: How much longer will the federal government put up with this inhumane trafficking at Roxham Road?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a strategy to tackle human trafficking, and this strategy includes investments to help the police better enforce the law. As I have already said, we have an agreement with the United States. We are now modernizing the process to better protect human rights.

We will continue to work together, in close co-operation with the Government of Quebec, because this is important for everyone.

[English]

Oral Questions

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, farmers in Prince Edward Island have been sending me photos of collapsed buildings, livestock without shelter and acres of crops under water.

P.E.I. farmers are still reeling from the Liberals' self-imposed export ban on potatoes from last year and now, with harvest set to begin this week, another potato crop is in jeopardy. Their financial and mental health is deteriorating and many of them have said that if they do not receive support, they are done.

What concrete steps is the agriculture minister taking to help Atlantic Canadian and Quebec farmers who have been impacted by the hurricane?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since it is the first time I am rising in the House, my heart is with all the families and especially farming families. I have had the opportunity to speak with the chair of the Prince Edward Island Potato Board and we know that it is an issue in P.E.I..

We are working with provinces. Officials have been in contact. I have also been in contact with many boards, which are going to be reporting back and assessing the damages.

The federal government will always be there. As it has been there for B.C. farmers, we will be there for Atlantic Canadian farmers.

● (1500)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, conversations are not enough, and they cannot be the fallback position of AgriStability and advance payment programs, because we know that the impact of this hurricane has been profound.

Farmers in Annapolis Valley have significant losses in the apple orchards. They cannot meet the threshold of many of these programs. Even if they did meet the threshold, they do not get payments for months and years down the road, and that is much too late. Farmers in Atlantic Canada and Quebec need support now.

Again, what concrete and specific steps is the agriculture minister taking to ensure that those farm families get their crop off and survive this disaster?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member very well knows that there is the business risk management already in place, and if that does not respond to the needs of the farmers, the AgriRecovery can be triggered.

Oral Questions

We are currently having conversations with provincial officials to assess the damage. I will be meeting with many stakeholders in the Atlantic region, and receiving phone calls later on this week, as they are still receiving the assessment of damages.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when asked, farmers have stated that their number one worry is not the market, it is not the weather, it is not international trade; it is the policies of the federal government.

The delivery of seeds and plants to the farm incurs the carbon tax. The manufacture and delivery of fertilizer incurs the carbon tax. The delivery of farm products to market incurs the carbon tax. The government's plan for the carbon tax is to triple it.

In a time of 10% food inflation, will this government finally give Canadian families a break and cancel this planned tax increase?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it quite difficult to listen to the member opposite speak about this, as many of his members, including the leader of his party, have risen in the House to talk about the impacts of Fiona.

We know that it is linked to climate change, and we know that we have to do more to fight climate change. We know that, because of climate change, there are more hurricanes on our east and west coasts, which are more and more severe. Therefore, I am having a really hard time to find an answer to this question.

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[Translation]

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last weekend, hurricane Fiona hit eastern Canada hard. It also slammed into the Magdalen Islands, causing considerable damage. I happen to know that the Minister of National Revenue is working very hard to ensure that people in the Magdalen Islands receive the help they need.

Can the minister give us an update on the situation in the Magdalen Islands?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Alfred-Pellan for his question and his support.

My colleagues and I are working with our local and provincial partners to meet the needs of the communities and people affected. I am in constant communication with the people in the Magdalen Islands, and the cleanup phase has already begun.

I want to take a moment to thank all the volunteers and first responders who have played a vital role, not only in the Magdalen Islands, but throughout Atlantic Canada.

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[English]

TAXATION

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no one can afford the Liberals' tax-and-spend agenda, but their cost of liv-

ing crisis and tax hikes hurt low and fixed-income Canadians the most.

Pioneer Lodge in Lloydminster has housed low-income seniors since the 1960s, but last year, the Liberal carbon tax added over \$26,000 to its expenses, which is going to quadruple under the Liberals' plan. The lodge is now forced to increase rent on the very people who can least afford it.

Therefore, will the NDP-Liberals cancel their tax hikes on homes, heating and eating?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives continue to flip-flop when it comes to the economy. Exactly one week ago, the Conservative House leader described our inflation relief plan as "It's a little bit like pouring water on a grease fire. It looks like it's going to help and just makes the root problem even worse." However, just yesterday, he did a U-turn, saying "putting tax dollars back in the pockets of Canadians is something that Conservatives have always supported."

I am glad the Conservatives have seen the light on the GST tax credit. Now it is time to get on board with housing and dental.

● (1505)

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is number one. Unfortunately, it is number one in the world for a lack of affordable housing, a shortage of acute care beds and the priciest cellphone bills, and now we are number one in taxes to farmers, planned tax increases to paycheques and a triple increase to the carbon tax, all when Canadians pay more for taxes than for food, shelter and clothing combined.

When the Prime Minister said that Canada is back, Canada did not know that meant it was at the back of the line. Conservatives understand that number one is the front of the line, not the back. Why does the government not understand this?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Conservative House leader is to be believed, the Conservatives have now seen the light when it comes to supporting Canadians with the GST tax credit. It is better late than never. The Conservatives claim to care about housing too, so may I suggest the next Conservative flip-flop? It is time for them to also support our \$500 one-time payment to help vulnerable Canadians who are struggling to pay their rent.

It is never too late to do the right thing, even for Conservatives.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with Fiona top of mind, people in my communities and across Canada are crying out for compassion from the Liberal government. Increased payroll taxes are hitting at a time when a lot of our small businesses are struggling to recover and maintain their employees. Those same workers are struggling to put food on their families' tables, put gas in their family vehicles and keep a roof over their families' heads.

Will the government restore Canadians' hope and cancel its planned tax increase for Canadians' paycheques?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the EI contribution rate today is \$1.58. Next year, it will go up to \$1.63. Both of those rates are lower than the EI contribution rate was every single year Stephen Harper was prime minister, yet the new Conservative leader, who was actually employment minister under Prime Minister Harper, now wants to slash our contributions.

Who do Conservatives think is the better economic manager: Prime Minister Harper or the new Conservative leader?

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HEALTH

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's overdose crisis continues to have a tragic toll in the community of Guelph and in communities across the country. The COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened this crisis due to increased feelings of isolation, stress and anxiety, as well as the changes in the availability of support services. Recently, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions visited my riding to announce over \$2.9 million in funding for five innovative community-led projects across Guelph.

Could the minister please speak to the importance of utilizing local expertise and working across multiple community organizations to help those who use substances to get the support they need?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his tireless advocacy on this issue.

Too many lives have been lost to the toxic drug and overdose crisis. Ensuring local organizations have the necessary resources and capacity to support their communities is essential to ending this tragedy. The five innovative community-led projects we announced together will allow for increased safer supply capacity, as well as improved outreach for people dealing with problematic substance use. This funding will also help increase access to multiple supports for youth in the Guelph region and support training and certification for the truly effective peer support workers.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with Orange Shirt Day fast approaching, we are going to see once again a government that talks a good game about respecting the rights of indigenous peoples but does not follow through. For clean drinking water, deadline after deadline has been missed. On overcrowding and homes in disrepair on first nations, there has barely been a dent, and for all the government's public commit-

ments that communities must lead their own searches for the unmarked burial sites of their children, communities are saying that the government is dragging its feet instead of supporting them.

Can the government explain why, when it comes to really supporting indigenous communities, its answer is no?

• (1510)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as an update for the House, I think folks would appreciate knowing that there are about 91 communities that have now received funding to do searches on their own time, at their own pace. It is something we obviously have to respect as a government.

If the member opposite has a community in mind that needs to be brought to my attention, I would ask her to please do so. I will ensure that the funding is provided expeditiously.

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[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, everyone knows about the passport saga with its endless delays.

Unfortunately, we are experiencing the same problem with employment insurance, despite the fact that unemployment is at an all-time low and there are fewer applications. Public servants are saying they are powerless and cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel. Meanwhile, our citizens are paying the price for a service they are absolutely entitled to.

Can the minister tell us what concrete measures are going to be put in place to deal with these unacceptable delays, which are only getting worse?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

I can assure him that the people at Service Canada are serving Canadians, whether it is for help with employment insurance, pensions or passports. We will continue to ensure that Canadians receive these services.

As for the employment insurance, I can assure my colleague that everyone is busy dealing with these changes and people are up to the task.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Wolfgang Sobotka, President of the National Council of the Republic of Austria.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

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RUSSIA'S ACTIONS IN UKRAINE

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has been discussion among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion. I move:

That, given:

- (i) Russia is running sham referendums in temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine;
- (ii) Russia has pre-determined the results of these referendums with the desperate aim to legitimize the territories it has seized in Ukraine, weaken international support for Ukraine and limit Ukraine's surging counteroffensives;
- (iii) Russia is resorting to coercive tactics such as sending armed soldiers and police door-to-door to collect votes from Ukrainian citizens to secure those pre-determined results;
- (iv) These sham referendums are part of Russia's illegal annexation playbook and were used in 2014 when Russia held a sham referendum in an attempt to legitimize its illegal annexation of Crimea from Ukraine; and
- (v) The UNHRC Commission of Inquiry has confirmed that the Russian Federation committed war crimes in Ukraine in a number of regions, including the execution, torture and rape of civilians and the rape, torture and confinement of children;

the House:

- (a) Condemn in the strongest possible terms the sham referendums being held in Russian-occupied regions of Ukraine;
- (b) Declare that it does not and will never recognize the legitimacy of these referendums;
- (c) Reaffirm that Ukraine's territory is that which was recognized at the time of the Budapest Memorandum in 1994 and includes Crimea and the Donbas, which Russia illegally invaded in 2014;
- (d) Reiterate its unanimous support for Ukraine in the face of Russia's genocidal war; and
- (e) Call on the Government of Canada to:
 - (i) Continue working relentlessly with our allies to ensure those who have committed or enabled war crimes in Ukraine are prosecuted and held accountable; and
 - (ii) Continue to provide additional support to Ukraine until all of Ukraine's territory is once again under the sovereign control of the government of Ukraine, by imposing more severe economic sanctions against Russia and providing Ukraine with more military, financial and humanitarian aid.

The 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)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the progress report on the implementation of the recommendations in the "Default Prevention and Management 2017" report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

* * *

● (1515)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS**

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The committee advised that, pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the subcommittee on Private Members' Business met to consider the items added to the order of precedence on Monday, June 20, as well as the orders for the second reading of private members' public bills originating in the Senate and recommended that the items listed herein, which it has determined should be designated non-votable, be considered by the House.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the report is deemed adopted.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

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PETITIONS**COVID-19 MANDATES**

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition on behalf of Canadians across the country who are opposed to the COVID-19 mandates and want them all to come to an end. The petitioners state that throughout the pandemic truckers have served Canadians, that they are heroes and that they have been subjected to the vaccine mandates that have impacted our supply chains. The petitioners say the Prime Minister has politicized the vaccines and insulted Canadians who disagreed with him. They are calling on the House of Commons to immediately end all COVID-19 vaccine mandates and restrictions implemented and controlled by the federal government.

• (1520)

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I have to present is from citizens across the country who are concerned about the Liberal Party's promise in its 2021 platform that would deny charitable status to organizations that have convictions about abortion with which the Liberal Party is in disagreement. This may jeopardize the charitable status of hospitals, houses of worship, schools, homeless shelters and other charitable organizations that do not agree with the Liberal Party on this matter. Many Canadians depend upon and benefit from these charities and the work they do. Therefore, the petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada and the House of Commons to protect and preserve the application of charitable status rules on a political and ideologically neutral basis, without discrimination on the basis of political or religious values and without imposing another values test.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling comes from Canadians who are concerned about forced organ harvesting and trafficking. This bill has passed through the Senate twice and in this House once in its current form. It is currently stalled before the foreign affairs committee. The petitioners are hoping it will soon be passed. The families of victims of forced organ harvesting and trafficking have now waited almost 15 years for Canada to pass this legislation. The petitioners are calling for the House to pass this legislation quickly.

AGE VERIFICATION SOFTWARE

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I have today comes from petitioners across the country who are concerned about how young people can easily access explicit material online, including violently explicit and degrading material. The petitioners comment on how this access is an important public health and safety concern. They note that a significant portion of commercially accessed sexually explicit material has no age verification software. Moreover, age verification software can ascertain the age of users without breaching their privacy rights. The petitioners note the many serious harms associated with sexually explicit material, including the development of addictions and attitudes favourable to sexual violence and the harassment of women. As such, they are calling on the House of Commons to pass Bill S-210, the protecting young persons from exposure to pornography act.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last petition I have today is from Canadians across this country who are suffering under inflation and the Liberals' carbon tax. The petitioners claim that the carbon tax is causing inflation and increasing the cost of everyday essentials, including gas, groceries and heating, making life very expensive for Canadians. The Bank of Canada has also said that the carbon tax is contributing to the impacts of inflation and is an added expense for Canadian businesses, which creates an economic disadvantage compared with other nations. The petitioners are calling for an end to the carbon tax. They want the government to control inflation and reduce its spending.

Routine Proceedings

Finally, the petitioners want to see pipelines and other projects approved, especially LNG pipelines, to take clean, ethical Canadian energy to tidewater and international markets to displace the fuel provided by authoritarian regimes and dictators.

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting this petition today on behalf of Canadians who have mobilized because of a concern over a promise made by the Liberal Party of Canada in its 2021 platform to deny charitable status to organizations that have convictions about abortion that the Liberal Party views as dishonest. The petitioners feel that this is another opportunity for the government to use a values test, as it did to discriminate against worthy applicants to the Canada summer jobs program, and in the same way this will jeopardize the charitable status of many organizations, such as hospitals, houses of worship, schools, homeless shelters and so many others that play such an intricate role in taking care of the needs of Canadians.

Therefore, the petitioners are calling on the Liberal government to protect and preserve the application of charitable status rules on a politically and ideologically neutral basis, without discrimination on the basis of political or religious values and without the imposition of another values test. Certainly of significance is that the petitioners are very concerned that the current government affirm the rights of Canadians to freedom of expression.

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of Canadians. The petitioners wish to express concern with the Supreme Court of Canada's recent decision to strike down a Harper Conservative law that allowed judges to exercise their discretion to apply consecutive parole ineligibility periods for mass murderers. As a consequence, some of Canada's worst killers will be eligible for parole after just 25 years. The petitioners note that the Liberal government has tools at its disposal and has failed to use them. They call on the government to do so by, namely, invoking the notwithstanding clause.

[Translation]

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table a petition presented by Development and Peace—Caritas Canada that François Adam and Father François Baril, of the Solidarité Mercier-Est pastoral committee, and also Yves Bourassa, of the Groupe local de l'Arrondissement Saint-Léonard, had signed by 335 citizens from La Pointe-de-l'Île and Montreal East.

S. O. 52

This petition is in response to the fact that some Canadian companies contribute to human rights abuses and environmental damage around the world. Unfortunately, the Canadian government does not require that these companies stop these harms from happening in their operations.

The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to adopt legislation on due diligence for human and environmental rights. This legislation would require companies to prevent any negative impact on human and environmental rights throughout their global operations and supply chains.

Peace is not only the absence of war. Peace is built by supporting social and economic justice every day.

[English]

FIRST RESPONDERS TAX CREDIT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to table this petition, in particular because it is timely, given hurricane Fiona. This is about volunteer firefighters, who account for 83% of Canada's total firefighting essential needs as well as first responders. In addition, approximately 8,000 essential search-and-rescue volunteers respond to thousands of incidents every year. The petitioners cite that the tax code of Canada currently allows a volunteer firefighter and search-and-rescue volunteer to claim a \$3,000 tax credit if 200 hours of volunteer services were completed in a calendar year. It works out to a mere \$450 a year.

The petitioners are calling on the government to increase the tax exemption from \$3,000 to \$10,000. It would help retain these volunteers at a time when volunteerism is increasing. Also, it would demonstrate how Canada values our first responders and our volunteer firefighters, especially in times like this.

• (1525)

ETHIOPIA

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions related to the situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, where there is a major famine. They are calling on the House of Commons to demand access to the region for aid groups to deliver food and humanitarian assistance, the restoration of communications in the region, the withdrawal of Eritrean forces and an arms embargo in Eritrea and Ethiopia.

SOMALILAND

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my third petition is in regard to Somaliland. The petitioners question the legality of the union between Somalia and Somaliland, and call for Somaliland to be recognized by Canada as an independent country.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from a number of constituents. This petition deals with the subject matter of what is generally called “just transition”. The petitioners note that Canada has a commitment to the Paris Agreement, which includes in its preamble the concept of making sure workers and communities in the fossil fuel sector receive transitional support so that they can be transitioned to renewable energy. It is one that protects individuals and communities.

They call on the House to work alongside oil and gas workers to create such a plan and to include in it the 10 recommendations that were initially put forward by the special task force commissioned under former environment minister Catherine McKenna on a just transition for Canadian coal power workers and communities.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition in support of Bill S-223, a bill that seeks to combat forced harvesting and trafficking of organs. I understand that similar legislation has passed twice in the Senate and in the House in its current form.

Families of those who are impacted obviously want to see change, as do a number of Canadians, as reflected in this petition.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

HURRICANE FIONA

The Speaker: There has been a request for an emergency debate. I wish to inform the House that I have received two notices of requests for an emergency debate concerning the same subject.

I invite the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay and the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester to rise and make their brief interventions.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask leave to propose an emergency debate on the urgent and escalating situation in Atlantic Canada following hurricane Fiona. Fiona was the strongest storm ever to make landfall in Canada, with several lives lost; many homes swept out to sea; bridges, airports and other infrastructure damaged; docks destroyed; and close to a million Canadians left without power.

While Fiona hit Atlantic Canada over the weekend, this is the first opportunity the House will have to discuss the federal response to the storm. We need to hear how the government plans to help Atlantic Canada in this unprecedented situation. I therefore ask that you, Mr. Speaker, grant this request for an emergency debate.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues and the House today for the interesting questions around hurricane Fiona. Having been there for the last two days and perhaps in one of the most hard-hit areas, I stand here humbly before the House to ask permission for an emergency debate.

We all know very clearly that hurricane Fiona has been devastating to Atlantic Canada. We also know that it is, as my good colleague from South Shore—St. Margarets once said, a generational storm. For that reason, we know that it needs to be debated here in the House on an emergency basis. We know that infrastructure has been severely damaged, including roads, power lines, wharves, barns, homes, crops, etc., and that importance cannot be underscored without a significant and robust debate here in the House of Commons.

I would also say that the fishing industry, which was previously under threat by significant cost due to bait and fuel, is now in significant peril due to the destruction of said infrastructure.

Atlantic Canadians and Canadians in general also want to understand clearly the rapidity and the extent and the process that will be involved for them to gain the support they so dearly need. We shall overcome this, of course. However, without robust debate here in the House of Commons, people will not know exactly what will happen in the next steps.

• (1530)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. members for their interventions. I am prepared to grant an emergency debate concerning hurricane Fiona. This debate will be held today at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

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REQUIREMENT OF ROYAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BILLS C-285 AND C-290

The Speaker: I would like to make a statement concerning the management of Private Members' Business.

As members know, certain constitutional procedural realities constrain the Speaker and members insofar as legislation is concerned.

[Translation]

Following each replenishment of the order of precedence, the Chair has developed a practice of reviewing items so that the House can be alerted to bills that, at first glance, appear to impinge on the financial prerogative of the Crown. This allows members the opportunity to intervene in a timely fashion to present their views about the need for those bills to be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

[English]

Accordingly, following the replenishment of the order of precedence with 15 new items on Monday, June 20, I wish to inform the House that there are two bills which preoccupy the Chair. They are Bill C-285, an act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Canada Labour Code and the Employment Insurance Act, standing

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in the name of the member for Niagara West; and Bill C-290, an act to amend the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, standing in the name of the member for Mirabel.

[Translation]

The understanding of the Chair is that these bills may need to be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

[English]

I therefore encourage members who would like to make arguments regarding the requirement of a royal recommendation for Bills C-285 and C-290 to do so at their earliest opportunity.

I thank the members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

COST OF LIVING RELIEF ACT, NO. 1

The House resumed from September 23 consideration of the motion that Bill C-30, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (temporary enhancement to the Goods and Services Tax/Harmonized Sales Tax credit), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore has eight minutes and 30 seconds remaining in questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand and appreciate the fact that this is a legislation that the Conservative Party itself is going to be supporting, which is a positive thing. We have heard many different speeches coming from the Conservative Party. Earlier this morning, a member was talking about economic policy in terms of where we should be going as a government.

One of the things that were talked about a great deal was when the now leader of the Conservative Party talked about the importance of cryptocurrency. In talking about cryptocurrency, he actually encouraged Canadians to invest in cryptocurrency, believing that this was some way to fight inflation.

We all know that this particular recommendation caused many Canadians to lose a great deal of money, no doubt those who would have followed the advice of the leader.

Can the member indicate to us what she thinks in terms of Conservative policy? Was this a policy that the Conservative Party supported back then, or was this something that today's leader of the Conservative Party had as his own personal idea?

[Translation]

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, first, I would like to offer my condolences to the victims of hurricane Fiona.

[English]

Our thoughts and prayers are with them at this time.

Government Orders

Let us talk about the economy over the last seven years. We had 8.1% inflation in June, \$56.5 billion now with the latest measures from the government in budget 2022. Let us talk about all of the sectors that the government has destroyed, most of all the natural resources sector, and most recently, the fertilizer sector.

I am very insulted that the member would bring up a fleeting thought, an idea that was discussed during our leadership race. In my opinion, it is actually a tactic, a mechanism, and an effort to avoid the real problem here, which is also the band-aid solution we find in this bill, after a terrible job with the economy in the last seven years.

• (1535)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are really glad to see the Conservatives finally come on board and support an NDP initiative to get help to Canadians who need help right now.

Here we are, doubling the GST tax credit, something we have been pushing for months. Finally, just yesterday, the Conservatives announced that they are going to support us.

Here we are: We see rising gas prices and rising telecom fees, grocery store prices through the roof and fuel prices through the roof. We see record profits in the banking sector, oil and gas, the wireless sector and the grocery stores.

Does my colleague not agree that those companies should pay an excess profit tax like the Conservative Party put forward in Great Britain? They had the courage to charge a 25% excess profit tax, to give back to the people of Britain and help them with their energy costs.

Does my colleague not agree that they should pay their fair share?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague is right. This is one area where we agree, but where my Conservative colleagues and I agree is on the fact that the NDP has helped the Liberals run this country and our economy into the ground.

This is the reason we have these high gas prices. This is the reason we have these high food prices. This is the reason we are encountering all of these problems: because of the member's question, which is also destroying all of our profitable sectors across the country.

Unfortunately, his point is the only thing we agree on, whereas my Conservative colleagues and I agree on all of these other factors I have mentioned, namely that he and his party are responsible for helping the Liberals run both this country and our economy into the ground.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is curious to me, because the NDP has not only been pushing for doubling the GST credit for over six months now. That help is desperately needed right now but was needed six months ago. We have also been pushing for dental care. We have been pushing for the rental housing benefit. We have been delivering for Canadians.

What have the Conservatives been doing, other than bluster and often spreading misinformation? It is difficult to see how the Conservatives can really look themselves in the mirror recently.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, the only thing the New Democratic Party has been doing, in conjunction with the Liberals, is pushing up inflationary spending as a result of agreeing to everything the Liberals put in front of them.

I said this before and I will say it again. If the member wanted to see different changes, things that are not currently within these bills or other ideas she had, she should have done a better job in negotiating with the government when they came to their agreement. I find it very rich that she accuses us of inaction, when in fact it is her and her party that have done a fantastic job of raising inflationary spending and running this nation into the ground.

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. I note one of my colleagues just asked how Conservatives can look themselves in the eye. We are His Majesty's loyal opposition, while the NDP has become the government's loyal coalition.

When we look at the past three, four, five or six months with regard to the cost of living increase and all that, have there been any opportunities for the NDP to have supported what Conservatives are saying and really helped out Canadians?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, the reality is every single word every member of that party speaks is very hard to listen to, because they are actually working in coordination with the government in an effort both to bring down the economy of this nation and to wedge and divide and create space between Canadians.

I certainly wish the New Democratic Party would have supported us in many of the different opposition day bills we have put forward in the past. There is good news: It has an opportunity to do so again later this week, as we have two opposition day motions coming up. I really hope if the member across the way is so eager to work in concert with the Conservative Party, His Majesty's loyal opposition, that New Democrats will take the opportunity to do so.

• (1540)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, when we take a look at inflation, something the member talks a great deal about, and compare Canada to the rest of the world, whether it is the United States, the United Kingdom or other G20 countries, Canada is doing exceptionally well.

I am wondering if the member could provide her thoughts on why she believes Canada is doing far better when it comes to inflation rates compared to the rest of the world. Why is that the case? Are the other countries that bad?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore has time for a brief answer, please.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, the government had the opportunity on many occasions to not spend the amount of money it did to raise inflationary spending, but it did not choose that. It chose to spend, and it is Canadians who will pay for it.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my dear friend and colleague, the member for Ottawa Centre.

On behalf of all the residents of Vaughan—Woodbridge, I would like to send our deepest sentiments, thoughts and prayers to all Canadians living on the east coast who have been impacted by hurricane Fiona. This past summer my family and I drove out to the east coast, visiting P.E.I., New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. It is truly a beautiful part of the country, consisting of beautiful Canadians who are just so kind and generous. We deeply enjoyed our time there.

Bill C-30 is our government's response to helping Canadians, and I would say helping the middle class and those working very hard to join it. It is a bill that provides direct relief to Canadians impacted by inflation, which we know is not only here today in Canada but across the world, particularly in developed countries. We have seen it.

We have gone through a period over the last few years with the COVID shock, which was considered an exogenous shock to our economy. Battling through that, helping Canadians and being there for Canadian businesses and Canadian citizens who were impacted, our economy literally came to a standstill during that period of time. Then, proceeding to the events we saw with the unjustified, barbaric invasion of Ukraine by Putin's Russia, we have seen the impacts of that. We have seen an impact on grain shipments throughout the world. We have seen an impact on prices of commodities and so forth, through our supply chain and on to inflation, which is impacting Canadians.

We know Canadians, particularly seniors, individuals on fixed incomes and working families, are impacted, and we are there to help. Fortunately, our government has been focused since 2015 on helping Canadians succeed, helping the middle class and helping those wishing to join the middle class. We have been strengthening the fundamental backbone of our economy, whether it has been working with the private sector unions or introducing the Canada child benefit, which we know is helping nine out of 10 families, unlike the prior program, which sent monthly, tax-free cheques to millionaires. Those types of programs have literally lifted hundreds of thousands of Canadians out of poverty, especially children, but also strengthened our middle class.

Our government also introduced two cuts. The first tax cut, for the middle class tax bracket, was asking the wealthiest 1% to pay a little more, which was the right thing to do. The second tax cut, which Canadians are still benefiting from, was raising the basic personal expenditure amount to \$15,000. Again, this literally took people off the federal tax rolls, helping seniors, students and all Canadians, which is great to see.

Bill C-30, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, is something I advocated for within our caucus for several months. It is something I truly believe in as an economist, as someone who participated in and worked in the financial markets, both domestically and internationally, for over 20 years of my life. The GST tax credit is a very effective instrument for assisting Canadians dealing with this specific issue. It is a significant policy tool that allows direct payments to Canadians who need it the most. I am very glad to see this legis-

lation. I understand that His Majesty's loyal opposition is also in agreement with this legislation. I could be corrected if I am wrong, but that is what I read. I am glad to see other parties in the House suggesting the idea, and I am also glad to see other parties in the House supporting the idea.

This would support literally 11 million Canadians, giving \$2.5 billion in direct payment to Canadians at a time when it is fundamentally needed. We have been dealing with inflationary pressures. We have seen the prices of food, rent and so forth, our daily necessities, rise. My family is very fortunate. We are raising three daughters, and I go to the grocery store. I see the prices. I fill the vehicles we have. My wife and I see the cost of gas.

● (1545)

I am glad to see our government act, demonstrating empathy to Canadians through a policy measure that we know will provide real relief to Canadians. Canadians do not really need to do anything, because the payments will arrive by year-end. I would ask people to please file their income tax returns. We know that when Canadians file their tax returns, they receive a ton of credits and benefits that ensure that not only they and their families have a good quality of life, but our seniors have a good, secure and dignified retirement.

As I said, under the GST credit, for example, a single mother with one child and an income of \$30,000 will receive almost \$400 for the July through December 2022 period and another \$386.50, to be exact, for the January through June 2023 period. In total, in this manner, an individual would receive nearly \$1,160 for the entire year through the GST credit. These are real funds helping real Canadians, those working hard day in, day out to put food on their tables and make sure their kids get to school. This is real assistance for Canadians at a time when we are dealing with persistent inflationary pressures in the interim.

As another example, under the present system, a couple with two children with an income of \$35,000 will be receiving \$467 for the July through December 2022 period and another \$467 for the January through June 2023 period. Again, it is real assistance for those families. In total, they would receive \$1,400 for this benefit year through the GST credit.

This is just another piece of legislation we brought forward that helps Canadians. I will repeat that it is helping the middle class and those working hard to join it, but also, very importantly, it is what I would call responsible leadership and a prudent fiscal picture. We have a AAA credit rating in Canada. Our debt-to-GDP ratio is on a declining trend. The provinces have come out with their fiscal picture, which is much improved. I know that under the stewardship of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Canada will maintain a strong fiscal balance sheet going into the future so there can be a prosperous future for all children and all families in this blessed country we call home.

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With regard to our seniors, when we ran in the prior election, we campaigned on a 10% increase to old age security for seniors 75 and above, benefiting over 3.3 million seniors in Canada, like my parents and aunts and uncles, who are in B.C. these days. We did that; we fulfilled that promise. It was a promise made and a promise kept, as we say. When we think of the timing of that increase, which came in the month of June, seniors will receive up to \$800 more in old age security payments. Again, that is real assistance. It is timely and dedicated to individuals who have built this country in the last few decades. I am very proud to serve the over 20,000 seniors in the riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge.

If we look at the Canada child benefit, which I cannot mention enough, it delivers over \$60 million, the last time I had the numbers, to my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge. It assists hundreds of thousands of families in our country. It is another measure that we were able to provide. There is legislation on the table for the Canada dental benefit and the Canada housing benefit one-time top-up.

To reference the Canada dental benefit, I am a bit of a fiscal hawk. I believe in free markets and I believe in capitalism. I have worked on Bay Street and Wall Street, but I grew up in a small town in B.C. With regard to dental coverage, I have heard too many stories from seniors who come to my office. They do not have dental coverage and have to spend \$1,000, \$1,500 or \$500 out of pocket when going to the dentist. They cannot afford it. It is literally the difference, on a monthly basis, between our seniors putting food on their tables or getting dental coverage. We are doing the right thing.

The same applies for children under 12 years old. I am so happy that I am part of a government that is moving this forward. If other parties want to make changes or suggest things, they can go ahead, but at the end of day, the premise is to help Canadian families and make sure they are getting ahead. That is most important.

• (1550)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, no one can be against apple pie. It is nice to have solutions to provide relief to seniors, families or low-income people. Nevertheless, these are temporary measures, like the dental insurance benefit or the housing support.

When we help, govern and talk we also have to think about future generations and bring in solutions that are permanent and predictable.

When will we see that here for housing and health?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou.

[English]

I will say that these measures we put in place are there to assist Canadians. As we go longer term and look toward the fall economic statement or next year's budget, I know with regard to stakeholders and constituents in my riding that everything is about economic growth and raising the standard of living for all Canadians from coast to coast to coast. I will continue to push for the types of measures that spur job creation and investment and that increase pro-

ductivity and lift productivity in this country. That translates, for an economist, into making sure that Canadians have a higher standard of living tomorrow versus today.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question comes from a place of ideology, fiscal responsibility and the overall big picture of where the Liberal government sees the future of Canadians and of helping those who are suffering most and those who definitely need relief.

How does the member across the way feel about the difference between investing in relief and investing in development, and about the sustainability of giving people an opportunity or a hand-up rather than a handout?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, if we look at the record over the last seven years, in terms of job creation and the number of policies we put in place not only to have what is called inclusive growth but, most importantly, to grow our economy, the record speaks for itself.

On the productivity front, we need to put in place more measures to continue to spur investment. If we look at, for example, the auto sector here in the province of Ontario, as the member and I are both from the province of Ontario, we will see the number of record investments that have taken place. It is nearly \$20 billion in investments. Today, I actually had an auto caucus meeting with representatives from that industry, which will create over 17,000 jobs by being a critical supplier within the battery supply chain as we transition to EVs.

Our government is working with industry. We are consulting and we are listening, and that is the direction we need to continue on.

• (1555)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am glad the Liberal government has followed the NDP's lead with the GST tax credit, along with the Conservatives. I know my colleague kept going on about the Canada child benefit; however, here is the thing. His government is currently clawing back Canada child benefits from single mothers. Meanwhile, guess who they are not clawing money back from. Let us look at Galen Weston. Loblaws makes \$5,100 an hour and saw record profits in the first quarter of 2022. At Loblaws, Galen Weston clawed back the pandemic pay of two dollars an hour for workers.

Since my colleague is so keen on the Canada child benefit, would his government consider going after big corporations instead of single mothers?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, we have introduced a number of measures that have lifted literally hundreds of thousands of single mothers and children, and families for that matter, out of poverty. We will still continue to introduce a number of measures.

We have also come out with a number of measures that have asked the wealthiest to pay more. There are measures here on the corporate income tax side for corporations. There was a series of PBO reports issued last week that refer to the revenues that would be collected from those tax measures. I encourage all members of the House to take a look at those PBO reports. They are quite interesting and quite detailed.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-30, which is an act to amend the Income Tax Act as it relates to the goods and services tax and harmonized sales tax credits. It is a bill that is very much focused on targeted tax relief for the most deserving in our communities. However, before I speak to the bill, I just want to quickly state that as this is the first time I am speaking in the House since the summer recess ended, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak. I hope all colleagues across the entire House had a good summer.

As we heard earlier during question period, the devastation caused by hurricane Fiona is top of mind for all of us. We have seen the kind of devastation that this particular storm has caused in Atlantic Canada and in eastern Quebec. Just like everyone, my thoughts are with everyone who has been impacted. There have been a couple of fatalities. We are thinking of the families that have been impacted.

I can assure the House, given my role as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and in working with the minister, that the entire government, including the Prime Minister, was working hard, as soon as we knew this storm was coming our way, to make sure we were prepared. That involved working very closely with the provincial governments and local municipal governments so that all necessary steps were taken to prepare for this storm. Because of that, we are seeing all of the recovery efforts taking place at the moment.

Just this morning, very early, I was glad to join the Prime Minister and the member for Ottawa South in thanking some of the crews from Hydro Ottawa that were departing for Nova Scotia. We thanked them for what they were doing, as what Canadians always do is look after each other.

During the summer, like perhaps all members, I obviously spent a lot of time in my community. One of the things I always do is knock on doors during the summer months to talk to constituents of mine. I ask two very simple questions: "How can I help you?" and "What kinds of issues are of concern to you?"

It will not come as a surprise to any member, as I have been hearing this from members of all sides of the House, that the cost of living and the rate of inflation are big concerns for everyone. However, I also heard about the need for affordable child care. So many parents I spoke to asked me when \$10-a-day child care was coming to their community, the one I represent right here in Ottawa Centre. They were very important conversations, and parents told me again and again that they could not wait for that program to be fully implemented. It is going to save them thousands of dollars, especially if they have more than one child.

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This would be a tremendous savings, not to mention an opportunity for young children to socialize and take part in play-based learning. If we couple that with the full-day kindergarten that exists in Ontario for four- and five-year-olds, this is a really game-changing moment for children to thrive and for parents to be fully involved in the well-being of our economy by getting good jobs so they can grow in their professions. The savings are in the thousands of dollars for parents, and they are quite excited for the fact that this federal government, under our Prime Minister, has finally brought in a national child care and early learning system across the country.

However, that is only one measure that would help people with the cost of living. We need to make sure that inflation does not continue, although we are starting to see it abating and coming down. The inflation rate in Canada is perhaps one of the lowest compared with the rates of comparable G7 countries.

● (1600)

Regardless of that, we still need to take steps. We still need to take measures to find targeted reliefs for those who are the most marginalized in our society, the people who are on a low income, such as single mothers, who are working extremely hard every day, and I meet many people like that in my community of Ottawa Centre. We need to ensure that they have some targeted temporary relief, so they can live through this period.

That is why this particular legislation, Bill C-30, is so important. We know that this inflation is global in nature. There are many factors which have gone into and have caused this inflation. Canada is not immune to it.

Of course, the pandemic has had a big role to play. We have heard from other members that the unjustified, unwarranted war by Russia on Ukraine is another big reason that has caused this inflation.

We need, of course, to find a made-in-Canada solution to help people. That is why, as I said earlier, Bill C-30 and Bill C-31 are so important because they would provide those targeted reliefs for individuals.

In this case, under Bill C-30, we would double the GST tax credit for individuals and for families who have qualified for six months. That is real relief that would deliver about \$2.5 billion in additional support to roughly 11 million Canadians. That is a very significant number of people who would benefit.

Just to give us an idea, if this legislation passes, and I hope all members will support this legislation, as I intend to do, from the period of July 2022 through June 2023, for the benefit year, eligible people would receive up to \$467 for singles without children, \$612 for married or common-law partners, \$612 for single parents and \$161 for each child under the age of 19. That would be quite a significant additional contribution to those individuals for them to work through this inflationary period. Of course, as we are starting to see from economic indicators, the inflation rate is starting to abate, and hopefully, that will continue to happen.

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However, we are not stopping there. We would also be providing a one-time rent supplement of about \$500, again to those who qualify for that kind of support, to ensure that they would be able to pay the extra costs they may be facing, and so they would not be at risk for homelessness. That is an important priority for our government, to ensure that people have access to affordable housing, and this particular support would be of significant benefit to them.

Lastly, a program initiative that is also much needed, which is very similar to our creating a national child care program, is what we are doing in creating a dental program for young people, to, again, make sure that young individuals, young Canadians, can have access to good dental care. It is essential to their health. By providing the support for those who are making, I believe, \$90,000 or less, they would be able to get that dental care and be able to stay healthy.

This would only allow for them to live healthier lives, but it would also be yet more meaningful savings for individuals. We can really see a theme here of providing targeted supports that would really focus on people who need help and support the most. They also have huge benefits, whether it is getting good child care, improving one's health, or making sure that one does not become homeless.

This is going to help our economy. This is going to help all Canadians because our number one job as the government, and my focus as a member of Parliament for Ottawa Centre, is to help build an economy that works for all Canadians.

• (1605)

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I heard the hon. member say that he hopes that inflation does not continue.

What is this government's plan? It is proposing a one-off payment in response to high inflation. I am glad that the government is now acknowledging high inflation. If this continues, is the plan a continued series of one-off payments?

What is the government's plan to address core inflation? I, too, agree and hope that inflation drops, but is this a long-term plan to address inflation?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, I want to first thank my friend from across the way and his party for supporting Bill C-30. It is a very positive step for all Canadians, and hopefully all parties will be supporting this important piece of legislation.

Yes, we do hope the inflation will abate. That is why programs such as the child care and dental programs are important. It is because they are permanent in nature. They would continue to stay in place as national programs to help Canadians coast to coast to coast. That is an example of putting forward a program that is going to continue to help Canadians.

We will, of course, monitor how things are progressing. Hopefully we will get to the point where the economy stabilizes and continues to grow again, as we are seeing with one of the lowest unemployment rates ever in the history of Canada, so people can have good-paying jobs as they contribute to our economy and to society.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was happy to hear my colleague say that we need well-structured programs. That is what the Bloc Québécois wants. We want to have permanent, targeted, well-thought-out programs.

My concern is that, once again, it will be meted out sparingly. The funding will be scattered here and there. In my opinion, that is neither permanent nor well planned.

How does the member deal with all of that?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, I welcome my colleague's question.

[English]

If one looks at the kind of programs we are putting in place, taking child care as an example, it is not a program without a plan. It is a program that has been sought for a very long time by Canadians, especially Canadian women, who have argued that, for them to thrive economically, we need to make sure there is affordable child care available coast to coast to coast. By putting forward a well-thought-out plan, the way our government has done, we are ensuring there would be more participation, especially by women, in our society and in our economy. It would also ensure there is good early learning for our children.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, a report came out this summer showing that one in four Canadians are spending less than they need to on groceries. Many are going hungry. I want to thank him for his support for the critically important NDP initiatives, such as doubling the GST credit, ensuring we have a targeted support for people struggling to pay their rents and ensuring kids under 12 receive dental care as a first step toward a federal dental care program.

One thing I did not hear about in his speech, which is a crucial part of this equation when it comes to rising costs, is corporate greed. The Liberals, so far, have refused to put a windfall excess profits tax on corporations that are making record profits. Would the member support an excess profits tax, or are the Liberals going to keep protecting corporate profits while Canadians go hungry?

• (1610)

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, we work our very best when we work with each other, share ideas and put them in place. I am really happy to see our government is working well with the NDP and making sure we work in a collaborative way that is in the best interest of Canadians. I am happy to see the opposition supporting this important initiative as well, because that means Canadians are going to be first.

We have done a lot of work as part of this government to make sure our tax system supports those who are marginalized. That is why we increased taxes on the top 1% of earners, took all that windfall and gave a tax break to middle-class and low-income Canadians. That is the kind of progressive policy we will continue to put in place.

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order, special order or usual practice of the House, during the debate pursuant to Standing Order 52 later today, no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

* * *

COST OF LIVING RELIEF ACT, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-30, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (temporary enhancement to the Goods and Services Tax/Harmonized Sales Tax credit), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed to the hon. parliamentary secretary 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)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Peace River—Westlock. Before I begin my remarks on Bill C-30, I do want to express my condolences and sympathies to all those suffering along the Atlantic seaboard. Even though they prepared as best they could, there have been some tragic results. I know that all Canadians are hoping for the very best, and for a very strong and quick recovery for all those affected.

Right now, Canada is facing the highest rate of inflation in 40 years. Canadians are struggling. They do not know what lies ahead or if it will get any easier. Grocery prices have risen at the fastest pace since 1981, soaring above 10% on average, with some items having risen over 30%. This means a typical family of four now spends over \$1,200 more each year to put food on the table. That is if inflation does not rise further, something we have no guarantee of under the Liberal government.

[Translation]

Rising gas, heating and rent costs are weighing on the majority of Canadians, who are struggling to get from one paycheque to the other.

[English]

Rental increases are crippling income levels, with many having to take on second or third jobs to afford to pay their bills and travel to work. I have heard from many constituents who cannot afford the basic essentials anymore for themselves or their children.

If someone loses their rental accommodation for any reason, or needs to change location, they are hit with gouging increases. A single dad in my riding who has had full-time employment for years, and who is well regarded there, lost his basement suite be-

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cause new owners wanted to take the space for themselves. He and his young son were literally priced out of other rental spaces that would be in any way similar. Friends are helping them out for now while he continues to try to find a home.

Bill C-30, which amends the goods and services tax credit, would double the amount for individuals and families with low and modest incomes. The GST credit would equal a one-time top-up for an additional \$467 for singles without children with a net income of about \$39,000, and up to \$934 for a family of four. This one-time assistance measure, which Conservatives support as welcome tax relief for workers and families, does little to address the inflation-fuelled affordability crisis facing all Canadians. Individuals without children earning more than \$49,200, or a couple with two children earning more than \$58,500, would receive no benefits.

● (1615)

[Translation]

This benefit, which equates to \$77 per month for a qualifying family of four, covers less than 40% of the Prime Minister's inflation at the grocery store alone, and does not begin to cover the rising costs of heat, gasoline and rent. More than 70% of families with children will not receive this support.

[English]

Housing, the cost of living crisis, homelessness and mental health concerns are top issues for B.C. residents. In 2021 alone, there were over 13 million visits to food banks across Canada. That is up 20%. Do the Liberals in the government, who often speak about the need to raise Canadian children out of poverty, realize that children represent over 30% of those food bank users in Canada?

Significantly, one in eight of those accessing food banks is employed. These services are a last resort for most, but they are becoming increasingly common for Canadians who have no other choice. Realistically, how could \$77 a month address the burden of this level of desperation? It does not.

The core issue impacting every person in this country is rising inflation levels. Unlike tax-relief measures, such as the GST credit, the government is implementing inflationary proposals, such as tripling the carbon tax on April 1 and lowering every Canadians' paycheque by increasing the employment insurance and Canadian pension plan premiums on the first of January.

Under the previous Conservative government, CPP premiums remained stable and never increased. The fund was left actuarially sound for the next 75 years, and CPP benefits increased every year. Of course, working Canadians want to contribute to their retirements and will continue to do so, but this is not the time to increase those mandatory payments at source when buying power is shrinking more and more.

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Tripling the carbon tax will mean that Canadians will again pay more for groceries and home heating and will add up to 37.57¢ per litre to the cost of gas. Yesterday, in the morning, in my riding of South Surrey—White Rock, regular gas prices were sitting at \$2.339 a litre. The cost fell in the evening to a mere \$2.289 per litre. At this rate, British Columbians will be paying close to three dollars per litre in no time at all.

My riding is a suburb of Vancouver with only one polytechnic university. White Rock is small and bordered beautifully by the water, but Surrey is growing rapidly. Infrastructure, however, has not yet fully caught up to the residential and industrial growth. In South Surrey, with no rapid transit and only bus lanes to get people in and out to Vancouver and beyond, or to get to the major universities in Burnaby and the UBC peninsula, these changes are burdensome and distressing to many who must drive to where they need to go. By the way, moving into Vancouver is not an option when a one-bedroom apartment now rents for \$2,600 per month. The Liberals' one-time rent cheque would pay for about five to six days out of 365.

At a time when the national focus should be getting the country's deficit back under control, the government is clawing back at the drastically reduced disposable income of hard-working Canadians, instead of cutting unnecessary spending within the bureaucracy. This government's approach is very limited. It lacks long-term vision for economic recovery.

Many experts are raising alarm bells on the government's financial strategy. The heads of our major banks, including CIBC, the Bank of Montreal and Scotiabank are all warning that handing out cheques is inflationary and will make our economic woes worsen. Derek Holt, vice-president of Scotiabank, has stated, "Any belief that [these measures] will ease inflationary pressures must have studied different economics textbooks."

Inflation has been described as the cruellest tax of all by economists, because it hurts everyone by making all goods and services more expensive and it impacts low-income Canadians, seniors and students the most. Despite the relief that is offered by the government, high inflation crushes the ability for low-income Canadians to afford the basic necessities of life and curbs the ability of middle-income households to afford optional activities like sports or better quality food for their kids.

According to finance professor Andrey Pavlov at SFU's Beedie school of business, "If we have high inflation and that inflation continues, that assistance isn't going to do very much to help anyone, including the recipients of that assistance. It's just not going to be enough."

Conservatives are advocating to bring inflation back under control. We need to do that. We need to stop inflationary spending. Conservatives understand monetary policy. We warned that inflation would naturally result from the Liberals' spending sprees, which continue. We will fight the government's tax hikes and inflationary deficits to protect Canadian paycheques and savings. We must do this because Canadians are not enjoying a higher standard of living, as I just heard. Canadians are hurting, and it is our job to transform hurt into hope.

• (1620)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank members on the other side for committing to support this measure.

When I was growing up, my mother received an HST refund and I know that it helped her with raising two boys with tight paycheques sometimes, and I am confident that this measure will do the same for families now.

My hon. colleague's speech wound around a bit and talked about how sending out cheques can contribute to inflation, so I would ask her specifically if she thinks that paying for things like dental care and rent for low-income Canadians will contribute to inflation.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, the way the Liberal government is going about it will absolutely add to inflation. One-time cheques on these measures do not a dental plan make. This is not a dental plan; this is a one-time payment. This is not a rent plan; it is a one-time payment. As I just mentioned, for someone paying \$2,600 a month for a one-bedroom apartment, \$500 does not go very far.

What needs to happen is that inflation needs to be dealt with, which is in itself a tax because it takes away from everyone. It is a regressive tax. It hurts low-income people the most. Liberals have to get the fiscal house of Canada in order. That would help people far more than one cheque.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her speech in which she mentioned food banks. I recently spoke with representatives of SOS Dépannage, which is located in Granby but serves the wider region.

What I am hearing about is the increase in demand. From August 2021 to August 2022, the demand for food assistance more than doubled. It is not just families who need it but also seniors, who are struggling because they are on a fixed income. One-time assistance is not the solution. Support and an increase in old age security is what is needed for all seniors, not just those aged 75 and over.

I would like my colleague to comment on that.

[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, this is where vision is needed, a vision of a Canada where we can be more independent, where we can count on each other and where our economy is robust and working for everybody. That is what we need.

We do not need further cheques to people. We need better pay-cheques for people. We need to get inflation under control because, as I mentioned in my speech, that is referred to as the cruellest tax of all. We cannot ignore it and economic policies must reflect a realistic look at the people hurting out there. The food bank situation is really atrocious in an affluent country like Canada. One of out eight Canadians is reporting putting water in milk for their kids. Canadians are reporting going without a meal. This is not the way Canada should look and the Liberals need to take it seriously.

• (1625)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, here we are on the eve of another climate emergency and what are the Conservatives doing? They are asking to get rid of the carbon tax. They are also asking for the government to help fund the climate emergency response, which I think we can all agree on. I, like my colleague, come from British Columbia where a carbon tax was brought in by the B.C. Liberals, supported by all political parties, because in British Columbia we understand the importance of fighting climate change.

Does my colleague think the federal government can override B.C.'s carbon tax and reverse legislation that has been put forward by the Province of British Columbia to do the right thing?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, I am afraid my friend's question is very disingenuous because nobody has even been talking about going into provincial jurisdiction.

We are talking about a tripling of the federal carbon tax on April 1, at a time when it is already, at the level it is at now, hurting people right across the country and hurting farmers immeasurably. It needs to be taken into account with the overall economy. People cannot afford this lowering and lowering of their purchasing power. They have to be able to look after their families and live in dignity, and we should be helping them to do that by not tripling the carbon tax on April 1.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I, too, want to add my voice to the discussion around Bill C-30.

In my lifetime, I have never experienced such inflationary times as these. We are living in immensely inflationary times, and I think this bill is an attempt to rectify that situation. We have seen a dramatic increase in the cost of living, the cost of food, the cost of fuel and the cost of housing. We have seen the average price of a house in Canada double over the last two years. Since the Prime Minister has become the Prime Minister, we have seen the price of housing double in this country. Over the last two years, we have seen butter, for example, come up 16%. Fuel has basically doubled in the last year. We are seeing how life is getting more and more expensive.

There are two ways to address this issue. First is to make more money in order to pay for the things that we need to pay for. Second is to try to lower the cost of living and the cost of everything that we have to pay for like housing and all of those things. The reality that will come into effect is that both of those things will happen. People will find ways to make more money and hopefully the government will work to reduce the cost of things or at least stem inflation.

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We watched Joe Biden celebrate a little while ago. He said that inflation was flat for a particular month. He was wrong when he said that. In fact, inflation did not increase for a particular month. The percentage of inflation is how much one's money is being reduced in value every month. If the inflation rate is running at 5%, then our money is worth 5% less over that particular period of time. If that inflation rate stays at 5% and does not increase to 6%, that is not good news. It is just that, over the next same amount of time, that money will be worth 5% less instead of being worth 6% less. An inflation rate that is close to zero is what the goal of our whole system ought to be.

• (1630)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would ask the hon. member to move his phone, especially since it is near the microphone.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I was just running my timer.

Nonetheless, there is the work that needs to be done to make life more affordable in Canada and to reduce the inflation rate. What kind of tools does the government have at its disposal to reduce the inflation rate? Taxation is a big part of the tools the government has. We, as Conservatives, are calling on the government to impose no new taxes.

On January 1 we will have a brand new tax increase on CPP and EI premiums. Happy new year. They are not optional fees for people to pay. If they were optional, the government may have been able to get away with not calling them taxes, but they will come off of people's paycheques whether they like it or not. They are taxes. That will reduce the amount of money people take home. They will make people's paycheques smaller, essentially. That will not help the inflation situation. It is not necessarily driving inflation, but it is one of the things that will not help people get over the inflation hump, so to speak.

On the other side of this, on April 1 the carbon tax will go up. The carbon tax is very much an inflationary tax. The carbon tax gets built into the cost of everything. Whether it is the shoes we wear, the food we eat, driving to work, driving the kids to school, or driving anywhere, the carbon tax is making all of that exponentially more expensive.

One thing that happens is that the carbon tax gets added into every part of the economy. When the raw products are taken out of the ground or the trees are taken out of the forest, the trucks that haul the trees to the lumber mill are paying for the carbon tax on their fuel. That cost gets built into the transportation costs of bringing the raw product out of the forest to the mill. The mill has to pay the carbon tax on the energy the mill uses to process that, so there is another added cost. As well, all of the packaging materials and supplies the mill needs are being shipped to that mill and they are paying the carbon tax on the products that are coming in, which is adding an increased cost.

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Most of these mills are publicly traded. Our pension funds are probably invested in these particular companies. As everybody wants to retire, they want a return on their investment. They are looking for a nominal 10% return on their investments. There is an expectation that no matter what the costs are to that particular mill, they have to turn a profit, so they are going to increase the cost. When the carbon tax on all of these different things is added to their input, it raises the cost of their input. When they sell their products, lumber for example, they are going to have to increase the price of lumber in order to get the 10% return they are offering to their shareholders and people who have invested in the stock market. There is that dramatic increase.

As that carbon tax is bumped up, it cascades through the economy making it more expensive. I never even talked about that lumber getting delivered. The carbon tax will be charged as part of the costs of the truck driver for hauling it, including the diesel fuel needed for that particular truck hauling that lumber away from the mill to the local lumber yard. The local lumber yard is paying carbon tax on the natural gas they burn to keep the building warm. They are paying it on what they deliver. By the time someone gets that lumber delivered to their yard, there may not be a line on the invoice for that lumber that says "carbon tax" but rest assured that a significant amount of the cost of that two-by-four will be for carbon tax.

The increase in the carbon tax on April 1, in particular, could be paused by the government. The government could pause that increase instead of ramping it up to three times from what it currently is. It could pause it or it could remove the carbon tax. The removal of the carbon tax would have the dramatic effect of reducing the cost of things across the country. I think that currently the carbon tax on gasoline is 12¢ a litre.

• (1635)

Imagine if, in much the same way as Alberta has done, the provincial fuel tax was removed. When oil went over \$90 a barrel, Alberta removed the fuel tax, causing a dramatic decrease in the price of fuel, which made life more affordable. People could get to work and their paycheques could go further. I hear more frequently from people who are having to ration their funds with respect to what they are buying and how they are heating their homes just so they can buy fuel for their pickup truck to make it to wherever they work.

The Conservatives are calling for two things. One is a reduction in, the removal of, or no increase to the carbon tax on April 1. This would help to stem the tide of inflation and dramatically improve the cost of things. Two is no increase to the payroll taxes. This would allow people's paycheques to pay for all the things they need.

The Conservatives are also calling on the government to quit borrowing money, quit raising taxes and quit raising inflation. We are calling on the government to stop borrowing money. We are calling for a one-to-one ratio. When the government wants to spend new money on a new program or a new initiative, it has to go back to the budget and find where there are some savings, whether that is from a program it is not interested in using anymore or it does not need. As society progresses, we see the government spend money

and then, over time, the programs are not necessarily needed any longer. We are looking for that one-to-one savings, no new taxes, and for the government to balance the budget in the coming years.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was listening with interest to the hon. member across the way's perspective on inflation and the price on pollution. There is one thing that was going through my mind that maybe he can help me with, and that is the government's role in investing in triple bottom-line results.

In Guelph we had six housing projects, for 243 units, with \$45 million invested by the federal government to help stimulate the housing supply. A lack of housing creates inflation, which we have been facing. We have created a circular food economy in Guelph, with an investment of \$15 million, to reduce food insecurity so people have access to food.

Could the hon. member comment on the role the government plays in providing social, economic and environmental support for our citizens?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I would say that the member opposite obviously thinks like a Liberal. Every time there is a problem, the Liberals pull out the government's debit card and try to spend their way out of it. Now they are faced with a particular problem they cannot spend their way out of. More spending of government money will only cause more inflation. The very thing the government is trying to stop will not be solved by spending more money.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the North West Company is a for-profit corporation that benefits from the federal nutrition north program. In its last quarterly report it reported a 2.4% increase in sales to the tune of \$579 million. Meanwhile, one in four indigenous Canadians lives in poverty. Does the member support corporate greed over indigenous poverty?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I would say that I am quite familiar with the northern stores and how the nutrition north program works. Once again, this proves that the government struggles to build programs that work.

Many times the free market is able to sort this stuff out better. I have heard of examples where Amazon Prime customers in northern Canada are able to get groceries cheaper than at their northern stores. Often those are the options.

I look forward to working with the member to try to come up with some solutions for the north for sure.

• (1640)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the statement of the hon. member that any more government spending leads to inflation is not borne out by many periods of time in this country and around the world.

Certainly some kinds of spending can fuel inflation. This is a very strange inflation we are experiencing. There are some real increases in price due to supply chain disruptions. There are real increases in price based on Russia's invasion of Ukraine. There are distortions based on the usual kind of inflation, which is generalized through the economy, where the Bank of Canada is raising its rates in order to slow it. There is a minuscule proportion of the overall inflation pressure from carbon pricing, and in any province where the federal backstop is at work, the money is returned to the citizens of that area.

To get a broader sense of that, some government spending is essential to help lower-income Canadians be able to cope with various pricing pressures.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I want to respond to the comment about helping citizens cope with the rising costs.

I would argue that working to reduce the cost of everyday items that are needed to live would help Canadians cope. A one-time \$500 cheque that would be written would not increase that person's long-term paycheque and would not decrease the costs of natural gas, food and other things.

We need to work to ensure there is more of the things that we need and less government.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Victoria.

It is a huge honour to rise today on Bill C-30, to help provide relief for the cost of living and double the GST tax credit. It is really great to finally hear that the Conservatives are getting on board with an NDP proposal, as well as the Liberals. We have been calling for this for a long time. Our leader has been calling for this since early in the year, to provide targeted relief to people who are being hit the hardest by inflation.

When I talk about inflation, we are seeing a 41-year high in the rise of inflation and the prices of groceries, 10.8% just in the last year. I was just at the Port Alberni Friendship Centre at the elders luncheon. I was talking to elders, and they were telling me how unaffordable it is getting. People are living in already compromised housing, in precarious situations, struggling to make ends meet, to pay for groceries or cell phone fees or to put gas in the tank. They are being hit from all sides.

When I talked about these measures, albeit small, it is so important to them to get this relief quickly. I am really hoping that the passage of this bill would happen quickly so that we could get support to those Canadians who receive the goods and services tax credit. The doubling of this credit would make a big difference for them in the next six months. In fact, it would help provide relief for over 12 million Canadians, which is a lot of people who are really feeling the pinch.

I talked about what people are feeling and the pressures they are feeling. I do not know why the Liberals took so long to do this, but they did come on board. They also provided an excess profit tax on the banking industry, which is going to generate about \$6 billion over five years. That is really important, because it could help provide relief for Canadians who are struggling the most. However, the Liberals left the oil and gas sector off the hook. They left their

friends in the wireless sector off the hook. They left their friends in the grocery store chains that are making massive profits off the hook.

In the meantime, these inflationary prices are being shouldered by everyday Canadians while these corporations are making record profits. If the Liberals had applied that excess profit tax to those other sectors, we would have had a lot more money to help everyday Canadians who are really experiencing difficult times due to increased inflation. Also, the Liberals have not addressed tax havens. We know the PBO said that this is costing about \$25 billion in tax revenue every year. CEOs get a tax advantage on their wins ahead of everyday Canadians. They get tax preferences.

When I look to the Conservatives, they have not brought any new ideas to help provide relief to Canadians. Great Britain applied an excess profit tax on the oil and gas companies of 25%. Why do the Conservatives in Canada not do that? It is because we know they are the gatekeepers for the big corporations. They are here to protect the profits of shareholders and the big corporations.

We hear them talking about the increase to CPP and the increase to EI, and they call them payroll taxes. I was self-employed for 15 years. I ran a chamber of commerce for five years that was runner-up for chamber of the year in British Columbia. These are not taxes. These are actually investments in the employees. It is retirement security. In fact, it was Conservative premiers who were calling on Ottawa to ensure that we increase CPP contributions so that people could retire with dignity. People cannot afford to retire with what they are getting right now. It is leaving people vulnerable. These are not taxes. This is about employers matching their employees' contributions so that they have more money to retire on. These are deferred wages. The increase in EI is to ensure that if people lose their job or there is a disruption in the workplace, they are protected. It should be all of our parties looking after the employees.

● (1645)

When we talk about what we are trying to do, this is just one suite of benefits. We are bringing forward a dental care plan and we are glad to see the Liberals get on board, but it is disappointing to see Conservatives not supporting getting dental coverage to people.

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I keep hearing from Conservatives that 70% of people across Canada are covered by a dental care plan. Penny just wrote to me from my riding and said, “I have to save for two to three years to cover my share of the dental cost for upper and lower dentures. Too many seniors cannot afford dentures, let alone dental repairs like root canals or major work they need badly. They are at the age where their teeth start falling out and dentures are needed.” Penny needs help.

I raised this here in the House. My friend Ted, in Parksville, has lost his teeth. He has one tooth hanging out of his mouth. He cannot eat. He has fallen into depression, and he has lost 40 pounds. He is saying this plan is going to make a big difference for him. When I raised it in this House, a Conservative MP said that Ted needs to go back to work. That is what the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan alluded to. Ted is 77. It is not okay to send Ted back to work so he can put teeth in his mouth and eat. That is not okay.

Laura from Courtenay writes, “My daughter is in dire need of a root canal on her second last upper molar. She's in pain. The dentist has booked her in as soon as possible, August 16. However, for some reason, her medical needs are not covered under our health care and I'm not sure why this is as it's a medical emergency.” She talks about the threatening aspects of dental care. “Left untreated, dental abscesses can lead to serious complications, like a stroke, heart attack or life-threatening sepsis”, she says. “Why are my child's health care needs not being taken care of by our health care system?”

I think it is mighty rich when I hear Conservatives who have dental care coverage vote against a dental care plan. Is that not unbelievable? It is okay for them to have dental care coverage, but not for the most vulnerable.

Dermot, who lives in Qualicum Beach, says, “As my income is below the threshold you mentioned, I am retired and thus uninsured, this affects me. I know that you take pride in the role your party played in the introduction of medicare all those years ago.” New Democrats are proud because we need a health care system that is truly head to toe.

I am the critic for mental health and harm reduction for the federal NDP. We need mental health care. We need parity between physical and mental health. The Liberals promised \$4.5 billion a year ago. They said they were going to work with the provinces so that people can get mental health care when they need it. People need mental health care, and they need it now. It is clogging up our health care system when people are in emergency rooms and actually need health care supports.

The federal Liberals have dropped the ball in terms of ensuring that we have a truly head-to-toe health care system. We are still waiting. We know they can do it. We saw them do it with child care. It took one year. They worked out a deal with the provinces. Why are they not doing that when it comes to mental health?

We need to help people when they need it. We are committed to that. Through COVID, it was increasing CERB to \$2,000 and the wage subsidy from 10% to 75%. With the commercial rent assistance program, although it was boondoggled, New Democrats helped them fix it, as well as the paid sick leave, and now we are

bringing in rent relief, dental care and the doubling of the GST tax credit. We are going to continue to show up with proposals to get help to Canadians now.

It takes forever to get the Liberals on board. There are many more things we can do. We know that the housing crisis is absolutely having a massive impact. The Conservatives love to throw mud at the Liberals in the doubling of house prices, but, guess what, on their watch, under Stephen Harper, housing prices doubled, too. They have gone up fourfold under these consecutive governments, making housing out of reach. We need non-market housing for people. Saying that the private sector is going to solve this problem is unrealistic. It has not happened anywhere in the world.

I am calling on all of us to work together to bring forward solutions and for members to work with us. New Democrats are here to work with them. We are glad to see all members in this House supporting this legislation. This is going to provide relief to 12 million Canadians. We can do more, we want to do more and we look forward to working with members.

● (1650)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member across the way was a chamber of commerce executive. I was a chamber of commerce manager in Guelph for many years as well.

I hear the arguments being brought forth by the Conservative Party that everything must be a tax if it is an investment in Canadians, whether it is employment insurance, the Canada pension plan increase or pricing pollution, never mentioning the rebates that go back to Canadians, which they can keep as they reduce their carbon footprint.

Could the hon. member maybe comment on the business of supporting the entire person, including mental health, housing, food and economically?

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, we know what happens when we do not look after people. If they do not have good dental care, they end up in the emergency room. If they do not have mental health supports, it drains the whole system. I was just with a first responder, a friend of mine who works for the Ottawa police department. He said that so much of his time is spent dealing with mental health issues. When we do not have a head-to-toe system or pharmacare, when people do not get the medicine they need, they get sick and end up in the health care system.

We have asked the Liberals to increase health care transfers as well, so that we can make sure that people get access to the health care support they need when they need it. We need a system, but we need to make sure that it is funded properly. We see corporations with runaway excess profits. We know we can invest in saving taxpayers' money not by straining the other systems, but by actually providing solutions in dealing with mental health, dealing with dental care and dealing with our health care system in a way that is more efficient and with the proper supports and investments. We know we can save taxpayers' money in the long run.

It is actually prudent and good fiscal policy to ensure that we have a head-to-toe system, and that is something we will continue to push for, especially when it comes to mental health. We need parity within physical and mental health. I tabled a motion around that, hoping that all parties in this House would support that motion.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague is also from our home province of British Columbia. British Columbia has some of the highest gas and fuel prices. We know that Canadians who are living in rural and remote areas are disproportionately impacted by higher food prices and higher gas prices. We now know, from a recent report, that Canadians are paying higher prices in taxes than they do on food, gas and living costs for a roof over their head.

I do agree with our hon. colleague that we have to view mental health the same way we view physical health, but this is not a plan. As we have seen time and again with the government throwing money at something, while it is nice and will help, it is not a plan.

Does my hon. colleague agree that a real plan should be developed to help Canadians?

• (1655)

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, that is exactly what we have been calling for. The member voted against my bill to have a national strategy and a response to the toxic drug crisis in this country. The same member says we need a plan, but then he votes against the plan.

Of course we need investments, but the Conservatives are even afraid to go after the big oil and gas companies that are having record profits while fuel prices at the pump are skyrocketing. Where are the Conservatives? We see the Conservatives in Britain with 25% on excess profit, but these Conservatives do not have the courage to do that. They are going to leave it on the backs of workers and everyday people.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni for his speech and for his enthusiasm, which is palpable.

What bothers me a bit in this debate, however, is the feeling that several short-term gains are being made, but there is no overarching vision.

Of course, inflation is really high at the moment, which is taking a serious toll. However, high inflation is often followed by a de-

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pression and austerity. In that respect, temporary measures have temporary effects, but they can have long-term repercussions.

I would like my colleague to tell us whether the temporary measures are sufficient.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, it is not good enough. This is just temporary relief. I totally, wholeheartedly agree with my colleague that greedflation has taken over. We have corporate greed that has run out of control and inequality that is skyrocketing and needs to be addressed. One thing we agree with the Bloc on is that we need to make sure that we are closing those tax loopholes for the super wealthy and that large corporations pay their fair share. The Bloc, the NDP and the Greens have been calling for that, but the Liberals and the Conservatives are the gatekeepers for the super wealthy.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are speaking today on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people. I represent the riding of Victoria, and the riding includes the homelands of the Lekwungen-speaking people, the Songhees and Esquimalt first nations, as well as part of the territory of the W'SANEC nations. It feels especially important to recognize first nations, Inuit and Métis nations, as September 30 is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. In my community, there will be a South Island powwow hosted by the Songhees Nation, as well as the annual Orange Shirt Day event.

I want to mention two incredible people in my riding who have poured their time and energy into this important work: Eddy Charlie and Kristin Spray. Eddy is a residential school survivor and he has dedicated himself to this work. We all have a responsibility to support the work of indigenous people and to stand in solidarity with survivors and communities today and every day moving forward.

This afternoon, we are debating Bill C-30, a bill that would double the GST rebate. This morning, we debated Bill C-31, a bill that would deliver \$500 in rental support to low-income Canadians and momentarily support kids under 12 in accessing dental care as the first step in the creation of a national dental care program, the largest expansion of our health care in a generation.

I mention these two bills together because at a time when Canadians are struggling with the skyrocketing cost of living, they are two critical pieces that will help families, students, seniors and the people who need it most. These are Canadians who are scrambling to make rent who were already struggling to make ends meet. Some are going hungry because food has become the most relentlessly rising cost in household budgets. The usage of food banks has tripled in many places, which is why we have been pushing, in addition to the GST rebate, for a windfall profits tax on grocery stores and big box stores to put that money back into Canadians' pockets. People need help and they need it now.

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When it comes to doubling the GST credit, we are talking about 11 million Canadians who would get some relief. However, that is not going to be enough on its own, and it should have come a lot sooner. In fact, over six months ago, our NDP team had been calling on the government to double the GST tax credit. We wanted a way to get help to people, and in a way that would not drive up inflation. We have relentlessly pushed for this, and now, finally, I am thrilled that we have successfully forced the Liberals to act to get help to 11 million Canadians who need it the most.

We also forced the Liberals to double the GST credit and are forcing the Liberals to deliver dental care and a rental housing benefit. The rental housing benefit would help 1.8 million low-income Canadians. This year's dental care benefit would be life-changing for many families, and it is only the first interim step in the development of a federal dental care program.

I hope we can take a moment to feel how big of a deal this is. Let us take a moment, because this will mean so much to families that right now cannot access the dental care they need. Families will no longer have to make the heartbreaking choice between paying for dental care for their kids and paying their rent or groceries. Parents have told me that being able to get dental care for their kids is going to be life-changing.

The most common surgery performed on preschool children in Canada is treatment of dental decay. Let that sink in for a moment. However, we are not stopping at kids under 12. We are going to get dental care for all Canadians who need it.

I have shared a lot of stories in the House from people I have met whose lives would be transformed by dental care, such as seniors who right now cannot chew their food, gig workers who miss days at work because of the excruciating pain and a person living with a disability who has been prescribed pain medication for her dental pain but cannot afford to get her teeth fixed. However, I want to share one more story, and I hope that my Conservative colleagues will listen closely.

I spoke to a teacher who, when she was starting out, got a part-time position as an educational assistant. At that time, she was working hard as a single mom with three young kids. She wanted to build her career, but as a part-time EA, she did not get benefits. She made the difficult choice to go on social assistance, to keep working and to have her entire monthly paycheque clawed back, because at least on social assistance she could access dental care for her kids.

● (1700)

If my Conservative colleagues claim to be fighting for single moms, dignity and respect, and if they claim to be fighting for small business owners, they should give them dental care. The Leader of the Opposition, in his speech on dental care, noticeably avoided mentioning dental care even once. Is he afraid to because he knows Canadians want this?

He also said that politicians should have to follow the same rules as single mothers and small business owners. Well, I would ask him this: Does he believe that single mothers and small business owners should have the same benefits as politicians? I ask because as an MP, the Leader of the Opposition has been using publicly funded

dental care for two decades, all while voting against giving dental care to single mothers and small business owners.

The Conservatives have been saying they want to turn hurt into hope. Well, people are hurting. They are dealing with—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. Members will have a chance to ask questions and make comments. Now is absolutely not the time to do that, as they are interrupting the member while she is speaking.

The hon. member for Victoria.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives have been saying they want to turn hurt into hope. Well, people are hurting. They are dealing with the physical pain of dental decay and the lifelong damage of going without dental care. Parents are dealing with the horrible feeling of not being able to get care for their kids. As a parent, it brings me to tears thinking about how painful it would be not to be able to get my child the care she needs.

Too many Canadians end up in the emergency room because of dental problems that could have easily been prevented if they could afford routine dental care. I am glad that my Conservative colleagues will vote in favour of doubling the GST credit, but if the Conservatives truly want to turn hurt into hope, I suggest they vote for dental care.

Just last year, the Liberals and the Conservatives teamed up to vote against dental care. They are teaming up again to oppose a windfall profits tax on corporations that are making record profits and oil and gas companies that, in a climate emergency, are raking in billions. Families are playing by the rules, doing everything right, but they still cannot get ahead.

There are three approaches in the House: that of the Conservatives, who want to let families fend for themselves; that of the Liberals, who have to be forced into doing the right thing; and that of the NDP, who are going to continue to work for people.

● (1705)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to touch on dental care. I know we are talking about two separate bills, but it is part of the larger affordability element. I would certainly agree with the member about the importance of dental care, particularly for those who are most vulnerable. The health impacts are very clear and I do not want to debate the merits of that.

My question is about the NDP, which seems to take the position that this should be administered by the Government of Canada. Of course, we are helping to provide payments, but what I have read in the news and what I can ascertain is that the NDP thinks this should be a federally administered program, notwithstanding that health is provincial jurisdiction.

I understand that we are providing interim payments until those agreements can be worked out, but outside of indigenous communities and perhaps military families, why does the NDP think this should be federally administered, as opposed to working with the provinces, which have connections on the ground, similar to what was done on child care?

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, I want to correct the record. Health care is a shared responsibility of the federal government and the provinces. We need to work together, which is part of the reason we will have an interim benefit. Families are going to get \$600 this year and \$600 next year. This means they can get their kids to the dentist to get dental care while we develop a more full-some program. Ideally, the provinces will get on board, but no matter what, the government should be committed to ensuring that every Canadian can access dental care when they need it.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is interesting, because when NDP members stand up, they like to point fingers at our new Conservative leader, when they only need to look within. I ask if the hon. member has priced out the bespoke suits or the Rolex watches the NDP leader wears. Perhaps they should be introspective and not throw stones when they live in glass houses.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, I am sensing some defensiveness from my Conservative colleagues, and I get it. When their leader gets up and says that he is not going to support dental care and when their leader directs them to vote against this life-changing policy that would provide care for kids under 12, for kids who cannot access basic health care, well—

Mr. Doherty: Come up with a real plan.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George had an opportunity to ask a question. If he wants to ask another question, he should wait until the appropriate time.

The hon. member for Victoria.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, I can understand why my Conservative colleagues are feeling defensive, as they are voting against dental care and at the same time receiving publicly funded dental care right now.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Victoria for her speech. However, I have a few concerns. First, when it comes to Bill C-31, there is nothing about taking care of seniors' oral health. We are nowhere near that point.

In Quebec, children under the age of 10 are already covered by a plan. In fact, there is an election campaign under way in Quebec right now. Unions and community groups have shared their demands in the context of this election campaign that will determine

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the next government in the National Assembly. The elephant in the room for them is the lack of health transfers, which would allow Quebec and the provinces to implement and improve their dental care plans. We are not talking about national dental insurance, but about health transfers of up to 35%.

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, we should be fighting for dental care and increased health transfers to the provinces. This is critically important, as we are in a health care crisis in emergency rooms. Staff are drowning. Of course we need to increase health transfers to the provinces now.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be splitting my time with the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

For my first speech after the summer break, I would have liked to talk about something a bit more divisive, but, unfortunately, Bill C-30 is fairly uncontroversial. It goes without saying that the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour, since it is a suggestion that was set out in all of our budget expectations. I hope that by saying this, I can avoid getting questions from the member for Winnipeg North in 10 minutes' time, since, at the end of the day, most of us agree on it.

The one small criticism I have for the Liberal Party is that the government was slow to act. As members will recall, the Deputy Prime Minister stood in front of the Empire Club in Toronto and simply repeated measures that were in the budget. The government could have taken inflation seriously long before now and taken quicker action. That was a little digression for the member for Winnipeg North. Now he will perhaps have something to say later.

I would like to quickly come back to inflation. In July, prices for goods and services in Canada rose by 7.6%. August brought a slight decrease, with inflation down to 7%. I am bringing this up again because I want to point out that this dip in inflation was primarily the result of a sharp drop in gasoline prices. That is why inflation slowed down.

Some of you may have seen, as I did, short videos of the Conservative leader constantly talking about people who are trying to buy groceries and their experiences. I understand where they are coming from, and I agree with the Conservative leader. Consumer prices have skyrocketed. Prices at bakeries have risen 15% in the last month. That is a substantial increase. It is the same for fresh fruit, with prices having risen by 13.2% compared to a year ago.

This is a developing phenomenon and we need to analyze it. Inflation is a complex economic situation. It will soon be clear where I am going with this. I have found a divisive element in something that is usually undisputed.

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It is a complex economic situation. I think we need to be careful how we respond to inflation. We have to be careful because the type of inflation we are seeing right now is not necessarily one we have seen before. In the past, it was a demand-side issue. What we are seeing now is an issue on the supply side as pressures from labour costs and energy costs are creating a supply crisis that is causing this inflation.

Members will agree that there is no easy solution, especially when we take into consideration other causes that are completely out of our control, such as the war in Ukraine and global energy problems. It goes without saying that there is no easy solution. Why do I say that?

I am not an economist and I do not know much about the mechanics of macroeconomics and microeconomics, but I am very familiar with political dynamics. As such, I can talk about what we should not do to fight inflation. In my opinion, what we should not do to fight inflation is use the inflationary tensions we are currently seeing to advance a political agenda; to me that comes back to playing partisan politics on the backs of the most vulnerable. I do not believe that populist speeches that use the catchphrase “have more in their pockets” are appropriate for fighting inflation. Such speeches might unite the discontented, but they do little to offer solutions to those on the losing side of our economic system.

• (1710)

All this kind of populism does is distort things by offering piecemeal solutions, such as reducing the gas tax. In my opinion, over the past few months, we have been seeing a Conservative brand of populism stand up for the most vulnerable members of our society. I am not trying to pick a fight, but the Conservative Party does not exactly have a history of standing up for people disadvantaged by the economic system. Let me explain why I interpret the new Conservative leader's messaging as a kind of populism.

Here is a brief definition of populism.

The first thing to understand about populism is that many describe it as a divisive political strategy used to frame issues in black and white and pit people against one another. I have been listening to my Conservative colleagues for a while, and that seems to be their approach. How do they drive people apart? My Conservative colleagues say the only way to rein in inflation is to get rid of the carbon tax. That is an overly simplistic solution. I can see that others agree.

The second thing to understand about populism is that some individuals have been giving speeches and displaying behaviour employing a certain rhetoric that combines utopianism and demagoguery, pandering to the people and pitting them against the ruling elite. I am thinking of the member for Carleton's rhetoric and a few clips I saw online in which he talks about a mother having to water down milk because she can no longer afford to feed her family. The member for Carleton said that the central bank is to blame for this situation. The Conservatives want someone to blame for inflation, so they have chosen the head of the central bank and the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister may have caused some harm, but the Conservatives are making the complex economic problem of inflation into a wedge issue.

The third thing to understand about populism is that it condemns institutions that, in the populist view, do not pay enough attention to people's aspirations. It portrays political opponents as elites with little regard for the ideas of the people and popular common sense. We also heard this sort of rhetoric from the leader of the official opposition when he talked about the Prime Minister being out of touch and about the head of the central bank.

I personally do not believe that this Conservative populism offers any proposals or solutions to fight inflation. Rather, I believe that it allows the Conservative Party to rally malcontents, those people on the losing end of our current economic system, to their banner without offering them any solutions. I will explain why I believe that the Conservative Party is not offering solutions.

What does the Conservatives' traditional economic rhetoric sound like? I have always seen it as being similar to the Washington consensus, which emerged from the liberal ideology espoused by the Chicago school of economics. What is this rhetoric? I have been here since 2019 and have frequently seen the member for Carleton champion the laissez-faire approach. He has done so on many occasions. What is the Chicago school's Washington consensus all about? It advocates the systematic liberalization of markets and interest rates. That is strangely similar to the proposals frequently put forward by the Conservative member for the full privatization of businesses and the deregulation of markets. It sounds a lot like the Conservatives' rhetoric. In particular, there is an emphasis on heavy budget cuts, especially by reducing public spending. We heard this often, even during the pandemic.

That is the Conservative Party's rhetoric. Does it structure government action in such a way as to help the most disadvantaged? I seriously doubt it.

• (1715)

Two very interesting books by Joseph Stiglitz tell us the complete opposite. By implementing such measures, in line with free-market liberalism—

• (1720)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry to interrupt the member. I was listening closely to his speech but I see that his time has expired.

We will now go to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

[English]

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, normally I try to engage in French, but I want to make sure my point is very clear.

I was interested in the member's conversation around supply-side economics. Of course the inflationary period we are seeing right now is somewhat unique. The Bank of Canada is increasing its benchmark borrowing rate to try to bring down demand.

Does he have certain concerns on the monetary policy side such that if this is a supply-side economic issue that is driving inflation, and notwithstanding the Bank of Canada is trying to do its job to bring down demand, it may prove difficult to actually quell inflation because this is a supply-side economic issue?

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I will try to respond to my colleague while I finish my speech, talk about what needs to be done and suggest some solutions.

I never thought I would have to say this, but I think that we need to protect the independence of the central bank. I never thought a politician would have to say this, but in light of the attacks by the member for Carleton, I have to say that we must indeed protect the independence of the central bank.

There is one thing I think is fundamental, however. We must reduce our dependence on oil, and the government should therefore probably stop giving such astronomical subsidies to this industry. My colleagues and I know that the oil and gas sector is an bottomless pit for public funds. In Canada alone, through Export Development Canada, or EDC, we are talking about an average of \$14 billion a year.

If that money were reallocated in a better system with stronger social policies, we would have a much easier time tackling inflation.

[English]

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, with reference to my hon. colleague across the way who was questioning as to whether this inflation was being driven more by supply-side economics, I wonder if the member could comment as to whether it is the supply side from economic goods or the supply of cash, in his opinion, that is driving this inflation.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I am not an economist. However, what I am hearing from economic experts is that we are in a supply crisis, not a demand crisis. Very high fuel prices and labour shortages are what got us into this supply crisis, which is driving inflation.

How can we address labour shortages?

The Bloc Québécois has made a number of proposals. Allowing seniors to return to work and providing incentives to do so is one way to address labour shortages and reduce the effects of population aging. Transferring certain powers to Quebec could help as well. Immigration is a total mess. Every riding is having issues with temporary foreign workers. We could alleviate labour shortages by making it easier for foreign workers to get here. We can take some of that off Ottawa's plate.

I think there are helpful measures that could be put in place. They would be more useful than simply saying that the head of the central bank should be fired.

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the cost of living does not seem to be factored for my constituents in Nunavut in this

bill. I wonder if the member could respond to the passing of this bill being absolutely necessary, especially with increases factored for remote and isolated communities. This is actually very necessary to make improvements for those more vulnerable communities.

• (1725)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague. The government could do more. I would reiterate the solutions I mentioned earlier. If we stop dumping money down the bottomless fossil fuel well, maybe we will have more money to support our communities.

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are here today to debate Bill C-30, an act to amend the Income Tax Act regarding the temporary enhancement to the goods and services tax, or GST, credit.

Bill C-30 is sponsored by the member for University—Rosedale, our Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. This bill, which is at second reading in the House, would create a new refundable tax credit of \$229 for a single person and \$459 for a couple, with an extra \$114 per dependent child. To be eligible for the full amount, however, people's income must be less than \$39,826 in 2021.

If Bill C-30 goes through quickly, eligible Quebecers and Canadians may receive that tax credit in October. If not, it will not be available until November or December, which is very late. This measure, which will cost an estimated \$2.5 billion, should help 11 million people. It is one tactic in the fight against inflation and the declining purchasing power of families in Quebec and Canada.

We in the Bloc Québécois have no problem supporting Bill C-30, but we wonder if the \$39,826 threshold to receive the full benefits is not a bit low. Even with a slightly higher salary, home ownership is not possible in Quebec or anywhere else in Canada.

In the Laurentians, where my riding is located, the average rent for a three-bedroom apartment was \$1,834 last spring. That is more than the cost of rent for the same type of apartment on the island of Montreal, and that is the number from six months ago.

Given that the cost of housing has risen twice as fast as the consumer price index, that number has already increased by \$250 in only six months. When you do the math, it gets truly frightening. The bottom line is that an income threshold of \$39,826 could almost be qualified as stingy.

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There is more, however. The rebate decreases by 15 cents for every dollar earned above this threshold. This means that someone who earns \$41,357 will not get a penny, even if the difference between the two amounts is quite small. I do understand, however, that 11 million people will benefit. We can assume that a lot of people will fall through the cracks, and that is what concerns me.

The Bloc Québécois will support Bill C-30, but doubling the GST credit for six months will not magically allow Quebec seniors to get their heads above water.

Even before the surge of inflation, Canada was one of the industrialized countries where retirement income was the lowest compared to employment income for the same person. That number is 50.7% in Canada, compared to 57.6% in the OECD and 63% in Europe. Once we retire, we get half of what we earned when we were working. That is not a lot. It means that our seniors get poorer faster than those in other countries when they leave the workforce. Seniors need more than that to live in dignity. They need more than the \$40 a month for six months that the government is currently offering them.

We in the Bloc Québécois have said it before, and we will say it again: We need keystone measures that are well thought out and properly targeted.

The first order of business would be to stop cutting the guaranteed income supplement payments of low-income seniors who received the Canada emergency response benefit or the Canada recovery benefit last year.

The second order of business would be to increase old age security by \$110 a month, as soon as people reach 65 years of age. This is a measure the Bloc Québécois has been defending tooth and nail for the last two years.

Again, the Bloc Québécois will support Bill C-30, but I remind members that our party already asked for this measure six months ago in its budget expectations. It is nothing new and it did not just pop out of the heads of the Liberals. We helped inspire it. Six months is a long time when you do not know how you will make it to the end of the month or even the end of the week. Six months is a long time for the most vulnerable people and those who are in a financially precarious position. It is even worse if the refund is paid in December or October, as I said before.

● (1730)

Back home, singer-songwriter Dédé Fortin, who passed away unfortunately, summed it up best in his song *The Answering Machine*:

Yesterday, I met a poor man
He lives on the street, doesn't own a thing
He told me something that I thought was really funny
Life is short, but it can be long at times

Let us think about that.

My colleagues opposite will say that inflation is dropping, that it was 8% in July and 7% in August. That is true, but the drop is due entirely to the price of gas, which fell 18.8% after reaching an all-time high in June. Everyone knows that Ottawa does not have a say in world oil prices, which are essentially set by the London and New York exchanges.

If we exclude gas, all other indices are rising, period. Baked goods have increased by 15.6%; fresh fruit, 13.2%; children's school supplies, 20%; housing, 15%; and the list goes on. These figures are from Statistics Canada, not me. In short, the Liberals can hardly be proud of and boast about this situation.

Increasing the GST credit is a good measure, but it is largely insufficient to make up for all the cost increases caused by the current surge in inflation. Right now, 41% of Quebecers cannot make ends meet. I think it is urgent that the government step in in other areas to support them.

I would be remiss if I did not make the connection between the current relief measures and the situation of workers across the country. By country, I mean Quebec. Sadly, yesterday saw a return to the prepandemic EI system. Ottawa could have extended the measures it put in place during the pandemic. Ottawa could have delivered on its 2015 promise to reform EI. Ottawa did neither of those things. Now, six out of 10 workers are ineligible for benefits as of yesterday.

This is a government that gives with one hand and takes back with the other. How shameful. As Bloc Québécois members have said repeatedly, Ottawa has to deliver on its promise and completely overhaul the EI system. That would be, in my view, a truly meaningful measure, the kind we in the Bloc Québécois like to see. It would counter the negative impacts of the increased cost of living that is putting untenable pressure on Quebec workers. It would be far more effective than a \$225 cheque. We in the Bloc Québécois hope that the government can understand that.

[English]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, being a senior myself, I was very interested in the comments of the hon. member across the way on supporting seniors. However, I am an employed senior, whereas we have many, many more seniors in our communities who are living on fixed incomes.

The Conservatives are saying we should not be looking at increasing CPP deductions and giving more support for seniors in the future through that means. Could the hon. member comment on the need for support for seniors on things like long-term care and areas that are normally under provincial jurisdiction?

● (1735)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Speaker, the member just opened a huge door for me.

Indeed, I do not support the measures proposed by the Conservative side, should they have any. However, I would remind the House that seniors deserve much more than they are getting right now.

The Bloc believes it is simple. We think seniors' pensions should be increased by \$110 a month, not at 75, but at 65. That is one thing.

I touched on the second thing during my speech. Honestly, this is something I learned while doing some reading to prepare for this debate. It is the difference between the amount seniors receive while working and the amount they receive after retirement. I was astounded to learn that there is such a large gap in Canada and in Quebec. Seniors become much poorer when they retire. I think we should reflect on that.

[English]

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to pick up where my Liberal friend from Guelph left off in talking about seniors. The seniors in my riding have been telling me about how the rising cost of living is making it very difficult for them when they buy things like gas and groceries, as these are becoming more expensive. We know the carbon tax plays a roll in exacerbating those prices and driving up those costs even more.

Would my colleague agree with me that the government should look at scrapping the carbon tax or at least freezing the carbon tax increases in the new year to help seniors and those struggling to get by?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Speaker, I understand that this issue is important to the Conservatives, but I am not at all convinced that it is the key. The carbon tax is seen differently in different parts of Canada.

The Bloc Québécois has found other solutions that would help seniors. That is the answer to the first part of my colleague's question. I am extremely grateful that a young fellow like him is so concerned about us older folks.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am really glad to see that everybody in this House supports an NDP proposal to double the GST tax credit to help people who have been the hardest hit by inflation.

We have been hearing from Conservatives all day about getting rid of the carbon tax, yet they forget to talk about taxing the oil and gas companies, which are having record profits while prices at the pump are skyrocketing. In Great Britain, the Conservative government there went and charged a 25% excess profit tax and gave it back to people who live there.

Does my colleague not agree that the Conservatives just do not want to talk about making the big oil corporations pay their fair share and taking a load off everyday taxpayers? Instead, they want to scrap a tax that is an investment. It goes back to eight out of 10 Canadians. We want to make sure polluters pay their fair share. Maybe my colleague can speak to that.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that interesting question.

Government Orders

Indeed, there has been a lot of talk about oil in the House today and in the past few months. The Liberal government has and would have had a great opportunity. Obviously this would never come from the Conservatives, but the oil companies' profits soared over the past few months, and the Liberal government refused to take a cut.

That is too bad because we are not talking about millions of dollars, but billions of dollars. A small cut of that amount could easily help our seniors, the people who always lose out and get overlooked in our system.

● (1740)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Whitby. Tonight is the first time since June that I have formally risen in the House. I would like to begin by greeting my colleagues. I hope that they had a great vacation and summer in their ridings with their families and constituents.

We are here tonight to debate Bill C-30 which, along with Bill C-31, represents a suite of federal measures to make life more affordable for vulnerable Canadians.

I think it is very important to put things in context. Over the last couple of years, we have seen the effects of supply chains that have been rocked by the pandemic. There have been weather events. Of course, there is the war in Ukraine, caused by Russia's invasion. There are also demographic changes. The economy, in Canada and in other countries, is very robust. Unemployment is very low, and that creates inflation in Canada and around the world.

[English]

I quite appreciated my colleague from the Bloc Québécois who talked about this being a supply-side economic issue. That is what I was trying to mention, while working on my French. Hopefully it came through in the translation. The fact is that some of what we are seeing right now is being driven by factors outside of Canada that relate to the products, goods and services that we, as global citizens, want to make sure we have as Canadian consumers. It comes down to two issues when we are talking about economics and affordability. The Bank of Canada has a role with respect to monetary policy and setting interest rates and trying to keep inflation to around 2%, and the Government of Canada has a role and obligation that pairs with that, albeit independent of the Bank of Canada, which is around fiscal policy.

Government Orders

It was mentioned today in the House, I do not think it needs to be repeated, that it is important that all parliamentarians respect the independence of the Bank of Canada and its expertise in setting monetary policy. Our job here of course is to perhaps understand the implications of those decisions, but to really focus on the government's fiscal decision-making as it relates to and couples with monetary policy. We have seen the Bank of Canada acting. It has increased its benchmark rate, which is having an impact on Canadians. It is quelling some of that demand. In fact, we are looking at forecasts right now with respect to trying to avoid a recessionary period, not only in Canada but indeed around the world.

I had the opportunity to review the decision by the Federal Reserve in the United States, which has significantly increased its interest rate. There will be a conversation that will have to be had by the Bank of Canada as to whether or not it will match that rate, such that we are not impacted from a consumer side with respect to imports and the value of the American dollar going higher, or whether or not we will try to pair a bit lower, such that our exporters can benefit with respect to that economic side. It is complex. I do not pretend to stand here as a pure economic theorist, but those are the decisions that are being made right now.

That brings us to this conversation on affordability, because we know particularly vulnerable Canadians are struggling right now. During the pandemic, I will remind members, the government was there to help support the small businesses and individuals who were impacted the most. As we come out of COVID-19, as we move beyond the pandemic, it is also our responsibility to look at the situation and be able to rein in government spending.

I will go on record to say, and it has not really been talked about here in the House, particularly by His Majesty's loyal opposition, that the government is actually in a surplus situation. I think that is pertinent right now given the fact the government has had to spend. It would be unwise if the government had not stepped up and provided that economic support at that time of uncertainty to make sure our economy continued to function and move forward, and indeed to set the stage for where we are at right now.

• (1745)

Again, it is Keynesian economics at its core. Government spends during a down period when help is needed and then reins back spending when the economy is strong, as is happening right now.

How do we try to help support Canadians without impacting what the work of the Bank of Canada is doing right now, which is to try to bring down demand? I think it is what we are doing right now with Bill C-30 and Bill C-31, which are targeted measures. These are not just spending measures to provide support to all Canadians, including some of those who are the most wealthy. This is targeted to those who really need help the most.

I want to give some context to what we are talking about today. Bill C-30 proposes to double the GST credit for the next six months for both individuals and families who are eligible. That is about 11 million Canadians. The benefits at an individual level would be for someone without children with a household income under \$49,000. That is what we are talking about in terms of providing very targeted support to those who need it. For those who have families, the example would be under \$58,000. For anything above and beyond

that, these individuals would not necessarily be eligible for these supports.

It is extremely important because it is targeting those who need the help without impacting Canada's fiscal position. This is a \$2.5-billion spending measure. That is not insignificant, but it is not going to disrupt the work that the government is doing to rein in spending, at the same time understanding that the Bank of Canada has a mandate to bring down inflation. Indeed, in some contexts of what we hear His Majesty's loyal opposition calling for, the government is doing it. Perhaps that is not the narrative they want to spin, but we are working to do just that.

I just want to take a moment to speak about Bill C-31. I understand it is a different piece of legislation, but they are interconnected. This is about providing affordability measures on housing with a \$500 housing benefit for those who are vulnerable, and providing dental care. We have heard great impassioned debate and context about how important this is. The dental care is for children who are under 12 whose household income is under \$90,000 and who do not already have private insurance coverage.

Right now, conversations continue on how best to deliver this. I have asked some questions in the House of my NDP colleagues. There is merit in working out program delivery with the provinces, who are closest on the ground, who are going to be able to be there to help implement this and who would have relationships with dentists. I understand that right now this is an interim stop-gap measure to help provide that support to families.

I, as a parliamentarian, may disagree with the NDP assertion that this should be a federally administered program. Perhaps it should be for indigenous communities, where the Government of Canada shares a very close constitutional relationship. I think that is clear. Perhaps it should be for military families if there is a way to roll that out through the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces. Otherwise, this is best suited for the provincial level.

I recognize that my time is coming to a close this evening. What I want to say and what I want to reiterate is that I think these measures are reasonable, balanced and targeted to Canadians who need the support the most. We are in a situation where there is some level of economic uncertainty. Inflation is coming down. The Bank of Canada is doing its work. The government is responding in a responsible manner to not drive additional liquidity at a time when the Bank of Canada is reducing its interest rates accordingly.

I look forward to the conversation and the questions from my colleagues here tonight.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated my hon. colleague's speech, and I appreciated that I heard, twice, his use of the phrase "rein in spending".

Earlier in this debate, I asked our colleague, the member for Ottawa Centre what the government's plan was going forward and whether it was more of a series of one-off payments in response to inflation. I am encouraged to hear the beginnings of a plan through the phrase of "rein in spending".

Where would my hon. colleague envision this reining in of spending occurring?

● (1750)

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the candour of my hon. colleague opposite. We have a great working relationship on the agriculture committee.

There is a whole host of areas I could look at it, but what I want to reference is when the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance tabled her budget. There is a plan to undertake about nine billion dollars' worth of spending efficiencies that the government is hoping to accomplish. There is probably a number of areas where that could happen. We are talking about a budget, in normal times, that would be around \$370 billion. I do not want to label any one specific program; I think that would be inappropriate. However, I think there is room for the government to look at measures on efficiency and to rein in spending, similar to what we are asking Canadians to do. We know this has been a challenging time.

We are going to do that responsibly. I will certainly look forward to the government's work on that. I am happy to take any suggestions if the member has some areas where he thinks that is particularly important.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Kings—Hants for his speech, in which he touched on housing, which is an important issue. There is no denying that, with the ongoing inflationary crisis, this is one budget category that has grown even more than most.

Still, I am fascinated by the Liberal government's lack of long-term vision and its propensity for sending out cheques as a form of one-time support.

As the Bloc Québécois critic for seniors, I have seniors getting in touch with me to say they cannot afford enough to eat. They see inflation driving grocery prices higher and higher. Does my colleague from Kings—Hants really think that a one-time cheque for \$500 will help seniors? Would it not be better to consider a long-term solution such as increasing old age security significantly and permanently? I would like my colleague to comment on that, because I honestly do not think that \$500 will do much for seniors.

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

The housing issue is a very complex one. The private sector and municipal and provincial governments must be part of the solution.

Of course, the Government of Canada has a role to play and must help by implementing certain programs. However, it is above all a municipal responsibility. To some extent, the problem is rooted in the labour shortage and the supply chain.

Government Orders

With respect to old age security, a \$110-a-month increase for every senior is definitely possible. However, such a measure would cost \$10 billion per year and per budget. I understand the importance of seniors, but at the same time, it is important to think about balancing the budget.

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yes, inflation is the problem, and we can guess who is paying for it. It is everyday people, but there are solutions. For example, we have big corporations and CEOs who made record profits during the pandemic. They are not paying for it; that is a choice. Do members know who is paying for it? It is single parents getting clawbacks to their Canada child benefit. That is who is paying for it. It is everyday people who are paying more for bread. While Galen Weston, the CEO of Loblaws, makes \$5,100 an hour, the cost of bread is going up.

I am wondering why the Liberal government does not go after all these greedy corporations that are making record profits. Stop making excuses and do not make everyday people pay. Make corporations finally pay their fair share.

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, I will try to keep it short.

Those things are exactly what we did in this last budget, where we increased the expectations on banking and insurance companies. We expect them to be able to contribute a bit more during this period, so we are doing some of the measures the member opposite is suggesting. I am not going to do it on a class warfare basis and criticize people who are successful. We certainly take the view on this side that we want to increase taxes on the super-rich in this country. That is what we have done, but we can do it in a tactful way instead of just attacking individuals and corporate entities across the board in this country.

● (1755)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in today's debate on Bill C-30, the cost of living relief act, no. 1. As my colleague has already mentioned, inflation is a cause for concern for Canadians and their families. While inflation is definitely a global challenge, the impacts on Canadians are nonetheless real, which is why our government has been working directly to help Canadians have more money in their pockets.

Government Orders

Investments we have already made in the last two federal budgets and the new measures in today's legislation and in Bill C-31 will help Canadians who need it most. For example, the government's \$12.1-billion affordability plan includes doubling the GST credit for six months, as proposed in Bill C-30. This would provide \$2.5 billion in additional targeted support this year, to roughly 11 million individuals and families who already receive the tax credit. It will also enhance the Canada workers benefit at a cost of \$1.7 billion in new support for workers this year to put up to an additional \$2,400 in the pockets of low-income families. As well, there is a 10% increase to old age security for seniors over 75, which will provide up to \$766 more for seniors. That will impact over three million seniors this year alone.

The affordability plan includes cutting child care fees by an average of 50% by the end of this year. Looking at the child care fees in my riding, for example, families are paying \$1,800 a month per child, at least. When we think about it, a 50% reduction in fees means \$900 back in the pockets of those families, not to mention that in some families, both parents do not go back to work. This, in essence, supports families in having two incomes. That is almost a mortgage payment for many families.

Dental care is another one that we have added to the affordability plan for Canadian families earning less than \$90,000 a year, starting this year with hundreds of thousands of children under 12. That will obviously be extended to seniors and individuals with disabilities in years to come.

We also must remember that our affordability plan has indexed to inflation a number of benefits, including the Canada child benefit, the GST credit, the Canada pension plan, old age security and the guaranteed income supplement. The federal minimum wage, which we increased to \$15 an hour, is also indexed to inflation. Also, a \$500 payment will go out to 1.8 million Canadian renters this year who are struggling with the cost of housing.

I want to talk a little bit about the housing challenges that we have experienced and some of the solutions. My colleagues have already eloquently touched on some of the aforementioned points, including the doubling of the GST credit for six months that is proposed in Bill C-30. I would like to focus my remaining time on the housing measures proposed in Bill C-31, introduced by the Minister of Health earlier this week, which is a critical component alongside Bill C-30 in making life more affordable for Canadians.

Our government believes that everyone should have a safe and affordable place to call home. However, that goal, one that was taken as a given for many previous generations, is increasingly out of reach for far too many Canadians. Young people cannot imagine being able to afford the house they grew up in. Rents in our major cities continue to climb, pushing people further and further away from where they work. All of this has an impact on our economy as well.

This is why Bill C-31 proposes a one-time top-up to the Canada housing benefit program that would consist of a tax-free payment of \$500 to provide direct support to low-income renters. This payment would provide direct help to those most exposed to inflation and those who are experiencing housing affordability challenges. With the support of this House, the payment would be launched by

the end of the year. Specifically, the benefit would be available to renters with adjusted net incomes below \$35,000 for families, or \$20,000 for individuals.

• (1800)

The Canada Revenue Agency would deliver the money through an attestation-based application process. In order to determine eligibility, the CRA would proceed with an up-front verification of the applicant's income, age and residency for tax purposes. Applicants would need to have filed their 2021 tax return and provide information and attest that they are paying at least 30% of their adjusted net income on rent, are paying rent for their own primary residence in Canada, which would include the address of the rental property, the amount of rent paid in 2022, and the landlord's contact information, as well as consent to the CRA to verify their information to confirm eligibility.

It is estimated that 1.8 million low-income renters, including students, who are struggling with the cost of housing would be eligible for this new support. In total, the proposed funding will be \$1.2 billion, of which \$475 million were committed in budget 2022. This is a one-time top-up and would not reduce other federal income-tested benefits, such as the Canada workers benefit, the Canada child benefit, the GST credit and the guaranteed income supplement.

That is not to say this is our only measure that impacts people who are having affordability challenges with housing. The one-time top-up is part of a broader set of initiatives introduced in budget 2022, indeed probably the largest chapter in the federal budget, that will provide more than \$9 billion to help make housing more affordable, including by alleviating the supply shortages that are one of the main causes of the high price of housing. These are measures that will put Canada on the path to double our housing construction over the next decade, including with a new multi-billion dollar housing accelerator fund.

Our government has a comprehensive plan to make housing more affordable by both funding and incentivizing new builds and by helping people get into the housing market.

We are, for the first time, directly tying federal funding for infrastructure in transit to a requirement for municipalities to approve the building of more homes. All of this is in addition to further investments in affordable housing, the building of new social housing units and an additional investment of half a billion dollars to help end homelessness.

While no government can solve the challenges of affordability overnight, we remain hard at work to address the cost of living and set Canadians up for greater success. We are also doing so by laying the foundation for longer-term economic growth.

What today's legislation means is that most of our most vulnerable in Canada will receive more financial support now and, when combined with other measures in our affordability plan, will continue to receive new support in the weeks and months to come.

For the Canadians who need it most, this will make their lives more affordable exactly at the right time. This is why I strongly encourage all members of the House to support Bill C-30.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on something the hon. member mentioned right at the beginning and that is inflation being a global phenomenon. I am not going to dispute that. We know that other countries are facing inflation as well. The part the member forgot to share was the fact that, in the countries that are spending more money, we see the correlation of higher inflation such as we are experiencing here in Canada. The PBO has confirmed that. Economists across the country have confirmed that as well. The government continues to ignore the fact that higher government spending leads to higher inflation.

I am wondering if the member would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge that this government spending has exacerbated inflation and has made it far worse than it ever had to be here in Canada.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear an hon. member on that side of the House acknowledge that inflation is indeed a global problem and also acknowledge that Canada fares much better than many of our peer countries around the world.

Inflation obviously is a challenging problem and the inflationary pressures that we see today are not just the result of pandemic relief spending, which I know the Conservatives continually purport in the House, falsely. I really believe that Canada has been set up for success. That is why we have seen the economic growth and the job recovery rate. In comparison to our peers, we are faring much better in terms of job recovery and growth. We really have set ourselves up to come out of the dip in our economy from the pandemic. We have seen a strong V-shaped recovery. Now we have to work on labour challenges, supply chain disruptions, etc.

I do not believe that these new affordability measures will increase inflation.

• (1805)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, no one can be against *sucre à la crème*, but the proposed measures are temporary, whereas the problems are permanent.

My hon. colleague said earlier that housing construction would double. First, since there has been a shortage of 100,000 units per year since 2016, does that mean that, basically, 200,000 units will be built per year?

Second, will these still be \$2,500 units with a 10% discount?

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[English]

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, the affordable housing challenges we experience today are deeply problematic for many reasons, but what we have seen is a market dynamic that has exacerbated the problem that has been around for a while.

What our government has done in addition to the national housing strategy, which is a massive and sizable federal government investment in addressing that problem, is it has created greater supply and impacted over 500,000 Canadians already. As well, many rental construction projects have been happening. That plan has been rolling out with many investments across the country.

There are many examples of projects, such as the rapid housing initiative. On top of that, we have added a whole host of new measures to help curb foreign and domestic speculation in the marketplace, increase supply and really help people get into the housing market and purchase their first home.

There is a whole package of measures that are really designed to get at more of the root cause of the problem.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the New Democrats agree with this bill and the necessary relief it would provide for families. Unfortunately, the amount does not address both inflation and the high cost of living for my constituents. All the figures mentioned by the member are not reaching my constituents.

In what way will the government ensure all these investments he mentioned are reaching my constituents, who I am sure he agrees are in the most vulnerable communities he talks about?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, I do agree there are members of her community, my community and all our communities who are vulnerable.

As I think about this package of affordability measures, I think about a low-income family of, say, four people, which I think is, generally speaking, the average size of a Canadian family. It might be less than four, but let us just say four for the sake of it.

Low-wage workers are going to receive the workers benefit. There is a housing rental benefit of \$500. There is the GST credit they will be able to take advantage of. There is dental care coming online for kids in low-income families. They are getting a 50% reduction in child care fees and the Canada child benefit is increasing at the rate of inflation.

I think there is quite a lot there to support the most vulnerable families across Canada.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Kenora.

Government Orders

It is an honour to rise to speak on behalf of the constituents of Saskatoon West, but before I speak to this legislation, I would like to let everyone in Atlantic Canada know that my thoughts and prayers are with them as they recover from this weekend's terrible storm. This is a very difficult time, with property destruction, injuries and deaths, and I know that the rest of the country stands with them and is ready to help with whatever they need.

Over the summer, I spoke with many constituents, and all of them had the same message: The cost of living is really starting to hurt. Seniors are struggling to get by on their fixed incomes, and all Canadians know about the high cost of groceries, at least those of us who actually buy our own groceries. I am talking about grocery prices that are up by almost 11%. They are rising at the fastest pace in 40 years.

Here we are in week two of our new parliamentary session. Is the government talking about reducing the sky-high cost of food? Is the government talking about stopping planned payroll tax hikes, such as the tax increases on January 1 that will reduce everybody's paycheques, or the coming carbon tax price increase on April Fool's Day, which is all part of the government's plan to triple the carbon tax? Is this what we are debating? No, we are here debating legislation that was born out of a cynical coalition deal between the NDP and the Liberals to keep this tired, worn-out government in power.

Yes, this legislation, Bill C-30, is nothing more than a scheme cooked up between the NDP and the Liberals through a tweet. In the summer, the NDP leader tweeted that the Liberals needed to do this or that to count on his unwavering support, and the government responded with Bill C-30 and Bill C-31. Close to \$5 billion will be used and, to use the words of the Minister of Tourism last week, thrown into the lake to keep the NDP happy.

I do not believe that government should be throwing money into the lake just to cling to power. Governments exist to serve the people who elected them, so today I have good news for Canadians. Our party just elected a new leader who is well versed in economics. He is a man who actually understands how economic works. For years, the member for Carleton warned the government about reckless and out-of-control spending. What was his simple message? It was that excessive government spending would lead to out-of-control inflation. Well, guess what? Inflation is rampant and out of control. Our new leader predicted this, and he has a solid plan to get us out of this. In the meantime, we will continue to hold our Prime Minister to account and work hard to encourage the government to implement sensible policy.

Let us talk about this piece of legislation, Bill C-30, and the financial implications for our treasury, our economy and, most importantly, the everyday taxpayer. The government is telling us that this a limited, one-time doubling of the GST rebate that will provide \$467 for the average family. When I look at this, on the one hand, who will argue if the government wants to hand them some cash? It is welcomed relief coming at a difficult time, but it is a short-term band-aid that does not get to the heart of the problem. If we do not fix the core problem, then more band-aids will be proposed, and indeed we are already seeing this. While the government says that this is a one-time payment, it is openly admitting that this is just the start of a larger government spending package. Bill C-31, for example, includes more inflation boost in cash injections, which

is just the start of an even bigger spending program that the health minister cannot even quantify right now.

I think this would be a good opportunity to take a moment to provide the government with some information that it may not understand. You see, I, like many of my Conservative colleagues, studied economics. Like me, many of my Conservative colleagues have run businesses and created jobs prior to being elected to this great House. I used sound economic principles to build my successful business and run my own household with the help of my wife. Together, we understood some of the basic economic principles and used them successfully. Now, we are not particularly smarter than other Canadians. In fact, I would suggest that most Canadians understand these basic economic principles and use them every day to manage their own households.

What are some of these basic principles? First, there is only so much money. It is not infinite. There is not a magic money tree in the backyard where we can go when we need a little extra cash. No, we have to make some hard choices. We have a limited amount of money with unlimited ways to spend it, and so we have to sit down together, weigh the pros and cons of the various options available and make a choice. Sometimes that choice is hard, especially right now. Families have to choose between inflated food prices and paying the carbon tax on their heating bills. These are not easy choices, but people are creative. Families find ways to scrimp and save in one area to allow them to spend in another. That is the first principle: Money is finite.

The next principle is that borrowing money is like playing with fire. It needs to be done very carefully and in a controlled manner. Yes, sometimes we need to borrow money, when we are borrowing to purchase a house, for example, but loan payments can become a heavy financial burden, especially when interest rates start to rise.

● (1810)

That is why most families understand that borrowing should be temporary, and that is why, when loans get paid off, there is great celebration in a household and a wonderful feeling of freedom. That is the second principle: borrow with caution. How does this apply to the government? If the government applied these two simple principles, the results would be lower taxes and lower debt. Canadians could keep more money in their pockets and have the freedom to spend their money the way they choose.

There is a third, very important principle I also want to talk about. This one is a larger principle that governments really must understand and apply. The third principle is the law of supply and demand. The easiest way to understand this is through an example. If consumers have \$10, and the store has 10 loaves of bread, then consumers will pay \$1 for each loaf of bread. If the government suddenly gives consumers an extra \$10, but the amount of bread does not increase, now people are going to pay \$2 for each loaf of bread. That is inflation. The loaf of bread goes from costing \$1 to \$2, and that is exactly what is happening in our country right now.

The government has dramatically boosted the amount of money available to people with \$500 billion in the last two years. This extra money has bid up the price of everything that we buy. This extra money has also been tacked onto our national debt, resulting in increased interest payments, an obligation that our children's children will have to deal with long after we are gone from this place. When the Prime Minister famously said he does not think about economic policy, this simple principle is what he was not thinking about, and because he was not thinking, we are in this mess today.

I will once again remind everyone that the Conservative leader does understand these principles and is committed to running government according to them. What would it look like if Conservatives were in charge right now? Let us say we had a Conservative prime minister and that we believed the government should provide some GST tax relief to Canadians, just as Bill C-30 proposes. How would we implement something like this?

First, we would understand that money is finite and that we cannot go to a magic money tree to implement this bill. We would task our government to find savings somewhere else to pay for this new program. We would recognize that a new dollar spent would require a dollar to be saved somewhere else, just like all Canadians do every day when they manage their own households. If the government behaved like this, it would not take long for inflation to back down and for taxes to be reduced. That is how Conservatives would govern.

I need to come back to the topic of high prices and the rampant inflation that we see every day. There is a grocery store a few blocks down 22nd Street from my constituency office. The folks who shop there know that I sometimes set up shop there on the weekends to shake hands, hand out reusable grocery bags and chat with my constituents in Saskatoon West.

I also shop there for groceries with my wife Cheryl. Cheryl and I have seen our grocery bill go up every month. It may be salad ingredients, such as lettuce and tomatoes. It might be meat and potatoes, or the side dishes and vegetables. Bread, milk, coffee, pop and chips, everything, has increased in price, and prepackaged portions are decreasing. I am not just talking about small increases. Look at the cost of meat today versus two years ago. It has nearly doubled in price. That is 100% inflation.

Chicken breasts used to go for five in a package for \$10. Now we only get three for that same price. They have cut the portion size to hide the cost increase. I was just at Costco this weekend, and I bought a four-pack of bacon. It used to cost \$20, but now it costs \$30. That is 50% more.

Government Orders

Is this a result of Russia invading Ukraine, as the Liberals would have us believe? How much beef, chicken, lettuce, potato chips, rice, coffee and milk do we get from Ukraine? It is probably zero. The vast majority is farmed and harvested right here in Canada. It is the domestic policy of the federal government, such as printing cash for the past two years, that has put Canada in this inflation period. It is domestic policies, such as the Bank of Canada aiding and abetting the federal government by underwriting its massive debt load instead of sticking to its mandate to control inflation. It is domestic policies, such as the carbon tax and fertilizer reductions, that are hurting our farmers and causing food prices to soar. It is domestic policies, such as ramming massive spending legislation through the House of Commons to keep a marriage of convenience with the NDP alive.

As I wrap up, I want to focus on accountability. Who is accountable for the \$5 billion the government is shovelling out the door to satisfy a Twitter outburst from the NDP leader? I know it will not be the Liberals and the NDP, as they ram the legislation through Parliament and pat themselves on the back like they like to do. Instead, it will be the people of Saskatoon West left holding the bag through more inflation, higher taxes and reduced benefits from the government. Rodney Dangerfield famously said he gets no respect. Unfortunately for Canadians, from the Liberal government, they get no respect either.

• (1815)

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened quite carefully to what the hon. member has said over the last 10 minutes. I just cannot get my head around something.

He says the increased interest rate is causing inflation to increase, which I disagree with. If the United States increases its interest rate and we do not follow, that would depreciate the Canadian dollar, which would be an even worse situation with the inflation here in Canada.

My question goes to his comment on national debt. He thinks the government spends so much money increasing the national debt. Almost in the same paragraph, he said that the government should cut taxes. If we cut taxes, we reduce our revenue for the government.

Would that not increase our national debt even more?

Government Orders

• (1820)

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, I think the member's question demonstrates quite clearly the issue that we have here. The government does not really understand how economics work. All economists are willing and very happy to explain to people that, when governments add a lot of money to the economy, it causes inflation. It is a proven fact. It happens all the time, and we are seeing it right now.

Yes, it is happening in different countries around the world, but it gets worse depending on how the government impacts that. In Canada, our government has shovelled so much money into the economy that our inflation is actually hurting us more than it needs to. That is what we will be fixing with the new Conservative government.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we all agree that the price of pretty much everything has gone up. We see it at the pumps, at the grocery store, in our rents, everywhere. The member is suggesting that we lower taxes to give taxpayers a break. I can understand how he feels. However, it is still a temporary measure. What permanent, predictable measure can he suggest to give taxpayers a break in the medium and long term?

[English]

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, it is a good point. We need permanent solutions to these problems. A temporary tax relief measure like Bill C-30 is helpful, as I said, but it is only temporary.

What we need to do is get government out of the way of our economy. The government is stepping in and messing around with the economy in ways that cause businesses to make decisions differently than they would have before. It causes us to lose jobs. It causes our economy to not have the economic output that it should have, which affects everything from jobs to incomes, from paycheques to government revenue. This is the direction we need to go in. We need to help the government get out of the way so we can let our economy do what it is supposed to do, which is better for everyone, including government.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I always laugh when I heard Conservatives talking about smaller governments and for the government to get out of the way.

We can look at Phoenix. They farmed out the payroll system for the government to save \$70 million a year. It is going to cost \$2.2 billion by the end of next year. They gutted Veterans Affairs by a third, which has led to a backlog of 50,000 applications for disabled veterans, the people who put their lives on the line. These are applications that are not even open yet. They were also a train wreck for DFO. They gutted DFO. I live in a coastal community. I know how that plays out.

One thing the member said in his speech was about those of us who buy our own groceries. What about the MPs who do not pay for their own dental care? It is unconscionable. Ted in my riding from Parksville is 77 years old. What did the Conservative member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan say? He said that Ted should go back to work.

Ted's teeth have fallen out. Does this member believe Ted should go back to work?

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, the government has a role to play in helping our economy in many ways. Helping people who are not able to work and who need a leg up is part of the whole role of government. It is one of the key roles of government.

However, governments cannot do that effectively when they are crippled financially. That is the whole point. We need to keep government out of the areas that it should not be in so it can excel and focus on the areas that it should be focusing on. When government is messing around in things it should not be in, it takes away the opportunity for government to help people like the one my colleague referenced.

We can have it both ways. The government needs to step aside, let the economy do its thing by generating the cash and the revenues, and then the government can turn around and do the things it needs to do, like defence and helping those who need help. We can accomplish this, and we will accomplish it.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for the warm reception. It is an honour to be joining the debate today and to be the closer of business this afternoon before a very important discussion later this evening.

Of course, I want to thank my colleague from Saskatoon West for being so gracious as to split his time with me today. I appreciate his comments. I have to say, despite being a fan of the Saskatchewan Roughriders, he is actually a great guy and a valued colleague in this House.

This is also my first opportunity to rise for a speech in this new session of Parliament. I have to say that I am very excited to be back here at work. I hope my colleagues on all sides of the House had a very productive and restful summer and had some time to spend with their families and loved ones as well.

Given the recent circumstances that led to the debate we are having later this evening, I want to take the opportunity before I begin my remarks on Bill C-30 to say that my thoughts are with all those in Atlantic Canada right now. I know that everyone across the Kenora riding feels the same in the wake of the terrible destruction and the pain the recent storm has caused. I want to express my sympathies to everyone in Atlantic Canada right now and reiterate the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition and Conservatives earlier today, when he said that our party stands ready and able to work with the government and assist it in any way we can to ensure its efforts are supported and that we are doing everything we can to support people who are suffering right now.

Going back to Bill C-30, the topic at hand, as I have a few more minutes here, I am honoured to be able to speak to this, given the incredible challenges that Canadians and those in northwestern Ontario are facing. It is really a shame to me that it has taken so long for us to get to this discussion, because I know the Conservatives were raising concerns about the cost of living many months ago, before we rose for the summer. Other members in other parties were doing the same as well, pleading with the current government to bring forward a plan to address the affordability crisis. However, throughout the summer the government sat on its hands and allowed the cost of living to continue to skyrocket, while many in my riding and across the country fell further behind.

This plan put forward in Bill C-30 to double the GST credit for six months is something I am certainly happy and relieved to see, but it is unfortunate that it took so long for the government to finally move forward on this. If we look at essential things like groceries, they are skyrocketing. Of course, every family needs to buy them. In fact, nearly a quarter of Canadians right now have cut back the amount of food they are able to buy, just to try to keep up with the rising prices. Butter is up 17%, eggs are up 11%, bread is up nearly 18% and fresh fruit is up over 13%, making it hard for every single person across this country to get by.

These issues are really exacerbated in the north, in my riding, in the municipalities I represent, and especially so in the remote northern first nations, where we can expect costs to be at least 1.5 times higher on a good day. This inflation that we are seeing, which has been driven by the government's reckless spending, is really having an impact on remote, rural and northern communities, like those I represent in northwestern Ontario. That is why we are continuing to see the rates of food insecurity continue to skyrocket. In fact, in some parts of northern Ontario, food insecurity rates are as high as 70%, and we have seen over the past few months more people turning to food banks and other areas of support because they are unable to get by.

Therefore, this support that we are talking about in Bill C-30 is certainly long overdue and welcome. We hope the government will continue to bring forward solutions such as this and continue to work with the opposition. As I said off the top, we have been advocating for supports such as this for quite some time now.

Speaking of time, that is probably it for me. I appreciate the opportunity to share a few thoughts, and I look forward to continuing this debate at the next opportunity.

EMERGENCY DEBATE

• (1830)

[English]

HURRICANE FIONA

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the consideration of a motion to adjourn the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely hurricane Fiona.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP) moved:

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That this House do now adjourn.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honour to rise here this evening to begin this debate on the federal government's response to hurricane Fiona and the devastation it has brought upon Atlantic Canada. As the NDP critic for emergency preparedness and climate resilience, I felt it was an urgently needed debate, and I would like to thank the Speaker for granting my request and the Conservatives for agreeing that it is a necessary discussion.

I want to start by saying that my thoughts are with all the Canadians on the Atlantic coast who have been affected by this catastrophic storm. My thoughts go to the friends and families who have lost loved ones, to those who have lost their homes and to those who have lost their livelihoods.

I lived on the island of Newfoundland for three years, including some months in a remote lighthouse, so I know very well both the ferocity of Atlantic weather and the resilience of Atlantic Canadians. I have travelled widely in Atlantic Canada over the past 40 years or so, including visits to P.E.I. and Nova Scotia just this year, so I am familiar with many of the communities that have been devastated by hurricane Fiona.

Hurricane Fiona was no ordinary Atlantic storm. It was the strongest storm ever to make landfall in Canada. Atlantic Canadians remember hurricane Juan in 2003 and hurricane Dorian. Fiona combined the intensity of Juan with the size of Dorian. Fiona recorded the lowest-ever atmospheric pressure in Canadian history and packed winds of up to 180 kilometres per hour. The storm surges swept across the coast like a series of tsunamis.

The human cost has been catastrophic. Several lives have been lost. Hundreds of homes were destroyed by storm surges or high winds, and many were swept out to sea. Roads, wharves, airports and other infrastructure have been badly damaged. Fisheries infrastructure has been destroyed in the middle of the fishing season; agricultural crops were compromised just before harvest, and close to a million Canadians are still without power.

I must pause to say that I will be sharing my time with the MP for Victoria.

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We knew this storm was coming. As it tracked north up the Atlantic coast from Bermuda last week, the forecasts were uniformly calling for a record-breaking weather event. I want to give credit to the scientists of Environment Canada for their strong modelling, which informed preparation for hurricane Fiona. It was those strong warnings, I am sure, that kept the injuries and deaths to an absolute minimum. I have heard people comment time and time again that it was a miracle that more people were not injured and killed, so for that I thank the science and the warnings that went out.

I received a call from the Minister of Emergency Preparedness on Saturday, and I thank him for that update on the federal response. He mentioned that the armed forces would be helping with cleanup efforts. I have since heard that the naval vessel HMCS *Margaret Brooke* will be travelling along the south coast of Newfoundland to carry out wellness checks in many of the small outposts there that have no road connection.

These are critical tasks and I am happy to hear they are being done, but important questions remain: How prepared were the armed forces for this storm that we knew was on its way ahead of time, and is there more that could and should have been done in the days before the storm?

I know that most communities have armies of volunteers that step up in these situations to help with organizing accommodations and food and other emergency supplies for residents who have lost or been evacuated from their homes. I thank the volunteers, as well as the neighbours who helped people clear down trees from houses and driveways and first responders who are helping with immediate and emergency cleanup, including the power company workers who are working around the clock to bring power back to hundreds of thousands of cold and hungry Canadians.

As critical and important as these initial responses are, perhaps even more important is that we look ahead to the coming days and weeks and, unfortunately, often years for the government role in rebuilding efforts that must take place. It is late September, and winter is not far away in Canada. We have systems and programs for government support to help people who have their homes damaged by disasters, but those systems are embedded in bureaucracies that often turn anxious weeks into anxious months, while winter sets in and families still have no place to go. They are forced to rely on the kindness of neighbours or relatives, or forced to move out of their communities entirely while waiting for help to rebuild their homes and their lives.

• (1835)

We have government programs, such as the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund, which are meant to help communities hit by overwhelming events such as fires, floods and hurricanes. In my experience, these communities, especially small communities, are left to do a lot of the heavy lifting in the rebuilding process, while they have neither the financial capability to pay for those actions nor the manpower capacity to navigate the bureaucracy to access the programs.

There are a couple of examples from my home province of British Columbia. The town of Princeton was badly flooded by the Tulameen and Similkameen rivers in last fall's atmospheric river event in southwestern B.C. It faced about a \$20-million bill in costs

to repair infrastructure. Ordinary federal-provincial government revenue-sharing agreements dictate that Princeton and other similar communities would pay 20% of those costs. It might sound like a good deal to a large community, but the entire annual tax budget of Princeton is only about two or three million dollars. It simply cannot afford 20% of a disaster. We need to come up with a permanent change to these cost structures to accommodate small communities.

Second, there is the example of Grand Forks, a town in my riding that was devastated by flooding in 2018. After months of wrangling, some intense and difficult work by the community itself and difficult decisions to radically change parts of the community, a funding agreement was reached whereby the provincial government would cover about \$38 million of the cost and the federal government about \$20 million.

The City of Grand Forks waited an entire year to get a response from the federal government on their first request for funding under this agreement. They received repeated messages from the federal government that the basic agreement was changing and they would have to be responsible for more and more of the costs. They had to repeatedly resubmit detailed funding requests. It was a bureaucratic nightmare for a small community that was trying to recover from a natural disaster nightmare.

This kind of behaviour from the federal government has to change. We have to have a kinder and more co-operative relationship between the federal government and communities in these situations.

I will finish by commenting on more long-term issues. We spend about \$5 billion every year fixing damages from weather-related disasters in Canada. Those costs are largely born by individuals and insurance companies; the federal government is covering only about 10% of those costs. That annual expense is expected to rise to \$50 billion by 2050, 10 times what it is now.

If we are to face the rising costs of these climate events and if we are to maintain our economy and communities in this onslaught of fires, floods and hurricanes, we have to start investing serious amounts of money in climate adaptation. We need investments in community infrastructure that protects Canadians, so they do not see their homes wash away on a storm surge; investments in heat pumps that would allow low-income Canadians to have air conditioning, so we will not have a repeat of the 619 people dying in a heat dome event in metro Vancouver last year; and investments in FireSmart programs to protect neighbourhoods at the interface with forests.

Reactive funding is necessary, but surely we can see the economic and community needs that point to investing for the future we all know is coming. In the meantime I just want to reiterate my support for the people of Atlantic Canada. I know they will use all of their ingenuity and strength to recover from this catastrophe, and I hope all levels of government will be there to help them when they need it.

• (1840)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we witnessed earlier today during question period, we had members from all sides of the House, whether it was the Prime Minister or other opposition and government members, expressing their thoughts and goodwill with regard to what has taken place. In fact, from coast to coast to coast, because of media, including you yourself, Mr. Speaker, bringing to the House's attention last week that we had a storm that was coming to Atlantic Canada and was also going to affect the province of Quebec, there was a tremendous amount of goodwill. Canadians from coast to coast to coast watched, and now part of the solution is to allow for those Canadians to express that sense that a part of our nation is hurting by making a donation.

I am wondering what the member would have to say about how else Canadians might be able to be involved besides giving some money, offering a prayer or, possibly for some of them, even going to the east coast.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, again, from experience in my riding with all the flood and fire events I have witnessed in my years as a member of Parliament, I can speak to the importance of groups such as the Red Cross in helping people in these disasters.

It is often the Red Cross that really does a lot of the work in relocating people, putting people up in accommodation and feeding them while they are forced out of their homes. Donations to the Red Cross would be very welcome.

Tonight we are talking more about what we can do in this place to help the people of Atlantic Canada.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member from the NDP for his kind words and for reaching out to those in my riding and the rest of Atlantic Canada who have been significantly affected by hurricane Fiona. I think it interesting we all appear to be on the same page here.

When we find out that the government can no longer manage these programs and there is an impossibility to get the money to people, will the NDP stand with the Conservative Party and ensure those Atlantic Canadians get what they need to rebuild their lives?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, the member for Cumberland—Colchester represents the area where my mother's family came from, my ancestors, so I appreciate that.

It is important to work together in this place to get help for Canadians when they need it. One example I did not give is the Town of Oliver in my riding, which had a landslide that caused \$10 million in damage. It did not qualify under DMAF for funding, and there were years of lobbying on my part. I tried to help them. The government eventually changed DMAF so that small communities can

now access funding of under \$20 million. It was too late for Oliver, but those changes can be made, and we need to work here together to make changes when Canadians need them.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I used to live in the Lower St. Lawrence region. There were times when the high tide coincided with a snow storm. We saw shorelines, garages and houses be swept away by the water. That was a lot less severe than what the Atlantic provinces and eastern Quebec experienced this weekend. Catastrophic events like these now tend to occur more and more frequently because of climate change.

My question to my hon. colleague is this: Does he think Canada is investing enough money to help polluters pollute less? Should we invest more to support innovating businesses that develop green technologies in Quebec and Canada?

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, obviously we need to put a price on pollution and make sure the processes, companies and individuals causing climate change around the world pay for that pollution so that we can do the things necessary to combat climate change. That is the mitigation part of climate change.

Tonight I have been talking about the adaptation aspect. We are stuck with the climate change we have right now. Right now, it is close to a 1.5° rise. If we stopped all our carbon emissions today, as I could only hope, we would still in this place where we would be having hurricanes and forest fires over the next centuries. We have to do both.

• (1845)

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to extend my support and solidarity to the people of Atlantic Canada. I went to high school in New Brunswick and university in Nova Scotia. I have family and friends on the east coast, and it is heartbreaking to see the devastation caused by hurricane Fiona. I want to extend my heartfelt condolences to those who have lost loved ones, to the families who have had their homes destroyed and to everyone impacted by the destruction and upheaval of this extreme weather event.

About a million Atlantic Canadians are without power, and we must do everything we can to support the families and communities that are hurt by this disaster.

I want to thank my colleague, the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay. He outlined clearly how disasters of this scale impact us all.

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We are calling on the government to not only provide immediate support to those who need it but also to look to the future. Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and more severe. It is costing communities. It means that we have to replace and rebuild with more resilient infrastructure.

Over the next 30 years, major storms and floods could cost Canada \$108 billion. Every report that comes out on the costs of the climate crisis shows that these costs are going to be astronomical, and it is important to emphasize that this is of national importance. The federal government must take a leadership role. It is so much less expensive to make proactive investments in climate resilience than to pay for the costs of destroyed infrastructure, but more than that, it also saves lives.

It is why we are calling on the government to increase investments in disaster resilience. It is why we want to see meaningful action on the climate crisis.

As I watched the videos and saw pictures, I could not help but think about the atmospheric river and the floods that hit British Columbia last year. It was less than a year ago that we were in an emergency debate on the floods in B.C.. We just have to look around the world right now at the floods in Pakistan, the increasing frequency of climate fires, the increasing severity of extreme weather events. These disasters are just a glimpse of what our future looks like.

Hundreds of people died in the heat dome in B.C.. People have lost their lives in floods and storms and forest fires. The government must significantly increase funding for the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund. It needs to urgently create a separate funding stream to assist provincial, territorial, indigenous and municipal governments so that they can take proactive action to strengthen infrastructure to meet the challenge of extreme weather events, of rising sea levels, of forest fires and other devastating natural disasters caused by the climate emergency, and we are in a climate emergency.

We are in a climate emergency, yet the government is not acting as though we are. We cannot continue down the road that consecutive Liberal and Conservative government have set us on.

As the government hands out billions of dollars to profitable oil and gas companies, as it teams up with the Conservatives to oppose a windfall tax on the record profits of oil and gas companies, the Liberal government keeps saying that it believes that climate change is real, but it does not matter what one believes if one is not taking climate action. The Liberals emphasize that they are different from the Conservatives, but with the severe impacts of the climate crisis unfolding right in front of our eyes, they will not take the action that matches the scale and the urgency of this crisis.

While Canadians are struggling with the cost of living, while Atlantic Canadians are dealing with the devastating impacts of hurricane Fiona, the government is handing over billions of our taxpayer dollars to the very corporations that are fuelling the climate crisis.

• (1850)

This is billions of dollars in subsidies that could be spent on climate action, climate solutions, climate resilience and support for

the communities impacted by these disasters. The Liberals and the Conservatives are opposing the policies that would actually make a difference for Canadians.

The Liberals refuse to actually match the scale of this crisis, the urgency of this crisis, with the kind of action needed, the kind of action that would keep warming below 1.5°C. The hard truth is that Canada is not on track to meet our climate targets and that these climate targets are not adequate to keep global warming below 1.5°C. The Liberals like to talk about believing in climate change, but we need to see action. The decisions that we make today will determine whether there is a livable future for our children and our grandchildren. These disasters are just a glimpse at the future.

We stand with the people of Atlantic Canada. We will work across party lines to ensure you have the support you need in these unimaginably difficult times. We will push the government to start treating the climate emergency like the emergency that it is. We will fight for you and for our collective future.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we have before us is an emergency debate to deal with what is taking place in Atlantic Canada and parts of Quebec today. I am hopeful that throughout the next number of hours, members will provide their thoughts on how the government can enhance support, quite frankly. We heard the Prime Minister and other ministers talk about our military, matching Red Cross donations and the tremendous amount of communication that is going on between ministerial offices and premiers' offices and other stakeholders.

The member seemed to focus her attention on the issue of climate change, and yes, we recognize it. We are not Conservatives. We do not deny climate change, but that is for another debate.

My question to the member is this: Does she have any thoughts or ideas specifically that she would like to see helping the people of Atlantic Canada and parts of Quebec?

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see that members from every party in the House are standing together in support of Atlantic Canadians. We are here together to support everyone in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and P.E.I.

However, if the member expects me to be silent about the fact that the climate crisis is one of the reasons we are seeing these increasingly extreme and increasingly frequent weather events, and if this government is going to continue to ignore the causes of these extreme natural disasters, well then, we are in trouble.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, times are often difficult in Atlantic Canada. That said, we understand that it is hard for people to afford transportation. We often live in single-family dwellings that have to be heated, but we do not have natural gas coming to a significant number of homes, and buying a car is very difficult. We often say in Atlantic Canada that people buy a beater car to get through, which is around \$2,500. How are they going to afford an electric vehicle to help support this?

I would also like to understand how tripling the carbon tax is going to cause a one-third decrease in the number of hurricanes in Atlantic Canada.

• (1855)

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, Atlantic Canadians and Canadians across this country are struggling. They are struggling with the cost of living. They are struggling not being able to access dental care. They are struggling because they cannot put food on the table and cannot afford to pay their rent. These are very challenging times, which is why New Democrats have been calling on this government to implement a windfall profits tax for the big banks, the big grocery stores, the big box stores and the big gas companies. This is essential so that we can put money back into people's pockets.

The carbon tax is a crucial piece of a climate plan, and in the last election the Conservatives actually acknowledged that, but it is not silver bullet. Unfortunately, we need a government that is actually going to take action that matches the scale of the crisis.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what we saw this weekend is but an example of what could happen more and more frequently if we keep being short-sighted, governing according to the latest polls and reacting instead of being proactive.

That being said, large investments are being made supposedly to help the environment. I am thinking of carbon capture plants that actually produce more carbon than they can capture.

I wonder what my colleague thinks about these solutions that, in the end, are not as green as advertised and what she would propose instead.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I am sorry but I will continue in English.

[English]

The member brings up a really important point. The current government has proposed handing over billions of dollars to big oil and gas companies for carbon capture, utilization and storage. This is not a climate solution. Reports have shown that this is just a giveaway to big oil and gas. We need to invest those billions of dollars the government seems set on handing over to profitable companies

into climate solutions and policies that will make a difference. The science is clear. We have the technology, the answers and the ability to meet our climate targets if we actually take the action.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the Minister of National Defence.

While it is always an honour to speak in this place, I deeply wish it was under different circumstances. Canadians from coast to coast to coast have seen the terrible images coming out of Atlantic Canada and eastern Quebec over the weekend. Homes have been destroyed by fallen trees, had their roofs blown off by extreme winds or been swept out to sea.

We also tragically had reports from authorities that people in several provinces, such as Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, have passed away as a result of the storm. Let me say that our thoughts are foremost with their families and loved ones. We are thinking of them, we feel their pain and we will be there to help and support them.

Hurricane Fiona was an unprecedented storm, unlike anything that has struck our shores before. I expect we will hear many more stories from my colleagues here tonight, from Atlantic Canadians, about how this storm affected the lives of those they represent, members like you, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to listening to them.

As the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Emergency Preparedness, I would like to start by providing an update to the House with some of the latest news from our officials. Let me first say that the Minister of Emergency Preparedness has been very active and involved in this matter from the beginning. Since we knew that there was a hurricane coming our way, he has been actively engaged, working with officials and working with other ministries, and we will hear from the Minister of National Defence, to coordinate our efforts to be ready once the storm hit Canada, not only working within the federal government but working very closely with the provincial governments and local authorities to ensure that they had all the support necessary.

Unfortunately, the minister is unable to be here. As many would know, he had knee surgery. However, he remains engaged and active, and I am working very closely with him. I wish him a speedy recovery.

In terms of the storm that hit Atlantic Canada and eastern Quebec, recovery efforts are ongoing across the Atlantic provinces. As of 3:30 this afternoon, eastern daylight time, we understand that power outages are affecting approximately 171,000 customers in Nova Scotia, 75,000 customers in Prince Edward Island, 6,800 customers in New Brunswick and 220 customers in Newfoundland and Labrador. There are zero affected customers reported in Quebec at this moment.

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States of local emergency remain in place at both Port aux Basques and Cape Breton. Thirteen first nation communities have reported impacts due to hurricane Fiona, and Indigenous Services Canada is working with those communities directly. Canadian Red Cross and Salvation Army are supporting shelters and feeding operations across the Atlantic provinces.

Two weather disturbances are expected on the September 26 and September 27 over Atlantic Canada, which may impact recovery efforts. Weather is expected to improve by September 28.

All levels of government are committed to continue working closely together to ensure that impacted communities are able to recover as quickly as possible. At the federal level, we have approved requests for assistance from Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador. Canadian Armed Forces have been deployed to assist in the local response, and I am confident we will hear more details from the Minister of National Defence when she has the opportunity to speak.

• (1900)

In addition, Transport Canada's national aerial surveillance program is providing support to assess the storm's damages in multiple provinces. The Canadian Coast Guard has also made resources available to assist where needed.

We also remain in close contact with all affected provinces as they continue their response and remain highly engaged on the news. There are ongoing, direct communications taking place, not only at the officials level between the federal government, the provinces and of course local emergency authorities, but I can also tell members that our ministers in the Canadian government are speaking with the premiers and their counterpart ministers on a regular basis. This is a team-Canada approach to deal with a very significant impact on our country.

In addition to this direct support to the provinces, our government has also announced that we will be matching all donations to the Canadian Red Cross for 30 days following this disastrous event. Through this program, the Red Cross will seek to address more immediate requirements for support for affected Canadians and their families.

Of course, we know how generous Canadians are. Right here in my community of Ottawa Centre, I am hearing from many individuals who want to know how they can help in the response and recovery. We encourage Canadians to donate to the Canadian Red Cross. The Canadian Red Cross, as many of us know, has previously been a partner to the Government of Canada in response to disasters like British Columbia's 2021 flooding and the Fort McMurray wildfires in Alberta. It has demonstrated an ability to provide impactful support to a significant number of people.

I would also like to recognize the efforts of all other partners involved in the ongoing response and recovery efforts. We know so many organizations like local NGOs, church groups and social service clubs are involved and engaged in helping the recovery. In the end, that is what communities and neighbours do for each other.

• (1905)

[*Translation*]

Our government commends the many NGOs that are already at work providing assistance to people affected by hurricane Fiona.

[*English*]

We know that while the storm is over, the response and recovery are truly just beginning. While it will take time for the full scope of the damage to be known, we recognize that provinces have already expressed concerns about the cost.

[*Translation*]

We continue to work closely with the affected provinces to identify all of the available federal resources that can help with the response and the recovery.

Our priority is to ensure the well-being of all affected Canadians, and we are committed to being there for them, now and throughout the recovery process.

[*English*]

Through the disaster financial assistance arrangements, the federal government can provide cost-sharing support when a natural disaster is so great that it challenges a province's ability to financially respond to it on its own. We stand ready to begin those conversations with the provinces, and we intend to be highly responsive to any request we receive. Helping each other in difficult times, just like we are seeing in our eastern provinces now, is just what Canadians do. That is what makes us so proud to be Canadian.

I encourage all members to continue to show their support for Atlantic communities during this exceptional time. Everyone in the House knows that we will get through this. We will get through this together and build even better communities in Atlantic Canada and eastern Quebec.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, as someone who has been a Cape Bretoner much of my life and is now a British Columbian, I have seen the climate crisis hit communities I know and love really hard. It is heartbreaking.

I want to extend thanks to all in this House for the solidarity in supporting Atlantic Canadians at this critical time and for continuing to support them, because the people of Lytton, whose town burned down last summer, have still seen nothing. Some of those people are still paying the bank for the mortgage on the house they no longer have. A lot of people need help and they need it because of the climate emergency.

My colleague is speaking on behalf of the government, and I do appreciate the advance work that the Minister of Public Safety tried to do to get provinces to act early. In Atlantic Canada, it worked and people were warned. It did not work in B.C. People were not warned of the heat dome.

Right now on the Environment Canada website is a completely inadequate consultation document that calls on Canadians to help the government put in place adaptation strategies by the year 2030. Will the hon. parliamentary secretary agree with me that we needed those adaptation plans yesterday and not in eight years?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, our focus right now is to provide the necessary help so those who are affected, and there are many unfortunately, can recover, and to restore power and get fresh water back to them so they can get to their workplaces.

In our effort, we have learned, as the member stated, that when we prepare for emergencies like these, our response is better and we can prevent the loss of life and hopefully loss of property as well. That is ongoing work.

We know climate change is having a huge impact. That is why having thoughtful, thorough, evidence-based adaptation strategies is what we need, and that is what we are working toward.

• (1910)

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate and thank the member opposite for Ottawa Centre for his kind thoughts and words.

I have a couple of very important questions that I think Atlantic Canadians would really like answers to.

First, exactly how will funds be paid to those people who make claims? Will the federal government be paying them directly, or will they be funnelled through the provinces?

Second, and perhaps more importantly, why did we choose the Canadian Red Cross? This is not meant to be disparaging to the Red Cross, but we know very clearly, especially in small towns across the country and Atlantic Canada perhaps in particular, that food banks are out there helping out and there are often volunteer fire brigades that run on a donation basis. The Red Cross is a large, multinational corporate entity, and perhaps some of the profits will be eaten up through bureaucracy.

I guess the question is, why choose the Red Cross? Does that not create a discrepancy for the smaller institutions that are acting locally and really providing help at the coalface, as it were?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, let me first of all extend my gratitude to the member opposite. I know his community has been directly hit and he has been actively trying to help his constituents. I have offered my assistance to him. I am available if he needs any information. I know that just this morning, the Prime Minister and I, along with the member for Ottawa South, visited Hydro Ottawa crews that were going to Truro, Nova Scotia, to his community, to help. I hope that will have an impact.

The Canadian Red Cross is a national organization. It has a very strong partnership with the Government of Canada. It has demonstrated a capacity to deal with large-scale events, like the one we are facing right now, and help a large number of people. That is why it is important that we work with it so that support can be provided right away to those who are impacted.

Of course, local community organizations play a very important role and are part of the recovery effort, but at this moment we need

to make sure that people are safe as quickly as possible and that power is restored. They have comfort centres available, and food and shelter also.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to say that the Bloc Québécois and I stand with all those affected. We need to assist them by providing the funding they need. We will be there to work with the government as needed.

I would like to know what my colleague plans to do about shoreline erosion. For a long time now, we have been calling on the government to invest and to give the provinces and territories money to improve shoreline protection, since events like this will happen again. I even tabled a petition on this topic during this session.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

[English]

As I was saying earlier, we need to continue to invest in adaptation strategies. We know that weather-related events impacted by climate change are becoming more frequent because climate change is real. We need to make sure we are not only fighting pollution by not making pollution free and not only curbing pollution to fight climate change, but investing in building resilient infrastructure, whether shorelines, dams or bridges. That is the important work the Ministry of Emergency Preparedness is focused on, and it will continue to do that work in an effective way so that all Canadians are safe at all times.

[Translation]

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be here this evening to take part in this emergency debate.

[English]

I will start by saying that our thoughts are with all those affected by hurricane Fiona. I was born in Kentville, Nova Scotia, in the heart of the Annapolis Valley, and I am devastated to see the damage that is being wrought on the Atlantic provinces and eastern Quebec. I would also like to echo the words of many colleagues today in extending the deepest thanks to the Canadian Armed Forces, as well as first responders, search-and-rescue volunteers and emergency managers, all of whom are working so hard to keep people safe and to help with the recovery during this exceptional time.

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I have been in touch with Premier Houston and Premier Furey and reiterated that the Canadian government is here to help. We will work closely with all regions to support the recovery, and I want Canadians who are watching this at home to know that our government and the Canadian Armed Forces remain vigilant and ready to respond and rise to the challenge, as they always do.

Over the past few days, we have seen images of devastating damage wrought by hurricane Fiona in Atlantic Canada and eastern Quebec. As a Nova Scotian myself, my thoughts are with everyone suffering and affected in Atlantic Canada and eastern Quebec. We stand with them.

• (1915)

[Translation]

We are here for them. We continue to help the provinces that need us.

[English]

Let me take things province by province.

I will say that all three branches of the Canadian Armed Forces are activated and ready to assist, as required. What are they? They are the Joint Task Force Atlantic, the 5th Canadian Division, the Canadian Rangers, local reserve units, the Royal Canadian Air Force's aircraft and crew and the Royal Canadian Navy's ships, small vessels and crew. They are all on standby and helping where they are needed.

In terms of the province-by-province work the Canadian Armed Forces are involved with in Nova Scotia and, in fact, in Cape Breton, yesterday morning, a Canadian army reconnaissance team was on the ground evaluating the damage of the hurricane and identifying which military capabilities would be best deployed and where. Yesterday, we confirmed that our Canadian Armed Forces would provide equipment and personnel to help with re-establishing electricity, roads and bridges, if required by the Province of Nova Scotia, with approximately 100 Canadian Armed Forces personnel.

[Translation]

Our personnel are there for the province.

[English]

They are available to assist the province if required. In fact, what we have is up to 100 personnel for each of the affected provinces. We are making sure that the Canadian Armed Forces are there for Atlantic Canada. The lead Canadian Armed Forces elements were ready to begin tasks this morning, and the CAF was present in communities in Nova Scotia as of this morning also.

Moving now to P.E.I., the next province to submit an RFA with the federal government, the Canadian Armed Forces deployed immediately last night to help with removing vegetation and debris from roadways to help restore the power grid, and with repairing roadways as required. As of right now, over 100 CAF personnel are in the province, and lead CAF elements are in P.E.I. They got straight to work today to help provincial authorities, in conjunction with local authorities, of course.

As for Newfoundland and Labrador, Newfoundland provided a request for assistance yesterday, and our Canadian Armed Forces

have been activating resources and personnel to provide physical impact assessments and immediate on-the-ground support to local authorities to ensure the well-being and safety of residents in the province.

Let me talk about HMCS *Margaret Brooke*. HMCS *Margaret Brooke* sailed from St. John's this morning to conduct wellness checks in four communities on the south coast. That will begin tomorrow, as requested by the province.

[Translation]

The decision to send HMCS *Margaret Brooke* will be based on ongoing assessments by regional and provincial authorities and military leadership. Although it has just completed a long deployment in the Arctic as part of Operation Nanook, it stands ready to support Canadians in need.

In Quebec, the Canadian Rangers continue to provide us with up-to-date information, so that we remain ready to assist the province, if asked.

[English]

As the situation evolves, we remain ready to respond in provinces that may need our help. We will continue to collaborate closely with provinces and other partners. I promise all Canadians that we will always do whatever we can to help.

[Translation]

We thank the members of the Canadian Armed Forces and everyone involved in these efforts for their hard work and dedication to their fellow Canadians.

• (1920)

[English]

This is an all-hands-on-deck effort, and I know that our Canadian Armed Forces will rise to the challenge, as they always do.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I join the minister in thanking all those on the ground for helping everyone through this disaster as quickly as possible. The recovery may not be quick, but the help is important nonetheless.

Three billion dollars over 10 years are being invested in the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund. I should point out that Canada has 243,042 kilometres of coastline, which means that the fund works out to \$12,343 per kilometre over 10 years, or \$1,234 per year per kilometre.

For disasters like the one this past weekend, \$1,234 a year is not enough, and these kinds of disasters are becoming increasingly common. The figure of \$3 billion is huge, but we need other more responsible measures than investing in big polluters or carbon capture plants that produce more carbon than they capture.

Could the minister talk about some more responsible and sustainable measures to support the environment and combat climate change?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question.

It is very important to remember that, in order to help the provinces and territories with these kinds of environmental disasters, we need to act on many fronts.

On our end, we have sent the Canadian Armed Forces to assist the provinces and territories. Three units are now ready to provide equipment and personnel.

Residents in the affected areas where forces are deployed have seen our members on the ground since this morning. For example, the following teams are operational and assisting as needed: Joint Task Force Atlantic, 5th Canadian Division, the Canadian Rangers, local reserve units, Royal Canadian Air Force aircraft and crews, Royal Canadian Navy ships, and small ships and crews.

These are very important measures for our country and for our provinces and territories when environmental disasters hit.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has just provided some information on the troops in the Atlantic, but I asked the Prime Minister today about the 5 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group based in Valcartier.

Are the troops of 5 Canadian Brigade Group on standby right now, ready to be deployed, or is there another brigade in Canada that is on standby to be able to act very quickly?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

We do not have a request for assistance from the province of Quebec at this time, but the Canadian Armed Forces are ready to deploy if we receive such a request.

Right now, as I said yesterday, in total we have about 100 Canadian Forces members per province available to assist in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador.

If we receive a request for assistance from the province of Quebec, we will of course assist Quebec and the Magdalen Islands.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our hearts and thoughts are with the people of Atlantic Canada. Naturally, we thank everyone who responded so quickly to this devastating event. It needs to be said that more resources are needed to help Atlantic Canadians. Of course, something must be done to mitigate the impacts of the next disaster. Most importantly, we need to end all subsidies to the oil industry and invest to fight climate change.

Is the minister willing to say right now that we will put an end to these subsidies and invest to help Atlantic Canadians and everyone across the country?

• (1925)

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

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As Canada's Minister of National Defence, I am certain that the Canadian Armed Forces will be there during environmental crises. That is what is happening right now in the Atlantic provinces.

We are on the ground right now with military personnel, equipment, materials and frigates. HMCS *Margaret Brooke*, for instance, will bring relief to the west coast of Newfoundland. We promised to help the Atlantic provinces and all of Canada in times of crisis and we will follow through.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition Conservatives and, I think, all Canadians, we stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in eastern Canada, the Atlantic provinces and eastern Quebec, and especially in the Magdalen Islands.

We are here today to show our support, but also to make plans for getting everything back to normal. It will be a long and difficult road, but we will work as a team, as Canadians always do.

[English]

To those particularly hard hit in Newfoundland, Labrador, P.E.I., Nova Scotia, eastern Quebec and New Brunswick, we are with them. Conservatives will do everything we can. To the emergency workers, police, paramedics, fire services, power workers, military personnel and all those who have gotten out as volunteers to help clean up the mess, pick up the debris, remove the downed trees, restore powerlines and take the initial steps toward normalcy, I thank them on behalf of all Canadians.

I would specifically like to acknowledge the devastation that Fiona has brought to Port aux Basques, Newfoundland, the stories and images of fishing boats and infrastructure demolished, homes and apartments being engulfed by waves and swept out to sea. These images are gut-wrenching for every single Canadian. As one local resident put it, "This is hands down the most terrifying thing I've ever seen in my life." Worse still, in Port aux Basques, as many across the country have now heard, one of two lives was lost to the storm so far. It was a 73-year-old woman trying to leave her home as it was swept to sea by the waves. Loss of life leaves families, loved ones and an entire community feeling helpless.

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P.E.I. potato farmers, who were already suffering under the government's self-imposed export ban and missed an entire season as a result of decisions by the government to shut down their industry, and many are still unable to sell their seeding potatoes, which are still subject to that same ban, now face the prospect of losing an entire year's crop. Dairy farmers are without electricity, risking the threat of losing valuable livestock, and fishers have lost boats, wharves and other critical infrastructure. Too many down east are going through extraordinarily challenging times, and there are no two ways about it. That means we need to stand with the people on the ground.

Slow bureaucratic programs with big headlines and no delivery simply will not do. The government will need to act quickly to restore order, to bring back the communities that have been devastated and to get the businesses, farms and fishing communities back on their feet. Speaking of feet, we here in the Conservative caucus will hold the government's feet to the fire to make sure that happens.

The devastation of Fiona is not just the hurricane wreaking havoc on our eastern family. Memories of Juan, Dorian and many other storms have brought hardship and devastation. In the presence of destruction and loss, however, Atlantic Canadians have proven their iron resolve to rise again and rebuild their lives, and they will rebuild again. We stand ready to work and help them along the way. We will do what is necessary to build upon their resilience and to provide them with the infrastructure and the funding that is necessary.

On this journey, we would be remiss if we did not thank our American allies who have stepped up to fulfill their side of the agreement. We know of power workers from Maine coming across the border. It reminds us of the Halifax explosion back in 1917, which killed thousands of Haligonians. A train departed from Boston loaded with medical supplies, surgeons and other medical professionals.

This assistance has always been bilateral, of course. Canadians came to the rescue of Americans fighting to retaliate against the terrorist attacks of 9/11. We, as North American neighbours, have always been dedicated to the continuation of this friendship, so I would like to take a moment to thank the Americans who have come across the border. In particular, Central Maine Power sent 16 line crews to help. We thank them for their work and we promise to reciprocate if, God forbid, ever a need should be so required.

● (1930)

I know that my colleague from Cumberland—Colchester, with whom I am splitting my time, will build on that solidarity. Reports are surfacing, however, of government getting in the way again. We heard that American crews working to get up into Canada and help with the rescue were held up because of the infamous ArriveCAN app, which unfortunately is with us, but mercifully only until Saturday. We call on the government to eliminate this app today so that it does not cause any more disruptions.

We do note that the public safety minister has denied these reports, but then his cabinet colleague, the emergency preparedness minister, contradicted him and said that there was indeed an incident and a delay at the border, although he described it as “inconse-

quential”. I would remind him that minutes are consequential in an emergency. There is no time for gatekeepers, glitchy apps or boondoggles when Canadians are in desperate need.

I would like to thank my Atlantic caucus, who have kept me apprised. We met on Saturday to discuss our response. They have been in contact with their local representatives, with their populations, with their fishing villages to find the needs and bring them to our attention. I would like to thank the premiers, the local officials and residents first-hand, many of whom I have had a chance to speak with over the last several days.

I would like to thank the member for South Shore—St. Margarets, who reached out to local organizations, including the Maritime Fishermen's Union, the Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association, and Fish, Food & Allied Workers in Newfoundland. On behalf of the official opposition, we will continue to pray for everyone's safety. As the east coast rebuilds following the damage and devastation of hurricane Fiona, we as Canadians must continue to work together.

In the words of the legendary Stompin' Tom Connors, soon the birds will once again be singing on every tree, and all nature will seem inclined to rest.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians have come together. It was encouraging to see the Leader of the Opposition earlier today talking about the importance of members on all sides of the House working in order to support Atlantic Canada during this time.

There are a number of initiatives that the government has undertaken. We have talked about the military and matching Red Cross donations. I believe all Canadians could get involved. I wonder what the member would say to Canadians from coast to coast about ways in which they could contribute to what is taking place in Atlantic Canada, using the example of giving a contribution to the Red Cross, or maybe prayers, or maybe going to the east coast, for those who feel they could contribute. Does the member have any thoughts in that regard?

● (1935)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I would encourage all Canadians to give generously and help in any way they can. We congratulate the government for the announced response it made. However, we will follow up to make sure there is delivery. We do not want this to be “A” for announcement but then “F” for follow-through, which we have seen before. We want the government to deliver, and we will be watching carefully, like hawks, to make sure that the people of Atlantic Canada are not let down again.

I note the work of the great member for Foothills, who is a southern Albertan but who has become the greatest champion in Canada for the P.E.I. potato farmer. I think we should give him a round of applause. The member has been championing the P.E.I. potato farmers, and all across P.E.I. they sing his praises every day. I know he will not let up until the P.E.I. potato farmers are back up and all of their crops are able to be exported to markets all around the world.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to see some degree of unanimity in our solidarity with the people of the Atlantic coast. It is very important that we all agree to help with the rebuilding as soon as possible.

The leader of the official opposition said that the government must act quickly and that his party would make sure the government takes action to achieve concrete results.

Once that is done, is it also not important to start getting serious about the energy transition to counter climate change, to slow it down and ensure we can adapt to it?

I spoke earlier with the Liberal critic responsible for waterfront development. Adaptation is necessary, but we also have to begin the transition in regions that produce fossil fuels, for example, while showing respect for local populations and investing in the transition.

Is it not time to stop building pipelines and start supporting the transition?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, we have to recognize the difference between fighting climate change and promoting the import of oil from overseas.

The strategy of the other parties, the Liberals, the Bloc and the NDP, is not against oil. It is in favour of foreign oil, which comes from overseas.

We import 130,000 barrels a day. Roughly 40% of the oil consumed in Quebec comes from the United States. The Conservatives believe that as long as oil is being used in Canada, that oil should be Canadian.

We are the most responsible party, the most environmentally sound, and we will continue to support our energy industry from coast to coast to coast in Canada.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was surprised that the leader of the official opposition is the first speaker tonight who has not mentioned climate change.

As we know, last year in British Columbia, 600 British Columbians died as a result of the heat dome. The atmospheric river last fall cut British Columbia off from the rest of the country. We now see Atlantic Canada experiencing a record amount of destruction as a result of the hurricane. We also know that this, tragically, will be the first of many. In the Caribbean, the hurricanes are increasing in intensity and in loss of life.

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My question for the leader of the official opposition is very simple. The Liberal government, as did the Conservative government before it, is spending billions of dollars in massive subsidies to oil and gas CEOs. Would it not be better for the people of Atlantic Canada that the money be invested in climate mitigation, fighting back against climate change and actually eliminate the problem?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, again there is no question that the Liberal climate policy has failed. The Liberals have missed every single target they have set. In fact, they said that if they brought in this carbon tax, they would hit the targets. They did not hit a single target. Now they say they have to triple the carbon tax and cost Canadians thousands of dollars.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has reported that Canadians are paying far more in carbon tax costs than they are getting back in these so-called rebates. In many provinces, including the member's, there is no rebate at all, even though there is a federally imposed carbon tax that will triple in his province whether the provincial government likes it or not, unless, of course, there is a new government that fights climate change with technology and not taxes.

• (1940)

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the leader of the official opposition for his kind words and support in holding the government to account.

This evening, as we come together here as parties to have this emergency debate, it is important a few things happen. One is that we understand the timeline. I had the opportunity to be at home this weekend and experience this first-hand. I also think it important that the emergency debate this evening be related to the support for Atlantic Canadians and not to push some other agenda, which we have seen. Unfortunately, the government has continued to miss its targets with respect to climate change, which is, as we might say in Atlantic Canada, a darn shame.

That being said, because not everybody has experienced a hurricane, I want people to understand very clearly that the forecasting, as some of the other members have said, has been absolutely fantastic. My children would say that I said I did not think it would be as bad as it was. Maybe I am just an optimist, and that is probably a good thing.

At about 10 minutes to midnight on Friday night, the power went off. That was it. As I left home this morning, my family still did not have power. I spoke to my wife earlier this evening and we still do not have power. What does that mean? It means we need to be cognizant of those things that need to be refrigerated. We need to rely on others, people who, thankfully, have had their power restored, such as friends and neighbours. We need to rely on them.

My wife is a pharmacist and had perishables in her pharmacy. We had to understand how best to deal with those so that valuable stock was not lost.

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Some of us are very fortunate to have a generator. I was quite thankful for a 15-year-old generator we purchased, sadly, after hurricane Juan. Then there was White Juan. The generator sat around a lot. Perhaps I am not that great at maintenance, but to get that generator going and be able to have some lights and power the fridge in my house is a great and wonderful thing during an event such as this.

I do want people to know that I live in the town of Truro. I am very fortunate that I have water. The folks who work in my constituency office live in a small place called Londonderry. If they do not have a generator that powers their pump, they are doing it the way we did when I was a kid when nasty storms came along. We filled up our bathtub with water so we could wash our hands and flush the toilet. Those things are still going on, and our hearts, prayers and thoughts are with people who are suffering in that way.

It is important to highlight those industries that are specifically negatively impacted. We talk about fisheries, farming and forestry. We know those industries are part of the backbone of Atlantic Canada. As my good friend from South Shore—St. Margarets has said multiple times, the wharves are the trans-Canada highway of the fishing industry. We know the fishing industry is a huge economic driver for Atlantic Canada. We also know the infrastructure for small craft harbours has been long neglected and those wharves are now even more seriously damaged. They are going to need significant and rapid federal help to get them fixed so the fish can be brought to market appropriately.

As for the farming industry, we do understand there is a significant amount of flooding, especially on Prince Edward Island. We have seen that. There are untold effects on how that is going to affect a sector that has been nearly decimated by mismanagement by the Liberal government. Again, it is a significant shame for those of us who live in Atlantic Canada.

Of course, there is the forest industry, with trees that are now piled on each other like a game of pick-up sticks. It makes it much more difficult and certainly significantly more dangerous for those who work in the forestry industry to work in that environment to hopefully get that wood harvested quickly, because with the price of wood, it is almost as valuable as gold.

One of the other things that is important to focus on is the lack of cell service. In this House, we have all become significantly reliant upon our cellphones. In the town of Truro, which is not big perhaps by downtown Toronto standards, to have 15,000 people with one bar of service makes it very difficult. It was difficult to communicate with the leader because I could not use video and things like that.

● (1945)

It significantly impacted search and rescue. Sadly, there was a young boy, four years old, who was lost in Pictou County, just adjacent to Colchester County. The search and rescue teams pointed out very clearly the need to have good cellphone service to coordinate a search and rescue operation. It just was not there and that made their work much more difficult.

Again, we know that the Liberal government promised after hurricane Dorian that cellphone service to rural and remote areas

would be significantly improved upon. Here we are, three years later, and this is still a significant issue. It disproportionately affects those in Canada who choose to live in rural and remote areas. We believe that is something that needs to be fixed expeditiously.

Another thing I would like to expand upon is about our neighbours from Central Maine Power. My father was a proud employee of New Brunswick Power for many years when I was growing up. During these storms, I remember very clearly him helping out in the storms. He was mainly a ground crew guy because he was an office worker, but he was certainly happy to help out.

We know there are many reciprocal agreements that exist between New Brunswick and Maine and Nova Scotia and P.E.I. All of those power crews work together to help support each other, often as far away as New York State. Sometimes when there are major hurricanes in Florida, crews from our area will go all the way to Florida to help out.

Volunteers who are coming to Canada to help are being stopped at the border, and then ministers of the House and, indeed, as we heard today, the Prime Minister were misleading the House and contradicting what Premier Tim Houston was very clearly heard saying. He actually requested federal help to get these workers from Central Maine Power across the border. This is an intolerable consequence of the ArriveCAN app, which serves no purpose. I understand that those across the aisle really want to say, "Hey, do not worry about it. It is going to be over Saturday." That is too late. This ArriveCAN app needs to end now because it serves absolutely no purpose.

One of the final things we need to talk about is the ongoing need for a clean-up. As I left my house this morning, mounds of brush needed to be picked up. Limbs of trees that were cut down are still going to be there. We need to have folks locally understand that this brush is going to be picked up before another event happens.

When I left this morning, it was pouring rain, with thunder and lightning. There was the threat of a waterspout coming up the Bay of Fundy up into the Cobequid Bay. One could imagine if a waterspout then made landfall with all of this brush piled up. We need to get it removed. We need to have it moved quickly and effectively and not at the cost of Atlantic Canadians.

There are two more things that I would like to touch on. We need to thank those volunteer fire brigades who have been essential in creating centres for people to go and be able to charge their devices, to have a coffee, to have a sandwich, to have a place that is clean and warm and dry, that they know that they can be a part of. Certainly, volunteer fire brigades are an ongoing tie that binds small communities together, so I give a big shout-out to them.

First responders continue to do their work through the difficult times. We know that in other hurricanes, sadly, the lives of first responders have been taken during the storm, so we are grateful that they were safe through this.

Finally, I want to speak to the resilience of those of us who live in Atlantic Canada. It might seem like I am patting myself on the back, but it certainly is an absolute pleasure to be part of a community that binds itself together by volunteerism and by the ability to say, “Hey, I know how to handle a chainsaw and I am going to help my neighbour.”

We know that this can-do attitude is really what helps propel Canada forward here at home and on the world stage as well. We know that Canadians garner tremendous respect for the work that we have been able to do in past world wars. I feel that this type of effort is coincident with that as well.

Those who have electricity should invite their neighbour in for a coffee, give them a warm meal. People should volunteer as they can, and make sure they check in on their neighbours, those who are vulnerable, those who they know perhaps are struggling and will continue to do so. We have been through this type of thing before. I am very confident that we are going to come back better than ever.

I want to thank everybody here in the House for their confidence in Atlantic Canada and their ability to support us.

• (1950)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I share my hon. colleague's sentiment about the way in which we work together in Atlantic Canada. Our communities step up for one another.

The member spoke about the importance of making sure that brush piles and debris-cleaning efforts are undertaken right away. I was certainly relieved to see that there were Canadian Armed Forces members on the ground in Nova Scotia, working with local authorities.

My question is around agriculture. In Kings—Hants, we are what I would call the breadbasket or the agriculture heartland of Atlantic Canada, but I will certainly share and recognize that Cumberland—Colchester has an important agricultural community as well. One of the things we worked hard on over the weekend as members of Parliament was to share about the impacts with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and the group that is working on the ground.

Would the hon. member share with the House the impacts on the agriculture sector in Cumberland—Colchester, such that we can make sure that we have a really important response in the days ahead?

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that important question from the member for Kings—Hants.

As time goes on, we are going to have a better idea in Cumberland—Colchester of exactly what has happened. We are quite thankful that the blueberry harvest is already finished, as that is a major economic driver. However, there are folks there who are dairy farmers and who continue to struggle at the current time. As

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long as power is restored more quickly, the likelihood of devastating effects with respect to that industry are lessened, of course.

Regarding some of the other things, we are in between seasons. Thankfully, with strawberries, we are between seasons there as well, so that is somewhat of a help. However, we also have to consider how many trees are down on top of other crops, and that is going to be difficult as we move forward.

We need to be dynamic in our support here to understand that as we get more information, those folks need to be supported quickly and we need to be able to get funds out that will enable those people to resume operations as quickly as possible, with money in their own pocket.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, my heart goes out to the farmers who are going through such an agonizing time. Let us not forget that these farmers represent 3% of the population, but they feed our entire people. This shows just how much climate change and the consequences of that change will impact our food. That is why it is important to ensure a swift energy transition.

I would like my colleague to share some responsible, viable and sustainable solutions for the energy transition.

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, it is important to understand that the Conservative Party is very much interested in technology, and not taxes. As we reflect upon the ability of the Liberal government to make changes that are impactful for the climate, we know that is just not happening.

We also understand that those of us who live in Atlantic Canada often live in more rural settings, often in single-family dwellings, and of course we often heat our homes with oil. That makes it much more difficult to make those transitions.

We do know about greener energy here from our great friends from the great province of Alberta. It is important to understand that it is the greenest energy that we can produce in the world, and we need to be more reliant upon that. We need to also look at things like carbon capture and storage and understand how we may be able to better use that technology to improve the state of affairs that we have at the current time.

As we look at those things as a comprehensive package, then we can understand that we can help Canadians move from exactly where they are into an important spot that is attainable, and not into fantasyland.

• (1955)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, as somebody who was born in Newfoundland and moved out when I was 15, I was horrified to see the homes being washed out to sea in Port aux Basques. It is heartbreaking. I want to send my condolences and my thoughts out to all of our friends to the east.

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We know that this is yet another example of climate change, and these impacts are becoming more and more common. I am curious as to whether the member could comment on why the leader did not once bring up climate change in his speech, and instead suggested that a magic wand could miraculously solve the problems that we are seeing as a result of climate change.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, I did not hear anybody talk about a magic wand in here, except perhaps the Liberals on how tripling the carbon tax is going to magically fix climate change. I am really unsure how that is going to happen.

That being said, I think that it has been very clear. It has been spoken out loud multiple times in Canada and with a loud voice, that we know that climate change is real on this side of the House, and we have great plans and policies on how we are going to combat climate change to make it real for the average Canadian.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, it means a lot to me to be here tonight because my part of the country was hit hard by hurricane Fiona.

I wish once again to extend my most sincere sympathies to the families and loved ones of the victims in Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island. My thoughts are with the people who are directly or indirectly affected by the hurricane.

The Bloc Québécois wishes once again to express its solidarity with everyone affected. We are, of course, prepared to collaborate with all MPs and parties, as well as with the government, to make sure the citizens of the Maritimes and of eastern Quebec receive appropriate support.

We are feeling an overwhelming sense of helplessness tonight, but also a great sense of solidarity. I believe it is our duty as elected members and members of civil society to give all the support we can to those affected.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would ask hon. members to take their conversations to the lobby, please, so that we can hear the speech.

The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, thank you for that intervention.

As I was saying, we need to work together in a collaborative and proactive way. In exceptional situations like this, we must set partisanship aside and work for our constituents. All weekend long, my thoughts were with the residents of the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands. I was in the Gaspé Peninsula myself, and I must say that the winds were more intense than usual. In Matane, we are used to the wind, but this time it was something else.

Again, I want to thank all the people who are still helping out tonight, especially the firefighters and the line workers. I want to say hello again to my second dad, Mario, who is in Nova Scotia right now reconnecting homes that have had power outages. I also

want to thank the military, the Red Cross workers, the many volunteers from St. John Ambulance and all the people who have helped out since Friday.

The Bloc Québécois just announced a partnership with the Red Cross. We did the same thing in May in solidarity with Ukraine and raised close to \$35,000. Once again, we are counting on the generosity of Quebecers and all citizens to help those in need.

I would like to take a moment this evening to commend the federal government, which, I must say, worked actively and collaboratively this weekend. I received a call from the Minister of Emergency Preparedness. I was provided with regular updates from his team, which showed that the government was prepared to deal with the situation, at least in the short term. It was ready to communicate with all levels of government, municipalities, provincial governments and opposition parties. I think that is to be commended. In politics, we too often spend our time criticizing each other. However, it is important to give praise where praise is due, like in this case. As I was saying, we have to work together, so I really want to recognize the government's proactive work this weekend.

This proactive work was necessary because hurricane Fiona has been devastating. The storm brought sustained winds of 80 kilometres an hour, with gusts reaching 90 to 120 kilometres an hour. A gust of 171 kilometres an hour was even recorded in Nova Scotia. Southwest Newfoundland was hit particularly hard. Water ripped through at least 20 homes in Port aux Basques. Hundreds of residents were forced to evacuate the area and move into a shelter.

The magnitude of the destruction is also evident in Prince Edward Island. Countless homes, businesses and wharves have been damaged. Some 200 people had to be evacuated from Cape Breton Island. The largest waves on the Gulf of St. Lawrence generally reached four to six metres. Ten-metre waves were recorded east of the Gaspé Peninsula. Ten metres is very high. At their peak, the waves reached 16 metres. The winds and waves damaged or destroyed many buildings. They washed away homes, cars and boats, the kinds of things people often spend their whole lives working for.

Eastern Gaspé has also sustained major damage. Château Dubuc in Chandler was swept away by waves on Saturday. I will say a little more about this building. I can say that it pained a good number of Gaspésians to watch a video of Château Dubuc being washed into the sea. The video has been shared thousands of times on social networks. It was a beloved heritage building that represented part of the industrial history of Chandler. In recent years, the municipality fought to save this heritage building from being destroyed. Unfortunately, it was already in very poor condition due to previous storms, and it was already at risk of being swept out to sea.

Levels of government failed to protect it in time, despite repeated requests from local communities. This long battle to restore the former inn began with the high tides of 2016 and 2017, when its protective wall was damaged, making it even more vulnerable to inclement weather. Later, in February 2021, the wall finally gave way, leaving the building unprotected. It was already very fragile, but this once again attests to our governments' lack of foresight when it comes to extreme weather events such as Fiona.

For Patrimoine Gaspésie, the destruction of Château Dubuc represents the disappearance of a part of Chandler's history. It is the loss of a heritage property that was the last physical remnant of the city's grand industrial era, as the chair of Patrimoine Gaspésie pointed out.

The Gaspé and Percé areas were also hard hit. The waves struck with great force. The sea rose over the pier in Rivière-au-Renard. Trees and utility poles were downed. Route 132 was quickly closed in Gaspé. The site of the Gaspé Oktoberfest in Percé suffered a lot of physical damage as well. The festival has been cancelled for this weekend.

• (2000)

There was water and debris on Highway 132 around La Martre, Marsoui, Manche-d'Épée and Gros-Morne. Wave run-up also caused coastal flooding in some areas.

Other sectors of the Gaspé Peninsula were also affected. High winds downed trees along Highway 198 between Murdochville and Gaspé and on Highway 299. Some places unfortunately still have no cell service, which is causing an even bigger safety issue. Local authorities are staying alert, and the roads continue to be closely monitored by the Quebec department of transport.

On the Magdalen Islands, the damage is even greater. Waves submerged wharves in several places, damaging several boats. Flash flooding destroyed dozens of buildings. On Havre Aubert Island, the coastline was completely underwater. Almost all the waterfront homes were flooded. The winds also tore off part of the roof of the Saint-Pierre-de-La-Vernière heritage church in L'Étang-du-Nord.

The areas hardest hit by the flooding include the historic site of La Grave on Havre Aubert Island, the Pointe-Basse wharf, and the La Martinique area.

We obviously do not yet have an estimate of the damages, but at least 37 people had to be evacuated. There were fortunately no deaths or injuries on the islands. Highways were reopened last night and there are many Hydro-Québec teams on site to restore power to the nearly 6,000 people affected by outages.

One of the two underwater telecommunications cables connecting the islands to the mainland was damaged. The second cable held, which allowed people on the islands to maintain direct contact with the rest of Quebec. Imagine if both cables had been damaged. People on the Magdalen Islands would have been left to fend for themselves.

According to the interim mayor, they are looking at tens of thousands of dollars in damage, unless there are other surprises in the coming days. That is likely, since it is very difficult to assess the

situation right now. It is still difficult to assess water damage on site.

Work to backfill the cliffs in Cap-aux-Meules was well under way when Fiona hit the east coast. The work site has suffered an estimated \$150,000 to \$200,000 in damage.

The beach developments in the Havre-Aubert area have held and proved their effectiveness. There was some flooding. The water went over the shoreline, but nothing was destroyed. We can conclude that the project was successful. That is at least one positive thing to take away from this that will help for what is to come. What is to come is the implementation of climate change adaptation measures.

The Government of Quebec quickly offered help. It will compensate island homeowners who did not have insurance. A special office will be set up in the next few days. Homeowners who were affected will be able to submit a request to the Department of Public Safety online or by phone.

Several cities quickly declared a state of emergency. In the Gaspé, declaring a state of emergency allows local mayors to make financial decisions without going through the city council. It is usually done to simplify the setting up of support programs to help the people affected.

As for the federal government, I know the government was on alert and had possible solutions on the table. However, I also know that when similar events have occurred in the past, the funds sometimes took a while to flow, which was criticized right away. I hope the government will step up quickly this time.

One thing is certain: We cannot leave municipalities and provinces to fend for themselves. In Maria, in my riding, it recently cost \$10 million to deal with the effects of climate change on one short kilometre of road. It is often said that the energy transition will be expensive, but not doing it now will cost us even more.

This all raises many questions. One question I think we need to ask ourselves is this: Why is eastern Canada being hit by a tropical storm?

In an interview on CPAC earlier, I was asked about the connection I made in the House today between hurricane Fiona and climate change. The truth is that it is impossible not to make that connection. There is a direct correlation between global warming and extreme and violent weather events. That is undeniable. The experts agree.

Data recorded over the past 50 years ago by the U.S. National Hurricane Center show that cyclone events have clearly been increasing in intensity since the late 1990s.

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● (2005)

Scientists expect that global warming will result in more intense cyclones producing stronger winds and more rain because of higher ocean temperatures. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC, confirmed it in its August 2021 study.

Whether the current disaster is directly or indirectly related to climate change is certainly not what we are debating. The fact is that climate change will result in more extreme weather events that will have a greater impact on our way of life and our societies. The current disaster is an example of the challenges the world will face in the future.

The proliferation of extreme weather events means governments need to do more faster to reduce greenhouse gas emissions so we can minimize global temperature increases. Governments also need to adapt to the effects of climate change by doing things like upgrading infrastructure. That is the adaptation piece.

I want to emphasize the importance of making the energy transition a reality in order to build a more resilient society. As early as the summer of 2020, my party made proposals to that effect when we published a green recovery plan. Quebec's regions have needs when it comes to adapting to environmental change. Our regions are not immune to the devastating effects of natural disasters. We are seeing this once again today.

We need to focus more on protecting our shorelines. For years, the Bloc Québécois has been asking the government to take a more aggressive approach to tackling shoreline erosion. There used to be a federal program that provided funding for shoreline protection. It was abolished and never reinstated. The Bloc Québécois has suggested reinstating it and even proposed that a fund be created to fight erosion with \$250 million in annual funding. The funding must be recurrent and predictable.

The fight against climate change must be based on both mitigation of and adaptation to the effects of climate change. The amount of money invested in the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund is not enough to build the kind of infrastructure we need to counteract the negative effects of climate change. It is about \$3 billion over 10 years. That is not enough.

The throne speech mentions investing in preventing and preparing for certain negative impacts of climate change. It talks about a national adaptation strategy. That would be the first such strategy to be published by the Canadian government. The environment minister talked about it at COP26 last year. Almost one year later, nothing has been published. We know nothing about the strategy or the Canadian government's plan for adaptation and resilience in the face of climate change.

Is it not unusual that, in 2022, we still do not have this plan, even after experiencing several intense weather events, such as this weekend's storm?

I believe that now more than ever, we must get to work, develop this strategy and implement it as quickly as possible to help our communities be more resilient and prepared to face climate change and its effects.

I believe this will quickly become the priority. The minister knows this full well. I do not know why he is not taking action right now. If members want my opinion, it is deplorable that the Liberal government boasts about fighting climate change, but does not implement the changes required to make the energy transition happen in Canada and to divest from fossil fuels. What we are seeing today is that it is not enough to fix the damage caused by weather events. We must prevent these events from happening in the first place.

People are getting increasingly worried. In my riding, more and more citizen committees are being formed to call on the different levels of government to act immediately. A woman who owns land in Métis-sur-Mer contacted my office recently to say that stones at least a metre in size have been carried away by the sea over the past year. People from Sainte-Félicité who had never engaged in activism before gathered one Saturday this spring to take part in an event organized by a UQAR student studying shoreline erosion. Every participant said the same thing: They are worried about the future.

We cannot in good faith or good conscience continue to fund projects that exacerbate climate change. Today, the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs was studying whether indigenous communities are ready and able to deal with natural disasters.

Darcy Gray, the chief of the Mi'kmaq community of Listuguj, recounted the painful memories and events tied to the 2018 flooding, which affected a number of homes. He mentioned that the criteria for compensation changed along the way, lowering the number of qualifying homes.

● (2010)

These events could happen again. Are we really prepared to deal with that? The answer, unfortunately, is no. We have to take action to both adapt and mitigate.

Canada has long been criticized for not meeting its greenhouse gas reduction targets and for continuing to heavily subsidize its oil and gas industry instead of investing in renewable energy and developing the green economy.

However, the government remains obsessed with fossil fuels and unwilling to start gradually cutting back production. Much was made of the promise to cap oil and gas sector emissions, but that promise did not include gradually phasing out coal, oil and gas. The claim is that these industries can be environmentally friendly by making their operations less carbon-intensive.

In other words, as the world transitions away from fossil fuels and toward renewable energy systems, Canada and the Liberal government are transitioning from fossil fuels to fossil fuels.

How many taxpayer dollars will Canada waste on helping polluters pollute less instead of helping innovative companies create the economy of the future?

For example, Canada's grey-hydrogen strategy and the dubious promises regarding carbon capture, use and storage technologies have already made it clear that the Liberals' inaction is going to come with a hefty price tag. We are already paying millions of dollars to develop untested technology that will be implemented years from now, when it is too late to help Canada meet its 2030 greenhouse gas reduction target. All of that to produce so-called greener oil and gas rather than making the real ecological and energy transition.

Whether the current catastrophe is directly or indirectly linked to climate change is perhaps not the subject of the debate. However, it reminds us that we must absolutely, and as quickly as possible, prepare our communities to face the effects of climate change, which will be increasingly violent.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her speech.

I have only one small question: Will the member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia support us in holding the government accountable for program delivery?

• (2015)

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question in French. It is much appreciated.

We will certainly fight alongside him to ensure that the government steps up and helps those affected by the devastating effects of hurricane Fiona.

However, what I would like to see from the Conservative members is a commitment to helping the government implement measures so we can adapt to climate change. This is not just about dealing with what happened this weekend, but also about preparing for the future and preventing the effects of climate change, which could be increasingly devastating.

Given the winds and waves that hit the Magdalen Islands, I can say that the shorelines took a hit and that investments in resilient infrastructure will be required. This is needed not just in the Magdalen Islands, but throughout the country.

I am counting on my colleague to fight with us on this issue.

[English]

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to correct the record. My hon. colleague articulated that the Government of Canada had no strategy or plan to deal with climate-resilient infrastructure. Respectfully, I just do not think that is indeed the case. The program would be the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund. It is a multi-billion-dollar fund that works directly with provinces or municipal governments to deliver federal dollars to meet local concerns and needs.

The member opposite, of course, sits in a sovereigntist party that often talks about jurisdiction and making sure that we devolve those decisions to local government. Here is one example of the Government of Canada doing exactly that, and I did not hear her

recognize that in her remarks. I am wondering if she could comment.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I am happy to be able to return the favour and correct my colleague. I was talking about the national adaptation strategy announced by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change last year.

He announced it again at COP26 in Glasgow, which I also attended. This strategy has unfortunately not yet been released. We hope it will be made public before the end of the year. At least that is what it says on Environment Canada's website, which I consulted earlier.

Yes, some smaller investments have perhaps been made, but certainly nothing significant enough to allow us to feel confident about the future and the resilience we will need to show.

This would be the Canadian government's first-ever national adaptation strategy. What I was saying earlier in my speech is that, in 2022, such an adaptation strategy is long overdue, because the regions of Quebec and cities and towns across the country are already dealing with the effects of climate change.

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member talked about the vital telecommunications and other infrastructure losses, as well as the need to proactively move on the energy transition, so my question is about the energy transition. What does the Bloc feel is the barrier for the government to start moving on the energy transition and stop investing in fossil fuel expansion projects?

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question.

In fact, there are no barriers. There is simply a lack of political courage. The government has all the tools it needs and knows exactly what needs to happen. It has a former environmental activist as Minister of the Environment. It knows exactly what it needs to do to ensure that we succeed in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, do our part internationally, and make the transition and follow examples like that of Quebec, which has been using renewable energy for many years.

There are no barriers. The government already has all the solutions, but it lacks the courage to implement them.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia for her speech. I could not agree with her more: It is impossible to speak about this terrible hurricane without mentioning its cause, that is to say climate change and our dependence on fossil fuels.

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The waves that swept houses into the sea were like something out of a sci-fi movie. It is almost unbelievable, but that is today's reality. Climate change is less intense today than it will be tomorrow and in the coming years. Sea surface temperatures south of Nova Scotia have risen continuously because of climate change. It is the warm water that made the hurricanes stronger and more destructive.

I would like to ask the member if she agrees with me that we need to end our dependence on fossil fuels as soon as possible and, at the same time, set up a system to help people adapt. As she said, the government lacks the courage to do that.

• (2020)

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I absolutely agree with everything my colleague just said. Obviously, the Bloc Québécois agrees, since it has been saying for such a long time that we need to move away from fossil fuels. Other solutions exist and it is not as though we are empty-handed. No, there are other ways.

We promise to work with stakeholders; we promise a fair transition. At least, that is what the industry is asking for, that is what workers are calling for. They also know that they will have to make sacrifices, but they are prepared to do that. It still takes leadership from the top, however. If the federal government does not want to move forward with the transition, the communities, the cities and provinces cannot do it alone. The government really needs to make a serious commitment and one commitment that could be done quickly, immediately, would be to end fossil fuel subsidies.

Canada not only favours these energy sources, but it continues to take money from taxpayers and hand it over to these companies that are already making billions of dollars on the backs of consumers. I think that this type of measure would send a strong message from the Liberal government, who claims to be a partner in the fight against climate change.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague, myself and several members opposite have pointed out that, at this time, hurricanes are being fuelled by the rising temperature of the ocean, which is not normal in the North Atlantic Ocean.

We also see that the frequency and strength of tornadoes is increasing in Canada. There have been tornadoes in Quebec. Some sectors in Gatineau have been devastated by tornadoes. That said, as my colleague mentioned in her speech, we are suffering the consequences of these hurricanes, but there will be other impacts in future months and years, especially on the economy and tourism.

I would like my colleague to elaborate on the impact of climate change on our economy and tourism.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague is our critic for tourism, and I had the opportunity to welcome her to my riding and the Gaspé Peninsula this summer.

She knows full well what everyone loves about the Gaspé region. It is the scenic drive that loops around the entire peninsula. It is a wonderful feature, and what draws so many folks to our region.

However, parts of highway 132 were washed away by waves. Parts of it eventually collapsed because of shoreline erosion. We

had to rebuild highway 132, the only road that leads to Gaspé, Percé and Bonaventure if you want to go all the way around.

This is having a huge impact on our economy and on tourism. If we want to remain a tourist destination, we have to be able to take care of ourselves, provide emergency services, and make sure that the economy continues to function and that trucks can get through.

I talked about Murdochville earlier. It is pretty much the only town in the middle of the Gaspé Peninsula, right in the parc national de la Gaspésie, and there is no network access on the road. Power cables and trees fell on the road. It was a major safety issue in addition to high winds and rain. There would have been serious consequences for anyone unfortunate enough to be on the road in the middle of that. It happened last weekend, and it will happen again. We have to be prepared for that.

As I was saying, the government is already aware of all this, and it already has the tools to launch real adaptation.

[English]

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to be here today. I would like to thank my parliamentary colleagues because tonight we are talking about the impact that hurricane Fiona has had on Atlantic Canada, and I certainly recognize eastern Quebec as well.

I want to start by recognizing that I will be sharing my time this evening with my hon. colleague for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

It was difficult to try to prepare exactly how best to tackle this debate tonight, given the gravity of what we are still seeing on the ground in Atlantic Canada. Yes, as an Atlantic Canadian member of Parliament, I am here, but many of my colleagues are not. They are actually at home working with their constituents directly in their ridings, to be able to address the real and severe consequences of hurricane Fiona, which found its way to our shores Friday night and carried on throughout the weekend.

I suspect that many of us, those in the House and, indeed, Canadians watching at home, have seen the gut-wrenching images from across the region, whether it was in Port aux Basques, where individuals' houses were finding their way into the ocean and where a woman has unfortunately passed away, or in Prince Edward Island, where massive trees, hundreds of years old, have been ripped out, almost as if they were play toys. That is the velocity and ferocity this hurricane has presented itself with. There remains across the region a number of residents who are without power. They, indeed, would have no hope of even watching this debate here tonight because they are worried about trying to keep their houses warm. They are worried about trying to make sure they have the supplies needed to move forward.

Before I go too much further, let me thank the first responders, volunteers and professionals who are on the ground doing all that they can to help support those who are in need clean up from this significant storm. I had the opportunity to be in my riding yesterday.

● (2025)

[Translation]

I talked to workers from Quebec and Hydro-Québec. Public services from Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Quebec, Ontario and Maine all coordinated their efforts.

[English]

It was amazing to see the way in which we as Canadians come together, and I really want to thank those who are working away from their own families to make sure that our families in Atlantic Canada are protected.

I hope to use my time tonight to cover three distinct areas. One, I will talk about the impact on my riding of Kings—Hants. I do not want to sound disingenuous, because the impact was significant and severe, but it really does pale in comparison to northern Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island and western Newfoundland. I will talk about those three distinct areas as well as Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine in Quebec, but first I will speak a little about Kings—Hants.

I was fortunate enough to get home last week from my work in Ottawa just before the storm arrived. We sustained winds of around 130 kilometres an hour at its peak in Kings—Hants. The house was shaking, and we have a relatively new home in a new area in our community. Frankly, we did not get much sleep, and I know many people across Atlantic Canada did not either. We saw significantly damaged trees, with some fallen on electricity lines, which put a lot of people out of power. Some of that is returning in my riding. In fact, by and large it has returned, but there are some who still do not have power. They are hoping to be connected either tomorrow night or Wednesday.

I often speak about the agriculture sector in Kings—Hants. When we think about the Annapolis Valley, as was mentioned today during question period, we think about the significant fruit-growing industry and apple orchards that we have. This is also the harvest season for those fruits.

I had the opportunity to be with Andrew Bishop of Noggins Corner Farm, and yesterday I visited Alex Sarsfield and Dave Power, farmers in my riding, to see the damage, which is significantly better than it was after hurricane Dorian. In some instances, almost across the entire industry, 90% of the apples had fallen from the trees, which made them no longer marketable in the same way they would have been had they been picked off the trees. Thankfully, in many cases, that is not the case in the Annapolis Valley, but there is some significant damage on certain farms.

On the telecommunications piece, in the first 36 to 48 hours, it was very difficult to make a phone call or send a text message. I remember waking up Saturday morning to survey some of the damage. I wanted to get around in my riding to engage with my com-

munity to see how best we could help at the Government of Canada level and with different local authorities. I was unable to even participate in the conference call that the Minister of Emergency Preparedness had arranged, because of the fact that the cellular connection was not in place.

I understand this is a nuanced subject and it is challenging for telecommunications, but I do think it has to be one of the lessons learned from hurricane Fiona regarding our telecoms. When power goes out and the Internet is not available, many people do not have a landline anymore. It is their cellphone that is their connection to their community and to emergency services. What could we do to make sure those cell towers stay up as long as possible, even though we know service will not be perfect because of the nature of these types of storms?

Northern Nova Scotia is home to my colleague, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, the MP for Central Nova. We have seen some of the pictures of the impacts on farming and forestry infrastructure in that particular part of Nova Scotia. Sydney was hit particularly hard. I am happy to report to the House that the member for Sydney—Victoria has let us know in our Nova Scotia caucus that power has been returned in his community. I know that Prince Edward Island, for example, is still struggling to get the lights on. I do not have a current update, but I know we are continuing to work in that domain.

● (2030)

I do not have words for Port aux Basques. The number of houses lost is certainly over 25. I think about the member of Parliament for Long Range Mountains, the Minister of Rural Economic Development, who is on the ground. If she is watching today, I want to make sure that she knows we are thinking of her. To lose 25 houses and to lose a member of the community in that fashion, I could not say anything today that would do justice to what that means.

I want to talk about what we are doing in terms of responding. It is under three major elements. The Canadian Armed Forces are already on the ground in Atlantic Canada. As the provinces put forward requests, we were there to provide support. I give credit to the Minister of National Defence for mobilizing those folks to be able to help with the cleanup. The member for Cumberland—Colchester talked about how important that is. I agree. That is exactly why, and impressively, within 48 hours we have Canadian Armed Forces on the ground helping. I give a tip of the cap to them tonight.

For the next 30 days, the Government of Canada is going to match private contributions to the Canadian Red Cross. That is an important program. I suspect the government may be open to extending that window, depending on the circumstances and the extent of the damage, once that is assessed in the days ahead. We really welcome that measure and the fact that it was rolled out very quickly.

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Finally, there is the disaster financial assistance arrangements program. For example, there was a \$5-billion package that the Government of Canada helped roll out with the Government of British Columbia when we saw those atmospheric rains and the major impact on the interior of British Columbia. That is the model that the Atlantic provinces and the Government of Quebec, if they choose to do so, could enact so that the Government of Canada would be there to help with the repairs and to help with the rebuilding of communities.

I just want people at home to know, if they are able to watch this debate tonight, that the Government of Canada is going to be there to help support the rebuild of their communities. We are going to roll out these programs as soon as possible. We know that there will be logistical challenges. We think about rural communities and capacity, such as having the construction companies and the labour to make this happen. It will not happen overnight. However, we will be there and we will be steadfast in working with members of Parliament in this House, with provincial governments and with local authorities to make that happen.

Perhaps a member could ask me about the agricultural impact. As the chair of the agriculture committee, I would be happy to answer.

My key conclusion is that the Government of Canada will be there. I know all members of Parliament will support those initiatives for us to be there with communities on the ground in Atlantic Canada. Now is an important time, when we look to rebuilding certain communities that have been the hardest impacted with a lens on making sure the infrastructure is climate resilient. I know those words can be really cliché, but it is about making sure that what we build back, whether it be houses, arenas or schools, is able to withstand future storms. I will leave it at that.

• (2035)

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was pleased to hear the member for Kings—Hants's report about a better situation this time than with Dorian for the apple growers. Indeed, that is really good news. It was a large issue.

The member for Kings—Hants talked about the trouble getting cellphone service. We know that after Dorian this was a huge issue. Cellphone tower batteries actually died, and we had no cellphone service. At that time, the federal public safety minister Ralph Goodale was in Nova Scotia and was getting an earful from Nova Scotians about that. His response was that he understood they were a necessity now, but if people had a complaint they really should complain to the CRTC.

It does not appear that anything was done to improve the situation because here we are three years later and we still have the same issue happening.

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, it is a really important question because, as I mentioned, a number of individuals do not have landline service and are not able to be connected. If the electricity goes out, that is their true lifeline from a pure public safety sense.

I am aware of hurricane Dorian. It was before my time in Parliament with the minister he mentioned, the Hon. Ralph Goodale.

However, now is the time for all parliamentarians to be asking those questions.

I certainly want to give the benefit of the doubt that telecommunications companies are working in earnest to be able to improve this. However, if not, that is our job as parliamentarians, whether it is through the mechanisms of committee or by engaging with the minister when he is back from Japan and the funeral of the prime minister there. Those are the questions we can ask and they are important ones so that we can make sure we avoid this situation, moving forward.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I want to assure him that we are offering our heartfelt co-operation. He knows that is the case under normal circumstances. Considering the extraordinary circumstances of this evening, it is doubly true.

I would like him to tell us more, as he so eagerly hoped to do, about the consequences this hurricane has had on the agricultural community in his region. What concrete measures will be taken to quickly provide support to farmers?

My colleague knows what I want to hear.

[English]

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague knows that normally I would love to engage with him in French, but at this hour of the night and on this subject, with a lot to handle, I am going to just answer in English.

We are still assessing the damage in Atlantic Canada. In Prince Edward Island in particular, the corn crop has been extremely impacted. A number of supply-managed barns, dairy and poultry, had major structural damage, so these are programs that we have to be able to put in place.

I mentioned a disaster finance arrangements program. That is an extraordinary program that can be established for a whole host of industries, including agriculture. My hon. colleague would know about AgriRecovery and about different programs that are cost-shared between the province and the Government of Canada as it relates to agriculture specifically. However, we do have mechanisms on extraordinary costs above and beyond that and this might be a time when we have to evaluate whether that is indeed the case, so we can get that support right away.

Again, I want to manage expectations. When we talk about the rebuilding of barns, we have a labour shortage right now in this country and we have to be mindful that it is not going to be easy, particularly in rural communities, to have the capacity to build this overnight, but we will get to work right away.

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Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to talk about the experience I have had in my riding in Grand Forks, where we had flooding in 2018. The regional district did a study as to what could and should have been done better to help the recovery process. There were things that came up as things that hindered the recovery and the rebuilding process. One was the inflexibility of the federal government in taking into account local solutions. The local governments were putting forward innovative solutions that would have helped people quicker and at a lower cost, but the federal government programs were totally inflexible. Four years later, the City of Grand Forks is still waiting for the full amount of money that was guaranteed to it, and those people are very frustrated.

● (2040)

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, I thank the member as he played a role in helping make sure tonight's debate happened.

I have a couple of things. I heard him reference this particular question earlier and I thought the problem was the 20% contribution from local government, which is another aspect here. Yes, the Government of Canada has to provide financial support, but it has to be in co-operation with different levels of government. I am not familiar with that particular case, but I can say that any time the Government of Canada can work collaboratively in supporting provinces and local governments, it is important.

My understanding of how these programs are designed to work is that the province actually sets the parameters of how we can work, but I am happy to take this conversation off-line and see what lessons can be learned.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am rising today to speak about how hurricane Fiona has impacted my home region of Atlantic Canada and how our government is supporting Atlantic Canada through what may be the worst storm we have seen in our history.

My heart goes out to the loved ones, friends and communities of those who have been lost due to this terrible storm. I want to recognize those who have lost their homes, lost their sanctuaries. They are in my thoughts and I know that all orders of government in every affected province will stand together, work together and support them and their families through this incredibly challenging time.

I also want to say respectfully that now is not the time for political games. I have heard more than a few members, some who do not normally say much about Atlantic Canada, choosing to bring hyperpartisan politics into this incredibly important discussion about the impact of hurricane Fiona on Atlantic Canadians. Now is not the time.

Now is the time, however, to work together and support those who have been affected by this brutal storm. Now is the time to recognize the incredible challenges that many residents in my home region of Atlantic Canada are facing due to this hurricane, and now is the time to show Atlantic Canadians how we can put partisan politics aside and work together on their behalf.

Atlantic Canadians are incredibly resilient. We heard many Atlantic Canadians say that tonight. We know how to prepare for

storms. We batten down the hatches. We make sure we have supplies on hand, but it is clear that storms are getting more and more severe and hurricane Fiona ripped through the best-laid plans and preparations made by so many residents. I do not believe that anyone can say all of the ways that this storm has impacted Atlantic Canada yet or everything that is needed yet.

Today's debate seems premature as the winds are still strong in parts of Atlantic Canada and, as we stand here in this place, provinces are still working hard to determine just what needs to be done and how our government can best assist their efforts. However, I can say that, leading up to this storm, during the storm and now in its aftermath, our government has been there to support the provinces. We have been in constant communication with the premiers of affected provinces because when the provinces need our help, government must answer the call.

The government received requests for help from Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and P.E.I. and swiftly mobilized Canadian Armed Forces personnel and equipment to assist. I want to thank the Prime Minister, the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and the Minister of National Defence for moving faster than the speed of light. Joint task force Atlantic, the 5th Canadian Division, Canadian Rangers, the reserves, the Royal Canadian Air Force aircraft and crew, Royal Canadian Navy ships and more are all ready to support.

In my home province of Nova Scotia, the Canadian Army reconnaissance team has already been on the ground in Cape Breton viewing and evaluating damage and determining how best the military can assist. The provinces are leading the way and the Canadian Armed Forces are ready to help them with everything from bridges and roads to helping re-establish electricity. At the request of the province, as I speak, the HMCS *Margaret Brooke* is sailing from St. John's to conduct wellness checks in four communities on the south coast of Newfoundland, and the Canadian Armed Forces will assist on the ground in Newfoundland, working with local authorities to ensure the well-being and safety of residents in the province.

At the request of Prince Edward Island, the Canadian Armed Forces are there to help remove trees and other debris from roadways so workers can get the lights back on across that province. They will also help repair roadways, as needed. From debris removal and clearing roads to conducting flyovers to assess damage and checking in on those most vulnerable, the Canadian Armed Forces are ready to support the provinces in their efforts to help those hit hard by this brutal storm. I thank so much the Canadian Armed Forces personnel who are working hard to support Atlantic Canada and those who are on the way.

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We recognized Military Family Appreciation Day earlier this week, but I want to thank the military families of those who are deployed to communities in Atlantic Canada and those who are also, as I said, on their way.

• (2045)

I know that military families are often forgotten, but they are so important and they deserve our gratitude. They have my gratitude. I know that many of them are in Atlantic Canada and perhaps are struggling with some of the challenges others are facing. I thank them for all they do.

I mentioned before that Atlantic Canadians are resilient, and other members across the aisle have said that as well this evening. This attitude shines through in the incredible acts of kindness that we are seeing in all of our communities. In my riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, businesses like Stone Pizza and Chanoey's Pasta are giving away free hot meals to folks in need, like those without power. Others have been giving away hot coffee or providing places for folks to charge their phones.

When people see power crews arriving from outside the province, they have been cheering and thanking them for their help. People are even offering them hot drinks and snacks along the way. Neighbours with power have been setting up charging stations on their lawns, with seating and hot coffee to support people while they are charging their phones. People in my community have no power. I am one of them. My family is home today and is unable to watch this because we have no power. Of course, no one is more popular right now, as I think was mentioned earlier tonight by a member from across the way, than the gangs of chainsaw owners who are volunteering to help people with their many downed trees.

I want all Canadians who may be able to listen to these speeches tonight to know that our government is matching donations made to the Canadian Red Cross through the hurricane Fiona appeal. If people are able to donate, their donations will help those who may have lost their homes or are in need of humanitarian assistance.

I would like to end by thanking those who have been working so hard during and after the storm to help, from the first responders and volunteers to the health care workers and power crews to the helpers who are seen throughout our communities. These are people who in times of crisis do everything they can to help each other out. I thank them for all they are doing to make this terrible situation as bright as it can be.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour has, if I understand it correctly, an urban mixed riding with an important fishing community. After Dorian, within a week the federal government had supplied, in Nova Scotia, 700 soldiers to help clear the trees from the power lines, which is still the most important and major issue going on right now, at least in our province, so we can get power back. However, the government has only provided 100 currently.

Can the member comment on why there is a differentiation when the devastation is arguably just as dramatic if not worse?

Mr. Darren Fisher: Madam Speaker, the member has one of the most beautiful ridings in all of Canada. I have spent an awful lot of time on the south shore of Nova Scotia.

The federal government responds to requests from provinces, and the provinces make requests of the federal government. The ministers that I mentioned in my speech moved at the speed of light to get those requests filled. Boots are on the ground. I cannot speak to the fluctuation of numbers, but I can say that every request that has been made of the federal government has been listened to, heard and provided.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I agree with him. I mentioned earlier that the government was well prepared, at least in the short term, this weekend to help and work with people on the ground. What worries me more is the medium- and long-term preparation.

As we heard earlier, everything is connected. The greenhouse gases emitted by the Canadian oil and gas industry are directly connected to the rising temperatures around the world, which are connected to the rising temperature of the oceans, which is causing extreme weather events. I think that we need to be prepared not only in the short term but also in the medium and long term.

Does my colleague agree that Canada needs to take action against climate change if we want to be prepared and improve things around the world? The government must stop funding the oil and gas industry and must do more to get our greenhouse gas emissions down.

Does the member agree that the government is not doing enough to prepare for the long term?

• (2050)

[English]

Mr. Darren Fisher: Madam Speaker, the hon. member's riding has a long title and I wrote it down. I listened to her speech very closely, and I spoke about using politics within speeches during crises like hurricane Fiona. She made suggestions and came up with ideas, so I want to single out the member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, because her speech was the least partisan and least political speech that I have heard this evening. I want to thank her for that.

As far as climate change action goes, she is speaking to the choir.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, just to follow up on the theme of planning ahead, again, in my riding we have had serious disasters, flooding especially but also fires. One of the issues that really constrain us in responding to those is the fact that there is no available housing in my riding before there is a fire or flood. Suddenly, we may have hundreds of people who have been evacuated from their homes with nowhere to go and people who have lost homes who want to stay in the riding and there is nowhere to go.

I am wondering if the member could comment on the need for some real, serious planning ahead to get affordable housing built in Canada so that we will not have these serious constraints when it comes to a disaster.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Madam Speaker, it is no secret in the House that if we asked every member whether housing is one of the number one issues in the country, they would say it absolutely is. We need to come forward with a large amount of affordable housing. We need all types of housing stock.

That is not necessarily related to the conversation we are having tonight about the crisis in Atlantic Canada, so I want to take a quick moment, if I could, to single out a few people back home who are probably working this very moment.

The mayor of Halifax, Mike Savage, has been, day and night, at the EOC looking after the folks in HRM, and the mayor of CBRM has been astonishing throughout this crisis. I will also say that the local MLAs of all parties, the local councillors and all folks from all orders of government have been wonderful to deal with. Their first concern is taking care of those who are displaced and those who have lost their homes.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to speak in the emergency debate on our situation in Atlantic Canada as a result of hurricane Fiona.

For those who have not been through this kind of situation, in the last 20 years of my residency on the south shore of Nova Scotia, I have seen four hurricanes and a number of tropical storms hit. Besides the storm chips that everybody buys, there are a number of routines, unfortunately, that we get into to prepare for a storm and then some once it happens.

When people live in the country on a well and septic system, there are a few things they have to do. They have to fill the bathtub with water so they can use the water to flush the toilet. They also have a generator, and if it is one of those big fancy ones, maybe it covers the whole house. However, if they are like me, they have a generator that will power the refrigerator and maybe the microwave, and it has to be filled every once in a while. One of the hazards of this job, I am finding, since this is my first term, is that my wife is at home in this situation now having to fill the generator with gas to keep it going and do all the things we have to do.

I live on St. Margarets Bay, and some members may not know it is where Peggy's Cove is. Nova Scotia Power workers came down our street today because we do not have power, as we lost it at midnight on Friday. They looked at the devastation of the trees on our street and on the power lines, including on my property. They said 11 o'clock tonight was when the power would be coming back, but

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then said, "Well, we're not going to fix this street today; there's too much work. This is the worst street in St. Margarets Bay. We'll be back in the next day or two. We have to replace lines and all kinds of things."

It is a very difficult time, and the limited power affects everything, and things we do not think of. During the calls I was making in my riding on the weekend, I talked to a family whose mother had a stroke. They had to rush her to the hospital, but the hospital did not have enough power to run the MRI machine. The doctors could make assumptions and could give her medication, but they could not do all the things we would normally expect to get done in such a serious situation because the hospital was running on emergency power. I am sure my good friend, our doctor colleague from Cumberland—Colchester, saw this many times in the hospitals when he had to deal with these storms in his riding in his previous life.

The member for Kings—Hants spoke a little earlier about the impact on agriculture in his riding. In Cumberland—Colchester, we have a thriving grape-growing industry and make some of the best wine in Canada. We just got a report from one of the largest wineries that 20% of its grapes are on the ground and that because of limited power, it only has 25% power and cannot harvest the remaining grapes. This is a problem for the business this time of year, given the damage that some of the vines sustained with the wind and trees, and the processing facility challenges with the roof.

This is a flavour of what local life is like. Everyone is getting together on my street. The guys are getting the chainsaws out and helping where they can. For every guy I know, including me, if there is a chance to use a chainsaw they will and they are. However, besides the ways we band together in these kinds of crises, and what we do in Atlantic Canada and most of Canada when these things happen, there are some really difficult things.

I would like to begin by my sending my condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives in this storm, one of whom is a 73-year-old woman from Port aux Basques. There are reports of waves of, on average, 10 metres. I was phoning fishing communities on the weekend throughout Newfoundland, P.E.I., New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and the folks I spoke to in a southwest Newfoundland fishing community said that the occasional wave came in at 30 metres high, which helps explain why we see some of this devastation. We feel for the family of the woman who was lost at sea and has been found.

● (2055)

The member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour would know where Lower Prospect is. We found out today in my riding that one of my constituents from Lower Prospect is now missing and presumed to have been washed out to sea. They have not found him yet.

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On top of that, obviously homes have been destroyed by flooding and by trees, mainly trees. The power is still out for hundreds of thousands of people in Nova Scotia alone. My understanding from the latest update is that out of 82,000 homes in Prince Edward Island, 80,000 of them still do not have power. Most of their power comes from New Brunswick.

My thoughts obviously remain with my fellow Nova Scotians and all of the Atlantic Canadians who are still reeling and dealing with this disaster.

As I mentioned in the House earlier today in question period and during my Standing Order 31 statement, hurricane Fiona was not the first hurricane to hit Atlantic Canada. As I said, I have experienced four in the last 20 years, but there have been over 30 since 1951 and quite a few before that, dating back as early as 1775, although the science on that is a little tough. There have been tropical storms and extratropical storms, and we know how to prepare for these.

I can give some examples of a couple of famous ones that happened. People close to the fishing community will know of the “gales”, as they called them, of 1926 and 1927, when over 300 fishermen were killed on the Grand Banks when two hurricanes came in. One hurricane made landfall in Yarmouth and the other one landed in Port Hawkesbury. Those were in 1926 and 1927.

Hurricane Cindy, in 1959, moved ashore in New Brunswick. There were similar ones throughout the decades that we could talk about. In 1950, hurricane Able went ashore at Goodwood in Halifax, which is also in my riding. In 1940 there was one that was called the Nova Scotia hurricane, and it went ashore in Lockeport in my riding.

We have these kinds of storms. They are growing in intensity, but we have had them for centuries in Atlantic Canada. They always bring tragedy, but Fiona was different in the sense that it was geographically larger. I was in the south shore when hurricane Juan hit in 2003. When it hit, it was intense, but it was compact and it moved fast through the region. It did a lot of devastation at midnight with a high tide and a full moon. The Halifax waterfront was destroyed. However, this one was larger and slower-moving, so the winds stayed around longer.

Hurricanes affect the ocean in two ways, in waves of surges. One is when the power actually moves the water and then another is when the wind also pushes the waves. It is sort of a double impact that happens. When it is more sustained over a period of time like that, there are more intense waves, which is what happened with Fiona.

I would also like to reiterate our leader's comments from earlier today when he asked the Prime Minister how we, as opposition members, can best support Atlantic Canadians who are in dire need right now. Everyone—not only in this House, but all Canadians—can help us, and I must express my gratitude to the federal government for its constant communication with opposition MPs and its rapid response to requests for military assistance.

I would also like to thank the municipal leaders in my community whom I have spoken to. They have done diligent work in communicating over the past few days with me and also with their resi-

dents about how to be prepared and what to do afterward in providing services to our residents. We can all get better results from our constituents when we work together with open lines of communication.

In times like this, we depend on the power workers, who work around the clock to restore operations as quickly as possible. Never before have we seen this many downed power lines posing a threat to workers and the public. It could be weeks before some of the Nova Scotia Power workers get a full eight hours' sleep, I suspect, and we owe them our thanks.

On top of that, we are welcoming more than 300 power workers from other provinces and even, as we heard earlier, power workers from New England. It is our tradition in Atlantic Canada of supporting New England and of New England supporting us in times of crisis. Atlantic Canadians have a reputation of helping out our friends in need, and we always get that same treatment from other parts of the country.

● (2100)

Additionally, I want to extend my appreciation to the police, paramedics, firefighters, the Coast Guard and members of our armed forces for everything they are doing to keep our communities safe and to try to help us rebuild.

In typical Maritime fashion, the community is coming together in light of the disaster. Warming centres and evacuation shelters are being staffed and supplied by generous donations. Nova Scotians are tough, and the character of our communities is most present in times of tragedies such as this.

As we start to rebuild, I know the resolve Nova Scotians and Atlantic Canadians have will not be diminished. I have been impressed with many groups and organizations that have swiftly begun assessing the damages of the storm. In Atlantic Canada, that includes industry groups representing many of our farmers, fishers and forestry workers, all of whom are reeling from the damage.

Of course, in coastal communities in Atlantic Canada, big storms always pose a threat to our wharfs and small craft harbours. I heard reports from constituents and people in coastal communities around the region about the extent of the damage they have witnessed at wharfs. I have talked to mayors in Newfoundland, ministers in P.E.I. and fishing associations in New Brunswick to understand the early assessment. A lot of those groups are really only getting on the water now and getting out to see the extent of the damage to the wharfs, the fishing gear and the farms because it is relatively safe to do so now, bar running into downed power lines.

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As well, I spoke over the weekend and today with the Maritime Fishermen's Union, the FFAW-Unifor in Newfoundland and the PEI Fishermen's Association in my capacity as shadow minister for fisheries. They have conveyed to me that the situation in southwest New Brunswick is serious and that the north shore wharfs in P.E.I. have had major damage. As well, we have seen the destruction in southwest Newfoundland, which is complete and devastating.

I have had reports from fishermen in P.E.I. that they hauled their boats in preparation for the storm, and when they went to see their boats, they were not there anymore. I have had fishermen tell me that the shed where they store their halibut gear and lobster gear is completely gone. I know New Brunswick fishermen were out in the water today, and will be tomorrow, trying to find the lobster gear they left in the water in the fishing areas. That will be a big challenge.

David Sansom, president of the Red Head Harbour Authority in P.E.I., said:

Our lower wharf, the tide bumped so high, it pulled it right out and destroyed that. And our east wharf this evening, the tide came up and lifted it right out of where it's secured.

He continued:

Just everything is loose and everything is unusable at this point.

On top of that, gear has been lost, and some fishers will lose out on days, if not weeks, of fishing due to the infrastructure damage. They may even lose a season. The P.E.I. summer lobster season is ongoing, as is New Brunswick's, but as we await the assessment of damaged wharfs, it looks like some fishermen may not get back out this season. They have three weeks left in the season.

That is why the fisheries minister must take a serious look at extending the seasons in those communities and keep in mind the severe financial setback the hurricane is causing fishing families. The Department of Fisheries must also immediately begin to prepare plans to repair wharfs under its jurisdiction and expedite permits to get vessels back at the docks as quickly as possible.

FFAW-Unifor, which represents many inshore fishers in Newfoundland, issued a news release this morning on the situation in southern Newfoundland. I will read the brief release it put out this morning, which reads:

● (2105)

Professional fish harvesters on the southwest coast of the province are left reeling after post-tropical storm Fiona made landfall in the area on Friday and Saturday. The damage left in Fiona's wake has impacted multiple enterprises, leaving significant damage to gear, boats, motors, and sheds. FFAW-Unifor is seeking financial support from federal and provincial governments to assist these inshore harvesters in their rebuilding efforts.

"The damage from Fiona has been felt in particular by folks located between La Poile and Port aux Basques. Some inshore harvesters have lost all their gear, motors, boats, and sheds – just washed away with the storm. As small-scale operators, they have no financial recourse through traditional insurance channels and we are therefore asking for financial relief from our federal and provincial governments," explains FFAW-Unifor Secretary-Treasurer, Jason Spingle.

"Support following hurricanes and tropical storms has been provided to inshore harvesters in the past, and we expect that Fiona will be no different. These fish harvesters will require financial help to replace their lost investment in order to resume fishing next season," Spingle says.

Harvesters in this region rely mainly on lobster and halibut as their primary, and in many cases, sole source of income. Rebuilding infrastructure and replacing lost

gear and other equipment will be paramount to the region's ability to rebound from Fiona's destruction.

In the immediate-term, FFAW-Unifor is communicating with members on the ground to continue to assess the full impact of damage, and to ensure our members and their families have their basic needs met in the coming days and weeks. The Union will also be approving a donation to the Canadian Red Cross via the Executive Board as soon as possible....

"Recovery on the southwest coast will certainly not happen overnight and we acknowledge that there is significant work to do. What our members need now is commitment from our elected officials that support will be given to the inshore harvesters that need it. Without that commitment, their livelihoods will be lost," concludes Spingle.

From our perspective, as the official opposition, we are advocating that support.

Commercial fishing organizations and their members and those who manage port authorities are doing an inventory of the wharves damaged in the hurricane. Some concerns that have been expressed to me by port authorities are that under normal situations, the federal government cost-shares repair work with port authority revenue through small craft harbours funding. The concern now is that many port authorities do not have their share of funds to pay half the cost of repairing the damage, and in some cases replacing a destroyed wharf. They will be looking to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard to provide sole-source funding from small craft harbours to pay 100% of reconstruction costs to help these port authorities bring back infrastructure to proper safety and operating standards.

As the fisheries minister is aware, but perhaps not everyone in this House is, there are a number of active fisheries that are open currently, and many fishers are attempting to assess damaged and lost gear. The fishing organizations I have spoken to want to know up front if the financial aid will be there.

The Minister of Fisheries is well aware that the fall lobster fishery in LFA25, between New Brunswick and southwestern P.E.I., is open. The season is short and is almost over, but the loss of these few days has had a big impact. As we asked in the House today, we are asking for the minister to extend the season so that they can complete it. I will ask the government again tonight if it will consider extending that season.

As I said in the House earlier today, our small craft harbours are the Trans-Canada Highway of our oceans, and without them, boats cannot get on the water, which means seafood cannot be caught, which means there is less Canadian product on supermarket shelves and less income for our coastal communities.

The men and women on the sea who feed us deserve a government that will remove the bureaucracy, cut up the red tape and get our wharves functioning again. These commitments from the government are serious and must be upheld.

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In light of the situation, we as legislators must come together, listen to what is needed on the ground, and deliver quickly to Atlantic Canada what they need to recover from this hurricane in a time that would allow people to resume their ability to earn an income and support their families.

• (2110)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for the great speech this evening and express condolences to his community and everybody across Atlantic Canada, throughout the Maritimes as well as in Quebec, and to all those who have been impacted by this tragic storm.

Like many members of this House, I have spent a lot of time in Nova Scotia. My brother was born there. We lived in Dartmouth for a couple of years. That is why I get to sit next to this fine fellow. I got to visit this summer as well. A lot of Canadians, and certainly people back in my riding, feel very disconnected from the storm, and they want to know what they can do.

Our government has set up a matching program through the Canadian Red Cross, an organization that has demonstrated the ability to distribute funds to community-level organizations quite effectively. What would the hon. member suggest that I could pass along to my constituents so that they could be helpful in this “build back better” plan for all Nova Scotians and Atlantic Canadians?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the offer and the kind words. I am sure he must have spent a great deal of time on Lake Banook, given his past life and previous success.

The Red Cross obviously is a great initiative the government has set up. I am sure there will be more charities coming through in the next few days that will be looking to help. I hope the government would consider matching funds for those as well.

The hon. member has family there, and what matters most is that when people know somebody in Atlantic Canada, they should just reach out to them and call them to let them know they are thinking about them and to ask what they can do as a friend or a family member to help them out. We tend to feel isolated in a situation where people are not going through their normal routines anymore, so for all those watching, if they have friends and family in Nova Scotia, and I am sure many people have already reached out, they should try to do that as much as they can over the coming weeks.

• (2115)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, storms like last weekend's will irrevocably change the shoreline and fishing harbours. The wharves have been displaced and are stuck on the shoreline.

For years the Bloc Québécois has been calling for more investments in research on countering the effects of waves on shorelines and on shoreline remediation.

Does my colleague also believe that we must put more money into protecting our shorelines from such storms and, at the same time, protect our wharves, ports and fishers?

[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, I think there are some strong methods already. I know that, on the point where I live on the ocean, half of the homeowners have used this technology and it has worked. The other half of the homeowners, on the other side, have not used it and the shoreline is eroding.

Regarding the harbours themselves, where the commercial operations take place, we need to have much more investment in those harbours. We already have probably in the neighbourhood of \$3 billion to \$4 billion required to bring the wharves up to standard across Canada. That does not include making the breakwalls and everything else that needs to be done in order to make them a little higher because the seas are a little higher, the storms are a little stronger and the boats are a little bigger. All of those things are contributing to the exposure of those fishing communities to the storms that we are receiving.

I would agree with anything we can do to figure out erosion, but Mother Nature is Mother Nature and it is pretty hard to win a battle against the ocean with artificial means. The ocean will take things away, unfortunately, so planning where one puts one's house and how one builds those breakwalls is very important.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, first, I also want to send my condolences to the people in Atlantic Canada, and I want to thank my colleague. I know he is very passionate about his home community, where I have family as well. We talk quite often about fisheries and the importance of fisheries.

I want to focus my question around first responders and the Canadian military. We have members of the CAF who are there, on the ground. They are constantly being deployed, whether it be to the flooding in British Columbia or forest fires. There was a story today stating that the CAF is short one in 10 positions right now, out of the 100,000 positions it has. I ran into a man the other day. He was so proud of his son, who is a paramedic in the military. He said his son is going to leave the military because of the wages. It is not like the old days, when people could save enough money, buy a house and put some money aside. Housing is out of touch with the state of inflation. He wants to stay in the military, but he is thinking about leaving.

Maybe my colleague could talk about the need to redesign the military to tackle the climate crisis and to ensure that we look after the people who are serving our country. Their roles are changing. Maybe he could speak about the importance of ensuring that we have not just military personnel, but equipment that can respond to climate emergencies.

• (2120)

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, I know the member for Courtenay—Alberni is passionate about the fishery as well, having served for many years very effectively on the fisheries committee, and he has relatives in Atlantic Canada. That is a great thing about Atlantic Canadians; we are everywhere. We are in Alberta. We are everywhere. We have connections across the country where we have gone to find work.

In terms of the role of the military, we are lucky that we have the military we have to respond to these kinds of crises and to help out. However, the primary reason people join the military, and my nephew is in the navy, is to go on deployment and not just be here in terms of supporting disaster relief. They primarily want to go out and defend democracy and freedom around the world where dictatorships and other people are trampling on human rights, as we are seeing now with Russia in Ukraine, and they are proud of that.

What frustrates them is that we do not make the investments in the military to provide them the equipment. It is a bit of a “chicken and egg”. Why would someone join the air force in Canada to fly fighter jets when we cannot seem to make decisions to actually buy any, and the ones we are flying now were purchased by Pierre Trudeau when some members of this House were not even alive?

The focus on investment in the operational needs internationally is the primary role for which somebody joins the military. If we are operationally ready and we have the resources here to help out in disasters, then that is an added bonus. Right now most people would be attracted to go into the military if we were properly equipping it.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am really grateful to the Conservative Party that the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets got a whole 20 minutes, because that means the time for questions and answers lasts for 10 minutes.

The hon. member is a friend and we have been texting each other all day because I am both a British Columbia MP and a Cape Bretoner. I remember hurricanes that we used to have in Atlantic Canada, and the hon. member and I have been back and forth on the question of this storm being supercharged by climate change.

I will never forget hurricane Juan in 2003, because my mom had died in late August of that year. The hurricane was so soon thereafter, I always relate them in my head. I was in Cape Breton. The storm was off the charts, which I do not need to tell my colleague or anyone in this place. Because I am a climate activist, I went digging in to see what happened with Juan. It was the first time we had had a full-fledged tropical hurricane-force, full-force category 2 hit our shores. We have had hurricanes, just as the hon. member has said, but they tend to have weakened. With hurricane Juan, the forecasters, as I recall, thought the hurricane would lose force because it would come over the cold water south of Nova Scotia and slow down. We would have a bad storm for sure, with high winds and lots of rain, but hurricane Juan was different, as was Dorian and now, boy, Fiona. Fiona hit Canada with the lowest barometric pressure of any storm ever.

One thing I want to say to my hon. friend is a cautionary tale from a British Columbian: It has been more than a year since the

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fires and the heat domes and the floods of last year. People in B.C. are still waiting for help, so we will hear good words now but we are going to have to stay on it. Therefore, I want to give the member my word that I will do anything I can for all of our colleagues and friends and cousins and my brother and sister-in-law who are in Cape Breton. We have to get help to everybody, as we do to his friend, the member of Parliament for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon. The people from Lytton are still waiting.

How do we seize this moment of commonality to actually sit down and dissect the science that says this is just going to get worse and worse until we turn off the tap on fossil fuels?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands and I have known each other for a long time. We have great discussions and I appreciate her intervention.

Hurricanes have happened with different intensity. In 1975, hurricane Blanche landed in Nova Scotia, and hurricane Hortense, in 1996, came directly into Nova Scotia. There are others that came in before that. They follow the gulf stream and the gulf stream comes in and out, so it has that impact.

I would love to carry on the conversation on it with the member later, since I am out of time.

• (2125)

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Sydney—Victoria.

I rise this evening to share with the House and all Canadians the brutal and devastating impacts of hurricane Fiona. For many and, in particular, my own constituents in Cape Breton—Canso, my neighbours, family and friends, this represents an unprecedented moment in the lives of all the residents in my riding.

It clearly is one of the largest weather events to happen in our community, and certainly one of the most destructive. Homes, schools and entire communities, which, just last week, were thriving, are now, many of them, unrecognizable, with fallen trees, downed wires and debris across our communities. It really is an unimaginable reality, which I have seen with my own eyes as I look around my riding during the aftermath of this storm.

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I want to share a story of Glace Bay, my hometown, where I was born and raised. There is an area called No. 2, and it is called No. 2 because it was named after colliery No. 2, the mine colliery. There are great people in that area, and the Hub of Glace Bay.

There are so many roofs that are off company homes in those areas. In fact, one roof came off a home and was found three streets over, in an individual's backyard. The force and the devastation of the storm cannot be overstated.

Nevertheless, there remains one thing, as I want to tell my colleagues and Canadians watching, that is untouched by the storm, and that is the resiliency of people in Cape Breton and northeastern Nova Scotia. For every instance of destruction that I saw, there has been an instance of unity. Neighbours are helping neighbours. We have heard that today. Family members are helping family members, and even strangers, with gestures that are small and quite large, from offering others a safe place to sleep to leaving their own supplies on the porches for people just to take. These are examples of the goodwill that is on full display on the east coast.

I would like to share some of the generosity I have seen over the past few days, like that of Margaret Kuchma. I met Margaret last summer and she quickly became an extension of what I like to call "team Kelloway". Margaret thinks about our community all the time, before herself, in fact. In particular, she takes care of everyone in the community called No. 11, another example of a community named after a colliery, colliery No. 11. That is a neighbourhood in Glace Bay. On Sunday, following the storm, Margaret ran her generator, fed dozens of people out of her home, and shared her power with those who needed to charge their device or their laptop, or just needed a hot cup of coffee.

Like Margaret, in the aftermath of the hurricane, the administrators and the officer cadets at the Canadian Coast Guard College in Westmount, Nova Scotia, opened their doors to the community. I was there today. Cadets were helping people who had been taken out of their homes, providing lodging, providing support and providing food. What great leadership. What great servant leadership. They are an example.

The staff and the officer cadets were there for the community. I want to highlight that they were there for 40 families that were displaced and are now staying at the campus until they return home. They are providing folks a hot cup of coffee, a shower, or the ability just to collect their thoughts and to think about the devastation but, more or less, to be with people, even strangers, just to commiserate on how lucky they have been during the storm, even with the challenges before them.

I know that most people know this, but I am proud to be a resident of Cape Breton, northeastern Nova Scotia. This is a community that has proven itself to be self-sustaining and brave of heart, even when times are tough.

I have said it before and I will say it again. My dad was in charge of mine rescue. He was a trainer and a mentor to those who went underground to save individuals' lives. My dad was a man of few words, but he would always say to me, "Crisis reveals character."

• (2130)

Over the past two days in my travels throughout the riding, my heart really has been filled by the kindness and generosity of folks in the communities that I serve. Despite our resiliency, we have been able to do only so much to get ourselves through the last 48 hours. Lucky for us we have not had to go that far to see leadership.

I want to take a moment to thank the countless first responders who came to the aid of my constituents. It has been said here tonight but it bears repeating that our local police, fire departments, emergency medical services and their dispatchers have worked tremendously hard to answer all the calls of those in need. There is no doubt in my mind that many are safe today because of them.

Bear in mind that in Cape Breton—Canso there has not been, up until I speak here tonight, any major injuries or loss of life. It is because of those people. It is because of the work of the provincial government and the federal government working together with municipalities, first nations communities and towns to prepare us for the devastation that came toward us.

I want to go back to the Coast Guard for a moment. Our Coast Guard has responded to reports of sunken and grounded vessels. It remains ready to confront any pollutant or other hazard to marine life.

I want also to highlight our Canadian Armed Forces. They have been on the ground here in Cape Breton. They were in the air and at sea in order to provide everything in terms of human resources, equipment and military assets. I would like to thank the CAF members of the 5th Canadian Division specifically, who have been quite literally at our side as we cope with the damage to our communities.

Our municipal and provincial officials and authorities have also played an integral role in the response, which has thus proven to be successful. I know there is a long way to go, but slowly and steadily we are seeing services being restored to communities that have been without power since the storm hit.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my federal colleagues for their outstanding leadership during this time of need. In particular, I thank the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and the Minister of National Defence for their time and effort, which I know has benefited our communities to a great extent. I would also like to thank members of the opposition who reached out to me to check in and see how my citizens were. I thank them for that. It says a lot about their character and who they are as people.

I would like to remind Canadians and colleagues in this House that climate change exists. There was a gentleman in one of the warming stations who said, "I believed in climate change before, but it is pretty much cemented now that I believe it even more."

Finally, I would like to thank my constituents for their bravery and their endurance. The people of Cape Breton—Canso have risen to the occasion in the face of yet another challenge. Whether it be in the capacity of a community leader, a health care professional, a technician or a store clerk, they have all played a pivotal role in helping one another. That is going to continue.

The success amid this incident, this storm, this really catastrophic event, and the responses at all levels of government would not be what they are today without the kindness, compassion and hard work coming from within the areas that are hardest hit. To the incredible people at home who I am privileged to serve in this chamber, and I am privileged to serve them, I express my profound gratitude.

Mr. Speaker, I think you will know this. Back home, there is a familiar tune and the lyrics contain the words “we rise again”. In this moment, those words represent the ethos of my constituency and all Atlantic Canadians. It is the people who weathered the storm. In light of all that has taken place, I say this with gratitude and absolute confidence to the people of Cape Breton and north-eastern Nova Scotia, as the song goes, we will rise again.

• (2135)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member, my friend from Cape Breton—Canso, for not singing the song, even though the song is wonderful and the sentiment is wonderful as well.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, my fellow Nova Scotian, is in a riding that is one of the hardest-hit places in our province. It is devastating. He represents some very important fishing communities around Cape Breton. Obviously, all Nova Scotians are concerned with what is going on in the northern part of our province and Cape Breton in particular.

I want to take this opportunity, because he is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, to see if he would speak on behalf of the government and make the commitment here that the government will quickly speed up the repairs of wharf infrastructure without bureaucracy, without the application processes we normally have. Will the government get the work done quickly so that our fishermen and people who depend on the fishery can get to work when the seasons open?

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to serve on the fisheries committee with the member opposite.

I will say that we have made some substantial investments in small craft harbours, because they are the economic hubs of Atlantic Canada. In terms of damage to and repair of small craft harbours, it is up to us to collectively work together. It is up to this government to make investments where they are necessary in small craft harbours, to buttress them and to strengthen them. We have done that since 2015 with investments in small craft harbours, with an additional \$300 million next year, but make no mistake about it: there will be a changing environment. Environmental crises require

us to do a deeper dive to ensure that we strengthen those resources that provide so much to Atlantic Canadians, and dare I say, to all Canadians.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people on the east coast are suffering, and I was glad to hear comments from all members in this House committing to supporting Atlantic Canadians in the coming weeks.

I also want us to start thinking about the future. These extreme weather events are happening more frequently and with more severity. I am concerned that the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund right now is completely inadequate. It does not come close to meeting the needs of communities and municipalities that need to fix critical infrastructure and build resilience in the face of climate disaster.

Will the member commit to pushing his government to ensure that this fund is adequate to meet the needs of this changing climate?

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Mr. Speaker, the fund the member speaks of helps a tremendous number of groups, communities and municipalities, but what we need to do is act collectively. This is another important moment in time where we look at the fact that this is not just a once-in-a-blue-moon storm. These storms are happening on the east coast on a regular basis. Maybe it was not as strong as Fiona, but five years ago we had a very catastrophic flooding event in Cape Breton that was supposed to occur once in a century. They are repeating more and more.

This government is committed to ensuring that we react and, more importantly, respond in the right way. There is that fund and other funds, such as the oceans protection plan, which has about \$9 million invested in it.

There are opportunities to work within departments and work with levels of government to ensure we put the right investments in place, but I could not agree more that we need to continuously up our game when it comes to protecting communities, economic development, social development and the environment.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as this is the first time on my feet since hurricane Fiona made landfall 72 hours ago, I want to make sure that all members in the communities that were affected know that our hearts are with them.

[Translation]

I want to say to Quebeckers affected by the hurricane that we are there for them.

• (2140)

[English]

I have a son posted in Gagetown, and my older son actually deployed as part of Operation Lentus back in 2019 in response to the flooding. Our colleague from Cape Breton—Canso talked about Canadian Armed Forces members who were on the ground immediately to help with removing debris and assisting with connectivity issues for electricity and so on.

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Could the member elaborate a bit on what he is forecasting with respect to medium-term needs? What does he anticipate might be needed on the ground in supporting the Canadian Armed Forces?

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, it is around helping to restore power and with respect to that, as well as clearing trees, lights and other debris from homes and businesses. We are looking forward to CAF members' presence here, and as the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence have said, they will be here until the job gets done.

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in times of crisis, Cape Bretoners come together. They unite for a common purpose, healing their neighbours, helping their neighbours. With that in mind, I have to start off by thanking the member for Cape Breton—Canso for sharing his technology and his screen name with me tonight so that I might give this speech. I extend my sincere gratitude to him for accommodating me. As of the beginning of this debate, there was no power in Eskasoni, and so I have come to Sydney River in the hospitable territory of Cape Breton—Canso to deliver my speech.

Cape Breton was hit hard by hurricane Fiona. We experienced a night of howling winds, the cracking sound of trees breaking, torrential rain and unprecedented devastation. Most of our communities remain without power, running water and many are without heat. Roofs have been swept off buildings. Downed trees and power poles criss-cross streets.

In the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, giant trees were uprooted, toppling fences and homes and crushing cars. In coastal communities like Neil's Harbour, the sea swept straight into some homes leaving a foot or more of sea foam coating every surface. Internet service remains spotty, if available at all. There are long lines at every gas station with those hoping to keep generators running to keep their homes warm and their food from spoiling. Truly, this is the most devastating storm to hit our island, yet in the aftermath, I have seen some of the best of our communities as people have come together to support one another and rebuild.

I have spoken to people across the island who, despite long days, are doing everything they can to help their fellow Cape Bretoners. They are people like Lieutenant Jenelle Durdle at the Salvation Army, who is providing hot meals and warm clothes for those now in need.

I have spoken to members of our armed forces at the Victoria Park barracks who are helping in the recovery efforts, including the search for housing for those who have lost the roof over their heads and are now in need of shelter, like the residents of an apartment building on Rotary Drive in Sydney, which had 64 units, who are now without a place for their families.

I spoke with Raj at one of those apartments who pleaded for our support. He is an international student who is now left without a place to stay for weeks, potentially months. Raj and many other evacuees are now being kept warm at the Membertou First Nation convention centre where Chief Terry Paul has admirably stepped up to help his neighbours during their time of need. I have been honoured to see the Mi'kmaq communities in Cape Breton helping

each other and they are now reaching out to help all those who they are privileged enough to help.

I spoke to more than 150 staff, students, cadets and volunteers at the Coast Guard College in Westmount who have transformed their institution into a welcome centre for displaced residents. This morning, along with the executive director, Dena Richardson, I spoke to them and thanked them for their bravery and courageous efforts. Despite the building itself having major damage, 40 beds are now being made available for those most in need.

Everywhere I look in the riding, there is devastation. Osborne Burke, who runs Victoria Co-operative Fisheries, a major employer in the region, has seen catastrophic damage and will require federal support in the months ahead in order to be ready for the fishing season that his community very much relies on.

Cape Breton Regional Municipality Mayor Amanda McDougall and I have been in constant communication. She reiterated the need for infrastructure support for housing, sidewalks, seniors complexes and the major cleanup that is needed. I have reassured her that help is on the way, and that the federal government has the backs of Canadians through floods, pandemics and hurricanes. Our government has been and continues to show that we will be there for Canadians.

The Minister of Emergency Preparedness, whom I cannot thank enough, has already approved a request from the Government of Nova Scotia for immediate support to the province as it deals with the impact from hurricane Fiona. As part of this response, the Canadian Coast Guard is providing deployable incident management teams. Transport Canada's national aerial surveillance program is providing aerial imagery and recon capability.

Last year, we had a historic flood that washed away entire roads on the Cabot Trail. People said it was a once-in-a-lifetime storm. Less than a year later, we have witnessed worse. It is clear that coastal communities are now vulnerable to the impacts of the climate crisis. Ponds that I once played hockey on as a child no longer freeze. Yearly storms batter the Maritimes like we used to only see in places like Florida and New Orleans. We are seeing the lowest barometric pressure we have recorded in Canadian history.

● (2145)

The climate crisis is here. Weather events are becoming more unpredictable and more prone to extreme conditions. We like to think the effects of climate change are a far-flung forecast, but we are feeling those effects now, and we are already seeing the cost of generations of inaction.

I know Cape Bretoners are worried about their children's future. They ask themselves, "What will the storms be like for them? What can we do now to slow and reverse these weather events?" We wonder what sacrifices we need to make now to ensure a better quality of life for the next generation.

The time for the debate on the climate crisis and our need to do more is over in the eyes of Cape Bretoners. We need help today, and we also need to get past the populist bickering about putting more money in polluters' pockets at the cost of our children's future.

A Cree proverb teaches us that only when the last fish has been caught, the last river has been poisoned and the last tree has been cut will we realize that money cannot be eaten. Indigenous knowledge teaches us to plan for the next seven generations. Responsible governments know that this is not easy, but we must take those important strides. We need to do everything in our power to transition to a green economy and lessen the severity of the growing crisis, and we must invest in resiliency and climate-proof green infrastructure.

We need to ensure the price on pollution is enough to cover the cost of disaster mitigation that is needed now and even more so into the future. If there are those among us who refuse to listen to the scientists, perhaps they may listen to the Supreme Court of Canada. In March 2021, Chief Justice Richard Wagner ruled as follows:

Climate change is real. It is caused by greenhouse gas emissions resulting from human activities, and it poses a grave threat to humanity's future.

Today we are fortunate in Cape Breton to be talking only about damage, and not deaths. I want to send my condolences to those regions that have experienced deaths.

However, I am convinced we could do more and go faster. Now more than ever, it is upon us, as parliamentarians, to become the environmental leaders on the world stage. Given the gravity of the situation, let our hearts and minds and the consideration of our children and grandchildren lead our decision-making.

I give these thoughts with the humble hopes that we will not succumb to selfish, short-term thinking at the cost of our future generations. As hard as it is, let us think together about the next seven generations of Canadians. *Wela'liq.*

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, one of the biggest concerns we have is that we not fall into the trap of saying, as the great Ronald Reagan once said, "I'm from the government and I'm here to help."

How will that side of the House assure Atlantic Canadians that the help the government is promising will end up in the hands of Atlantic Canadians in a rapid, transparent manner, so that the process is simple and we are not tied up in bureaucratic red tape for the next four years?

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, what we need to do is move fast.

However, to blame this disaster on bureaucrats or gatekeepers or whatever terminology the member wants to use is not seeing the actual problem in front of us. The actual problem is climate change. These disasters will happen, and they will continue to happen. We

have seen it up north. We have seen it in the west. We have seen it in the east. To try to blame it on the bureaucracy is ingenuine to the actual problem that we must face.

I would ask the member if he believes climate change is real, like the Supreme Court of Canada has said. Are the member and his party willing to act so that Nova Scotians will not have to deal with this in the future?

● (2150)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his speech tonight and for his on-the-ground reporting as to what is really going on on Cape Breton Island. He made the point that the reason behind this and other disasters we have been facing is climate change.

I am wondering, given the member's role in this, if he would like to comment on the role that indigenous people across Canada should and could be taking in leading the fight against climate change, the fight we all have to be engaged in.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, that is an important question.

In the Mi'kmaq culture and in the Mi'kmaq language we have a term called *netukulimk*. It reminds us that we have a responsibility to each other, we have a responsibility to our communities and we have a responsibility to our nation.

We also have a responsibility to our ecosystem, one that we too often forget at the cost of profits and at the cost of money in our pocket. We have lost that connection to our ecosystem and that responsibility to our ecosystem. We need to relearn that. We need to teach our children. As parliamentarians we need to work together to find answers we can all agree on that say that we realize this is an existential threat, and as a minority government we are willing to take the steps needed to safeguard our children's future.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would say to my hon. friend from Sydney—Victoria a huge *wela'lin*. I do not know that I have ever been more proud to stand here as someone who still considers herself a Cape Bretoner as well as a British Columbian. I think the words of the hon. member for Sydney—Victoria have been the most profound of this whole evening's debate.

I would like to ask if he would agree with me that our chances of giving our children a livable world are hanging in the balance in the very near term and that we need to listen to science, but we need to be guided by indigenous leadership and wisdom.

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Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her comments and her years of advocacy on this important file. It is one of the things that we learned growing up in an indigenous community, that within a language we are all connected. That is an important thing that I try to remind myself of daily, but I think the answers are not only in indigenous knowledge but in collaboration within this House. The answers are within us. We are in a minority government. We need to work together, like in our all-party caucus on environment. We need to start meeting more frequently. We need to start having these conversations in a way that I know the member has led for many years, and I thank her for those efforts. However, I want to hold on to hope in this government, that we all see what is going on and that we are all ready to act.

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Atlantic Canadians are well used to preparing for hurricanes and tropical storms. These storms are part of life in the Atlantic provinces. Atlantic Canadians are prepared, and they expect their federal government to be as well.

In my own constituency of Miramichi—Grand Lake, in living memory, in 1959, the remnants of a hurricane brought 50-foot waves and 100-miles-per-hour winds, claiming 35 lives and 22 boats in what has become known as the Escuminac disaster. So tragic was this event that at the time the late Queen Elizabeth II herself donated to the New Brunswick fishermen's disaster fund. Stories of that storm and its tragic aftermath continue to be told today, 60 years after the incident. I had the privilege of speaking at the 60th anniversary.

As we all know, post-tropical storm Fiona raged through Atlantic Canada this past weekend, and that is the very purpose of this debate tonight. I wonder what stories will be told 60 years from now about its aftermath. How will the current Liberal government be immortalized in the minds of Atlantic Canadians? It is not lost on anyone in the Atlantic provinces that when polling numbers started to be reported in 2015, when the current Prime Minister was elected, Atlantic Canada delivered for him at the time. Almost every seat in Atlantic Canada was delivered to him. However, now that we need him the most, where is he? The government has abandoned Atlantic Canada when we needed it the most.

One of the most important duties of a federal government is to keep its citizens safe. Post-tropical storm Fiona has devastated homes and communities and infrastructure in all Atlantic Canadian provinces. Hundreds of thousands remain without power, and it will be anywhere from days to weeks before the hardest-hit areas get restored. Some in Atlantic Canada cannot afford the fuel to put in a generator, and some of our citizens cannot afford the generator. There are many people in Atlantic Canada who are struggling, who are going to be colder than they were, and there are people in need all over the Atlantic provinces.

I have spoken today with the Premier of New Brunswick and briefly with the Premier of Nova Scotia. The premiers have conveyed to me that, while obviously in New Brunswick we did not get hit as hard as some of the other Atlantic provinces, still there are wellness checks that are not happening. Those are a concern in Nova Scotia. There are also roads that are impassable, and cell and mobility coverage in Atlantic Canada is already terrible. We all

know that. Now we have entire communities going with one bar and sometimes none at all. There is not enough service.

Why is the failed ArriveCAN app more important than the public safety of Canadians? One of the most basic responsibilities of the federal government is to keep Canadians safe. This past weekend, post-tropical storm Fiona raged through Atlantic Canada, devastating communities and damaging critical infrastructure. This storm did not come as a surprise. Those in the storm's path had many days to prepare as best they could. The federal government, too, had many days to prepare. Today, there are still hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses in Atlantic Canada without electricity and counting on power crews from outside the province and from our neighbours in the United States to help get the devastation under control.

CBC News is reporting that senior officials in the Liberal government have confirmed that their failed ArriveCAN app will no longer be mandatory as of October 1. This failed \$17-million pandemic restriction has overreached into the basic rights of Canadians. The government was standing by as these restrictions delayed the arrival of much-needed utility workers to my region. In five days, these restrictions will disappear anyway. Why are the Liberals allowing it to delay the restoration of electricity and critical infrastructure in Atlantic Canada?

Let us think about that. When this app was created, many in the technology world said it could have been created for a million dollars. The government spent upward of \$17 million or \$18 million. I forget the exact number.

● (2155)

Therefore, \$17 million or \$18 million was spent for an app, which was \$16 million too much. It was a failure from the outset, and now it is prohibiting New England power crews from getting there to help Atlantic Canadians. That is a total failure. It cannot be looked at any other way.

There is one thing I can say about Atlantic Canadians. I believe we could take the majority of citizens in my riding, blindfold them, put them in a helicopter, drop them in any wilderness in this country and they could survive. I would lay money on it that.

Atlantic Canadians are tough. They live in rugged terrain. They have had storms dating back to 1775. For 100 years before Confederation and a good 150 years after, they did not blame these storms on something called climate change. There were several ice storms in New Brunswick when I was a provincial MLA, including hurricane Arthur.

There have been some very serious storms of recent memory, serious flooding as well, and the one thing I can recall is that Atlantic Canadians persevere. We are known for that across the country. Atlantic Canadians were known for that in World War II and the First World War. Veterans were known for that. There are so many things that we are known for across the country. This is going to bring out the resiliency of Atlantic Canadians.

However, as the official opposition, we want the government to act with vigour. We want it to do the job well so that Atlantic Canadians know they are getting the support they need. On this side of the floor, we are going to be there to make sure that the government delivers for Atlantic Canadians. That is our job on this side of the House, and we are very concerned with some of it.

I have seen some of the footage from Newfoundland, devastating footage in places like Port aux Basques. I could not believe what I was seeing. I saw a lot of pictures and digital imaging from Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, and clearly there is a lot of damage. One of the things that is damaged in Miramichi—Grand Lake is, as I mentioned, the Escuminac Wharf. In my region of Baie Sainte Anne, Escuminac and Hardwicke, the fishery is paramount. It is paramount throughout my riding, region and province.

The lobster fishery, as we know, is going to lose a minimum of one week because it has already lost three days. Fishers are going to spend the next two or three days locating their gear, which is scattered across the bay and coastal areas. Some of that gear will not be recovered. They are going to have to reset all the traps. Lobster fishermen are actually going to lose at least one week, so Conservatives are also calling on the government to extend the lobster fishery by at least a week. It may need to be longer, but we are looking for an extension on the lobster season because it is a critical season in my province. I want to make sure that small craft harbours are very much on the radar of the government because there is never quite enough money spent on that, and right now there is a direct need.

I want to mention that I will be splitting my time with the great member for Tobique—Mactaquac, which I forgot to mention in my introduction. We are all a little rusty since the summer. It will be great to hear his speech.

Lastly, we on this side of the floor are here to support Atlantic Canada. Conservatives and our Atlantic Canadian colleagues are working together. We have great leadership from our leader, and we are all working as a team in the best interests of Atlantic Canada. We are going to be there for them, and we are going to ensure that the government has the backs of Atlantic Canadians, like it says it does, because we have their backs on this side of the floor.

● (2200)

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his words in solidarity with Atlantic Canadians and about the resilience and strength of communities across the east coast.

I was surprised by some of the member's comments about climate change. I was surprised when the Leader of the Opposition did not mention climate change or the climate crisis in his speech tonight. I am curious if the member was implying that he does not

think climate change and the climate crisis are a driving cause for the increased severity and increased frequency of hurricanes and extreme weather events.

Mr. Jake Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I think what I was trying to insinuate is that, as the opposition, when we look at climate change, we think we should fight it with advancements to technology.

The current government, supported by the very member who asked me this question, have not hit a single target. If the NDP and Liberal coalition were actually concerned about climate change and actually considered it a crisis, then they would have actually created a system that would meet a target. They have not met a single target, so I do not think I can take any advice from members of either of those caucuses, Liberal or NDP. If they actually believed it were serious, they would have hit a target.

● (2205)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am going to follow up on the question from my friend from Victoria.

I do not disagree with him that, if the Liberals were serious, they would actually do the right thing on climate change, but I equally do not quite understand, as I am not quite certain that his caucus would support the government if it did the right things.

We immediately need to, for instance, cancel Bay du Nord, cancel the Trans Mountain pipeline, and make sure that we follow the advice to stop adding greenhouse gases and start subtracting them. That is the first step, and we need to take it before 2025, according to the world scientists with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. We need to support those moves.

Mr. Jake Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate that the member and I can agree on the initial part of her question.

I think that, on this side of the floor, we understand the importance of the Bay du Nord project. We also understand that those living in New Brunswick had an Energy East pipeline, which was going to bring oil from Alberta to New Brunswick. We did not do that. We also had a natural gas supply. Right now, our allies in western Europe are getting supplied with their energy source from Russia, and Putin is fuelling the war machine with the proceeds of selling that product to England, France and Germany, countries that we are allies with.

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I think the climate agenda of the left and the extreme far left has contributed to the power dynamic in the world right now. I think we had a huge missed opportunity with the Energy East pipeline. We should absolutely support it again, along with the Bay du Nord project. Now is the time we should be thinking about energy sovereignty, energy security, building pipelines and infrastructure, powering our country and helping our allies so that they do not have to purchase from the people who want to wage war against other countries from this planet.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member for Miramichi—Grand Lake this. He has been asked a lot about climate change and its effects. We also know that a great deal of what we see happening with climate change is driven by the energy needs of China and India, but I would like to bring it back to why we are having this debate tonight. It is about the response we have to do today to help our communities that are in dire straits right now. They lack the ability to even have power to cook a meal, let alone go on the ocean or on their farms to earn a living.

I wonder if the member could speak to what he expects from the government on delivering on those issues today.

Mr. Jake Stewart: Mr. Speaker, obviously, we have first responders on the ground. We have utility companies from within the provinces and outside from New England and maybe further. Obviously, we need as much help on the electrical side of it as possible.

In some of the storms we have had in New Brunswick in recent years, we found that when the armed forces showed up it really made a difference. Although it may not be their mandate, they made a huge difference when they came in. Any extra help we can get from the armed forces would be great. I think the current government has to really look at that very closely and very quickly.

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House this evening on behalf of our fellow Atlantic Canadians, who are under tremendous duress in many parts of our region, facing unprecedented circumstances. Some families and individuals are feeling the devastating consequences of hurricane Fiona.

I would like to just begin my remarks by, obviously, taking the time to express, on behalf of all members of the House and Canadians from coast to coast to coast, that all of our fellow Atlantic Canadians and fellow Canadians are in our thoughts and prayers at this time as they deal with the devastating effects of hurricane Fiona.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our true thanks and gratitude to the many faithful, dedicated volunteers, who so often are right there in the times of crisis. Maritimers and Atlantic Canadians are known to be truly some of the best at stepping up when their neighbours are in need.

When they see someone struggling, they will run to be there at their side to help their fellow Atlantic Canadian. We have seen this in the firefighters, who are responding even as we speak at this late hour, being there for their people, volunteering many dedicated hours to help remove debris, help get the power back on and be there for people who are in duress and have been without power for many hours, and it is now going into days.

We have seen it in the members of the Canadian Armed Forces who are on the ground now and helping in areas throughout our region. We say thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, to the brave men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces, who are there doing a tremendous job in support of the efforts of the local first responders and firefighters. It is so true, that expression, that our volunteer firefighters and first responders and members of the Canadian Armed Forces are those who rush in when everyone else is rushing out. We say thank you to them, on behalf of every member of the House, for their dedicated and faithful service, to fellow Canadians, including those who are dealing with the aftermath of this storm.

I want to take a moment, as well, and just speak to the fact that Atlantic Canadians are a resilient people. As my colleague from Miramichi—Grand Lake referenced so eloquently, we are not strangers to storms and hardships, hurricanes and disasters.

I remember, even a few short years ago, when our region in the province was much more affected by hurricane Arthur and how we came together. Neighbour moved in with neighbour, or sometimes went somewhere close by where they actually had power. There were several communities that were without power for weeks, yet we rallied together. We worked together, and we came through.

Atlantic Canadians live up to that old expression, that when the tough times come, the tough get going. I will tell us what, they say, “Guess what, we are tough enough. We will get going ourselves”, and they rise to the occasion and help one another out, saying, “Know what? If it takes a chainsaw, we will get a chainsaw. If it takes just good, old sweat equity and getting out there and moving debris, we will do that.”

Atlantic Canadians are just that kind of people, and we are a friendly bunch. They will probably throw the kettle on while someone is out there working and say, “Oh, do not worry. We will put some soups and sandwiches on.” They will do what they can to help each other up. That is what makes Atlantic Canada so special. I am proud to be an Atlantic Canadian and absolutely honoured and proud to represent the good people of Atlantic Canada.

I have been reflecting over this time and looking at it, and one thing that has become very important is that, in any time of crisis, it is absolutely clear that collaboration, coordination and rapidity of response is essential in a time of crisis.

I would encourage our federal government to do all that it can to make sure it collaborates with the provincial governments in Atlantic Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and, of course, eastern Quebec, and make sure that all of the necessary resources are there and there rapidly, so the response can get to where it needs to go as quickly as it needs to get there. Too often, the delays, hindrances and barriers that are in place hamper the relief efforts.

• (2210)

What we need to do is everything we can to expedite the relief that needs to be in the hands of those closest to the ground, which are our provincial governments, to make sure they have all the tools and resources they need to get the job done and bring relief to our people.

While reflecting on this time, an old story came back to me. Perhaps it is my roots that are showing, but I had an old story come back to me that kind of crystallized this moment. Perhaps it will relate to those who are listening at home.

I remembered an old story recorded in *The Gospel of Mark* about some fishermen who were caught in a very bad storm. The storm was so terrifying for them they were overwhelmed. They were experienced fishermen. It was not their first time facing stormy waters, but here they were in the midst of a storm, their boat being overrun and the waves splashing in against it. They were terrified, afraid and they cried out for help.

Thankfully, help came. The storm subsided and a great calm came afterward. One remark was made that came back to me today and just stuck with me. These experienced fishermen, speaking of the Master, said, “Who is this that even the wind and the waves obey him?” The part that stuck out to me was the wind and the waves. Being from Atlantic Canada, I cannot help myself; it just kind of comes.

The wind can be looked at as the cause. The hurricane winds are the cause of a great disaster in our region right now, but the cause is only one part of the story. The waves are the effects. Long after the wind has blown through, the waves will keep coming, and it will keep rocking the vessels, keep hitting the shoreline and keep causing damage.

I recognize in people's lives what is true literally in this old story is also true figuratively. For many people, after disaster has swept through their lives, such as a personal crisis or a time of trauma, long after the cause has ceased and the wind has blown over, the side effects and lasting consequences of that storm in their lives keep washing over their vessel for sometimes weeks, months and years to come. They are defined for a long time by an event that happened some time ago in their lives because, yes, people rushed in at the time of the storm and were quick to answer when the winds were blowing or in the immediate aftermath, but who was there when the waves kept coming weeks out, months out or even years out?

It is easy in a time of crisis for governments to be quick to respond in the moment, but what Atlantic Canadians want to know is whether the government will still hold their hand long after the wind has passed over and the waves are rocking their vessel. Will it

be there not only to deal with the cause but to deal with the lasting side effects and consequences of this storm that has blown over their region? Will it invest strategically in necessary and critical infrastructure like the member for South Shore—St. Margarets mentions often: our Trans-Canada Highway, wharves and infrastructure along the coast?

Will the government be there to make sure their farms have relief, not just now but in the weeks and months ahead? Will it be there for families who have lost their businesses, which have been in their lives for generations, to help them rebuild, recover and get back on their feet? The question many Atlantic Canadians have for the government tonight is this: Will you not only be there in the wind but will you be there with us to deal with the waves of the aftermath?

I conclude with this old hymn. I will wrap it up with that. I cannot help myself, but it came to me. It is storms, winds and waves, but the hymn is simply called *'Til the Storm Passes By*:

In the dark of the midnight,
Have I oft hid my face;
While the storm howls above me,
And there's no hiding place;
'Mid the crash of the thunder,
Precious Lord, hear my cry;
“Keep me safe 'til the storm passes by.”

'Til the storm passes over,
'Til the thunder sounds no more;
'Til the clouds roll forever from the sky,
Hold me fast, let me stand,
In the hollow of Thy hand;
Keep me safe 'til the storm passes by.

... 'Til the storm passes over,
'Til the thunder sounds no more;
'Til the clouds roll forever from the sky,
Hold me fast, let me stand,
In the hollow of Thy hand;
Keep me safe 'til the storm passes by.

My hope and my prayer for all my fellow Atlantic Canadians is that He would be with us not just through the wind but also through the waves. May we, as government representatives, do the same: be with them through the wind and the waves.

• (2215)

The Deputy Speaker: I did not get to church on Sunday, so I need to thank the member for that.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to follow on that theme of the long term. Will the government be there to help the people of Atlantic Canada in the long term?

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We have seen data that, right now, we spend about \$5 billion a year in Canada fixing the problems of climate and weather events across this country. Every year, that is \$5 billion. The federal government puts up about a tenth of that. Yes, Atlantic Canada gets storms every year, but they are becoming harder, faster and more devastating. It is predicted that, by 2050, we will be spending \$50 billion a year. We could get ahead of that if we invested in the long term in some of these things that would make our shorelines more impervious to storms. Where I come from in British Columbia, we can make our rivers less likely to flood urban areas and make our forests less likely to burn cities down.

Could the member comment on this need for investing in the future to save us money in the future, save lives, save infrastructure and save homes by making those investments ahead of these disasters, instead of always reacting?

• (2220)

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his thoughtful question and reflection. Absolutely, I think it is pertinent that the government invest strategically in our region. Part of that is key infrastructure investments into our wharves to make sure that they are sustainable. For years, they have been in need of investment, and our wharves are going to need extreme investment over the next few weeks and months to make sure that the critical infrastructure is put back in place for our fish harvesters, their families and the communities that rely upon on them, so that they are prepared with better infrastructure in place to respond to any kind of storm that may come in the future.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I did not miss church on Sunday, but I am still glad I heard that.

If we think about the kinds of investments we will need for the storms of the future, my friend from South Okanagan—West Kootenay pointed out where we are headed. We are at 1.2°C global average temperature increase right now, versus what it was before the beginning of the industrial revolution. With every fraction of a degree of warming, we face worse storms. We are really looking at trying to save lives because, at every fraction of a degree, millions more people are going to be at risk. There is going to be a level of climate change that we can adapt to, but we are getting really close to a level of climate change to which we cannot adapt anymore.

Does my hon. colleague think we can step back and have a hard look at this? What can we adapt to? What kinds of wharves, bridges and infrastructure can withstand what we can see coming at 1.2°C and 1.4°C, but not 1.5°C and certainly not 2°C? How do we hang on to a livable climate, the one God made for us?

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague and friend from across the way for her comments, and I appreciate her thoughts.

I would like to assure my hon. colleague that I think all of us in this House want to be responsible and good stewards of the land, the earth and the planet that we have been entrusted with. I also believe there will be two different ways in which we approach this. Right now, what we are seeing from the current federal government is that it feels it can tackle climate change through taxation.

We understand, on this side of the House, that taxation will do absolutely nothing to tackle climate change. Rather, technology and investment in technology and investing in good, clean Canadian energy is the way forward. I believe Canada has some of the best alternatives, but also some of the best and cleanest energy in the world. It will help the rest of the world get off much dirtier sources of energy. That would help the planet and help us all become better stewards of the planet we have been entrusted with.

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me start off by saying I will be sharing my time with the member for Charlottetown.

Let me begin by acknowledging how difficult the past few days have been for the people of Halifax West, for Nova Scotians, for Atlantic Canadians and for eastern Quebec. My thanks go out to all my colleagues for sharing their messages of support this last weekend and this evening.

I wish we did not have to stand here to have this debate this evening. However here we are. What we know as of now is that two families in my region are mourning today. On Prince Edward Island, Fiona claimed the life of one Islander. In Newfoundland, we learned of the tragedy in Port aux Basques that claimed a 73-year-old woman's life. In my home province, we are worried for 81-year-old Larry Smith of Lower Prospect, who has not been seen since Friday evening and it appears he may have been swept out to sea.

My heart breaks for these families. It is hard to find a comforting word in this moment, but I want them to know they are in my prayers, and I did attend mass yesterday. Before I share my own experiences with the storm, many thanks are in order.

• (2225)

[Translation]

First, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to our Prime Minister and the ministers of Emergency Preparedness and National Defence.

[English]

We had a number of calls throughout the whole weekend. They have reassured us, and we were in turn able to reassure our constituents.

[Translation]

Our federal government and armed forces were prepared in advance and acted quickly. For that, I wish to say on behalf of my own community that we are deeply grateful.

[English]

In Nova Scotia at the moment, crews from across the country and New England, and even Hydro Ottawa's team, are helping to get us reconnected and get debris and trees off our streets. I am told there are more than 1,000 people in the field working on our recovery effort, and I am grateful to each and every one of them.

In Halifax West, I surveyed a great deal of the damage over the weekend and today before I took a flight this evening and came here. What I can tell my colleagues is that most, if not all, side streets in my area have multiple trees down and sidewalks ripped up. Countless streets were impassable, with trees blocking the way. In many instances, residents took it upon themselves to help in the cleanup.

One in particular I want to mention today, because I saw it on Facebook but I also know the people, was a whole crew of families who live on Kelvin Grove who came with saws, axes, shears and chainsaws in hand, making short work of the downed trees blocking their street together. They all came out to help a young woman who lives in a house where trees were blocking her driveway and access right beside her car.

What I am thankful for is that Nova Scotians largely heeded the call to stay home, allowing our paramedics, first responders and power crews to continue doing their jobs without additional impediments or delays. If anyone has seen any photos of the grocery store shelves in my riding, it is not hard to imagine that most people were home with their families and their storm chips. As I walked through my community, checking in with folks who needed checking in on, and probably some who did not, asking them what they needed in the moment, I was relieved to hear that most were okay, even though most had no power.

[Translation]

However, not everyone was able to withstand the storm so easily.

[English]

This was a serious storm. On Sunday morning I stopped by the Canada Games Centre, which was turned into an evacuation centre for folks who had lost their homes in the storm. What was previously a busy recreation centre is now being run by the Salvation Army and Red Cross to shelter dozens of people from two apartment buildings that had sustained extensive damage. One building had its roof torn off, and on another building the chimney fell off and punched a hole right through every floor of the building. Miraculously, thankfully, no one was hurt, but all of these people are now looking for housing.

At the Canada Games Centre, I met members of the Disaster Animal Response Team of Nova Scotia. They told me they are the first and only one in the country that does animal response. They were sheltering 13 pets that had been displaced in the storm by people who were evacuated and had no homes.

Later on, I visited the LeBrun Recreation Centre in Bedford, where volunteers from Halifax's joint emergency management team were providing tea, coffee, snacks and a place to charge phones to anyone who did not have power. Volunteers Dave Aalders, Karen Saulnier and Amani Saleh were incredibly welcoming to anyone

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who needed help. In fact, I remembered meeting Karen back in 2018 when she was taking the first steps to set up a JEM team for mainland south. I am thankful to all those who in normal times, when events like these are generally far from our minds, take the time and put in the work to prepare for the "what ifs", although especially with climate change, these are more like "when ifs".

While I was there, I called into CBC to talk about the resources available in our community. Within five minutes, a woman walked in and said to me, "Oh, you're Lena." I said yes and she said, "I just heard you on CBC Radio and learned that there is a comfort centre here. I just came in to get some Wi-Fi, because we have no power." It all works.

• (2230)

[Translation]

This shows me the value of all of us, public personalities and community leaders, doing what we can to amplify existing resources in our networks.

[English]

On the other side of my riding, the Fairview Resource Centre team was doing much the same work. I stopped by to thank Hayley Nelson this morning, a volunteer with the provincial EMO, and the centre's staff and volunteers for providing a safe place for those who did not have power.

I saw Nova Scotians of all ages and many across Atlantic Canada all mobilizing to help their neighbours. From the Haliburton Hills subdivision to Lucasville to Bedford to Fairview and everywhere in between, people were asking themselves what they could do to be of assistance. That is very much what we do in our part of the country, which we have heard quite a bit tonight.

Facebook groups are full of neighbours reaching out to help those who do not have power. People are offering their help, their showers, their freezer space, their generators and cups of tea. In one truly inspiring example, Square Roots, a group that delivers produce packs to residents in need every week, made sure that a hurricane did not get in the way of their deliveries. As soon as they were able to get volunteers, they did it.

I give a special thanks to Mount Saint Vincent University and its president in my riding for making sure that students on campus were safe, warm, fed and well cared for.

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The storm was terrible. Many people in our communities experienced and are still experiencing pain and hardship, but when people needed support, families, friends and neighbours were there to help. I was able to assure them, after a phone call with the Prime Minister, my cabinet colleagues and MPs, that the government is there to help. I am proud to say that support from the military is on the ground, with significant financial support as well. There is an appeal to match Red Cross donations, which is also being offered.

I especially want to say that my heart and mind are with Cape Breton, P.E.I. and Newfoundland. Anybody who is able to donate, please do so. Again, we look forward to all the work we have to continue to do, and I want to thank everybody who is working hard in our communities to bring them back to safety and normality. Please stay safe, everyone.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her words about community members coming together to help one another and neighbours helping neighbours. That is really the spirit of Atlantic Canada. It reminded me of when I was in Halifax during hurricane Juan. My neighbours had a tree go through their house, and we went over to help them. Our other neighbours came over with a barbeque so we could use the rest of the food that was in our freezer, which had thawed. This is so critical, and I am so glad that members of very party in the House are committed to giving support immediately.

As mentioned a number of times, we also need to look forward. It has been shown again and again that investing upfront in resilience costs way less than having to clean up in the aftermath of natural disasters.

Can the member speak about the importance of proactively investing in climate resilience to ensure that communities are prepared for natural disasters in the future?

• (2235)

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Victoria very much. I really love her part of our country. It has lots of similarities, I find, to Halifax.

First, I am going to thank her for acknowledging us. I feel that as Atlantic Canadians, we are a special part of the country, and we really, truly deeply care for each other. We are welcoming and generally generous and good people.

Second, to her question, the Prime Minister has made a clear commitment to Atlantic Canada and to continuing to ensure that the government is there to do whatever is needed right now on the ground to assist not only in the short term but in the longer term, because these hurricanes are going to happen. They are going to happen more frequently and they are going to be more severe. I have witnessed a number of them so far that have hit our province over the last two decades, and they are getting worse, more frequent and, quite frankly, more scary.

Even as I stand here now, none of my children, in their respective homes in Halifax, have power. I just saw a picture right now of one of my children, who has three little ones, with candles all over the place. They are all sitting and having fun. It is wonderful for me to see that, and it is nice to say that our government is there to assist and collaborate with the province and with the municipalities,

which are really working hard on the ground to get everybody back to where they were.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for flying in today and for sticking around at the community level to ensure that everybody had what they needed before she came to the House of Commons.

I was fortunate enough this summer to visit my friend and colleague in Halifax and visit throughout the riding. I got to see firsthand her commitment and dedication to the constituents in her riding. That was evident today with her speech as well.

As I mentioned earlier, a lot of Miltonians feel a tremendous amount of sympathy. My neighbours want to know what they can do. How can my neighbours in Milton and throughout Ontario help remediate this disaster?

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Mr. Speaker, I really want to thank the parliamentary secretary for health and sport. Yes, he was in Halifax West this summer and he did visit the Canada Games Centre, which now, unfortunately, is the home of the shelter.

People can donate to the Canadian Red Cross. I say that truly, honestly and without a doubt. If anybody wants to help across the country or internationally, right now I would say the best thing for citizens to do is donate through the Canadian Red Cross.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by acknowledging that I am speaking from the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people, Abegweit. They are the past, present and future caretakers of these lands, and we honour them.

I am in downtown Charlottetown, one of the only places in the riding of Charlottetown that has power. I would try to speak from my home office, but the generator would probably drown me out.

I want to, first of all, thank the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay for bringing forward the motion for this emergency debate tonight. It is timely, and I do think it is important for Canadians to hear from parliamentarians about the impact of this storm and the government's response to it.

The storm was not a surprise. All of the forecasts and warnings that came in advance turned out to be remarkably accurate. Prince Edward Islanders are quite accustomed to storms, more commonly winter storms, and all of the preparations were made. Generators were in place. The fuel for the generators had been purchased. There was a run on the grocery stores for storm chips and any other number of groceries. The shelves were quite bare in advance of the storm, without a doubt. Arrangements were made for emergency shelters. The level of preparation and information, all of these things, were accurate and well done.

What we did not anticipate, I would say, in Prince Edward Island and certainly in the Charlottetown riding, was that this would be pretty much exclusively a wind event. Rain was not a factor. Water has been a factor in coastal communities, and I say that not based on personal observation because the only personal observation I have been able to make is in my riding, but from relying on information received from other people. I say that because one of the major challenges in the last three days, since the storm hit, has been connectivity. Internet and cell service is spotty at best, which really affects absolutely everything. If one does not have information, it is difficult to know how to access the supports that are available.

We have heard from many other speakers this evening on the impacts of the storm in their communities, so much of what I am about to say will sound quite familiar. Because of the tremendous winds, the city of Charlottetown and much of Prince Edward Island are littered with fallen trees. These trees have fallen on power lines, which knocked out power to virtually the entire riding and the entire island. Bit by bit it is being restored, but not so much in Charlottetown, other than downtown, as of yet. Those trees have damaged roofs. In some cases, the winds have actually decimated roofs not that far from my home. Pieces of the roof of Queen Charlotte Intermediate School have flown for city blocks, and it is a very significant question as to when those junior high school students are going to be back in the classroom.

We have seen some substantial erosion, including a decimation of the dunes at Cavendish Beach. A famous and popular rock formation in Darnley is gone. Cars have been damaged, including one in my driveway. Wharves have sustained substantial damage in coastal communities, and there have been impacts in the agricultural sector, particularly with corn, and the storage facilities for potatoes and dairy. All of these sectors have been particularly hard hit.

• (2240)

As the storm has gone on, it has proven difficult to be able to recharge generators with propane or gas. Because of the lack of power, these things are not available. In my search for propane yesterday, I was absolutely heartened when the Confederation Bridge opened, and I know it is a bad word, but a convoy of electrical trucks came from out of province. I met them on the bypass. I was never so happy to see a convoy of people coming to do good.

This is also the case today with the arrival of the Canadian military. Two days ago, the Government of Prince Edward Island asked for federal help. One day ago, they got a yes, and today, the army arrived. That will be a major help in cleaning up the roads and getting the trees off of the power lines.

I want to talk for a minute about the mindset of the people in this city and this province. The picture of devastation that I just presented might lead people to believe there is despair here. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is a lot of shock and awe about the magnitude of the winds and about the magnitude of the devastation. We knew it was coming, but many people have never seen what we see in our streets even now.

The mindset is one very much of determination and of resolve. The mindset is that we are going to roll up our sleeves. We have trust and faith in one another, and I have to say that we have trust and faith in Maritime Electric. Time and time again when we have

been battered by winter storms, we receive on Prince Edward Island timely and reliable information from Maritime Electric with regard to the progress that is being made by the hard-working crews at Maritime Electric and the status of their work. That has already begun. Kim Griffin, the spokesperson for Maritime Electric, has become a well-known face to Prince Edward Islanders for the updates in these critical situations. That is the case now.

When we have gone around Charlottetown over the last couple of days, the sound of generators and chainsaws is predominant essentially everywhere.

I have been heartened by the involvement of the cabinet. The Minister of Emergency Preparedness and the Prime Minister have listened to us. They have been in contact with us. It is evident that they care. It is evident that the information they are receiving from us is factored into the actions that they are taking. It is also important to focus on the other measures that have been taken by the government, specifically the decision to match donations made to the Red Cross.

I want to offer a big thanks to the workers at the Jack Blanchard Family Centre, the Malcolm J. Darrach Community Centre, the Community Outreach Centre, the Confederation Centre of the Arts and the Hillsborough Park Community Centre for the work they are doing in helping those who need emergency shelter.

I want to finish with a final word of advice to the people in the insurance industry. During my time practising law, I was on both sides of the insurance industry. To the case managers and adjusters within the insurance industry, I would ask them in the coming days to please act with urgency and act with compassion and to put their policyholders ahead of their shareholders.

• (2245)

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to serve with the member for Charlottetown on the Standing Committee on Health, and I appreciate his actions there.

One of the things that certainly holds true, as we have heard from most of the Atlantic provinces today, and it is always interesting to hear, is how similar we are and how the great resilience of the people from Atlantic Canada certainly stands out in all of our minds. As I said previously, hopefully it is not just us patting ourselves on the back.

That being said, I think it is important to underscore, and I think we are all at the point that we need to realize, that cellphone service is part of critical infrastructure. We also know, and we have heard in this House previously, that former minister Ralph Goodale promised during Dorian that the CRTC would fix this. We know that has not happened.

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I wonder how the member opposite is going to prod his government to ensure that this piece of critical infrastructure is better suited to serving the needs of all of our constituents.

● (2250)

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Cumberland—Colchester for affording another opportunity to drive home the message on this, that cellphones and connectivity in this day and age absolutely are essential and that it is important for government to create the environment that brings in the investment from the telcos to make that happen. There has been substantial progress made, but a catastrophic event such as this indicates there is still more to do.

That message is absolutely evident. I know the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry is acutely aware and has spoken to it in the past. I am absolutely certain there will be more conversations on this topic in the near future, as well as investments. There must be.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Charlottetown for sharing the experiences he has had on the ground there. I visited Charlottetown in June, and my heart goes out to the people there who are facing all these difficulties.

He mentioned that we knew this storm was coming. Maybe there was some uncertainty around how strong the winds would be and how much rain would fall, but I remember debating in the House about something else last Wednesday, and talking about the oncoming Fiona and the high winds that would accompany it.

I am wondering if he could comment on what we might have done differently, in terms of being ready beforehand. He talked about two days ago the province asking for the army and a day later, it came. What if the armed forces had been there before the storm hit? Would that have made a difference? Would they be already helping to clear streets? Would they be helping do all the things that are going on now? We would have been ahead of the game. Is there anything we could have done to prepare beforehand? We knew this was coming.

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, this may actually be a question of process. The process right now is that the federal government responds to requests from the provinces for the deployment of federal assets. In this case, virtually immediately after that request was made, the assets were made available. I am not aware whether there is a process or a mechanism for a province to pre-emptively make that request. Perhaps, given the clarity of the forecasts, this would be a situation where that might be explored.

The other thing I would say, in terms of climate change and resilience, is that Prince Edward Island is and will be on the cutting edge of climate change adaptation as a result of substantial investments by our government in the Canadian Centre for Climate Change and Adaptation in St. Peter's Bay, which is now churning out experts in the field.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak tonight to this very important topic. I want to mention at the outset that I will be splitting my time with the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Last week, people from across Atlantic Canada did what they could do to prepare for a storm that was being described as a severe threat and potentially historic. As we all know by now, those descriptions were accurate. Hurricane Fiona was indeed severe and historic. Sadly, it was also tragic.

I want to echo the sentiments that have been expressed in this House today. Those who have lost a loved one are in our thoughts at this terrible time. Our thoughts are also with those who have lost homes or businesses or experienced extensive damage to their property, and with anyone who feels as though the road to recovery right now looks too long to bear. I want to thank the firefighters, police and paramedics who answered calls for help, putting themselves oftentimes in harm's way. I also want to thank the mayors leading their local recovery responses, and the premiers of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador and New Brunswick, who responded swiftly following hurricane Fiona's impact.

Of course, I want to recognize every individual working on reconnecting families to power right across Atlantic Canada. These hard workers will be spending days away from their own families to help reconnect the thousands of homes that are still without power in the region. This includes the energy workers from Maine, who overcame the obstacles on their way to deliver much-needed aid to Nova Scotia.

As emergency crews work day and night to restore power to communities across the regions hit by the hurricane, we are learning more about the extensive damage and the personal stories of Maritimers and Newfoundlanders of how they rode out the storm and are trying to recover.

I want to give thanks as well to everyone who lends a hand to their neighbour and helps out. That is one of the things we have seen over and over again when we are met with challenging times. In Atlantic Canada, people look out for their neighbours and give them a hand. We have heard story after story of that taking place in the days that have followed.

Many of these stories follow along a theme that has become very familiar to Atlantic Canadians, and that is our strong sense of community. People have been coming together to help each other however they can. Anyone with a chainsaw quickly got to work to help clear fallen trees. Community centres opened their doors to welcome families needing to charge their phones, get warmed up or just have a hot cup of coffee.

Our strong sense of community is just one of the reasons I am proud to be from Atlantic Canada. That sense of community is also absolutely essential at times like these. Provinces like Nova Scotia are no stranger to this type of strengthened sense of community after experiencing a tragedy.

In 1917, another historic event happened in the province when a cargo ship carrying explosives collided with a steamship in Halifax Harbour. At the time, the world had never known a man-made explosion of that magnitude, and the devastation was immense. However, it only took a couple of hours after the Halifax explosion before trains started making their way toward the city to deliver supplies and people willing to lend a hand at the city's darkest moment. The speed at which neighbouring communities and provinces mobilized to provide relief all those many years ago is a testament to the strength of Atlantic Canadians, and it is the same strength we are seeing today.

Another tradition we are still seeing today is the willingness of our neighbours to the south to lend a hand when things get tough. Even 106 years after the Halifax explosion, the Province of Nova Scotia still sends a Christmas tree to the City of Boston every year to express its gratitude for Boston's contributions to the relief efforts in 1917.

In 2022, our American neighbours once again answered the call for help, but this time around, those efforts were stalled by red tape and bureaucratic hoops to jump through just to enter Canada to lend a hand. The ArriveCAN app has been a disaster since it was first launched. Border crossings with little or no cell service rendered the app useless, and there was no consideration for seniors or individuals who simply did not have a smart phone. Travellers were mistakenly told to quarantine when they were not required to. With all the confusion created by ArriveCAN, there has been an untold amount of fraud, as innocent Canadians fell victim to scams in their attempts to accommodate the complex and inconsistent rules imposed by the federal government.

• (2255)

Entire industries, including the tourism industries in my own riding of Fundy Royal, have been negatively impacted by the ArriveCAN app, but even as this bad border policy hurt communities and businesses that depend on cross-border travel, the Liberal government doubled down on its policies. On Sunday, we saw the most egregious example of just how bad the ArriveCAN app was when the Liberal border policy led to Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston indicating that U.S. power crews had been delayed at the border while trying to enter Canada to join recovery efforts.

The hurricane recovery is time-sensitive. When families are disconnected from one another or cannot call for help or cannot heat up food for their children, every minute matters. Any delay in support to help Atlantic Canadians trying to recover after the storm is completely unacceptable.

The Minister of Emergency Preparedness said yesterday that any delay that may have taken place at the border was inconsequential. It was a pretty bold statement to make from his home, which has power, to families who do not yet know when they will have power.

I use this one impediment that could stand in the way of this recovery as an example of a policy that does not make sense, because we know that the ArriveCAN app will no longer be required starting this weekend. I would urge the government to drop it immediately. We can see the damage that a policy that is not well thought out can do.

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That leads me to other issues around recovery. There are agreements between the federal government and the provinces for compensation for those who need it for rebuilding homes, farms and businesses. We have to make sure we do not allow red tape, bureaucratic excuses or delays to impede Atlantic Canadians from getting the help they so desperately will need after this storm.

Members of the government continue to say they are standing with everyone affected by this storm, but they also must be careful not to stand in the way. The federal government's disaster financial assistance arrangements have been put in place to provide financial assistance to provincial and territorial governments in the event of a large-scale natural disaster. However, this assistance does not flow immediately for Canadians who are suffering now, so I ask that we all work together to reduce bureaucracy that stands between Canadians and the help they need as quickly as possible.

While the intention of many of these programs is good, we need to make sure that accessibility remains paramount. We have seen over and over in the last few years that the government can turn on a dime if it wants to, and there is no excuse not to put that same focus and energy into supporting Atlantic Canadians in their time of need.

This hurricane has caused extensive damage throughout the Maritimes and Newfoundland and Labrador, but together we stand committed to doing everything we can to once again get Atlantic Canadians through this. I want to thank everyone who has pulled together, in big ways or small, to help their neighbour and to help their community. Together, we are going to build once again for a brighter future. We need everyone pulling together to make that happen, at the municipal level and the provincial level and, indeed, at the federal level.

I would urge the federal government to make sure we break down every barrier that would prevent Atlantic Canadians and the provinces of Atlantic Canada from receiving the help they need in this time that is so crucial.

• (2300)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is so important that we are here tonight to talk about what we can do to help people who are affected by this in Atlantic Canada and throughout Quebec.

It is also really important that we stick to the facts. Earlier today, in question period and throughout the afternoon, we have been hearing some misinformation about some occurrences. I just want to read into the record something provided to me by the member for Halifax West. It is a news article that states:

Nova Scotia Power says there were no issues delaying American power crews from crossing the border to help repair the electrical grid from the devastation of hurricane Fiona.

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On Sunday, the utility company and Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston had both said an issue related to the controversial ArriveCAN app [which will be optional as of Sunday] was delaying power crews from crossing into Canada.

In a new statement Monday afternoon, Nova Scotia Power spokeswoman Jacqueline Foster says there was some confusion about the app but it is now confirmed there were no problems.

I hope that sets the record straight for everybody in the House tonight.

Hon. Rob Moore: Mr. Speaker, it illustrates perfectly how useless this program has become. The hon. member speaks about a program that did cause delays in crews from Maine crossing the New Brunswick to get to Nova Scotia. It is a program the government is going to get rid of on Saturday, but it will not get rid of it today to prevent any delays at the border for mutual assistance.

The member read a quote; I will read a quote:

"I do know that there was a situation where some crews from Maine were having an issue at the border," Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston told reporters during a Sunday morning press conference.

"We became aware of that, we alerted the federal government. My understanding is that that was dealt with pretty quickly. But...there was an issue to begin with."

I take Premier Houston at his word that there was a delay, and there is no excuse for it. The government knows this is a program that has never worked, but now it is actually working to delay help we desperately need, so let us get rid of the program right now.

• (2305)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are gathered here tonight of course to send our support to our friends from coast to coast to coast who are faced with the aftermath of these natural disasters. We are talking about the importance of taking action now, and there is no question that needs to be done.

There is also a question about what investment needs to be made and whether the government should be making investments in a proactive way to ensure climate adaptation projects are in place. Would the member support more investments in proactive climate adaptation projects, instead of always waiting for disasters that are often coming our way in a much more severe manner, as we are seeing now?

Hon. Rob Moore: Mr. Speaker, we need to be able to do both: adaptation and mitigation. We need to be able to do that, recognizing challenges coastal areas face, but we also have urgent and critical needs around the rebuilding of wharfs and other coastal resources that our local industry and communities depend on.

We have had many hurricanes and other storms in the past that have caused damage from time to time, and one of the things we have to do to get industry, small business and communities back on their feet and individuals working again is make sure we have the right investments in community infrastructure that we can move forward and build together. That is something we are committed to helping our communities do, and we will stand with them every step of the way.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this important debate tonight about the impacts of hurricane Fiona on eastern Canada.

As members know, I represent a riding in Alberta. We live in a big country, where a natural disaster could affect one part of the country and not another. I also know we are a community of solidarity, where people in Alberta follow events in other parts of the country and are feeling a deep sense of solidarity and a desire to help. There are many Albertans with close familial and ancestral connections with Atlantic Canada, who are really following in horror the impacts of this hurricane and would like me to share on their behalf the sense of solidarity and the desire they have to see their government come to the aid of those in need.

Just as when western Canada has faced natural disasters, such as the B.C. floods, Atlantic Canada was with us, in the same way my province and my constituents are fully behind Atlantic Canada and are calling on the government to have a strong, effective and continuous response. The lead to this response from within our caucus is coming from the Atlantic caucus, and I want to salute and recognize the excellent work being done by members of that caucus, including the member for Cumberland—Colchester, who put forward the proposal to have this emergency debate tonight. Of course I also want to recognize the engagement of our leader and the powerful speech he gave tonight as well.

What really stuck with me from our leader's speech was his saying that we do not want this to be another situation in which there is an "A" for the announcement and an "F" on the follow-through. Sometimes commitments are made when a story is in the news, when there is a focus on the situation, and it is very acute as it is happening. Then there is the question of whether the government and the rest of the country are really there through the follow-up, through the rebuilding process that must continue long after the story is not in the news anymore and attention has shifted to other issues. Is there the follow-through? Also, is the government making announcements but then severely delayed in actually delivering the results, or is the government responding quickly enough?

The opposition will be there, led by our Atlantic caucus, in pushing strongly for follow-through, for efficiency, and for the government to support the rebuilding that is required, not just while the story is in the news but in fact over the long term. We need to have a results-oriented approach that measures the results that are achieved, that measures the concrete impacts, that invests the dollars that are required and really measures those results. Canadians can be assured that our opposition will be diligently following up on this issue for the long haul to make sure those results are achieved, or certainly to do all we can from this side of the House to ensure they are achieved.

I want to speak tonight in particular to highlight one issue that we have seen with the government's response. It is about the issue of matching programs. There is a problem with the way the government has consistently developed and delivered matching programs. The problem has been that the government identifies one organization or a small group of large organizations for matching support, and it says it will match every donation that is made to organization X or to this group of five organizations. However, the government does not offer matching programs to all of the organizations that are involved in a response.

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I have encountered this issue, particularly in the area of international development. In cases in which we have seen disasters around the world, this was a major issue brought to my attention by international development organizations working in Lebanon, responding to the humanitarian needs associated with the invasion of Ukraine, and most recently in the situation in Pakistan, where there are organizations, maybe small organizations, diaspora-led organizations, organizations with really deep connections and a significant footprint on the ground, that are left out of a government matching program because it becomes easier for the government to say that it is going to match with these very large organizations that have more experience dealing with government and that we have established relationships with. It is easier to say that it is going to match a contribution to this big player as opposed to saying it is going to match donations to all of the organizations that are doing this work.

• (2310)

I have encountered and learned about this issue in the area of international development, but now we are seeing this as part of a domestic disaster response. Again, the government, in the process of a matching program, is choosing one organization. In this case, it is the Red Cross.

I want to say at the outset that I think the Red Cross does excellent work. I also think the idea of matching programs, of encouraging individuals to donate and saying that when someone makes a donation, the government is going to match those dollars, is a very good concept. It expresses the shared solidarity that we need here, which is not the government acting alone, but the government being part of a solution and supporting individual philanthropy in collaboration with government. In principle, that is really good.

When we have a system that matches donations to some organizations and not others, not only do those smaller organizations, which may have a bigger presence on the ground and may be led by local people and plugged into local communities, lose out on the benefit of the matching dollars, but they actually lose out on donations as well.

When people say they want to be part of responding to, in this case, the recovery efforts around hurricane Fiona, or in previous cases, the flooding in Pakistan or the situation in Lebanon, people instinctively want to give to those organizations that are receiving matching, as opposed to the organizations that do not.

Organizations tell me that they get calls from previous donors who say they were going to donate to what they were doing, but they actually want to donate to another organization that is getting matched. We see how, through a government policy, by matching donations to some organizations but not others, the government ends up incentivizing private donors to change their donation behaviour from organizations they were previously giving to, to organizations that are matched. The government is, through this matching policy, directing donations from some organizations to others. That is a problem.

The effect of offering matching to some organizations is that it might take away from groups that have a long track record and have been working on the ground. It also creates some level of suspicion. People ask why the government is not matching them. Is it

because it has somehow determined the organization is not good enough for the match? That is not the reason. In fact, some of these organizations may be more effective in their response, but they are not receiving the match because government instinctively goes back to the same organizations to provide that match every time.

Having raised this issue multiple times in other contexts, I want to implore the government again to really reconsider this policy. There are different ways of doing this. The government could identify, in some global sense, all of the donations that are made to charitable organizations related to flood relief, and the government could then put that same amount of money aside in a fund, which it then distributes.

It would not have to necessarily match every dollar that was given to an organization to exactly the same organization. However, if it put aside an amount of money that was equivalent to the total donations and then disbursed that, it would at least address the problem right now of disincentivizing donations to organizations that are not matched. I think that would be a good way of exploring the response.

Every Canadian who donates to hurricane relief, in some way, should see their donation matched, whether it is to the Red Cross or to organizations that are smaller and embedded in local communities. The Knights of Columbus council in my area might want to raise money and transfer it to a Knights of Columbus council in Atlantic Canada. There might be small local food banks that are raising money, locally and across the country. I would say those worthy efforts deserve the same kind of matching support.

Again, I have raised this in the House on past occasions. It is a bit frustrating to feel these simple, non-partisan solutions, which say we need to reform these matching programs, do not seem to be heeded. It has been raised on past instances yet it remains a problem. I implore the government to revisit this issue and to look for mechanisms to match donations in a way that is inclusive, that represents the diversity of organizations and that supports small local organizations as well as the larger ones.

• (2315)

Again I want to share with the House that my constituents, the people of western Canada, are very much behind and in support of the people in eastern Canada who are struggling right now. We want to see the government have their backs over the long haul.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague knows quite a lot about international development and I look forward to our next chat in the elevator on this topic.

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I did want to highlight, because I had the opportunity to visit the Red Cross in Nova Scotia this summer, its extensive network of community-level contacts and relationships. The type of rapid response that these donations will rely on are those relationships and the ease of access with which community-level groups, such as the one the member highlighted, the Knights of Columbus, that might be doing something at a community level, would be able to contact their local Red Cross.

That said, the member also highlighted, which is off topic a bit, some of the international aid. The Humanitarian Coalition, as he is probably aware, is actually a coalition of 12 organizations that are quite diverse, but I take his comments under advisement, which I think are worth considering.

I would ask the member if he could explain how his constituents out in Alberta might be supportive of this important restoration effort.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I want to underline that nothing in my speech was to take away from the great work that the Red Cross is doing in eastern Canada or in other parts of the world. Of course, it does have partnerships with local organizations, and I hope it will do its best to engage some of those local organizations.

However, fundamentally, it does not change the point that there are many other worthy organizations that are not getting this matching support and, essentially, it puts the Red Cross in the position of being the disbursers of public money, which is a role that we would normally conceive of as being the government's. We should work to provide that support in the form of matching to all of the organizations that are doing good work, not because the organizations being matched are not worthy of it but because there are other organizations that are worthy of it as well.

I know my constituents will be actively involved in this relief effort and I would like to see all of the donations that my constituents make matched, regardless of the organizations they give to.

• (2320)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the member a question on the opening part of his speech. I think he was saying the government should be in it for the long haul to help the people of Atlantic Canada and other disasters across this country. The government always has their backs when there is a disaster, but sometimes it forgets about it fairly quickly.

I am wondering if the member might comment on the concept that we should be spending more money investing in the future in terms of these disasters that are getting more common, more serious and more catastrophic. Should we be investing more to adapt to climate change? Rather than always being reactive and spending billions of dollars after the fact, we should really be ramping up our investments every year in helping Canadian communities get ready for the future.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, of course it makes sense to have resilient infrastructure, infrastructure that is fit for purpose and that can respond to these things as much as possible.

I am not an engineer. There are probably limits to one's ability to build for all possible events, but I would assent in principle to the

idea that we should as much as possible, in the process of rebuilding and in the process of building up infrastructure, try to be prepared for and resilient against the possibility of storms and other kinds of weather events.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have had similar concerns in the past about the matching programs. I wonder how the member might suggest that in the short term, in the next few days, we make an impact in how we would access the best and most effective charities on the ground.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I think a really simple thing for the government to do would be to say, as a policy statement, that it will work to identify all of the dollars that have been donated for this purpose and match those dollars insofar as it will set aside, in a fund for relief, the number of dollars equivalent to the amount it estimates has been contributed.

That formal calculation does not have to all be done in one or two days. If the government says that now as a policy commitment, then it means that over time the government can engage those charities, work to identify who is involved in relief and what dollars have been contributed and then disburse the funds at a later point.

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the outset, I want to indicate that I am sharing my time with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, and I welcome the opportunity to participate in this emergency debate.

At this late hour in the House, I expect that I am the only member currently sitting who experienced this weather event in Atlantic Canada directly. There were some on this side. I was in the epicentre of it, along with a number of my colleagues. I know there were a number of other members who experienced this event as well.

I can honestly say, and I will speak to Prince Edward Island, that in Prince Edward Island we were well prepared. I give full marks to those emergency agencies, including my own colleague, the minister responsible, and the provincial government, for getting the message out that this was a very serious weather event that people should heed. We were well advised. All we could do, though, was wait and hope that it would not be as traumatic as the warnings that were being given to us. All of the mechanisms of government worked from a warning perspective, and that is why we had minimal loss of life. We cannot minimize any loss of life, as it is too much, but the implications were to that effect.

We were aware, and in fact I returned to my riding when I heard the weather forecast was getting more and more severe. I chose to return to be there.

I can honestly say that it was one of these weather alerts that woke me up at about 3:30 in the morning. I had decided that I had better take my phone to bed with me. It was pretty nasty and I was unsure how it was going to go. I am glad I did, because the emergency app went off. It woke me up to what was happening. I looked at it, and then I thought I had better look outside. I could see the trees violently shaking, an experience I had never experienced before. I was looking out and then I watched them suddenly start crashing on the house. Yes, those emergency systems did work.

I am going to focus my comments on two areas of Atlantic Canada and Prince Edward Island that responded very well. The fishing industry, the fishers, primarily, removed their very expensive boats from the water, so they listened. They took the advice of all governments. They removed them to take them out of harm's way. There was no loss of vessels. However, they could not remove their fishing gear. We are now getting some assessment on that. The damage is significant.

Farmers were able to store their equipment as well as they could in buildings. They took precautions. However, they could not take their crops out of the field. That is where extensive damage has occurred to the farming industry. In the two industries, fishing and farming, the farmers and the fishers took all the steps they were advised to take to mitigate their losses, yet there were significant losses, and they are still being incurred.

That is where the government has to be prepared to stand with these industries to ensure that we provide resources to mitigate those losses, because they did everything in their power to reduce the damage they would have. We are still assessing that. Then it gets to this issue: We have had infrastructure damage, significant infrastructure damage, to our small craft harbours across the region. That has been a situation that has been growing for some time.

I have been listening to some of the speeches in the House saying that the government has to move faster and faster. I spoke to a farmer yesterday and, in fact, I was all across my riding on Saturday and Sunday, at most of the ports, meeting with those who were primarily impacted. It was important. I was listening to a farmer, and he said that even if we gave him money today, he could not hire a contractor to begin the repairs that he has to do.

Let us temper the expectation, because some say that we are not moving fast enough and we should be there. I take the Prime Minister and the ministers at their word, that we will be there whenever the ask is made. This has to come through provinces, same as a request. The Government of Canada cannot send the military on its own. It has to wait for provinces to request it. We have met all of the requests that the provinces have made so far.

• (2325)

The Government of Canada has been acting as quickly, diligently and judiciously as possible, but there are obstacles. We may not be able to get the necessary repairs made to some critical infrastructure in a timely enough manner simply because of the restraints of not having contractors to do it.

I also want to acknowledge the tremendous work of the utility workers in Prince Edward Island and all the provinces in getting the power up. We must recognize that we cannot just bring in people off the street to supplement and double the effort, because these are highly trained, skilled people. This is a very dangerous occupation. We cannot minimize the time it is going to take, but it is a necessity in dealing with a weather event.

I heard during the debate this evening that we have had these events before, that we have had ice storms and we have had hurricanes. Let us understand that this event which occurred in Atlantic Canada early Saturday morning and throughout the day was the first weather event of its kind recorded in Canada. These are the

first reported meteorologic conditions ever recorded in Canada. We have never had an event like this before. The events are getting more and more serious.

This is a significant event. We have to take the time to acknowledge and thank all of the first responders who could not stay indoors during this event like I did. I took the advice that was given to us and did not dare go out after seeing the conditions. Unless one actually lived in some of the higher-impact areas, nobody could describe to me what I experienced, and I have experienced some wild storms, as I am sure other members have. This was a very scary event, and the damage is significant.

Our government will be there, but in some areas, like small craft harbours, I think we are going to have to be innovative. We may have to deliver money to the local harbour authorities to get the work done quickly. We know the time it takes to go through the process, and then often the government is held to account: "You're not following due process." We cannot have it both ways.

This is the first-ever event of this magnitude to occur in Canada. If we are going to respond in a timely manner, we are going to have to make some first approaches as well. In doing this for infrastructure, I would challenge my own government to work with the local harbour authorities when it comes to small craft harbour infrastructure to get timely repairs done quickly. This means it may not go to public tender, because that takes time. We are going to have to be tolerant of that and supportive.

We must recognize that the farmers and fishers took all the steps they could to minimize their losses and damage, but in the areas that we depend on to feed this country, those crops were still exposed to Mother Nature, and that is where the damage occurred. Within the fishing industry, the fishing gear was still at sea. We are going to have to respond to those costs that are not covered by insurance for fishers, and we are going to have to build.

As it was raised a couple of times in the debate this evening, we can build infrastructure to withstand. I am probably the only member in the House who was part of the design approval for the Confederation Bridge. The Confederation Bridge performed as it was designed to perform during this catastrophic weather event. It had no damage. I recall getting into a debate with the design people when it was being approved. I was the provincial minister responsible at the time. They were putting in a design for category 4 hurricanes, and I said that we were over-designing a bit, which was not the case. So, yes, we can design infrastructure to withstand the weather patterns that are coming.

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In closing, all I can say is that we better be prepared to put in the investments to protect the critical coastal infrastructure that we have, that we depend on, because Atlantic Canada is the most prone part of Canada to hurricane events coming up on a regular basis. We must invest in the infrastructure that will protect the fishing ports of Atlantic Canada and the infrastructure that we need. It will be expensive, but we have to be there as a government.

I challenge my own government that we have to be there. We have to be creative, and we have to be a heck of a lot faster in getting projects and repairs under way to deal with these catastrophic losses that were incurred.

• (2330)

The Deputy Speaker: It is not like me to make comments, but I have seen fishing gear after a hurricane, and it is garbage.

We will continue with questions and comments. The hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for sharing the experience he went through. I actually had the eye of a hurricane pass over my house and stood outside in it only a few years ago.

He is not the only person in the House who experienced the Confederation Bridge. I was the chief of staff to the minister who signed the deal on the Confederation Bridge way back when, when that member was the economic development minister in the Ghiz government, and we had some interaction around Summerside.

I am a long-serving member of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries, which has done four reports on small craft harbours over the last decade outlining that more was needed in A-base funding, a lot more, so proper long-term capital planning could be done by port authorities to manage these wharfs so they were not in the shape they are in now, where they are more easily destroyed by these storms. Will he help all of us, and I will help him as well, to continue to advocate and push harder for proper funding for that program so we can get ahead of the maintenance?

The Speaker's riding and my riding alone need \$600 million to bring our wharfs up to operational standards, according to DFO.

• (2335)

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Mr. Speaker, I totally agree with my colleague, who I sit with on the fisheries committee. Our government has added \$600 million additional to the budget of small craft harbours. It is still a drop in the bucket. Successive governments have cut the A-base funding to a level, and it is still the same, of \$100 million for capital across the country. Quite frankly, it is not even a band-aid.

I agree this is a wake-up call on infrastructure. Somebody made the comment, and I am not sure who it was, that if this was a section of the Trans-Canada Highway in an area near a municipality, it would be fixed within a number of days. I agree with that comment. We should be able to react in that swift of a fashion to repair small craft harbours and bring them up to a standard where they will not sustain the damage they did. We know these hurricanes are coming.

I support the member very much, and I will be curious to see how my government responds to that in a very positive way by

putting the resources needed to build this infrastructure up to a level to sustain the storms we know are coming.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I asked the member for Charlottetown earlier what perhaps we could have done before this storm hit. We knew it was coming days ahead of time. There are procedures, I know, for calling in the military. The province needs to request it. In this case, we knew this was going to be a bad storm. We knew it was going to be the storm of the century. We knew we would need help.

Would it not have been better to have some members of the armed forces on Prince Edward Island when the storm hit, so they could go to work immediately after the storm passed, and we could get things done in a timely manner? Perhaps there are other things we could have done that did not involve the armed forces, but we need to be working ahead of time now that we have the ability to predict these storms, especially a hurricane like this, where we knew precisely when it was going to hit.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Mr. Speaker, I am unsure how preventive we could have been. The military was on the ground yesterday and the storm only subsided late Saturday. That is a very timely response from the Canadian military, which we accept and we do not take for granted.

The other side of it is that, if we brought the military in several days before and the storm never advanced the way it did, then we would be accused of being alarmists and reactionary. It is always a fine line. I, for one, say we took all the steps that could be taken. Notices were given and people were on alert that this was a very dangerous storm, and they did heed that advice. All we could do was wait to see what damage would occur, assess it and deal with it, as is being done now.

The Deputy Speaker: Before I get to debate, I want to say that it seems like the later we get in the evening, the longer the answers and questions get. There is an exponential thing here the later we get, so let us shorten them up a bit so we can get a few more done before we finish up at the top of the hour.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

• (2340)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is in fact a late hour, but it is a good metaphor for where we are on the climate crisis, because at the moment, we are standing on the very edge of too late regarding the advice we have been given by the international scientific process, the largest peer-review process in the history of human civilization, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

I want to start by acknowledging that we are standing on the traditional territory of the Algonquin nation. I say *meegwetch*. I also want to begin by saying how deeply moved, concerned and committed I think all of us are in this place as we assist the people of Atlantic Canada.

[Translation]

We are also thinking of the people of Quebec, because the Magdalen Islands were impacted by the hurricane.

I am also concerned for the people of Saint Pierre and Miquelon.

[English]

I have heard nothing of what has happened to the French protectorate south of Newfoundland and Labrador. I have searched the news to see. That is a place I have visited and find intriguing and charming. Saint Pierre and Miquelon was pretty darned exposed to Fiona as she ran through eastern Canada, Quebec and every single one of our Atlantic provinces.

As members have heard me mention a few times in this place, I am both a Cape Bretoner and British Columbian. I have family in both places and experienced the climate events that walloped British Columbia last summer, the summer of 2017 and many other occasions. I have also experienced previous hurricanes going through Atlantic Canada. My thoughts are with everyone who has been impacted.

If the Minister of Emergency Preparedness happens to be watching, I also want to send him our good thoughts. I know he is recovering from knee surgery, as I did recently, and it is no picnic. I am sure he is working really hard from wherever he is to deal with emergency preparedness now.

Tonight's debate raised a lot of commonalities. I want to speak to those because I think it is important when we find things in common.

So often we hear people speaking of the impacts of hurricane Fiona: no phones, no cellphones, no electricity and a real sense of isolation. I can say those very same things run through a lot of climate events that have happened in the last few years.

In my own riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands, we had entirely bracketed the week of Christmas 2018. Many people within the riding had no land lines, no cellphones and no electricity, particularly in the Gulf Islands, an experience very much like the one we have heard of, with people running out with their chainsaws clearing trees out of the way, trying to help neighbours, reaching elderly neighbours who were alone at Christmas and getting help to people because no other help was coming.

The same thing was true in Ashcroft. I talked to the fire chief there about the summer of 2017 when they were on evacuation warnings. This is the interior of B.C., not far from Lytton in the riding of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon. The fire chief said they did not know what to do. They had no phones, no cellphones and no power and were told they were on evacuation alert. They did not know how they were going to let their citizens know if they had to evacuate. They now think the technology we need is a really big bell at the fire station so they can warn the town. Our technology is

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running up against some fairly grim limits that are set by extreme weather events that knock out all our technology. We need to really pay attention to this.

The same thing was said of what happened during the floods that occurred in November. Everybody was there with no phones, no cellphones and no electricity, so we have some commonalities.

We say Atlantic Canadians are resilient, neighbour helps neighbour, but I would like to say Canadians are resilient, neighbour helps neighbour, whether one is as person on the Gulf Islands of my riding or the interior of B.C., a farmer on the Prairies who needs help or an Atlantic Canadian. I do not even think there is a rural-urban divide to the extent that it is possible to help in an urban centre. I think rural Canadians have more skills to handle the collapse of things all around them, but I think the heart and soul of every Canadian is to help everybody who is a neighbour, to get out there and pitch in when a community is in trouble.

● (2345)

I think that Atlantic Canada's provincial governments, every single one of them, and the federal government, did a remarkable job in warning people. The number of lives lost is tragic in this storm, but we lost 800 or 900 people in B.C. last summer because of the heat dome, which was completely predictable right down to the hour yet the provincial government ignored it, never called for an emergency and never warned communities.

There is a difference when governments respond appropriately. I want to give credit where credit is due here. The governments of Nova Scotia, P.E.I., New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the federal government identified early that this was going to be really bad and did their best to tell people to stay home and not take chances. That saved lives. Forgive me for being angry about it, but the provincial government of British Columbia cost lives last year when it decided not to call for a state of emergency, not to warn communities and not to open cooling centres.

I hope we have learned, by these comparing the two kinds of disasters, that provincial governments play a big role here. They have to step up early and say it is an emergency and that they need help. When they do that, the federal partner has to reach out as well.

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There are two parts to this debate that we have had tonight. What we do immediately to help people and help people rebuild has been raised. Quite a few members have noted that we cannot necessarily rebuild exactly where we were. We have to have a resilience. We have to adapt to a changed circumstance of extreme weather events that have not yet finished doing their worst. They will continue to worsen. That is baked into the climate science. However, we do know that, as we rebuild and help people, that help must be real and tangible and not just empty words. I have mentioned, more than a few times tonight, that the people of Lytton are still waiting to see a town. People are still waiting to be rebuilt where they are.

My husband's farm is a family place but his daughter had been living there and nearly died in the heat dome. Literally, the temperature at my husband's farm last summer hit 50°C and my step-daughter Julia nearly died. They are not there anymore but the house has been pretty steadily occupied by people who have no place to go. Last summer there was a wave, first, of people who had lost their homes in the fires and then of people who had lost their homes in the floods, so the house has proven to be very helpful for lots of people who have no place to live. This is the reality of the climate emergency, the bleeding edge of it, which is in places like Lytton, Ashcroft and now Atlantic Canada.

The second part of how we respond is this. What do we learn about climate science? How was this hurricane affected by climate events such as the warming ocean?

We know that the heating of our atmosphere dumps itself into our oceans. I find this astonishing. Every single second of every minute of every hour of every day the oceans absorb, due to the climate crisis, the energy equivalent of seven Hiroshima bombs. No wonder the ocean south of Nova Scotia has been heating. It has been heating for some time. The hurricanes come up the eastern seaboard, tracking along the gulf stream, and the water does not cool down the way it used to.

The average temperature for the water south of Nova Scotia, pre-climate change, used to be about 15°C in September at this time of year. If we were to look at the temperature records for last week, it was 20°C, then 18°C and had dropped to 17°C the day that Fiona hit Nova Scotia, Cape Breton and all of the adjacent areas, but it was accompanied by extraordinary low barometric pressure. Several members have mentioned this. In fact, it was the lowest barometric pressure ever recorded from any storm in Canada. As well, we had a wind shear event, which, as the hon. member for Charlottetown mentioned, was the big surprise for P.E.I. The wind storm was not really like any hurricane they had ever seen before.

We need to pay attention to the climate advice. That means the Government of Canada, as hard as it is for the Liberals to do, must recognize that the IPCC has warned us that if we do not stop adding greenhouse gases to the atmosphere, if we do not ensure that they peak and begin to drop before 2025, it will be too late to hold to 1.5°C or even 2°C. That is why it really matters that we get this right, because the window will close on 1.5°C or 2°C before the next election.

• (2350)

That means the government has to turn itself inside out. The Liberal caucus has to be the crucible of decision-making for whether

we want our children to survive in a livable world with a functioning civilization.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her speech tonight and her stories about the heat dome in B.C.

My hon. colleague from the NDP is probably going to bring this up as well, but around the case for mitigation, could the member share her thoughts on how we go forward on mitigating some of these climate change effects that we are experiencing in Canada?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party did submit a very long piece of advice to the consultation the government is running on how we adapt and what changes we could make. We went through what we could do for farmers and the forest industry.

We have to put saving lives up front. We have to make sure that if there is a heat dome we actually get people to safety. One of the more chilling things I heard in preparing that report on adaptation, which could be found on my non-partisan website, elizabethmaymp.ca, was from Professor Blair Feltmate from the University of Waterloo, who said that 700 British Columbians died in the heat dome, but if we had had a power failure at the same time, which is not far-fetched, thousands would have died.

We have to think about each one of these major kinds of events, whether it is a hurricane, a flood, a fire or a wind event, and figure out how we keep people safe. There are many ways, and they come from the practicality of members like the member for Peace River—Westlock.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member has pointed out here many times the dangers that we face. Even if we stopped all carbon emissions in the world right now, we would still be in this situation for centuries where we would be having these incredible hurricanes, catastrophic forest fires and floods. That would not stop. What we are trying to stop is making things worse.

This is only going to get worse. There is this case for adaptation. We have to deal with the situation as it is now. I just wanted to touch on the heat dome, whether it occurs in B.C. or Alberta or wherever next time. This brings me back to P.E.I. as well. P.E.I. has a program around heat pumps. A really serious investment by the federal government in a heat pump program would allow people to have cooling, especially for low-income Canadians and especially in British Columbia, where not many people have air conditioning. That is what killed people. They were stuck in their homes. They basically got too hot.

We could save a lot of people if we provide low-income Canadians with heat pumps that would get us off natural gas and other forms of heating, and at the same time provide the cooling necessary to perhaps save them in a heat dome event.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my friend from South Okanagan—West Kootenay, but I would add that we need to make sure that we have distributed energy systems, such as solar panels to run generators to make sure that people who are relying on a heat pump do not have it conk out because their power grid has gone down at the same time.

When we are looking at Fiona, right now people are running generators to keep themselves going. The ice storm event was another climate event that affected an urban area. Those people who had generators were able to help their neighbours that did not have generators.

There is a lot the government could do, but I think the number one thing is to make sure our electricity grid works east, west, north and south, and continually recharges itself with renewable energy so that the grid itself is the big battery we need.

● (2355)

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands talked about the promise of help versus the delivery of help. We have seen that this is a concern in the debate here. We experienced it after hurricane Dorian in 2019, when the help that was promised did not arrive for a lot of our municipalities. We heard about the floods last year in B.C.

Could the member expand more on that issue and where she has seen that happen, where the issue seems to fade and the money does not flow?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, this is apropos given the last debate we were having about the fixed link. I was actually in the minister of the environment's office when we signed off on that being the first piece of infrastructure that adapted to climate change, because it was built for a one-metre sea level rise.

We need to stop taking our attention off an issue once it is no longer in the front pages, and we need to find a place where we get the money. I respectfully suggest that given the profiteering by big oil right now from the profits they get from the war in Ukraine, we should double their tax for one year, from 15% to 30%. That would generate \$8 billion that we could dedicate to making sure we protect communities and help them rebuild.

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The Deputy Speaker: Tonight is full of surprises, and I have learned all kinds of things. It is amazing how many people sitting in the House were involved in the Confederation Bridge.

Continuing debate, the hon. member for Peace River—Westlock.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will assure you that I did not have very much to do with the building of the Confederation Bridge.

Tonight, we are debating in this emergency debate another instance of nature trying to kill us. We have seen that a big hurricane has hit the east coast of Canada. To some degree, the very nature of civilization or being civilized is our war against nature. It is our war to ensure that nature does not kill us. To be civilized is to live in a warm home. To be civilized is to have clean running water. To be civilized is to have clothing that allows us to function when nature is trying to kill us, whether that means too warm or too cold. Humans are fragile beings and we are therefore always in a struggle to survive. The very fact that people live on every square inch of this planet is a testament to our dominion over nature. We do live in every corner of the globe, so there is a resilience that comes from the human experience.

As an Albertan, I want to extend our support for the Maritimes and Quebec at this time, and I want to say a bit about the many folks who have moved from that part of the country to my riding to support work in the oil patch. They have helped me in my campaigns along the way as well. They are Sonya Andrews from Newfoundland, JD Dennis from Nova Scotia, Glenn Mitchell from New Brunswick and Jordan Johnston from P.E.I. All of these folks I am pleased to call friends, and I know that every one of them has family back home they are concerned about. They will likely be heading there to help with the cleanup efforts.

This is the Canadian story: When our neighbours are in trouble, we step up. We head out and gas up our chainsaw, and do what we have to do to show up and ensure that our neighbours thrive and flourish and that we collectively, to be civilized people, war with nature to survive.

I am very excited to add my voice to the debate tonight, and I look forward to the resiliency of Canadians as we rebuild eastern Canada.

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The Deputy Speaker: I want to use my prerogative quickly to thank everyone for their interventions. As I said on Friday, if members know someone in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, P.E.I., Îles de la Madeleine or Newfoundland and Labrador, please give them a call. Reach out and see how they are doing because it is going to be a while that they will be looking for some help and waiting for their power to be restored, especially those folks in my constituency of West Nova.

It being midnight, I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12 a.m.)

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