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# House of Commons Debates

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 17, 2022

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

### PANDEMIC DAY ACT

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)** moved that Bill S-209, An Act respecting Pandemic Observance Day, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to move and speak to the bill on pandemic observance day. It was moved in the Senate by the hon. Senator Marie-Françoise Mégie, and was adopted by the Senate on May 12.

I know we all have “days of everything”, but I want to talk about why this is important and relevant. We need to bring an end to COVID-19 everywhere on the planet. There have been 6.5 million deaths worldwide and over 620 million cases of COVID. It is still considered to be a pandemic by the World Health Organization, even though all of us do not want it to be.

We need to help Canadians grieve and commemorate the efforts in getting through the pandemic. Over 45 thousand Canadians have died from COVID. More than 100 Canadians died from COVID last week in Canada.

We also need to reflect on ways to prepare for future pandemics.

Why March 11? On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization first characterized the coronavirus, the COVID-19 epidemic, as a global pandemic.

How should people commemorate on March 11? We are not going to try to prescribe any ways of doing this. I know the senator who originally moved the bill in the Senate feels it should be up to all Canadians and organizations to choose how and why they observe it and do it in the manner that is more relevant to their community, their needs and their province. The bill would not create a paid holiday.

This is very relevant to the health of people in Canada. It is our government's top priority. We know that it is still a real pandemic.

The World Health Organization has not declared it over. We know that this virus has had an uncanny ability to mutate and evolve. Right now, omicron BA.4 and BA.5 are already in the northern hemisphere where we live.

As we close our houses in the fall and we are all inside, the risk of having another wave is very high. In the summer, we could be outside and that was helpful to us, but now that we are inside, we need to take care of ourselves.

The problem is that even though we have removed travel requirements, the Public Health Agency of Canada's chief officer has told everyone to please wear a mask, to get vaccinated and get boosted. We now know there is a new bivalent vaccine available to people, which might be helpful against the BA.4 and BA.5 variants. Our government has delivered all sorts of treatments that may be available if one does get COVID.

Recent studies show that for people who had COVID, even though it was mild, there is something called long COVID. These persons, even though they had a mild attack, would be subject down the road and over the years to chronic diseases. They will not be as healthy as they would have been. They can get all kinds of other diseases. For the sake of everyone's protection, try to follow what the Public Health Agency has asked people to do.

The Public Health Agency of Canada continues to ask Canadians to get their vaccinations, and I know a lot of people do not want get them. Nobody is forcing people to get vaccinated, but the thing about getting vaccinated is that it protects not only those getting it but it protects others around them. It also protects others in our communities who may be immunocompromised, who may have a chronic illness, who may be receiving cancer treatments or who may have all those things going on for them at the same time and be very susceptible.

Since the beginning of COVID-19, Canada has done very well. The reason we did was because we had vaccines, and many Canadians, more than any other country in the world, got vaccinated. That prevented us from having the sorts of results and outcomes that we saw in the United States, where millions of people contracted the disease and died from it.

*Private Members' Business*

We were lucky because we followed the rules and protocols. The thing about public health, pandemics and epidemics is that they are not going away. They will be here with us for a long time. It is the globalization of this. People are travelling. They are going everywhere in the world, visiting any country, going for holidays anywhere they want, and when they do that, they are subject to whatever little epidemic is going on in a country and they bring it back. That is how pandemics spread.

We know about the great flu pandemic in the 1900s, which killed a lot of people. We know better now. We know what we can do. We need to be reminded, always, every year at this time, even if we do not get a massive wave in the fall of this year, even though we may have all escaped and we are being vaccinated and are doing everything else, that this is not going to be our last pandemic. There are going to be various pandemics.

This one spreads by aerosol; in other words, it spreads in the air. That is why one of the things we need to do if we are in a closed room is open windows and ventilate the room as best we can, turning on fans to ensure the air is circulating. That is an important way to prevent us from breathing in this virus.

I am speaking right now at home because I am not particularly well, so I am doing this virtually, and I am not wearing a mask. However, if I were in the House, I would be wearing one. I would be speaking, and the drops from my mouth would be floating in the air and could infect other people in the room.

We want people to remember this pandemic in order to protect ourselves and others. The next pandemic we face may not be borne by aerosol; it may be contact, it may be sexually transmitted or it may be spread by feces and gastrointestinal products. Pandemics infect people in a lot of ways.

The thing about public health is that it first finds out what is causing the pandemic. Once we have found out what the bacteria or virus as in this case of COVID, we are then able to decide how it is spread. Then we take the precautions with regard to how we get it from each other. Those precautions will be different depending on whatever the pandemic spread is.

We want to remember pandemics. We need to remember that they are going to be with us. We need to remember that we are living in a new world now, post-COVID, and we need to be careful. We need to care about others in our community, our loved ones, friends and people we do not even know, who live nearby. It is the only way we will be able to stop pandemics from spreading, to nip them in the bud and to end them as soon as we can.

This one has stayed for a long time because, as I said earlier on, this virus seems to have the uncanny ability to mutate, change, evolve and take different forms, so the vaccines that people get would not be as effective. We also know that vaccines have a time period after which they are not as potent and as strong a protection as they used to be. That is why we are doing the boosters.

We need to remind ourselves of what we have faced. I have talked about the tens of millions of people around the world who have died from this pandemic. This is not where we want to go. We have seen the outcomes of this pandemic. This pandemic created all kinds of economic restraints. Women were mostly affected by this

pandemic. They were forced to stay home or quit their jobs. That individual family economic balance was disrupted. Women were also at the front lines as nurses or doctors. Many other women were working the hospitals and in the communities.

This pandemic not only affected women, but it also affected children and seniors, who tend to be immunocompromised because they have chronic illnesses. They have diabetes, chronic lung disease or heart disease, and this makes them more susceptible to getting COVID.

● (1110)

Some people may take medications because they have an autoimmune problem. Those medications alone could bring down their immunity and they could become what is known as an immunocompromised person.

I would be the first to say I am an immunocompromised person. I take a medication for an autoimmune disease that is at the top of the list for causing one to be immunocompromised. That is one of the reasons why I am very careful and follow the protocols. We need to remind ourselves of that. We need to remind ourselves that we are living in a different world. Therefore, observing this day is important, not just for our protection but we need to thank all those people on the front lines, who are now burnt out.

We need to look at what could happen to our hospitals if we have another pandemic or we have another COVID wave this fall. We need to know that we cannot cope anymore. Our systems were so beaten by COVID-19 over those two years that we do not have the ability to rebound in a way we used to. People are burned out. Some people no longer want to be front-line workers. Doctors and nurses no longer want to work in the system. These are the things a pandemic observance day would help us remember, that we must care for our system that has served us so well over such a long time, but is now under stress and is cracking and breaking.

People who live in our communities do not want to go to a hospital emergency room because it is so overcrowded. They cannot get in or cannot get a bed. All of these safety responses have changed and we need to be able to respond to them differently. This is a reminder that we need to care for our system itself, the whole way in which we have to respond.

A lot of people remember what happened when we, as a government, had to suddenly spend billions of dollars to help people who had lost their jobs, to help them keep a roof over their heads and pay their rent. We saw a large number of people visiting food banks. The community impact of this pandemic on families and people has been horrendous.

An observance day would remind us of this. It would remind us that we need to understand the impact of any pandemic, not just COVID. It would also remind us of what we may need to do in the future to react as soon as it happens, to have the resources to help the pharmaceutical companies create vaccines and to build our own vaccine ability in Canada so we do not have to beg other people to give us vaccines. We need to become self-sufficient and resilient, so we need not to have to do the things we did, such as going into lockdown and stopping people from going to work. We should not have to do all of those things, because we would have learned from this and built in new ways to cope and protect ourselves, and to prevent what happened with COVID-19.

A pandemic observance day would help us learn from what happened in the past. If we do not learn our lesson, we are doomed to repeat the same mistakes we made earlier. Science has said that if we keep doing the same things over, such as denying that we are living in a pandemic, even though we do not like it, we are going to keep repeating the same mistakes. To continually repeat the same thing over and over is the definition of insanity. This would help us not feel as powerless as we felt during the pandemic. An observance day will help us remember. It will help us build a new and create resilience in our country, our communities and among ourselves. It will help us look at how we deal with long-term care facilities where seniors were getting COVID even though everyone was trying very hard to prevent it. The ventilation systems were carrying COVID throughout those buildings. We are going to have to learn how to build that kind of resilience in the future, so our seniors are not as vulnerable as they were.

I want to thank the members and hope they will support this Senate bill. It is really important for us to move forward to be resilient and to build a new Canada post-COVID.

• (1115)

**Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC):** Madam Speaker, a lot has happened with respect to the pandemic. That is undeniable. My question relates to the fact that it is very clear, as stated by the president of the Canadian Medical Association, that the medical system is on the brink of collapse. I do not believe that a private member's bill with respect to remembering there was a pandemic is going to, in any way, shape or form, help the catastrophe that is happening in the medical system. Why not bring forward a bill that would actually address the deficiencies in the system that the government has allowed to happen over the last seven years?

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Madam Speaker, I understand the logic behind the hon. member's question. However, the thing about remembering is that when we do not remember, we do not learn. This is not just saying, "Let us remember." It is saying let us look at what we build to protect ourselves the next time around. One of those things is obviously going to have to be to shore up our health care system. One of those things is going to be to make sure we have frontline workers; to make sure we do what we need to do to keep, recruit and retain nurses; and to look at physicians. In British Columbia alone, we are now looking at helping family physicians to go back and practise family medicine. We are looking at incentives. Those are some of the things we do.

As I said in my speech, what we do not do is just sit there and say we remember. Of course, that would be a ludicrous thing to do,

*Private Members' Business*

but by remembering, we find out what we did wrong; we look at what the outcomes have been, and we try to prevent those things from happening again by creating new systems and by helping to build a new resilience to everything. That would mean—

• (1120)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I have to allow for other questions. There is only five minutes of questions and comments.

The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I do not necessarily have a question for my colleague, but I thank her for her speech.

Perhaps I will just make a comment. Rather than looking at what was done or not done and recapping the day or what was done during the pandemic, I think that this day must be dedicated to the families of those who died from COVID-19. In Quebec, that is over 45,000 people. I think that we need to dedicate it to health care workers, those who worked on the front lines and provided essential services.

I watched the TV series *De garde 24/7* on Télé-Québec. I read Dr. François Marquis's book, and I think we need to dedicate this day to those who were on the front lines of this pandemic.

I am pleased to see that the House seems to be unanimous on that.

[*English*]

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Madam Speaker, I agree with the hon. member. We need to remember all those people who passed, all those people who are now chronically ill, and all of those people who were overworked, overwrought and burned out, as we are seeing right now in the system. This is about remembering all of that, but it is also about remembering what we must do and what we did not do, and about learning lessons. Therefore, I want to thank the hon. member for her support.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member could provide her thoughts in regard to the importance of reflection, whether it is on our health care professionals or on children in our schools, and of having an opportunity to focus on the issues related to pandemics. Could she just share her thoughts on that?

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Madam Speaker, at the heart of what I do as a physician and what all physicians and nurses and health care professionals know is that we have to learn from our mistakes. We have to reflect on what went on and what we could do again.

*Private Members' Business*

The word post-mortem is a much bandied-about word, but it means looking back and seeing what one did. Was it good? Could we have done better? What would we have done differently if we had to do it again? That is what this reflection on this observance day would be all about. It is about not waiting to get another one before we think about where we go and how we deal with it and how we reflect on the mistakes we made and what we can do better.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise, as always, in the House of Commons and to address legislation before the House.

I think one of the important things is to understand that I do not think we need a pandemic observation day, observance day or any other day to remember the pandemic. How could we possibly forget the pandemic? Very clearly, we can all remember that in 1918 there was a pandemic. I do not think there is anybody who forgets there was a pandemic in 1918.

I very clearly remember what happened during the pandemic. My wife and I were fortunate enough to be away on vacation. While there, it became very clear, and there were multiple news reports coming in from around the world, that this virus was approaching Canada. As we now know, it was probably here.

Friday, March 13, 2020, came around, and I can remember having spoken to folks in my office, saying that we needed to get ready for this pandemic and that we did not know what was coming. Unfortunately, like many of us, some people did not really believe it was coming.

March 15 came along. That was a Sunday, and I can remember very clearly going to our local hospital and really understanding that there were two people planning for the pandemic. When I went into that room, they asked if I would like to join them, and I did. That led, of course, to our setting up the northern Nova Scotia response to COVID-19, which we ran successfully for a very long time. Sadly, it went on and on and on.

One of the interesting things I will always remember is the sense that, even at that time, when we really did not know anything about COVID-19 and how it was going to unfold, even then people joined together as a team to staff that unit and look after patients who were going to be sick with COVID-19 in that northern zone of Nova Scotia. We thought there was a better than average chance at that time that many of us would die from COVID-19, and thankfully none of us did in that unit. We are very happy to have come through the pandemic without those burdens upon us.

Sadly, as the member for Vancouver Centre readily points out, there were many Canadians who did not fare as well as those of us who did. However, I think it is also important to underline the fact that for many people, the trials and tribulations they had to suffer during the pandemic are things they will never forget, and that they might even want to forget, so our continuing to have a pandemic observance day does not seem to make any sense to me.

I do not believe it is a place to look at the systemic failures of our health care system, which, as I said briefly in my question, is on the brink of a catastrophic failure, when we have, in Nova Scotia alone, 100,000 people without access to primary care. When I look at those things, they are a system failure. When 100,000 Nova Sco-

tians and a million people in Ontario do not have access to a family physician or primary care, I do not think we need a pandemic observance day to remind them how terrible the system is.

What we need, very clearly, is for the government to get acting on these things. We need action. We need somebody to do something. We need to stop talking about it and blathering on about all of these things the Prime Minister has said about 7,500 doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners. Where are they, and what are they going to do in a system that is short by at least 60,000 to 70,000 nurses?

We have seen none of the 7,500, and that makes me sad. That means, as I said previously, that we have a government of inaction. We need to stop talking about things, and we need to actually get things done. If we do not begin to do things, having another observance day would only enrage those Canadians, in my mind, who are unable to access appropriate care in this country, in which medical care is part of those things we hold near and dear to our hearts. It is a very important thing.

● (1125)

I do not say that simply because I am a family physician; I say that because I am a Canadian, and those are things that are important to us. When we look at those things, do we need a day to allow us to remember that the system is crumbling in front of us? No, we need look no further, in many cases, sadly, than our own families, and we are certainly within two degrees of separation of somebody who suffers without being able to access primary care.

To further build upon that, I do not think we need a pandemic observance day to remind folks who could not be with their loved ones during their final days; they are not going to forget that. We do not need to remind them that they could not have funerals. We do not need to remind them that people could not celebrate birthdays or anniversaries. My own son's graduation was an event where we drove by in our cars and, from some distance, he received his graduation certificate. These are things we will not forget, and we do not need a day to remember them.

We do not need to have a day to remind us that we could not socialize with people in the manner we wanted to, that we could not travel and experience the great things the rest of the world has to offer and have learning experiences that make us better, richer people from a personal, social and spiritual point of view. We do not need a day to remind us that we were unable to do those things.

*Private Members' Business*

We are now learning to live with COVID-19, and I think there are a lot of lessons to be learned. We need to look at the science behind it and the science behind this new group of mRNA vaccines to understand what the science is telling us. As the member for Vancouver Centre talked about repeating mistakes, if we do not have the courage to look at those vaccines and the outcomes, then we are doomed to make mistakes, which I think is going to be an important thing going forward. Do we need a day to do that? No. We need to be working on that now, and we need to do it day after day. We do not need one day to remind us to do that; that does not make any sense.

We also do not need a day to remind us that our Prime Minister lashed out at many Canadians and called them racist and misogynist. We do not need a day to be reminded of those sad days. We do not need another reminder of the division that this Liberal government has created in Canada.

Therefore, as we begin to look upon this, I really believe that people will not forget the pandemic, which began in 2020 and as yet is still not declared over by the WHO. We know that perhaps the pandemic emergency will soon end, but we need members of the House to have the courage to come forward with the appropriate private member's bill that will give us hope for the future, that will bring us forward, that will look at systemic failures and the failures of what happened in managing the pandemic, that will look at things that are near and dear to all of our hearts, like the health care system, and that will allow us to say, "How are we going to change things? How are we going to make it better? How are we going to repair this?" That is what we need to be thinking of.

Do we need to have a day to do that? We do not need a day. We need multiple days; we need years; we need people to dedicate themselves to doing that, and I believe they are. Once again, this government of inaction needs to move forward to action and actually do something about it, as opposed to having another day to talk more about it.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise on this topic this morning.

There are different ways of seeing things. Some people say that we do not need a day. However, that day already exists. Last year, on March 11, there was a rather solemn commemoration. Two years ago, we also commemorated the day in a meaningful way—

Madam Speaker, I would like to be able to hear myself speak.

[*English*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Order. There are individuals having conversations in the House, and it is sometimes hard for members to hear themselves speak.

I would ask members, if they want to have conversations, to please take them outside the chamber, out of respect for those making speeches in the House.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their co-operation.

As I was saying, this day already exists. March 11, 2021, was designated as a national day of remembrance. There was also a commemoration in 2020, as I mentioned earlier.

Today, we are creating an official, permanent day of remembrance. We are not creating a statutory holiday or anything like that. This day will be marked on the calendar and will be an ongoing reminder of what we need to do.

We need to remember what happened and take into consideration the mistakes that were made. We all know that this was exceptional and that it was extremely difficult to find the right path. However, we must still learn from what happened. That is the purpose of creating this day. Essentially, we are looking to establish a symbolic day.

I had assumed that the House would be unanimous on this issue this morning, but that is not the impression I am getting. We will see what happens when it comes time to vote.

The important thing to do now is express, yet again, our sincere condolences and our compassion. We must make it abundantly clear that we stand with everyone affected. Yes, we remember those who were lost, and we also remember the families that were unable to visit their loved ones before they passed. That is a terrible thing to go through, and we have to make sure it never happens again. We need to remember that every day.

I am speaking on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, but I daresay I am speaking on behalf of the House, because I do not think anyone here lacks sympathy for those affected.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the frontline workers.

We were among the lucky ones who could telework. When we were able to come here, we did so in small groups. We practised social distancing and many other measures that helped us feel pretty safe most of the time, but that was not the case for everyone, including health care workers.

The previous speaker, who is a doctor, talked about doctors, but we also need to think about the nurses and personal support workers. There were times when it was the PSWs who were picking up the slack. I want to acknowledge the work done by everyone who volunteered to help out at the long-term care facilities. It was truly remarkable. People I know very well, who were on forced leave from their work, voluntarily risked their lives daily to help others. This deserves to be remembered and respected.

*Private Members' Business*

I am also grateful to the guardian angels, the asylum seekers who agreed to work in the long-term care facilities as PSWs to try to save people and take care of others. We have a moral obligation to them.

We are currently debating the creation of a day of observance. I do not think this is the time for criticism, but let us keep in mind that the cases of those who helped have not all been settled. This has been dragging on and it is important to wrap it up. I am calling on the government members, the people in charge, to pick up the pace. These days it is tough to pick up the pace where immigration is concerned, but I think we can manage. The people involved have already been identified.

● (1135)

In terms of frontline workers, I just mentioned orderlies, but maintenance workers, janitors, parking lot attendants and grocery store clerks also come to mind. Although some of these workers eventually got bonus pay, they still earn minimum wage and face the risk of getting COVID-19 every day. We have to think about these people and the dedication they have shown day after day.

Dedication can take many forms. I am thinking of delivery drivers, truck drivers and other drivers. I am thinking of teachers, who were initially forced to take leave or work from home and who later had to work in extremely difficult conditions.

I am thinking of hairstylists who had to cut hair while wearing a visor. I love my barber, and she actually told me that she was thinking about retraining as a truck driver. Apparently, cutting hair with a visor on is not easy. Depth perception can be affected, and it can be especially difficult if the visor fogs up.

We also have to think of police officers, peace officers and high-way workers. It is important to think of all these people.

As for our youth, they found themselves in an unfortunate situation. My parliamentary assistant had the misfortune, if I can call it that, of doing almost his entire bachelor's degree online. Last week, we talked about our respective university experiences. I will not go into the details, but I will say that we did not have the same experience. I find that sad.

All these people had to make sacrifices. Of course they developed other strengths, and that is what we all have to do when facing adversity. I always say that, like in judo, the thing to do is to move quickly and turn the situation to your advantage. Those people also suffered.

I mentioned university students, but we could also talk about high school students. They, too, did not have the same experience. There were no proms, for example. These things may seem mundane, but they are milestones in these young people's lives that they did not get to experience.

We must remember all of that. I cannot name everyone and I have no intention of even trying to name and thank all the groups of workers who worked so hard during the pandemic.

We should keep in mind, however, that the pandemic is not over yet. I will issue a gentle reminder: Getting vaccinated is a darn good idea for anyone who can get the shot. I personally received

my fourth dose last week and am very happy about it. I am now "bivalent". I suppose I am better protected than I used to be. As a vaccination ambassador for the health and social services centres in la Mauricie-et-du Centre-du-Québec and Lanaudière, I encourage people to get vaccinated.

I also want to thank the scientific community. It was not easy. We were facing the unknown. Scientists had to make the information more accessible, inform the public and search for the truth all at the same time. It was a challenge not to instill fear in the public while also having to ask people to be diligent and follow rules. That is an extremely difficult thing to do.

I salute everyone who worked during the pandemic. I think this day is important. I heard earlier that we do not need a day, that we need to reflect on this all year long. Still, having a day on the calendar forces us to remember and reflect. The Bloc Québécois is therefore in favour of this day.

We need to make sure that we do not repeat past mistakes. One thing this must include is adequate funding for our health care system. We have to work on preventing errors and duplicating services. The tone is friendly today, but there is a history here. We must be proactive for the future. We need an efficient health care system, and employees must be treated properly. People with a strong foundation in their work environment will respond better to this kind of disaster.

● (1140)

[English]

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to debate Bill S-209, an act respecting pandemic observance day, proposed by the hon. member for Vancouver Centre, which would designate March 11 of each year as pandemic observance day to give Canadians an opportunity to commemorate the efforts to get through the pandemic, remember its effects and reflect on ways to prepare for any future pandemics.

First of all, it is important that we first recognize the incredible toll COVID has taken on our country and indeed our world. In Canada, already more than one in 10 Canadians has had some form of COVID. Almost 50,000 Canadians have died as a result of COVID-19. Around the world, the numbers are horrific: 625 million people infected and over 6.5 million deaths.

We know people's lives have been shaped irreparably, in some cases, as a result of COVID. Lives have been put on pause, finances have crumbled, and weddings, funerals, new births and last moments have been missed. Special moments and milestones with loved ones have been missed as well. I would argue there is not one family in our country that has not been touched by the tragedy of COVID-19.



*Private Members' Business*

What we are also here to talk about today is the clear fact that much more could have been done, both within our borders and abroad. If we look back to the last couple of years, we need to talk about the support Canadians so desperately needed. We cannot forget the Liberals only wanted to support Canadians with a one-time payment in the face of not just a public health emergency but also a financial crisis for many Canadians. It was the NDP that successfully fought for regular CERB payments, which helped to lift many people up during this time of crisis.

Now, unfortunately, the government is targeting the benefits of people who relied on CERB throughout the pandemic, including many in our region. All the while, wealthy CEOs, who used tax avoidance schemes to avoid paying taxes, and who received support during the pandemic, are getting a free pass. We need to see amnesty for those who needed CERB and applied for it.

Unfortunately, this is in character for the government. It cut the guaranteed income supplement for the most vulnerable seniors, leaving low-income Canadians in desperate situations until New Democrats forced it to reverse the cuts. Recently we learned it cut the Canada child benefit for families struggling to feed their children. It is clear whose side the Liberals are on.

Rich companies that used the wage subsidy, even though they were making profits and gave millions in dividends to their shareholders, are not being asked to pay the money back they received. The government is not hesitating to make hard-working Canadians, who are struggling to make ends meet, to pay back the CERB they desperately needed throughout the pandemic. The reality is that the COVID-19 crisis held up a mirror to the country we have built and the cracks at its foundation.

No one need to look further than the reality of first nations during the COVID-19 pandemic. First nations in our region, such as the Island Lake first nation, which does not have regular hospital access, communities such as OCN, Shamattawa, God's River and others, had such bad COVID outbreaks that the military needed to come in to help. A lack of PPE, testing kits and even nurses and doctors left communities fending for themselves. They were scrambling and without support.

Then we had communities such as Pukatawagan, where the government decided the best way to help community members to isolate was to give them tents in the middle of winter, which nobody from that community asked for. It was not quite the heartlessness of the Harper government sending body bags during the SARS pandemic and H1N1, but it was awfully close. The worst part is that no one in the community even asked for this. We looked into it, and it turned out a board member of the company that made the tents also sat on the COVID-19 supply council, which was designed to advise the government on procurement during the pandemic. When this came to light, that person was forced to step down.

COVID showed us how vulnerable so many of our institutions are and how ill-prepared we were. A COVID outbreak at a Cargill meat processing plant highlighted how unserious our country is about workers' safety. Over 1,000 cases were linked. People died because they worked in unsafe workplaces.

• (1145)

Throughout the pandemic, we also saw how ill-suited our institutions were in ensuring that the most vulnerable in our society were protected. Our health care system, for which the Prime Minister and the government never replaced the cuts to transfer payments brought in by the previous Conservative government, was stretched beyond its absolute limit. Nurses complained about the lack of PPE while they put their lives on the line to keep people safe and to save what lives they could.

Our behaviour as a country was no better abroad. It was the Liberal government that blocked countries like Bolivia from accessing a Canadian-produced generic vaccine, preferring to put the economic profits of giant pharmaceutical companies ahead of the lives of people around the world. Do not forget that Bolivia reached an agreement with the Canada-based drug manufacturer Biolyse to acquire desperately needed vaccines for a country that, at the time, had only been able to vaccinate 5% of its population. The government, despite publicly stating that it was doing everything in its power to get the vaccine to the global south, worked to block Bolivia's efforts at the WTO. Canada has put lives at risk.

It is abundantly clear that much more could have been done and could still be done, both at home and abroad. The government did the bare minimum and it was up to Canadians to pick up the pieces, with people checking in on their neighbours when they were sick and helping them out with things like groceries and basic necessities.

When we talk about the cracks in our foundation, we also saw the way in which the loss of our vaccine production capacity rendered us at risk. The inability to produce the PPE we needed here at home put us at risk. Publicly owning the capacity that we need to be safe in a pandemic is something that we as Canadians need to act on. We cannot be vulnerable the way we were during the pandemic.

I also want to highlight that many have pointed to the lessons we should be learning from this pandemic. I appreciate the work of Nora Loreto, who wrote a book called *Spin Doctors: How Media and Politicians Misdiagnosed the Covid-19 Pandemic*. It talks about how the media, in many cases the mainstream media, overlooked the reality that was afoot in our country, and how politicians and public health officials were mostly given the benefit of the doubt that what they said was true and that they acted in good faith, when, in many cases, we know that this was not necessarily the case.

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Her book documents each month of the first year of the pandemic and examines the issues that emerged, from the disproportionate impact on racialized workers and the people who died in residential care to policing. Her book demonstrates how politicians and uncritical media shaped the popular understanding of the issues. It very much argues that we desperately need to move beyond the idea that individual actions will keep us safe and move toward collective action, backed up by the political will to ultimately put people's lives ahead of profit, something that we did not see happen the way it should have throughout the pandemic.

In wrapping up, I want to share my thoughts with the many people across the country, including here in our north, who lost loved ones to COVID-19. Our thoughts are with them.

We also know that thoughts are not enough. What we need is clear action, so that lives that were lost were not lost in vain and so that we are there to protect workers, people on the margins, indigenous communities and people living in long-term care. We need to protect them going forward.

This requires political will. This requires public investment. This requires supporting our health care system and our health care professionals. It requires public ownership when it comes to the production of vaccines, PPE and the materials we need to keep our community safe. It requires ending the housing crisis in first nations and building hospitals where they are needed for indigenous communities. It requires lifting people up in concrete tangible ways and ultimately making it clear that lives, whether they are in Canada or around the world, are much more important than profit.

We need to act now.

● (1150)

**Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill S-209, which was introduced by Senator Marie-Françoise Mégie and which seeks to designate March 11 as pandemic observance day to commemorate the efforts Canadians have made and continue to make to get through the COVID-19 pandemic.

I want to take this opportunity, first, to thank the senator for developing this bill and, next, to thank my colleague for Vancouver Centre for presenting the bill in the House of Commons. I would also like to thank her for her decades of service as a former minister, member of Parliament, physician and someone who knows first-hand how important it is to save lives.

A national day of observance matters. It would commemorate the people who lost their lives during the pandemic and the significant impacts we have all felt because of COVID-19. All of our lives, the lives of everyone around the world, were forever changed by the emergence of COVID-19.

Today, we mourn the tragic loss of more than 45,000 Canadians: grandparents, parents, heroes, siblings, friends and loved ones. They mattered to so many. Each of these losses cascaded through families and communities, leaving many more thousands bereaved. Because of restrictions around traditional mourning customs and rituals, heart-wrenchingly, many families were unable to even say goodbye. We did not get to be by our family member's side to hold their hands and to comfort them in their last hours. Instead, some of

us said goodbye over Zoom with little or no funeral afterward. Today, COVID-19 has infected over four million Canadians.

The pandemic has had an immeasurable impact on how we work, learn, connect with family and friends and live our daily lives. All Canadians have experienced sacrifice and loss over the past years. Seniors were isolated from the ones they love. Our children missed birthday parties, friends and sports. For far too many, the virus meant the loss of their jobs or the closure of their businesses.

Our health care workers have been heroic for almost three years now, initially putting the interests of their neighbours, communities and country ahead of their own. While many of us could work from home, health care and other essential workers could not. The farmers who ensured that we had food on the table, the truck drivers who made sure that food got from the farm to the grocery stores, the grocery store workers who kept the shelves stocked, the teachers and child care workers who comforted our children, and the women and men in uniform who helped care for our most vulnerable, they worked long hours so that we could get the services and care we needed. They were the everyday heroes who we cheered on and hung signs in our windows for. We witnessed Canadians at their very best. We came together, remained strong and lent a hand to neighbours and organizations whenever possible.

It is important that we commemorate the pandemic to remember how our world changed forever and how, once again, human resilience is succeeding. This bill would create the opportunity to come together each year to honour the memory of those we lost, to recognize everyone who was impacted by COVID-19 and to pay tribute to all those who continue to work hard and make incredible sacrifices in our fight against the virus, because the pandemic is not over.

We need to be prepared to use the tools we have. The flu vaccine and COVID-19 vaccine help prevent people from getting seriously ill, prevent further delays in scheduled hospital care and support worn-out health care workers. Internationally, we need to close the booster gap. In low-income countries, only 35% of health care workers and 31% of older populations are fully vaccinated and boosted. We must be prepared for the next time, because there will be a next time. History is clear on this.

• (1155)

More than six distinct influenza pandemics and epidemics have struck in just over a century. Ebola viruses have struck over 25 times in the past five decades, and we have seen the impacts of SARS, MERS and COVID-19. Internationally, governments and private funders poured billions of dollars into building preparedness. Plans were tested and evaluated, and still COVID-19 demonstrated that the world was not sufficiently prepared.

This is the time we should all be asking why this broke down and what must change. We should also be studying the lessons learned to date from COVID-19: our state of preparedness prior to the pandemic; the impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians, business, industry, the economy and public services; the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on some communities; and what actions and investments are being made to be better prepared for the next pandemic.

We should also pay attention to antimicrobial resistance, a global crisis that threatens a century of progress in health and achievement of the sustainable development goals. Because the drivers of antimicrobial resistance lie in humans, animals, plants, food and the environment, a sustained one-health response is essential. There is no time to wait.

We should learn what we always learn during a pandemic, namely, that science, research and public health matter, and not just when we are in crisis. They are fundamental building blocks of our country, which require attention, nurturing and support, and they cannot be neglected. We need enhanced competitive investment in science and research to keep the best and brightest in Canada.

We cannot afford to forget because we have forgotten before. In 1918-19, influenza swept the world and killed more than 50 million people, more than the number that died in all of the fighting in the First World War. Many victims were healthy young people in the prime of life. There was a shortage of medical personnel. There were no effective treatments. There were no flu vaccines, antiviral drugs, antibiotics or mechanical ventilation.

To slow the spread of the disease, governments implemented quarantine, placarded homes, closed public places and regulated and enforced mask wearing. Individual citizens closed their doors to the outside world and communicated via letter. In Canada, between 30,000 and 50,000 people died. In Montreal, the demand for transporting the dead was so great that trolley cars had to be converted into hearses that could carry 10 coffins at a time. Whole families disintegrated and young adults left behind children who were forced into orphanages. Losses to businesses were staggering. Merchants lost their livelihoods because staff were absent with flu and customers were too ill to shop. Restaurants and theatres all lost heavily.

It was one of history's deadliest pandemics, but people did not want to talk about their experience during the pandemic. Because they were reluctant to talk or write about the pandemic, future generations were not always aware of it. Historian Alfred Crosby called it the "forgotten pandemic". People wanted to forget difficult times, move on with their lives and think about a happier future.

This time is different. There are innumerable memorial projects and memorials under way around the globe. Here in Canada, there

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is an obituary project to pay tribute to everyone who has died of COVID-19 and every Canadian who died of the disease abroad. It is called "They Were Loved". That is why this bill matters: because they were loved.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

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

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 20—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-31

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved:**

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-31, An Act respecting cost of living relief measures related to dental care and rental housing, be disposed of as follows:

- (a) the bill be ordered for consideration at the second reading stage immediately after the adoption of this order;
- (b) when the House resumes debate at the second reading stage of the bill,
  - (i) the ordinary hour of daily adjournment shall be midnight,
  - (ii) at 11:45 p.m. or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, all questions necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill shall be put forthwith without further debate or amendment, provided that, if a recorded division is requested, it shall be deferred to the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions on the next sitting day, and the House shall thereafter adjourn to the next sitting day,
  - (iii) during consideration of the bill at the said stage the House shall not adjourn, except pursuant to a motion moved by a minister of the Crown;
- (c) if the bill is adopted at the second reading stage and referred to the Standing Committee on Health, during its consideration of the bill,
  - (i) the committee shall have the first priority for the use of House resources for committee meetings,
  - (ii) amendments to the bill, including from independent members, shall be submitted to the clerk of the committee by 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 20, 2022, and distributed to the committee members in both official languages by noon on Friday, October 21, 2022,
  - (iii) suggested amendments filed by independent members pursuant to subparagraph (c)(ii) shall be deemed to have been proposed during the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill,

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(iv) the committee shall proceed to clause-by-clause consideration of the bill no earlier than 7:00 p.m. on Monday, October 24, 2022, and if the committee has not completed its clause-by-clause consideration of the bill by 11:59 p.m. that day, all remaining amendments submitted to the committee shall be deemed moved, and the Chair shall put the question, forthwith and successively without further debate on all remaining clauses and amendments submitted to the committee, as well as each and every question necessary to dispose of the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill,

(v) a member of the committee may report the bill to the House by depositing it with the Clerk of the House, who shall notify the House leaders of the recognized parties and independent members, and the report shall be deemed to have been duly presented to the House;

(d) the bill be ordered for consideration at report stage on Thursday, October 27, 2022, provided that,

(i) no later than 6:15 p.m. that day, if the House has not previously disposed of the report stage, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this order, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the report stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment,

(ii) if a recorded division is requested after 2:00 p.m., it shall not be deferred, except pursuant to Standing Order 76.1(8),

(iii) the bill be ordered for consideration at the third reading stage immediately after the concurrence of the bill at report stage;

(e) when the bill is taken up at the third reading stage, pursuant to subparagraph (d)(iii) of this order, not later than 11:45 p.m. or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this order, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment, and if a recorded division is requested, it shall not be deferred; and

(f) on Thursday, October 27, 2022,

(i) Private Members' Business shall not be taken up,

(ii) the House shall not adjourn until the proceedings on the bill have been completed, except pursuant to a motion proposed by a minister of the Crown, provided that once proceedings on the bill have been completed, the House may then proceed to consider other business or, if it has already passed the ordinary hour of daily adjournment, the House shall adjourn to the next sitting day.

[English]

He said: Madam Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in supporting the motion just read to schedule a time for passage of Bill C-31, an act respecting cost of living relief measures related to dental care and rental housing. While I am, as we all are, committed to ensuring that this legislation is given due consideration, undue delay would mean that eligible families would have to wait until next year before receiving the Canada dental benefit.

The target implementation date for the benefit is December 1, 2022. Delivering a nationwide benefit is not a small endeavour, and many elements cannot be put in place until this legislation has received parliamentary approval and royal assent. Delays would mean leaving parents with further uncertainty about when they would get the financial support they need and deserve to seek out dental services for their children. I think that we can all agree that children should not have to wait to access the care they need.

• (1210)

[Translation]

I want to remind my colleagues why Bill C-31 needs to be passed quickly. This important bill was introduced by our government to meet the urgent needs of families dealing with the rising cost of living. Parents across the country are struggling to pay for

their children's dental care. Inflation is a global challenge that affects all Canadians, but households are not all equally affected. That is why our government has moved quickly to make dental care more affordable for those who need it most, while taking the time to design a longer-term national dental care program.

Oral health is essential to overall health. If left untreated, oral health troubles develop into serious problems that are more expensive, more painful and more difficult to fix. Data from the sector show that children miss nearly two million school days a year due to dental health problems. Obviously, when children are taken out of school to have their urgent oral health needs seen to, their parents must also take time off from work to go with them. In fact, it is estimated that oral diseases cost our economy about \$1 billion in lost productivity every year.

Some members of the House have questioned whether oral health is really that important for children. The fact is that poor oral health places a heavy burden on our children and our health care system. It can lead to problems with sleep, nutrition, growth and social development.

[English]

When access to preventive care is out of financial reach, oral health troubles can become exacerbated and hospitals and other urgent care settings may be required to pick up the slack. Emergency surgeries in crowded hospital emergency departments become the fallback. Dental surgery under anaesthesia accounts for one-third of all day surgeries performed at most pediatric hospitals for children between the ages of one and five.

Low-income Canadians are the ones hardest hit by the impacts of poor oral health. Children in low-income families are two and a half times more likely to need surgery for oral health concerns than children from wealthier families. We should all strive to avoid the need for such drastic interventions whenever possible. General anaesthesia for dental procedures can result in psychological and emotional distress for children and their families. These are things that could be limited to only the most complex cases if access to preventive care were more affordable.

This is what the Canada dental benefit is aimed at addressing. It is a simple upfront payment because parents know what their children need. There is no red tape and no hassle. It is just the means for parents to help their children thrive and be healthy.

We are collaborating with the Canada Revenue Agency because it has the expertise to successfully deliver such a program. When a person applies for the benefit in My Account, the CRA will verify information in its existing tax and Canada child benefit systems, such as income, age of children and the applicant's relationship to a child.

Simultaneously, the attestations and verification information that make up part of the application itself will be incorporated into CRA's standard verification processes to ensure the integrity of the program. This is a tested, responsible approach to delivering much-needed relief to Canadian families.

However, we have more to do. The Canada dental benefit is the first step toward addressing overall oral health needs in this country, starting with those who have the most to lose by delays. There is a pressing need now with the potential for lifelong impacts on some of the most vulnerable: our children. This legislation puts kids first in line so they can reap the benefits of early intervention for a lifetime. At the same time, our government continues to work hard on the long-term dental care program that will support Canadians for decades to come.

We have been debating important measures through Bill C-31, such as supporting Canadians with rental support and helping kids access the dental care they need. However, throughout this time, unfortunately we have seen the Conservatives play political games to waste time and slow down the important legislation that will help Canadians.

Our government has also been investing in families since 2015. One of our first actions was creating the Canada child benefit, which, since its inception, has played a major role in reducing the number of children living in poverty. Unfortunately, the Conservatives, yet again, voted against this measure.

We have made historic investments to build a Canada-wide early learning and child care system, starting with a 50% average fee reduction by the end of 2022. Unfortunately, the Conservatives are also against this measure.

On this side of the House, we will always stand up for Canadian families so that every family and every child has a fair chance at success. Why will the Conservatives not join us, stop playing political games and help us get this much-needed support to Canadian families?

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

In closing, I urge all my colleagues in the House to support this motion. Canadian families and children in need who need dental care are depending on us all. The bill was vigorously debated at second reading during six sittings of the House, on September 22, 23 and 26 and October 3, 5 and 7.

I am sure my colleagues understand that time is running out and that we must act quickly for our children's well-being. By scheduling a time for passage at second reading, we can send this bill to committee for further consideration.

[*English*]

I hope that all my colleagues will join me in supporting this motion and will allow this bill to progress so that Canadians can get the support they urgently need.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the Conservatives agree that oral health is very important, but the measures in Bill C-31 cover children under 12 who are mostly covered by other provincial programs, adding \$500 or \$600. Then

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there is the one-time \$500 payment for rent. At the same time, the government is taking away more than \$1,500 from Canadians by increasing the carbon tax and increasing payroll taxes.

Does the government not recognize the hypocrisy that it is taking more money away than it is actually giving? If it wanted to do something instantly, it could cut the carbon tax and stop payroll taxes. Will the minister commit to doing that?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos:** Madam Speaker, we are all very pleased to hear that the member supports this bill, so we should pass it quickly. We look forward to the Conservatives' support when the motion is voted on soon. We look forward to their support when it gets passed in the House.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Madam Speaker, since Quebec already has a rent support program, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has run the numbers. We learned last week that 86,400 Quebecers in need with a family income under \$35,000 or individual income under \$20,000, will not be eligible.

Quebeckers and Quebec have been completely forgotten in the housing component of Bill C-31. I am speaking directly to Quebec voters who need rent assistance. I want them to remember in the next election that today democratic debates in the House are being short-circuited and that their MP, the Minister of Health, has forgotten them.

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos:** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be asked a question about my riding of Québec, where there is a large number of community organizations such as low-cost housing, housing co-operatives and housing non-profits that have been working very hard since 2015 to support and strengthen the Canadian government's efforts as part of the first housing strategy in the country's history.

I am sure that that is also the case in my colleague's riding and that these housing co-operatives and housing non-profits are delisted with the national housing strategy we put in place in 2015, which supports hundreds of thousands of low-income renters throughout Quebec.

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• (1220)

[English]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am not prepared to encounter any more delays for the children in my riding who desperately need dental care. We know that those regular dental checkups are so important for overall oral health.

Could the Minister of Health comment on how those regular checkups for children under the age of 12 would actually save our system a lot of money going forward because of early detection of oral health problems, and how this would really help families that struggling to make difficult choices week in and week out?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos:** Madam Speaker, I am very much in agreement with the importance of investing in the oral health of our children.

Oral health is health. We know that about 2% of all hospitalizations are due to urgent oral health needs that could have been prevented and treated through the type of dental care program our government is putting in place at this time, which we are going to build on in the years to come. This is an important investment to protect the health of Canadians, particularly that of those of modest and average incomes who otherwise would not go to see a dentist, technician or therapist because they do not have the means to do so.

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Madam Speaker, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands and I are both supportive of what is in this legislation, as well as moving it ahead as quickly as possible. We feel that, while it is not enough, it is a step in the right direction.

My question this morning is with respect to the motion itself. Could the minister share more on why this motion is necessary in moving the supports ahead? He mentioned December 1 as a critical timeline. Could the minister speak to how this motion would allow all parliamentarians in this place to get the supports needed to Canadians as quickly as possible?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos:** Madam Speaker, this is an excellent question. The timing is quite clear. December 1 is when this program is due to be in place. There is a lot of work to do before then.

The Canada Revenue Agency has a significant challenge in implementing this in the most appropriate manner. That is why we need to move to second reading and have the committee look at this bill. The Senate would then take the bill over if the House passes it. Then we could start helping those hundreds of thousands of children who need dental care as quickly as possible.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, first, I would like to thank the Minister of Health for coming to Winnipeg North a few weeks back and meeting with some community members at the Fred Douglas Lodge. It was greatly appreciated. We were talking about how we help our seniors.

Today, the minister is bringing forward legislation that would help the residents of Winnipeg North, children under the age of 12 whose parents or guardians might not necessarily have the financial means to get them the dental work that is so critically important. That applies from coast to coast to coast.

Could the minister specify why this is so important? How many children fall through the cracks because they do not have dental benefits and ultimately end up going to hospital facilities?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos:** Madam Speaker, my colleague is quite right in pointing to the 500,000 children who we estimate do not have appropriate dental care, in addition to those that do not have appropriate child care for their families. In the member's riding, probably around 1,000 to 2,000 children and their families would benefit from this dental care program, if it is passed by Parliament. That is obviously a lot of children who would live a healthier life because of those investments.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the minister's presence today. I am disappointed the government is moving forward with such a large expansion without necessarily having debate.

Every province, with the exception of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, has a program to help seniors, as well as low-income children, to get dental care. In my own home province, John Horgan, the premier, has said on behalf of the Council of the Federation that this is not where they would want to see health dollars spent.

How does the minister square outright expanding areas of government that are not the priority while our health care system, the system the minister is supposed to support and putting money into, is not a priority? These are things that even the premiers say are not a priority. How does he square that? How does he feel about his role working contrary to every single province?

• (1225)

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos:** Madam Speaker, there are two key statistics: 4% and \$2 billion. The approximate share of current expenditures by provinces and territories on dental care is 4%. That is obviously not enough to cover the needs of almost 35% of the population in Canada that does not have access to dental insurance. Second, \$2 billion is the estimated cost hospitals have to incur when people are forced to go to the emergency department because they do not have access to preventative dental care.

These costs are obviously very large and would be significantly reduced by investing in dental care for low- and medium-income families.

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[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon:** Madam Speaker, last weekend I was in my riding, in the Saint-Janvier area of Mirabel, and I was forced to tell citizens, who are already eligible to the Quebec rent supplement program and who are poor, that the Quebec Liberals had forgotten them. These people are among the 86,400 Quebecers who will not qualify for federal assistance because the Minister of Health and the Minister of Housing have forgotten them.

Did the Minister of Health go to his riding of Québec to explain to households earning less than \$35,000 a year that they will not be eligible and that they will be left high and dry while Quebec taxes pay benefits to other Canadians?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos:** Madam Speaker, the member certainly did a very good job. I am sure, then, that he is familiar with the Canada housing benefit, which has been paid to 100,000 households in Quebec for some time now. This figure represents about one-third of the households covered by the Canada housing benefit across the country.

My colleague is surely aware of the considerable investments that are being made to help the Government of Quebec and all of the housing partners, whether it be low-cost housing, non-profits or housing co-ops, and to secure community housing, which, as he rightly said, is essential to ensure the quality of life of hundreds of thousands of low-income renters in Canada and Quebec.

[*English*]

**Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House to represent the good people of Cumberland—Colchester.

I thank the Minister of Health for his speech, as he is always very interesting. Reflecting a bit on the minister's own language, the number in Bill C-31 for rental relief and the dental program is \$10 billion, which would be funded by the federal government. I think that is a big number. Perhaps I will come back to that.

The deputy minister of finance talked about throwing stones in the lake, and I would suggest that we are almost throwing boulders into a teacup, which is, of course, going to overflow, unlike what she would have Canadians believe.

That being said, this bill is split into two parts. Let us speak about the rental relief part of the bill. My hon. colleague from Mirabel spoke about how Quebecers will be left behind. It is shameful, saddening, disheartening and inconceivable that the average monthly rent in Canada is more than \$2,000. The Liberal government's rental relief, which the Minister of Health did not speak of much, would give people a one-time payment of \$500. We know that rental prices are up 4.3% since August and 15.4% over a year, to an average of \$2,043 per month. That information is from Rentals.ca and Bullpen Research and Consulting.

We also know that all rental property costs are up 21.9% since April of 2021. Of course, this is due to increased demand and interest rates, which we know are fuelled by the Liberal government's inflationary fire, upon which we all know it wants to continue to pour more gasoline. Sadly, in Nova Scotia, my home province, the average rental cost per month for all property types is \$2,453, which is a shocking amount of money for a place to live. In On-

tario, it is slightly less at \$2,451. A condo or apartment in Toronto is, on average, \$2,855.

When I look at those numbers, it is not that \$500 is an insignificant amount of money. It is certainly an amount of money one would not pass by, but it is not significant with helping people who are having difficulty with housing. During the constituency week last week, when I asked people in my own constituency about receiving that \$500, the majority of people said it was not worth it. They wondered why the government would even bother, as it might cover one week out of 52 weeks when we look at the ballooning cost of housing.

Why would we not consider directing funds to things that really affect the sustainability of every household in this country? As we all know, and if we do not we are sadly living under a rock, groceries are up at least 10%. Let me expand a little on that. Fruit is up 13.2%. Eggs are up 10.9%. Bread is up 17.6%. Here is a shocker: Pasta is up 32.4%. Those are shocking increases that translate into a family of four having to spend \$1,200 more to feed itself over last year. If we are giving people a one-time payment of \$500, it seems like shockingly little, yet this program, as touted by the Prime Minister, is going to cost about \$900 million.

• (1230)

We all know, very clearly, that the government has added more debt for Canadians than all previous governments combined in 148 years. I know the government is going to talk about the terribly high cost of COVID, but on this side of the House, we all know that this really is not forming a significant part of the massive amount of burdensome debt that is going to be left to my children, and my grandchildren as well, which makes me very sad.

We also know that the other side of the House has had significant failures on the housing file. We now know that people are spending over 50% of their cheques on housing, up from 32%, and we have the fewest houses per-capita in the G7. We also know that the average housing price in Canada has doubled.

We are talking about creating another federally administered program from a government that has multiple failures. For example, Canadians are having trouble getting a simple passport.

I can remember getting my first passport in the early 1990s. At that point, it seemed really quite simple. People were able to get a form that, as it was not downloaded then. I think they went to the post office. They put their names on it. They had several people in the community as guarantors. Then they would put it in the mail and the passports came back in a timely fashion.

*Government Orders*

Now, shockingly, the constituency assistants in my offices in Truro and Amherst spend untold hours advocating on behalf of the great citizens of Cumberland—Colchester to simply get a passport. They are now beginning to emerge from this pandemic and they want to go somewhere. It is shocking. It is as if it could not have been foreseen, that as life returned to normal and we learned to lived with COVID that people would want to go and do something but their passports were running out.

I find it just inconceivable that my office and the offices of all my colleagues have been spending such tremendous amounts of time on something as simple as a passport, and now we are going to entrust the government with another federal program. It is like asking why the government does not federally administer a program for all Canadians. That makes no sense when we cannot even get people a passport.

Two other issues that I think really underline the ridiculous nature therein are with respect to the immigration file.

I met with a gentleman at my office during constituency week. He has been living in Canada since 2011. He entered with a BSc and an MBA. Since being in Canada, he has obtained an MSc as well. This man has been waiting five years for his permanent residency. It is nonsense. He has been here, as I mentioned, for 10 years, working in Canada, functioning as a Canadian citizen. All of his paperwork is in. He pays taxes and he goes to work every day. Why does it take such an inordinate amount of time?

Again, I would suggest that all of my colleagues in the House are really able to fully realize that this is not a fallacy. It is the sad reality that people are waiting years to become permanent residences and citizens of a country in which they are actually functioning as citizens already. They are following the laws, paying their taxes, working and are contributing to the great country which we all have the privilege of calling home.

When I look at those things, how can we entrust the government to administer any other programs?

• (1235)

Finally, as we know very clearly, hurricane Fiona has been devastating to Atlantic Canada, specifically to Cumberland—Colchester. The way in which that support is rolling out for Atlantic Canadians and the great people who live in my riding is appalling. There does not appear to be rhyme or reason. There appears to be words attached to the amount of funding that will be rolled out, however, there does not appear, as we are sadly reminded daily, to be any plan behind how to get people that funding.

Trees are lying everywhere, and I am not talking about some alder bushes that have fallen over, which can be snipped with a good pair of clippers. These are big trees, and in the order of 30 or 40 trees. The government has promised money for these people to get their lives back together and, sadly, it does not have a program to roll it out. Again, I would suggest that asking the government to be a part of rolling out another federal program is really not the way in which we would like to see things proceed.

We now know that Canadians are paying more in taxes than in housing, transport, food and clothing combined. We are taxed, and I

do not even know where it is, whether it is above my nose or eyes. We are paying significant taxes, and people are feeling this cost of living crisis. People are not able to afford to pay more. As we all know, winter is coming, which may sound like a bit of a cliché, as it always does. People are now worried about putting oil in their oil barrel. People in Cumberland—Colchester, who often live in single-family dwellings, are very much dependent on fossil fuels, and we know this is a concern for them. We also know they are worried about feeding their families, and adding more programs does not seem to make any sense.

Also, as mentioned in the House this morning, there is the upcoming payroll tax increases and the tax on tax, the dreaded tax of all, the tripling of the carbon tax. Canadians are at their breaking point, and the government continues to pile on more and more taxes on the backs of Canadians, which we know is an untenable position. People cannot afford this. People do not want to continue doing this.

As we also heard, we know that the government is often wanting to give with the left hand and take with the right, which is what we are seeing with the increased payroll taxes that are going to roll out in January. Then the tripling of the carbon tax is going to be rolled out against the best wishes of many. Therefore, we see the giving of \$500 and the taking away of much more. The government is taking money in the form of payroll taxes and putting it into general revenues, which really does not make a whole heck of a lot of sense.

The second part of Bill C-31 is the proposed dental benefit act.

As I mentioned, the finance minister said, “This is like throwing a stone in the lake — the lake doesn't flood.” Of course, when we continue to add billions of dollars, it is like throwing boulders in a lake, which eventually we know will raise the level and could possibly overflow depending on the size of the lake. If we put a boulder in a mud puddle, we know that will take up all of the space.

What is the evidence with respect to this? I would like to think that the Parliamentary Budget Officer is a good source of information. The estimate is that it is going to cost \$9 billion over five years. There is some other strange math that perhaps could be clarified, but it appears that year one is going to cost in and of itself \$5.3 billion for another federally administer debacle.



*Government Orders*

What does the Canadian Dental Association have to say about it? Arguably, it speaks for many dental professionals in the country. It asks whether it would not be better to bolster existing and underfunded provincial and territorial plans as opposed to attempting to create another system altogether. As we heard, we know very clearly that at least 11 of our 13 jurisdictions have the ability to fund, at least in part, dental care for those in the greatest need. If that is the truth, which I believe it is from the research, it would make more sense and behoove us all not to create an entire other system, but, as the Canadian Dental Association would say, to bolster the existing and underfunded programs.

● (1240)

In Nova Scotia, for instance, there is a program that is fairly comprehensive for children under age 14. It costs \$11 million per year. When we look at that, the federal program is for children under the age of 12, but perhaps Nova Scotia might have fewer children per capita than other jurisdictions. Just doing some spitball math, if there are a million children under 14 in Nova Scotia and averaging it out to the rest of the country, that would be \$3.4 billion per year, certainly not an insignificant amount.

We believe that the CRA is going to administer this part of the program. When we look at these things, I do not think that anybody who pays taxes in the country would believe that the CRA will create a simple administration for this program. I fail to believe that. We know how complicated even filling out a simple tax return is, and that is going to be difficult.

We also understand that there could be claims adjudication in this. Early on in this part of the bill, it says it is going to be \$650 a year with no strings attached, no questions asked, how much the fees are, etc. I do not know if we can keep the rest, but there is a thinly veiled threat that if people are dishonest, they will have to pay it back and there will be a fine.

We know that dentists' fees vary widely in the province of Nova Scotia and across the country. We know that in Nova Scotia a checkup and cleaning, for instance, could be between \$90 and \$240. We know that in Nova Scotia a filling could cost from \$70 up to \$400. Therefore, we know there are significant difficulties associated with that.

We also know, as I previously said, that multiple jurisdictions already have significant dental coverage in a universal sense. Quebec, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, P.E.I., Yukon, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories have more complete coverage for first nations families as well. We know there is additional coverage for other families that are receiving financial assistance in places such as New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. Will the provinces be expected to continue the programs they have? I have some concern about what is in the bill that would suggest that the provinces that have programs will be expected to continue them, which really does not appear to be fair and equitable.

What do we really need to have happen? We need to understand very clearly that the funding for health transfers needs to be shored up across Canada. We hear day after day from folks who do not have access to primary care. We hear of the tremendous and insane

backlogs that have been created by the COVID-19 pandemic, which is going to require significant effort and funding.

We know that the government has also not yet committed to funding the Canada mental health transfer. On page 75 of the Liberal platform, \$250 million were committed and then in budget 2022, another \$625 million, which, at another point, appears to equate to \$4.5 billion over five years. I do not think this is a member in the House who would not agree that mental health is a significant, ongoing and burgeoning difficulty for the entire country, every province and territory, towns, small and large. The government has yet to commit to funding the Canada mental health transfer. As well, there has not been significant consultation with the premiers of the provinces and territories with respect to this bill. We believe that is what the provincial and territorial ministers of health would want.

● (1245)

We also know the government continues to run a significant deficit and debt. I have spoken previously and multiple times about the terrible debt burden the government is leaving future generations. I look at it like this to try to make sense of it: If I have a minivan and continue to make payments on it, why would I buy another vehicle? I do not understand that. If I cannot finish paying for the one I have, why would I want something else? I would just be adding to it. Those are wishes and desires. From that perspective, it just does not seem to make any sense.

The Minister of Health also spoke about a speedy passage, and I would respectfully disagree with the minister. We know the speedy passage is related to the Liberal-NDP coalition and the demands made to keep the government afloat. That is not a reason, in any way, shape or form, to impede debate on such significant legislation in terms of the cost of the legislation.

As we said, this is \$10 billion. Again, I will use the minister's own parlance and say, here is a number: more than \$10 billion. That is without the hiccups and pitfalls we know happen with so many federal programs. Therefore, could it be \$15 billion? Again, these are boulders we are throwing into a teacup.

I need to be clear that this is not a question of the importance of oral health. This is a question of responsible government, fiscal responsibility and timing. This is about partnerships with provinces. This is about federal oversight and heavy-handedness. This is about the federal administration of a program, which we know has failed multiple times. We know the government is a government that is great at making loud overtures, but we also know the government is not very good at following through on action. We also know it is great at spending money and not delivering much.

*Government Orders*

It has become very clear over the last several minutes there is no way I could possibly support Bill C-31 in its two separate parts, which are the rental relief program, for which I quoted the people of Cumberland—Colchester, who feel it is not worth it and ask why we would bother, and the significant costs and even perhaps the lack of support from the Canadian Dental Association with respect to the dental portion.

I hope that sheds some light on the very important difficulties associated with Bill C-31 and the need to debate it further on behalf of all Canadians.

• (1250)

**Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am a big supporter of Bill C-31. We are talking about \$1,200 for dental care and \$500 for rent subsidies. The member opposite, on one hand, is saying that the government is spending way too much. I think he said it was \$900 million on the \$500 subsidy. At the same time, he is saying that \$500 is not enough.

Does the member opposite not think anyone in his community could use \$500 to help with rent or groceries? Does he not believe any child in his community would be helped by having the \$1,200 subsidy?

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Madam Speaker, the important thing here is that the government needs to begin to understand the significant effects of inflation and increasing interest rates on Canadians and the difficulties that everyday Canadians, not just in Cumberland—Colchester but across this vast nation, are struggling with when trying to feed their families. We know for a family of four it is costing them \$1,200 more to feed their family. We realize that.

What I would suggest is that the government needs to do something better. It needs to change its fiscal policies, because we know that is what is putting the gasoline on the inflationary fire. It continues to do it only to, sadly, support its coalition with the NDP, which continues to prop the government up.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I enjoyed my colleague's speech. I quite agree with many of the points he made, including the fact that we should focus on improving existing programs rather than creating more. We just so happen to agree on that.

In his speech, he said that, rather than creating new problems, we should look to provincial health transfers as the solution. Did I understand my colleague correctly? Does he agree that the government should increase health care transfers to the provinces with no strings attached, as the provinces and Quebec have been calling for?

Ever since his party got a new leader, that has been very unclear. I would be really pleased to hear him say that.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for that important question.

[*English*]

I know very clearly that the Canada health transfers have been a difficulty for all provinces. We see the burgeoning costs of health care, and we know that this is a significant issue. Part of the argu-

ment I would make is to ask this. Why are we spending money on more and new programs that are exceedingly expensive, as I said, on the order of \$10 billion, when we are continuing to underfund the Canada health transfers at the current time?

It is that old question of robbing Peter to pay Paul. Why are we doing this? Why are we taking money that we do not have and trying to pull it out of this pocket and do a little hocus-pocus to say that we have found some more money?

We are continuing to print money. We know it is adding, as I said previously, fuel to the inflationary fire. We know Canadians find it very important to have a robust and accessible health system, which at the current time they do not have. That is the travesty of the Liberal government.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for pointing out that this, in fact, is due to the NDP bringing it forward. That is kind of him. I did notice, however, that he spent a lot of his speech talking about things other than dental care. I wonder if that was because of his worries about going back to his constituents and explaining to them why he does not support dental care for children under 12.

My colleague talked about the \$10-billion price tag. I wonder how he feels about what we just heard: the fact that there are tax evaders in this country who are evading 30 billion dollars' worth of tax. If we actually took care of that, we could take care of the teeth of children in this country. I wonder if he could comment on that, please.

• (1255)

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Madam Speaker, I think the important thing we need to understand here, of course, is that the government has so many flaws that it is really beyond fixing. We know that it is not catching tax cheats. We see that. It is not doing those things. It is not funding mental health care. It is not funding health care. However, it wants to fund another program. That seems to be nonsensical.

I will reiterate this to my colleague. I know I said this previously, but I think it bears repeating. This is not a question of the importance of oral health. That is not what this is about. It is a question of responsible government, fiscal responsibility, partnerships with the provinces, insane federal oversight and a failed federal administration. That is what this is about.

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Madam Speaker, the member for Cumberland—Colchester spoke about the \$500 rental benefit in Bill C-31 being insufficient on its own. On that we agree.

I would appreciate hearing his perspective on the root cause behind the housing crisis we are in, which is corporate investors treating homes across the country like commodities. The governing party says it needs more time to study the issue while experts across the country are recommending we move forward with sensible measures, like removing tax exemptions for real estate investment trusts. It is a path that then Conservative finance minister, the late Jim Flaherty, started down 13 years ago or more.

*Government Orders*

Can the member comment on a measure like this? I put it forward as Motion No. 71. It would move us toward a housing market that treats homes as places people live, rather than stocks institutional investors trade.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Madam Speaker, part of the difficulty that Canadians are facing is inflation. We know that interest rates are rising. Some other economic experts think there may even be a recession looming on the horizon. That is absolutely terrifying from an economic perspective.

We understand that generations going forward will not be able to afford homes. That is a travesty. That is not the vision that we have for Canada. We understand that the current generation of adult children are living in their parents' basements because they are unable to afford a decent house. That is a travesty. On the weekend, I met with a great friend of mine of many years. Two of his adult children are living in his basement because they are unable to afford a house. Is that a problem? That is a giant problem that I lay directly at the feet of the Liberal government because, clearly, there is no thought about monetary policy on that side of the House.

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Madam Speaker, one of the things that is being lost in this whole discussion about this dental program and Bill C-31 is the fact that in Ontario, for example, under Ontario's healthy smiles program, the government funds a dental program that provides free preventative, routine and emergency dental services for children and youth 17 years old and under in low-income families. That includes checkups, cleanings, fillings for cavities, X-rays, scaling and tooth extraction, and the list goes on. In fact, in my area of Simcoe County, the Simcoe County and Muskoka District health unit has a bus that visits schools to provide oral health care.

Is this really an issue of oral health for Canadian children, or is it just pure political crassness and political vote buying to offer this payment when many of these programs exist within the provinces or are covered by insurance companies?

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Barrie—Innisfil for highlighting that wonderful program the Province of Ontario has. I would also like to pass on my condolences for the fallen officers in his riding.

We know very clearly that many provinces and territories have reasonably robust oral health programs at the current time. As I mentioned, I think it is important that we understand that what exists now could be built upon. It is mentioned in the comments by the Canadian Dental Association to look at programs that are underfunded or going in a direction that could be improved upon and to understand that we do not need to tear down those institutions that already exist. We need to make them better, and I do not believe for one second that there is anybody on that side of the House who could possibly run a program that would be effective, delivered quickly and useful for all Canadians.

I think what that member highlighted is very important.

• (1300)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Madam Speaker, how can I say this? Gag orders, or time allocation motions in Parlia-

ment, are the nuclear option. That is what majority governments use most of the time to muzzle Parliament and put an end to debate, the exchange of ideas and everything citizens voted for on election day. That is why they should be avoided as much as possible. Because they are supposed to protect the work of the opposition, the opposition parties usually do not support gag orders.

However, in this 44th Parliament, we have now reached 23 stages of bills that have been fast-tracked. Four government motions were adopted under a gag order and there were also 17 other time allocation motions. Why is that? It is because we are caught up in some sort of parliamentary racket involving the Liberals and the new undemocratic party of Canada. We are talking here about undermining the work of Parliament.

We expected it to start in March, when the Liberals and the NDP reached their agreement, but it started with the Emergencies Act, when the NDP members were more than willing to stand up in the House one fine Monday, when there was not a single trucker left in the streets, and vote alongside the government for one reason only: to protect their seats. They did not want to justify their decisions to their constituents. They voted in favour of what were clearly human rights violations then, and they have done so ever since on things like budget bills.

We hear them yelling. As we all know, rubbing salt in the wound can be painful.

Then, they went on to ram through a number of bills and motions, all of which rejected Quebec. The NDP members allowed a gag order to be imposed on Bill C-13 while the Bloc Québécois was asking, for example, that the Charter of the French Language apply to federally regulated businesses in Quebec. Not only did they vote against us, they allowed for a gag order to be imposed to fast-track Bill C-13. What is Bill C-13? It will allow Michael Rousseau, Air Canada, Via Rail and Canadian National to determine the language in which they work in Quebec. What language is that? It is English.

That is the NDP. It is a far cry from the days of Jack Layton, the days the NDP wants to forget, back when they pretended to have principles. We know they have none. Indeed, principles are not supposed to change over time. What a far cry from the days when the NDP stated, in its Sherbrooke declaration, "The national character of Quebec is based...on...a primarily Francophone society in which French is recognized as the language of work and the common public language". Those are the words of the NDP, and yet, as I said, we are a far cry from that.

Do we know why they are constantly voting alongside the government? It is to keep their seats and to provide stability that the Liberal Party does not deserve considering the policies it is bringing forward, like Bill C-31, which, to be perfectly honest, is badly done, poorly written and ill thought-out.

*Government Orders*

This shameful process, which the NDP supports, seeks to shut down the work of Parliament and muzzle parliamentarians. Without even getting into the content of Bill C-31, we can see that the process that led to it was already tainted by some next-level dishonesty.

How do they proceed? As we know, the Liberals were not able to deliver a universal dental program last summer. As we know, this is not part of their skill set. They do not run establishments. Then, the leader of the NDP got angry. He lost it. He went to the media and threatened to destabilize the government. The Prime Minister got scared. They had a quick meeting to hastily slap together a piece of legislation, believing they could take some half-measure that will not even help families in Quebec or Canada with dental care—I will come back to that—and, in so doing, justify their existence.

Obviously that is unacceptable for Quebec. It not only infringes on its constitutional jurisdiction, but on its jurisdiction in general. This is not a federal jurisdiction.

• (1305)

To force it down our throats, the Liberals said they would include a small housing measure, that they would give people a nice little \$500 cheque. They said that if we were to stand up for Quebec's interests and take the time to think before implementing such an ambitious program, they would go to our constituents and tell them that we voted against a bill that offered money for rent. Can my colleagues see how twisted the democratic process is getting? That is what is unacceptable.

Bill C-31 should have been split into two bills. We could have discussed housing separately and assessed that measure on its own merits. We could have discussed what they are calling “dental care”. They do not even understand their own bill. They think that there is something in it for teeth, but there is nothing. We could have discussed it separately if the bill had been split in two.

If the NDP were not afraid of what it is proposing, it would not be afraid to debate it here. It would not be afraid to use all the debate time provided for in the Standing Orders. It would not be afraid to hear from the other opposition parties, although we are no longer even sure if the NDP still counts as part of the opposition. Now we are in the House today, being silenced from talking about a bad bill.

I wondered if it was even worth sending the bill to committee for study, since the government was backing us into a corner by adding a housing assistance component. As we know, there is a housing crisis in Quebec. It is affecting Mirabel, and it is taking a toll on residents. I was in Saint-Janvier last weekend, and residents there told me how hard the housing situation has been for them.

Like other parliamentarians, I thought that a small amount of \$500 might help families in Mirabel. We are in a period of inflation, and a recession may be imminent, as the Liberal member mentioned in the previous question and comment period. However, neither the government nor the NDP has done its job. The Liberals and the New Democrats have not considered what the real impact of this bill would be on the ground. If they really wanted to help people, they would never have introduced a bill in this form.

This is what we did. We asked the Parliamentary Budget Officer to determine what Quebec's part would be in this bill. As for me, I listen to Quebec. I am familiar with Quebec's programs and public policies. I stay informed. I know that the other provinces also have their own public policies. I am aware of all that, as the Liberal government should be. However, this government seems to be living in some kind of constitutional bubble where Quebec and the provinces do not exist and Ottawa delivers its decrees from on high. The Liberals failed to realize that Quebec already has a rent subsidy program.

Quebec already provides a rent subsidy to families with an income of \$35,000 or less and to single people with an income of \$20,000 who spend more than 30% of their income on housing. We therefore wondered whether the bill provided for an exclusion for Quebec. It is a good thing we asked the Parliamentary Budget Officer about that because the Liberals could not care less about Quebec. They did not provide any numbers and did not even think to provide any because they have no interest in Quebec.

What did the Parliamentary Budget Officer have to say about that? He noted that some provincial and territorial programs provide social housing assistance that caps rent at 30% of household income. That means that 118,000 Canadians, 86,700 of whom live in Quebec, would not be eligible for the benefit.

Quebec has a solid social safety net. In Quebec, we do not subscribe to this niche leftist idea of individualism that promotes individual rights and stands up for people as separate individuals. We stick together. We have a social safety net that takes care of people. We thought about housing, unlike the government, which, with its national housing strategy, needs three, four or five years to negotiate. The strategy is taking so long to put in place that the government has to give people \$500 to tide them over.

Once again we can see that Quebec is paying the price for doing the right thing and properly managing its affairs. The government is proposing a housing aid program in name only. A bit over \$900 million will be paid out, with more than \$200 million coming from the taxes that Quebeckers pay to Ottawa. There are fully 86,700 Quebeckers who are recognized in the bill as being vulnerable. I am talking here about vulnerable families and children. As we all know, a \$35,000 annual salary for a couple with children is not much.

• (1310)

For a single person or a single mother, \$20,000 a year is not much. These people will not qualify for the same assistance as other Canadians because not one Liberal MP stood up to defend Quebeckers and not one NDP member stood up to defend Quebec. Is that what the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie meant on October 4 when he said that the government had listened to the NDP's good ideas?

Will the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie explain to his constituents who make less than \$35,000 that they are among the 86,700 people who will not qualify for any assistance whereas all Canadians will be entitled to some assistance? Will he do that? Is that what the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie meant when he said, in his speech of October 4, “This is a minority government, and we used our position of strength to get results for people”?

Did he go to tell his constituents in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie that, in the eyes of the Liberals, they are not people, they do not have a voice on this and they can take a hike, when Quebecers pay Ottawa more than \$200 million to help Ontarians and Albertans?

In Alberta and Ontario, it is easy to elect a right-wing government that does not do its job and does not maintain the social safety net, because they know that Ottawa will be trampling on their jurisdictions and do the work for them. However, in Quebec, we have our social safety net and we look after it. That is why Quebec must be able to opt out from these types of programs with financial compensation.

This is not an empty principle; it is for the good of the people. We are already managing the social safety net. We are doing more than others and we are prepared to take responsibility. We are prepared to bear the costs. However, when the federal government comes to do the same in the other provinces and Quebecers already have programs that work and, moreover, are permanent, the money must be paid to Quebec. No one has risen to defend Quebecers.

However, it gets worse: The member for Hochelaga is also the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing. As part of her work, she has to take small tours, attend small meetings, participate in small photo ops and talk about housing. Recently, in the House, she gave a speech on Bill C-31. She said, “In Hochelaga, 70% of the population consists of renters, with over 24% paying more than 30% of their income on rent.”

The member for Hochelaga could have stood up for Quebec, for Quebecers from her region, from all our regions. She could have done the work. The same is true of the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, who never stands up for his people.

Will the member go into her riding and talk to single individuals who make \$18,000 a year? Everyone else in Canada will get a housing benefit, but her constituents will not. There are people in her riding who need help and who are unable to get through the month with enough money to feed their children. Will she tell them that Quebecers paid over \$200 million to fund this program that will help those who voted for Doug Ford in Ontario? I hope she does. I hope she will be honest enough to do that. I am beginning to understand why the Liberals made their little deal to avoid an election. I can understand them not wanting to go to the polls and face voters.

Earlier, I asked the Minister of Health if he had told the people of Quebec City that he had forgotten them. He talked to me about co-operative housing and all kinds of things. He stopped just short of saying the private sector was doing his job. He was completely unable to look me in the eye and tell me, through the Chair, that he was going to tell the people of Quebec City that he had forgotten

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them, that he was not standing up for them, that he is in his bubble here in Ottawa and that his people are not important to him.

We have not even talked about the dental care component yet. The NDP wants a centralized, Canada-centric, Ottawa-centric program, a single solution for everyone. The days when the NDP wanted to win votes in Quebec are gone. The NDP no longer cares about Quebec, not now that it has just one seat left in the province.

Back in Jack Layton's day, the NDP wrote that “unity is not necessarily uniformity”. That is in the 2005 Sherbrooke Declaration. Back then, the New Democrats had principles, they did their job, they stood up for their constituents and they at least appeared to stand up for Quebecers the way they were supposed to. In chapter 3 of the declaration, it says, “The national character of Québec is based...on...its own political, economic, cultural and social institutions, including government institutions and institutions in civil society”.

• (1315)

When the NDP wrote that, was it telling Quebecers that, the day it was shown the door for not doing its job as the opposition, it would come here to set up a kind of Canada child benefit enhancement that has nothing to do with teeth?

Basically, they are telling parents in Quebec and the rest of Canada that they are going to give them a set amount of money they could have gotten anyway, because the system already exists.

Just to satisfy our NDP friends, who are yelling—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay on a point of order.

[*English*]

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, I know the member is upset, but he keeps pointing at me personally and I find that it is threatening my space. Could you ask him to settle down a little?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon:** Madam Speaker, I want to manage my time and I have every right to point to the clock under the Standing Orders.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I want to ensure that everything goes well in the House, and I would like to remind the hon. member not to point at other members. I would ask him to please be careful.

The hon. member for Mirabel has four and a half minutes left for his speech.

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon:** Madam Speaker, if it was my words that were criticized, I could withdraw them, but it is a bit more difficult with my finger.

*Government Orders*

We are in a situation where a family has to go to the CRA, fill in paperwork and be audited. To qualify for this enhanced benefit, they will have to go to the dentist to seek services not covered by current programs and get through a bunch of red tape. Instead of helping their children do their homework, instead of spending time with their children, they will spend their time being audited to qualify for an amount that is not related to dental costs.

It is even worse, because we are waiting for some figures from the Parliamentary Budget Officer. We know that Quebec will have to pay for this. Quebec has a generous program that can be improved. This can be negotiated with the Quebec government. Quebec has a dental care program that covers children 10 years of age and under. It can be improved. The system already exists. The computer system already exists. Dentists know it, parents know it. For example, after paying for a child's filling, people are automatically reimbursed.

Because we get results, because we look after our own, because we have a system, because we stand together, because Quebecers are united, they will pay. Parents in Quebec will not have access to as many benefits as parents in the rest of Canada. That is what is going to happen. In Ottawa, Quebec is paying the price for its solidarity. In Ottawa, Quebec is paying the price for looking after its own people.

The intentions may have been good, but who will be paying? It is the children of Quebec, the renters of Quebec and the single people of Quebec who will pay. I am not making it up when I say that nearly 87,000 Quebecers will not qualify for the benefit. Between 80% and 90% of people do not qualify.

Let us return to the gag order, because it is of fundamental importance. These people from the NDP and the Liberal Party think they are so smart, so good, but they have tunnel vision. They have forgotten Quebec, they have forgotten Ontario, they have forgotten the New Brunswick dental care program. They have forgotten everyone except themselves.

They think they are so great that there is no need for debate. They think that because we have chosen not to get into bed with the government and have instead decided to support bills that are good for Quebec, to vote at second reading, to debate in committee, to examine bills clause by clause, and to do their job, the job they are elected and paid to do, we are not smart enough. They think we are not capable of reading a bill, improving it, looking after our constituents.

What are the NDP members doing? They are playing the government's game and supporting a gag order. Shame on those who go into politics, who get elected in opposition, in the party with the least number of seats in the House, and who claim they have the individual right to quash debate in this democratic chamber. Shame on them.

• (1320)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, what is clear, unfortunately, is that the Bloc, a separatist party that does not have any form of a national vision recognized, is

working with the Conservative Party of Canada and does not support this legislation.

That is the reason the motion is necessary. If the motion were not brought in, children in Canada, from coast to coast to coast, would not get the benefits of a truly national program that would prevent, in many ways, children from having to go to hospitals. How could members of the opposition, namely the Conservative and Bloc members, disregard the needs of children under the age of 12? Shame on them.

Why does the member not recognize that if not for the NDP, we would not be able to get this legislation through the House? Maybe he is being somewhat hypocritical in his assessment.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon:** Madam Speaker, what a shameful statement from a man who knows that we are going to support the bill at second reading. We believe in the parliamentary process. We believe in debate. We believe that the bill should be studied clause by clause.

What an shameful statement from a man who is cutting debate short, who is leaving almost 87,000 low-income Quebecers without a housing allowance, and who is excluding Quebec from children's dental care benefits because Quebec already has a generous support system. Shame on him.

[*English*]

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I share with the member the frustration over how the government seems to think this place is a complete afterthought and how debate is not needed. As we have seen over and over again, when the government brings things forward, we have concerns about them. We have said they are not going to work and are not going to do what it intends them to do. We have ideas for improvement, and the government has not been willing to listen to us.

Can my hon. colleague outline examples of other bills we have seen come to this place that the Liberals have rammed through, only to have disastrous results as we predicted?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon:** Madam Speaker, this may sound naive, but I believe in debate. I think we can have debates. I think a bill can be amended. I think people who are overlooked can be brought back into the fold. I think that in a federal system, contrary to what the member for Winnipeg North tells us, solidarity also means recognizing those who have already made an effort, rewarding them for it and welcoming their expertise.

He says that we have no vision. For me, Quebec is my nation. I feel no animosity toward Canada. Quebec has already done its job, is already one step ahead, so I think that instead of yelling at it and insulting it, Canada should take inspiration from it. Unfortunately, there is a glass bubble around Ottawa, and I think people like the member for Winnipeg North have spent a little too much time in it.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Madam Speaker, this is the first phase of our plan to provide dental insurance to all Canadians.

Why is the member not on board with the idea of providing universal dental insurance coverage to all Canadians, including Quebecers?

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon:** Madam Speaker, the member just proved that British Columbia is quite far from Quebec.

We know that Quebec instituted a dental insurance program back in the 1970s. We are leaders on this. Today, that program covers children 10 and under and people on social assistance. It can be improved. The program used to cover people 18 and under.

Do my colleagues know why we had to scale back this program? It is because of the budget cuts to health transfers, including by the Liberals in the 1990s.

Before hurling blame and telling us we are against dental insurance, my colleagues should sit down, do their homework and look at history. Perhaps then they would be less inclined to support a government that is responsible for undermining the very program they claim to want to bring in.

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, since the member for Mirabel seems to be in fine form today, I would like him to share his thoughts on independence. The topic was raised earlier by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. The door is open.

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon:** Madam Speaker, in an independent Quebec, we would have Quebec MPs looking after Quebec. We would not have a member for Kingston and a member for Winnipeg North speaking for the other 160 members. Maybe then we would have a Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing who stands up for Quebecers, because, at present, there is no one doing that. Maybe then we would have a Parliament full of people defending Quebec's interests. That is what we would have.

It is not about being better or worse. We know that we have the economic capacity to do it. We know that we can do it. It is about solidarity. The tone of debates, the attacks by the member for Winnipeg North alone say a lot. It speaks volumes that members from British Columbia barely know where Quebec is on the map and know so little about our programs that they want to create new programs that duplicate ours, without doing their homework. It shows us that not only do we need to gain independence, but that it is urgent because they do not care about us. We are not important to them.

The NDP does not care about people making less than \$35,000 who need help with housing in Mirabel.

• (1325)

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am very disappointed to hear my colleague from Mirabel say that no one is standing up for Quebecers' interests in the House. In my riding and in Quebec, we have received subsidies for social housing that exceed the proportion we represent in Canada. I am very happy with the projects that have been completed in my riding and in other ridings.

The member for Mirabel surely knows of one or two social housing projects that have been completed in Quebec, given that there are some.

### *Government Orders*

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon:** Madam Speaker, did the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle take action at the time? She was here in Parliament, yet it took four years to negotiate the national housing strategy because Ottawa implemented it and then realized that Quebec City already had such a program with certain criteria.

Is the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle aware that, through the green municipal fund administered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, we receive about 10% of the funds when we should be receiving 20%? Has she talked to her mayors about that? Will the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle go see the people in her riding who are among the 87,000 or so people who will not be entitled to assistance? Meanwhile, we are paying for Ontario and Alberta because their provincial governments are not doing their job. Did she do her job? If she did, I congratulate her, but I doubt it.

[*English*]

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** Madam Speaker, once again I want to mention to the hon. member that similar to Quebec, Alberta has a dental care program for children across the province. Again, as we have been pointing out, this is true across the country.

One thing I would note, as I disagree with the member's assessment of the way things are, is that Alberta pays an exorbitant amount into the equalization program. Quebec is generally a net receiver of that program, and I wonder if the member would recognize the fact that Alberta is often paying the bills for Quebec.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon:** Madam Speaker, I am talking about the provincial governments that are doing their job and those that are not. That is what federalism is all about. The provinces are given powers and told to handle housing and all the social programs. That means different provinces can make different choices.

Obviously, Quebec has made certain choices, and now it is being penalized for its success in this area. My colleague talked about equalization, and this is kind of the same thing. Alberta's performance on the environment and economic diversification is poor, and it is paying for it. That is the nature of federalism.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, that was an interesting question, and the member did not necessarily answer it. There are provinces, like the province of Manitoba, that have been big beneficiaries through equalization. I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts on the importance of equalization payments. I know they are really important to the province of Manitoba.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon:** Madam Speaker, let us look at the books for the pre-pandemic year for all levels of government and compare them to the health of Quebec's economy, which is highly diversified.

*Government Orders*

In 2019, if Quebec had been its own country, which does not eliminate duplication, its deficit would have been around 1.5% of its GDP. That is better than the United States, France and this government, which is not even capable of managing public spending.

If equalization bothers the Liberals that much, maybe they should just kick us out.

• (1330)

[English]

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is a great honour, as always, to rise in the House and speak for the people of Timmins—James Bay. It is very powerful that we are having this discussion today on trying to move forward with dental care legislation and protection for Canadians who are low-income renters, in the midst of constant obstruction from both the Conservatives and the Bloc.

I will be sharing my time today with the member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Today, as we are discussing dental care, let us put it in context for people back home. We will be voting this afternoon on the New Democrat motion to take on “greedflation”, to actually shine a spotlight onto the massive level of profits that are being made as ordinary working-class Canadians and senior citizens cannot pay their grocery bills.

This morning, Galen Weston suddenly had his moment on the road to Damascus and announced that although he was not completely willing to stop the price gouging, he was going to put a price freeze on all of his No Frills products. Nice, Galen. It is nice to know that when the New Democrats start putting pressure on, the big grocery giants are starting to jump.

We are not done with it. We see that inflation has been hitting in two key areas. One is obviously at the grocery stores, and the other is at the pump. Those are the two sectors that have had unprecedented levels of profits over the last year. It is inexcusable for giants like Galen Weston and big oil to claim that they are just responding to the crisis that has been caused by the Ukrainian war and inflation, when what we are actually seeing is “greedflation”. Whenever the price at the pump has been dropping, we have been seeing that inflationary pressures have dropped.

Internationally, we see efforts in the EU, California and the United Nations, pushing for a windfall tax, to say that this upper level of profit, this unprecedented level of profit, is coming out of the pocketbooks of people who cannot afford to pay it and should be paid back. That is something that is happening at the international level. We have not seen the government go anywhere near that, but it would be interesting today to see whether the Conservatives and the Liberals will stand with us and actually take on “greedflation”.

I mention that because it is really important to frame how the New Democrats have come into this Parliament and how we have been proceeding.

When the Prime Minister called that completely unnecessary election last summer, in the summer of 2021, we went door to door and we listened to people, and we met family after family whose

concerns were that their children could not get dental care. We met seniors who could not afford to get proper work done on their teeth.

We made a promise that if the Canadian people set up the cards in Parliament such that we had a minority Parliament, we would come back in and fight for a national dental care program. We ran on that, and we are delivering on that. We are very focused on that. I think it is very telling, because what obviously has my Conservative friends' backs up about this is that we are actually delivering.

We said that we were going to push for a doubling of the GST tax credit, because we need to get some money back into the pockets of citizens. We saw the Conservatives light their hair on fire, and then they flip-flopped, because how would they go home to their constituents and not say that they believed they should be entitled to having money come back?

What they have been doing is that they have a very different strategy from us. We are very focused on what we are doing. We announce what we are doing. We work on it. It is like siege warfare, I have to say, with the Liberals, dragging them kicking and screaming sometimes to do the right thing, but one can do that in a minority Parliament if one is focused.

We said we would get the dental care provisions in place, that we would double the GST tax credit and that we would get support for low-income renters, because they are unable to pay the bills at this increasing time of insecurity.

The Conservatives, for their part, God love them, love to jump down rabbit holes of conspiracy, to get people arguing about things that are completely inconsequential.

Obviously, we could not have this conversation without the new shadow critic for infrastructure. At a time when the issue of infrastructure and housing is the number one issue in the land, she is demanding an investigation into Pfizer, because she saw some crazy right-wing politician on YouTube making allegations. That is what the Conservative leader's new infrastructure critic is saying.

• (1335)

I remember when she was going on about the so-called Nuremberg Code and it took the very wise member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, whom I have a lot of respect for, to have to publicly say, “Being offered a vaccine that prevents serious illness and our governments' responses to COVID-19 are not the same as being tortured in a Nazi concentration camp.” He had to say that against a member of his own party.

I mention that because the politics of disinformation are about getting people upset so that they are not focused on what matters, and what matters right now are concrete solutions to addressing the growing financial gaps and insecurities.



*Government Orders*

If we want to talk disinformation, the front face of the Conservative movement in Canada right now is Danielle Smith. I mean, oh my God, where to begin? We find out now that she has been promoting pro-Russian, pro-Putin separatist propaganda. This is not acceptable when we see the horrific death rates, torture, killing and rape that are happening in Ukraine. However, she says that those who do not want to wear a mask are the most discriminated against people in the history of Canada. We need to see all leaders in this country standing up against Putin, because the economic devastation that is happening around the world is impacting us here. It is also from a basic human rights point of view that we need to stay focused.

Again, I mention this because this is the politics of disinformation that the Conservatives are opting for to cover the fact that they are not delivering real results for people. When we came in and said we were going to double the GST tax credit, the Conservative leader said that if we gave money to working-class people or senior citizens to help pay their bills, the money would be somehow “vaporized”. That was the term he used.

“Vaporized” is a magical Conservative economic term, kind of like cryptocurrency, and if we are talking about what got vaporized, how about the \$1 trillion in crypto savings that disappeared after the Conservative Party leader told people to invest their savings in cryptocurrency? That is vaporization. What New Democrats are doing is delivering.

Today, we are hearing a million reasons Conservatives are telling ordinary Canadians they should not have dental care, and that it is not necessary. However, the bill before us today will affect 500,000 children who do not have access to dental care, and that is an enormous number of children who deserve it. We see that 50% of low-income Canadians have no dental care services, and only one-third of Quebecers have private dental care insurance.

For anyone who has a child who needs their teeth fixed, it is an incredible pressure, and I know from talking to families about how they try to find ways to get dental care. However, this year, Bill C-31 will give two payments to low-income families with children under 12. This is not the full solution, but it is the interim step that is necessary in order to get this program in place. This was in our supply agreement with the Liberals.

Now, it must be said that just because we have a supply agreement with the Liberals does not mean that we get along with the Liberals. This is about pushing these guys, because I have to say that pushing Liberals to actually do something is like wrestling with the Teletubbies. Just trying to even get something to grip on with a Liberal is difficult at the best of times, but in this minority Parliament, we found where it was needed and we knew it was on dental care. This year, we pushed them. We actually pushed these Teletubbies and we are going to get that money to low-income families, but that is only the beginning. We need this national program because senior citizens have a right to it and ordinary working-class people have a right to it. We need to move on this.

Therefore, while my colleagues on the other side are going to jump down the rabbit holes of conspiracy and YouTube nut jobbery, we will stay focused on getting kids their dental care, on getting

money to the working class and seniors, and on taking on the grocery giants and greedflation.

I will be here all week and I am ready to take questions.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by the member.

I never thought of myself as a Teletubby, but I can tell the member that I am thinking in terms of the process of getting the bill through the House, given the opposition to seeing this legislation ultimately pass in a timely fashion. There might even be some members who do not ever want to see this legislation pass, so I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts as to why it is important that we move this motion in order to be able to get the legislation through the House. If we do not and if we were not prepared to move the motion, I do not believe it would pass.

● (1340)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, that is a very important point. We are here in Parliament, sent by the Canadian people, and they sent us a very clear message in the 2021 election. They did not like that unnecessary election; they basically sent the same configuration and said to do some work, and doing some work means that at a certain point we put the interests of Canadian people above our own partisan interests.

That means we do not have to get along, but we have to say there are objectives that have to be met, and the objective that has to be met is that we have to get this dental care through. If we do not get this thing through, if we allow the Conservatives and the Bloc to obstruct it, that would mean children would not get this service, and it would mean that next year seniors and families would not get this service. We have to put our own partisan interests to the back once in a while and say that as a Parliament we can come together, so yes, we are going to work on this; we are going to get this thing through and we are going to get proper dental care for all those who deserve it.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am just wondering, as the member said that he put aside his partisanship. I would argue that perhaps he is trying to look for relevance at this time. At the top of his speech he was talking about how this is an NDP initiative. This is definitely a government bill, so I am wondering, as the NDP seeks relevance in this place, what its next initiative will be.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for obviously looking to New Democrats now for the direction of where this House is going to lead. That is about showing up, because, God help the poor Liberals, they just do not seem to have direction. Yes, we pushed them on the GST credits. We are hoping they are going to be willing to stand up to the grocery giants, as I would like to see my colleague do as well.

*Government Orders*

As for what is coming next, stay tuned, because there is a whole bunch of elements we need to work on in terms of housing. We have to get actual housing built. That would be a good booster for the economy. We need to get investments, particularly in western Canada, in the energy transformation. We hear a lot of hot air, but we need to see investments, so we can actually start to build a new clean energy economy.

Any time my colleague wants to know what is coming up next in the House, he can come over and I will explain to him how we are going to push these Teletubbies, bring them into the promised land and make them a relevant government.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Madam Speaker, we are not against dental insurance. Quebec already provides dental coverage for children.

I wonder if the member has thought about this, or does he know if anyone else has thought about how this measure will fit in with the program that already exists in Quebec. How does this not penalize Quebec? Why not simply transfer the money to Quebec?

[*English*]

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, we have certainly thought about this issue, and we have been working across the board to make sure children everywhere are entitled to this. We know that only one-third of Quebecers actually have private dental coverage. They are left woefully behind in this area. If we actually have a program that works, we will make sure every child in this country, followed by every senior and by families who have a right to it, are able to obtain it, whether it is in Abitibi or in Crowsnest Pass.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I want to remind members who are having side conversations to maybe take them outside. At one point there were at least five conversations going on at one time at one end of the House, so I just want to remind members, if they want to have those conversations, to please step out into the lobby.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to take a moment today to wish all of my colleagues in the House of Commons a happy Thanksgiving. We have not been in this place since then, and I want to reach out to everyone and extend that greeting.

I want to note that I am certain that many of us, when we were in our constituencies last week, heard from our constituents that the price of food, the price of fuel and the cost of living in Canada is becoming untenable. It is becoming something that Canadians cannot handle. It is incumbent on all of us in this place to stand up and find ways to work together with other parties and other members to make life more affordable for Canadians. I am absolutely convinced that one of the ways we can do that is with dental care.

Our job here is to support those people who do not have the same things we have. It is to support people in Canada and around the world in meeting their human rights and needs. Therefore, it would be remiss of me, as an Albertan and an Alberta MP, to not take a moment here to deeply condemn the comments made by our very new Premier of Alberta.

I want to tell the House about people: people living in poverty; people who are houseless; people with disabilities; people living without drinking water; indigenous people in this country, particularly women and girls; the families and children who went to residential schools, and those children who lost their lives; BIPOC folks; LGBTQ2S+ and SOGI folks; members of the Jewish community; members of the Muslim community; and women in Iran, Afghanistan and Ukraine. These are the people the Conservative Premier of Alberta said were not as discriminated against as the unvaccinated in our province.

I want to add to that and say that we need to look at these lists of people who have suffered unbearably and not discount all of that to say that the people who have suffered the most are the people who chose not to take a free, safe, miraculous and scientifically proven vaccine. I spent much of last year in this place talking about how we needed to get vaccines to other places in the world that did not have access to them, but our premier, the Conservative Premier of Alberta, has discounted every other group that has suffered harm and suffered devastatingly during this pandemic. I would be remiss if I did not raise that in this place.

Today, we are talking about dental care, and this is another opportunity for me to point out that the Conservatives do not seem to have a clue at all. We are talking about dental care for children under 12 years of age. The Leader of the Opposition has had dental care for himself and his children for almost 20 years, and all members of the Conservative Party have a gold-plated dental package that allows them to take care of their teeth, their children's teeth and their spouse's teeth, yet they do not want that for every other person in Canada. My children will never not be able to get their teeth fixed because they have access to a dental program that allows them to get their teeth fixed. The idea that the Conservatives would not want that for every child in this country, the idea that the things they have and their children have are not things they would want children across this country to have, baffles me. I do not understand.

● (1345)

I walk around in my constituency, and I hope we all do as it is very important. Edmonton Strathcona is of course the most beautiful constituency in the country, but I hope we all walk around in our constituencies. I am hearing from folks across the board who are delighted with dental care. They are delighted this is finally happening. It was recommended in 1968, but it is finally happening because of the NDP.

Do the Conservatives not walk around in their ridings? Do they not talk to their constituents? Do they not understand what is there?

One of the other things I wanted to point out is that we are hearing in this place that this is not needed because there is a program already that helps low-income Canadians. In Alberta, one needs to make around \$27,000 to be able to access some services. Basically, one needs to be living that close to the poverty line to be able to access just a few of those services.

If one does not believe children should have access to dental care and does not think it is important for the Canadian government to support that, is there an economic argument we can make? Can we explain to the Conservatives how much it costs when a child ends up in the emergency room because they cannot afford preventive dental care and how much more it costs later on when we do not do the basic dental care at the outset?

When Conservatives say not to worry because people have dental care, pharmacare and all of these things, it is not true. It is not true for the vast majority of Canadians, and they know that.

One other thing I wanted to bring up in my speech today is that I am so incredibly proud to be part of the New Democratic Party that has brought dental care forward to the House of Commons. My colleague before me from Timmins—James Bay mentioned just how incredible it is to be able to say we were able to push the Liberals, and I think he called them Teletubbies, and get them to do this work, and to hold our horses because there is more we can do. That is kind of what I want to talk about.

Dental care is great, but what else do we need? We need pharmacare. We need eye care. We need mental health supports in this country. As people struggle with COVID, the cost of living and all of these things, there is the desperate need—

• (1350)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Order, please.

I want to ask members who are having conversations to please take them outside. I know members are starting to come in and are getting ready for question period, but it is very disrespectful to be having conversations and speaking loud enough for me to hear what the conversation is while another member has the floor.

The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona can continue.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Madam Speaker, we need to have things like pharmacare, eye care, mental health support, supports for people living with disabilities and supports for indigenous people, who have not even basic rights being given to them. We need to have support for people around the world. We have a food crisis. Putin is once again threatening famine to millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. We need to be supporting women getting an education in Afghanistan and other places around the world.

I know what the Conservatives will say. They will say that we cannot afford it and pay for it. There are a few things I want to say to them. First of all, we do have some solutions. The first solution is something I hope they will support today, which is the motion we brought forward where we would make sure grocery stores are not

able to gouge consumers and that grocery stores are not able to make massive profits while the cost of food goes up in Canada.

### *Government Orders*

We have suggested a profiteering tax. This is a great idea, and in fact, something the Conservatives in the United Kingdom have done. We could do that. We could have wealth taxes. There is \$30 billion of unclaimed taxes we need to go after. It is always going to be a shock to me, but I am standing up here on the same side as the CEO of Shell begging the government to tax corporations at a higher rate so that the burden of paying for social programs, which are so vital, falls equally and does not fall on everyday Canadians and small businesses in our communities, and so that the corporations and the ultrawealthy are paying their fair share. To me, this does not seem like it is brain surgery. This seems very doable and easy.

When we talk about how we are going to pay for it, we have a world of options. Maybe, as my friend from Timmins—James Bay mentioned, if one wants to hold tight, I would be happy to bring those ideas forward. The NDP is happy to push the government to make those things happen. We are going to be doing it today. I am extremely proud of that motion. I look forward to answering questions.

• (1355)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, we have heard many members of the opposition speak on the legislation and they often say province X has this or province Y has that. By bringing forward this legislation, we would ensure that every child under the age of 12 in Canada, in every region of our country, has some dental benefits. It seems to me that point has been lost on the opposition.

The member referred to the uniqueness of Alberta, but the provinces all are different. I am wondering if she could provide her thoughts on how important it is that children under the age of 12 from coast to coast to coast are provided this badly needed service.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Madam Speaker, I apologize to my colleague for calling the member a Teletubby. I know it was meant in good fun.

In terms of the situation in Alberta, absolutely we need to make sure that all children in Alberta have access to dental care, but I think he is getting at the idea that, as a parliamentarian who loves Edmonton Strathcona, I want to make sure children in Nova Scotia, children in B.C. and children in Yukon, all of them, have access to the same dental care program, that they can all access dental care and that there are no gaps or holes that families and young children could fall through.

*Statements by Members*

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the framing of this debate by the member is to say that, if we want people to have access to a particular thing or service, it necessarily follows that the government should provide that, and that if people oppose the idea of federally mandating and controlling dental care, somehow they oppose children having dental care, which is ridiculous. I do not support, for instance, the government buying food for everyone. That does not mean I do not think food is important and indeed essential. I just do not think that the government providing it is the best solution to the problem in the vast majority of cases.

Does the member acknowledge that, with the significant failures in terms of delivery and provision in core federal services, such as health care, passports and other areas, the government should recognize that maybe there are other institutions that could deliver these services more effectively and that more federal intrusion is not a solution? In fact, in many cases, it is the very cause of the problem.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Madam Speaker, that is interesting to me because I think what the member is basically saying is that we should leave this to the private sector, which brings me back to where I started with my comments on the Premier of Alberta.

I will say that, as a New Democrat, I strongly support universally accessible, publicly delivered health care that includes dental care, that includes pharmacare and that includes care for those who cannot afford to pay for it. I do not understand why the Conservatives think that by wishing it will happen, as if some sort of fairy is going to provide dental care to children. That is not going to happen. We tried that and it does not work. Now it is time to try the NDP way and get kids' teeth fixed.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, in her speech, the member stressed the importance of working together, of collaboration. My question is the following: Is she open to discussing how the program can be adapted for Quebec, which already has its own program? This could take the form of increased health transfers, for example.

If we are supposed to work together and debate bills, does she think it is okay that we have to vote under a gag order, rather than work constructively on improving a bill?

[*English*]

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Madam Speaker, it is important that we have these conversations and this debate, but frankly that is not what has been happening. The obstruction, deflection and inability to do any work in this place because of the some of the members of the opposition mean that it is very important that we move on this. It is very important that we get the support out to people as fast as we possibly can.

I am very supportive of this bill. I am very supportive of working with people from all parties to make this bill stronger, and I look forward to conversations with the member.

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

[*English*]

**RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS**

**Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate the political career and achievements of Hamilton city councillor, Sam Merulla. Following in the hard-working footsteps of his mother Rosalia and his late father Giuseppe Merulla, Sam has dedicated his entire life to serving the public. After 22 years of service, he has decided to retire from elected office.

Like a brother to me, he was always quick to offer good guidance, counsel and support when I needed it most. He worked on enhanced public transit, affordable housing, services for seniors and the disabled, and infrastructure renewal, and the list goes on. Councillor Merulla was a leader on all issues. It is largely because of his hard work and determination that we see what many consider a renaissance in our great city of Hamilton.

I know that Sam is anxious to spend more family time with his wife Corrine, his two daughters Sabrina and Alexa, and their families, and the newest addition to the Merulla family, baby Remi.

Please join me in congratulating Councillor Merulla for his more than two decades of service to the residents of Ward 4 and the entire city of Hamilton.

\* \* \*

● (1400)

**HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Vladimir Kara-Murza was arrested in April by Vladimir Putin's thugs on a trumped-up charge of spreading false information about the Russian military. His supposed crime: condemning Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine while speaking on U.S. soil. Just last week, the Kremlin kleptocrats and their kangaroo court have upped the ante by charging Mr. Kara-Murza with treason, which carries a 20-year sentence. This is a despicable show trial by Putin and his cronies.

Clearly, the corrupt Russian court system is helping Putin punish his political opponents and muzzle anyone who dares to speak the truth about his barbaric invasion and genocide he is committing in Ukraine. These are the kinds of gross human rights violations the Magnitsky act was designed to address. If Russia refuses to bow to pressure and release Vladimir Kara-Murza, the full force of sanctions must rain down on all responsible for this abuse of authority.

Vladimir Kara-Murza is a political prisoner, a prisoner of conscience and a human rights defender. Canada must speak up on the international stage and forcefully call for his immediate release.

### WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

**Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, October marks the 30th annual Women's History Month in Canada. This year's theme is "*Elle m'a ouvert la voie*" or "She did, so now I can."

I want to take this opportunity to praise the amazing women-led and women-serving organizations in our communities.

In Halifax West, I want to give a shout-out to the Centre for Women in Business at Mount Saint Vincent University, which is celebrating 30 years of helping women entrepreneurs this year.

The Sisterhood of Diman Foundation, a group of Canadian women with kinship to their ancestral village of Diman, a small village overlooking the Kadisha Valley in Lebanon, raised \$160,000 last month to support the education of youth from Diman.

[Translation]

As we commemorate Women's History Month, we are inspired to follow in their footsteps and reflect on what every individual can do to create a more equitable society.

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### RICHARD PERREAULT

**Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to one of my constituents, the former mayor of Blainville, Richard Perreault, for his tremendous contribution to our region's vitality.

Mr. Perreault has a remarkable record of public service. He served the people of Blainville for more than 16 years, first as a city councillor, then as mayor and reeve of the Thérèse-De Blainville RCM.

Mr. Perreault has made important contributions to the vitality of Blainville, which has more than once topped the list of the most livable towns and cities.

To recognize his immense contribution, the Town of Blainville has decided to name the VIP room at the Centre excellence Sports Rousseau after him. This is a well-deserved honour that celebrates who he is.

I want to congratulate Mr. Perreault on his many achievements and his unwavering commitment.

\* \* \*

### SARKIS BEREJIKIAN

**Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today, I want to pay tribute to a man who works in a dying trade: shoe repair.

Sarkis Berejikian owns the Cordonnerie Jean-Pierre II in old Sainte-Rose, Laval. He is a typical 1970s shoemaker. Mr. Berejikian was born in Syria in 1946. He later moved with his parents to Lebanon, his adopted country, where he trained as a shoemaker. He arrived in Canada in February 1988 and opened his shoe repair shop in 1991.

### Statements by Members

Mr. Berejikian is a kind and professional shoemaker who does great work for a reasonable price. At age 76, he is still just as passionate about his job. As we often say, we need to encourage our local business owners.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

[English]

### DEVON NORTHRUP AND MORGAN RUSSELL

**Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart, along with my colleagues from Barrie—Innisfil and Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, to honour Constable Devon Northrup and Constable Morgan Russell, members of the South Simcoe Police Service, who tragically fell in the line of duty last week.

These brave men gave everything they had to protect their communities and ultimately sacrificed their lives doing so. Their incredible courage and their commitment to duty and service will not be forgotten by the grateful residents of Bradford West Gwillimbury and Innisfil, and by all Canadians.

Though we cannot imagine the heartbreak and grief their families and colleagues are going through, I hope it gives some solace to know that Constables Northrup and Russell will always be remembered as heroes.

This senseless tragedy is a sobering reminder of the debt we owe those who wear the badge and the very real risks of their calling. I ask all members on behalf of Canadians to join me in showing gratitude for the sacrifice made by Constable Northrup and Constable Russell.

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### SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is Small Business Week, and I would like to highlight two small businesses in my riding that I visited last week.

Yoga-Tastic 4 Kids is a heart and mindfulness business owned by Sandra and Rich, providing various yoga and mindfulness programming that caters to children and adults in their beautiful Burlington studio.

Crepresso is owned by Mohe and Farah, who moved to Canada as Syrian refugees in 2015. In September, they opened their family owned and operated business in north Oakville, welcoming all sweet toothed and those who love crepes and coffee.

I would also like to acknowledge the support provided by the Burlington and Oakville Chambers of Commerce to small businesses, and in particular my friend France Fournier, whose leadership and inclusion efforts have not gone unnoticed since her appointment as president and CEO of the Oakville Chamber of Commerce in January of this year.

I thank the small businesses and those who support them, this week and every week.

*Statements by Members***SMALL BUSINESS WEEK**

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is indeed Small Business Week and it is a great time to salute those small and medium-sized enterprises that truly are the foundation of Canada's economy.

It is just as great a time to recognize the people who work so hard to support those business, including people like Dean Barbour of our Fleetwood Business Improvement Association or Baljit Dhaliwal and Anita Huberman of the Surrey Board of Trade. Their tireless work has been backstopped by our government's pandemic supports, the Canada child benefit and so many other programs.

Our government's focus on supporting people who really need some help works, because that money is spent close to home at our local businesses. That is why, unlike the previous Conservative government, we do not send cheques to millionaires and that is why we have more small businesses open for business in Fleetwood—Port Kells today than before the pandemic.

All in all, we are a great team making a big difference for families, small and medium-sized businesses and a strong community.

\* \* \*

**FARM FAMILIES**

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the new Conservative leader will put the people first: their paycheques, their savings, their house and their country.

He will put farm families first, which have been busy harvesting in the fields. Rain or shine, hail or snow, these folks measure their time in acres and not hours. Farming is not a job; it is a way of life, it is a heritage, it is a calling. From before the sun gets up until long after it sets, they ensure that when the rest of Canada when people head to the store, there is food on the shelves for them. It is simple: Farmers feed families.

For those farmers who are listening, I thank them. I thank them for giving up the meals at their table so that my family can have a meal at ours. I thank them for being a wonderful example of hard work, faith and dedication. I thank them for being stewards of the land, keeping it healthy now and for future generations.

When the Liberal government belittles them and thinks that it can tell them how to do their job with carbon taxes and fertilizer reductions, farmers know that on this side of the House they are and always will be heroes. We will never stop fighting for Canada's farm families.

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● (1410)

**ETHICS**

**Ms. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely outraged and furious. The anti-feminist hashtag used by the leader of the Conservative Party is a portal to some of the darkest, most hateful material on the Internet. Users of the hashtag support terrorizing women, banning homosexuality and legalizing rape.

It is not a common hashtag. It is the hashtag of a dark Internet subculture. Its use by the Leader of the Opposition was deliberate, strategic and dangerous. Now under scrutiny, he pretends to have no recollection of the hashtag's use and its consequences. Really? This is beyond locker room talk. This is violent misogyny.

I hope Canadians recognize that this is not leadership. This is reprehensible behaviour that is dangerous, is divisive and is not welcome in this country, let alone the House.

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**CARBON TAX**

**Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, inflation is at a 40-year high. Thanks to the Liberal government's plan, the cost of food, the cost of transportation and home heating is skyrocketing. Now we have learned that home heating prices will go 50% to 100% more this winter.

In my city of Saskatoon, we have seen a dramatic increase in the use of food banks, from 13,000 a month to over 20,000 people a month. Seniors in my constituency are already grappling with day-to-day expenses. The Liberal plan to triple the carbon tax in the new year will only make it more difficult for families and seniors to keep up with the cost of living.

Our new Conservative leader will put people first, will protect their paycheques, their savings, their homes and their country. We will continue to fight this dismal Liberal carbon tax.

\* \* \*

**SMALL BUSINESS WEEK**

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the new Conservative leader will put the people first: their paycheques, their savings, their homes and their country.

Small business owners are the unsung heroes of the Canadian economy. These entrepreneurs employ nearly two-thirds of workers across Canada, providing meaningful paycheques to millions of Canadians. However, right now, under the Liberals, small businesses are being punished with higher payroll taxes, leaving them with higher costs for every person that relies on that business for a paycheque. They are also being punished with a carbon tax. Small and medium-sized businesses have to pay the whole thing and have no choice but to pass those costs along to consumers. This has made it more expensive for Canadians to buy local homegrown products than goods that have been flown, trucked and shipped from other countries.

This Small Business Week, the Conservatives will keep working to turn hurt into hope for business owners. We stand with these risk takers and job creators. We will keep fighting the Liberal-NDP coalition planned tax increases and call for a cap on government spending.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### SITUATION IN HAITI

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, while governments are grappling with many challenges such as war and inflation, I want to make the House of Commons aware of yet another crisis facing the people of Haiti.

Haiti is in the midst of a multidimensional crisis, specifically a political crisis in which the lack of credible authority and democratic institutions has given rise to heavily armed gangs that have been raping women and terrorizing the Haitian people, even before former president Jovenel Moïse was assassinated; a humanitarian crisis fraught with even more misery and the resurgence of cholera; and an economic crisis spurred by oligarchs who continue to squander Haiti's resources. Corruption in Haiti is unprecedented.

The diaspora is very concerned about the situation. As an MP of Haitian origin, I urge all members of the House to show their support for the people of Haiti.

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[English]

#### INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

I want to remind all members of the House that poverty is a political choice. It is the choice of governments not to fund and support people. It is a choice not to ask corporations and the ultrarich to pay their fair share. It is a choice not to prioritize the crisis of poverty that is putting people on the streets, fuelling a mental health crisis and forcing people to use food banks to survive.

We must make different choices, including by implementing a guaranteed livable basic income that ensures everyone can live with dignity. Poverty is a violent human rights violation, and it is time to stop picking and choosing which human rights we uphold.

Nelson Mandela said, "overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity...While poverty persists, there is no true freedom." Let us remember his words and work to end poverty once and for all.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

[Translation]

#### INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the inflation we are currently experiencing is hard to deal with, but it is worse for those who were already in a precarious situation. As we

#### Statements by Members

mark the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, let us remember poor seniors, seniors who were already finding it difficult to pay for groceries before prices skyrocketed, seniors for whom every rent increase means they will have another basic need they cannot meet. Those people must receive support.

As we speak, there are three million seniors who have been abandoned by the federal government as prices increase. There are three million people who are not entitled to even the smallest increase in their pension because they are unfortunate enough to be between the ages of 65 and 74. On this International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, Ottawa should finally realize that this kind of age discrimination has the opposite effect: It does not eradicate poverty, it exacerbates it.

On this day, let us push for the government to finally address this profound lack of compassion.

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[English]

#### MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this weekend, residents of Vancouver and the Lower Mainland cast their ballots in municipal elections and the results are in. British Columbians rejected and repudiated left-wing politicians for the mess they have made of our cities, including kicking NDP mayor Kennedy Stewart and all his city councillors out of office in Vancouver. Voters sent a clear message that there is too much violence on our streets and the cost of living is too high. Vancouver, Surrey and White Rock residents elected new mayors who will get serious about violence in our communities and remove gatekeepers to build more homes.

Congratulations to B.C. voters. They are taking back control of their lives. In the next federal election, they can count on the Conservative leader and our team to put people first, restore safe streets, build more homes and make life more affordable in British Columbia.

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#### SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

**Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as part of Small Business Week, I want to welcome our Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce delegation: Rory Ring, CEO; his wife Michelle, who is also a small business owner; and Randy Schuran, secretary.

### Oral Questions

Let us take a moment to reflect on the obstacles small businesses had to face during the pandemic and how we were able to adapt together. We promised to do whatever it took to support them and we did. Now we are going to continue to work with and support small businesses by cutting taxes for growing businesses and by helping them move their services online and improve their e-commerce. We are investing in strengthening supply chains are making it easier and better to export. We are also increasing immigration levels to help fill the worker shortage.

I give a special shout-out to all Canadian small businesses. They are the lifeblood of our economy. They create jobs, grow our communities and make us a better country. Welcome to all Canadian delegates.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### TAXATION

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the cost of government is increasing the cost of living. The \$500-billion inflationary deficit is driving up the cost of the goods we purchase and the interest we pay. Inflationary taxes are increasing costs even more. The Royal Bank of Canada reported last week that inflation and higher interest rates will cost every Canadian family \$3,000 next year.

Will the costly coalition finally realize that Canadians cannot pay any more? Will it cancel its plan to raise taxes?

• (1420)

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that we are well aware that Canadians are dealing with a major increase in the cost of living. That is why we put measures in place to support Canadians, but the Conservatives decided to vote against them.

A few days ago, the Conservatives did a U-turn and finally decided to support our tax relief proposal to double the GST credit for 11 million Canadian families. Will they do it again and support Bill C-31, which we are studying today?

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[English]

### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the radical policies of the Prime Minister and the NDP mayor in Vancouver led that city to more violence, to be on track for a record number of overdose deaths and to be among the most overpriced housing markets on planet earth. However, voters in Vancouver have said “enough”. They have fired the NDP mayor, rejected the radical policies and instead voted to remove the gatekeepers, build more affordable homes and bring in common-sense laws to restore safe streets.

Will the government in Ottawa finally get the message?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the leader's interest in the mayoralty campaign in Vancouver, but here in Ottawa, I have a very specific question for the member across. We have an opportunity in Bill C-31, and I ask him whether the Conservatives are going to agree to provide dental care for Canadian children across the country. It is bad enough that they will not support it. Why will they not just let members of this House, the majority of whom support it, be there for Canadians and be there for children who need dental care?

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### CARBON PRICING

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is true that Vancouver already has its own provincial carbon tax, but now the costly coalition of the NDP and the Prime Minister wants to force B.C. to triple that tax. We already have gas prices nearing two dollars a litre in British Columbia. People voted in the Vancouver elections to reject these inflationary policies.

Why will the costly coalition not get the message from British Columbia that people cannot afford these taxes, and cancel its plan to triple the tax?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, just last Friday, thanks to the climate action incentive payments, a family of four received \$208 in Manitoba, \$275 in Saskatchewan, \$269 in Alberta and \$186 in the member opposite's province. This will happen four times a year.

We can fight climate change and support Canadians, and that is exactly what we are doing. The Conservatives have no plan to fight climate change and no plan to help Canadians.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have no plan to fight climate change. What they have is a tax plan, and the Parliamentary Budget Officer has concluded that the majority of people who receive these rebates, which is not even all Canadians, get less in rebates than they pay in taxes. For example, 40% of east coast Canadians are living in energy poverty. The Liberal Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador has said that the Liberal government in Ottawa should not triple the tax on home heating. Home heating prices are expected to double this winter.

Will the government get the message that heating a home in Canada is not a luxury and cancel the plan to triple the tax?



*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in fact, we are helping households transition away from dirty and expensive home heating oil to more affordable and greener heating sources. We are doing that, and have committed to doing that, with our partners in Atlantic Canada. We are working with every single province in Atlantic Canada to support programs that they have put in place, with \$250 million to help tens of thousands of Canadians have access to cheaper and greener energy.

We can fight climate change and help Canadians. On those two fronts, the Conservatives have nothing to say.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, here we go with the trickle-down government. It scoops up the money from hard-working people who are just trying to heat their homes, doubles home heating bills, brings the money to Ottawa and then expects us to believe the money is going to trickle all the way back down to the people who paid for it in the first place. Allow us to doubt that.

We already know that the vast majority of Canadians are paying far more in taxes than they are getting back in any rebates. Many provinces do not get any rebate at all, yet the government wants to target seniors for the crime of heating their homes.

Why does it not cancel this crazy plan to triple the tax?

• (1425)

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, trickle-down economics is a policy that gives advantages to the most wealthy, with the idea that those at the bottom will benefit. This party opposite is a party that voted against the Canada child benefit. This party opposite voted against raising taxes on those who have the most and giving to those who have less.

I have a question for the member right now. There is an opportunity. The member opposite has an opportunity—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order.

We can continue. I believe the hon. member was asking a question. He can start from there.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I simply want to know this. If they do not support trickle-down economics, why do they not support dental care for children? Why do they not support those who are struggling right now with rent? They could do that. It is bad enough that they are not supporting this. At least let the House pass it.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**CLIMATE CHANGE**

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, last week in Washington, the Deputy Prime Minister announced Canada's new foreign policy on energy to the world.

What is Canada's new policy? Well, it is the same as the old one: sell more oil and gas. Sorry, planet, the Deputy Prime Minister an-

nounced that Canada will fast-track energy projects to export more fossil fuel. Drill, baby, drill. This confirms what many already thought.

In essence, what Canada did in Washington was drive the final nail into the coffin of its fight against climate change. Is that accurate?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last week, the Deputy Prime Minister said exactly the same thing I said and that my colleagues have said over the past few months: We need good projects with legs. We have to make sure we look at environmental impacts; we also need to have discussions with indigenous groups.

Of course we want to have good projects that will move forward.

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources is answering my question, and that really says it all.

The policy that the Deputy Prime Minister announced in Washington reveals that Canada was basically just looking for a pretext to sell even more oil and gas. It found one. So much for fighting climate change. Canada is back to exploiting fossil fuels in a big way. The Liberals are going full steam ahead. The government is trying to use the war in Ukraine to sell more oil despite the climate crisis.

Who wrote the Deputy Prime Minister's speech? Was it the leader of the Conservative Party?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question and remind him that we have one of the most rigorous environmental assessment processes. It is a process, by the way, that the Conservatives opposed with Bill C-69.

We are also committed to supplying clean, renewable energy to European countries. That is why the German chancellor came to Canada to sign an agreement on hydrogen that will be produced with wind power. This is exactly what we are doing in Canada: supporting Canadians and Canadian businesses and fighting climate change.

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**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, to the best of my knowledge, oil is not a renewable resource.

While many people are struggling to pay for groceries, we have learned that Loblaw's plans to freeze prices on its "No Name" products. It is a nice gesture, but it comes after months of inflation, months of seeing our families struggle. The Liberals have allowed the CEOs of these large corporations to get rich off the backs of Canadians for far too long.

### Oral Questions

The NDP has brought forward some concrete solutions to support families and make these rich CEOs pay their fair share. Will the Liberals tackle this “greedflation” by voting in favour of the measures the NDP is proposing today?

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague that families in Canada are struggling right now. Our budget actually includes a plan to ensure that everyone pays their fair share. Our government is very committed to asking those who prospered most during the pandemic to pay a little more, and this includes banks and insurance companies. The biggest and most profitable companies will pay a bit more to help everyone else.

• (1430)

[English]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, while grocery CEOs are making millions of dollars in bonuses, Canadians have been making difficult choices about what groceries they can afford. Today, after pressure from the NDP, Loblaws showed that it is possible to freeze prices, but it needs to be forced to do it.

This afternoon the Conservatives and the Liberals have an opportunity to help people instead of the rich CEOs who are profiting off of struggling Canadians. Will the government admit that it has let corporate greed go unchecked by finally voting with the NDP to defend Canadian families?

**Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on making sure that we make life more affordable for Canadians. I would like to thank that member and all members in the House for supporting Bill C-30, which would see \$2.6 billion delivered to the 11 million households that need it the most. That includes more than 50% of seniors. We have a chance to do more with the recovery dividend. We have a chance to do more with the 1.5% tax on the excess profits of banks and other corporations. There is a lot more work we can do in this place, and we are going to do it.

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### CARBON PRICING

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as an immigrant to Canada whose family came here with little, and through the grace of God, hard work and opportunity, it is an absolute honour to stand here as a member of Parliament and the new finance critic for the Conservative Party.

However, this is not the reality for many newcomers and low-income families. Because of unjust inflation and rising taxes, it is impossible for families to make ends meet. When will the Liberal government have some mercy and get rid of the unjust tripling of the carbon tax?

**Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by congratulating the member opposite on his new role. I hope we can work together to make life more affordable for Canadians and to work on affordability, just as his predecessor

did when their party supported Bill C-30. I hope he can use the new-found power he has in his critic role to challenge his own party and ask why it is obstructing our measures to make sure that the kids who need it the most can get their teeth fixed. I would ask him to use his power responsibly.

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are about to get hit with an almost 100% increase in their home heating and electricity bills just this winter. The banning and cancelling of good energy projects in Canada by the Liberal government has led to Canadians paying more to heat their homes, fill up with gas and buy groceries.

Canadians are already suffering from Liberal-made inflation, rising rents and the carbon tax, which the Liberals plan on tripling. Will the Liberal government cancel its plan to triple the carbon tax, or does it want to leave Canadians in the dark and in the cold?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, 10 prime ministers ago, in 1970, a program was created to help Canadians face the impacts of natural catastrophes in this country. Since 1970, \$8.5 billion has been paid, but a third of that was paid in the last six years.

The cost of natural catastrophes is increasing in Canada. We just need to talk to people in Atlantic Canada. If the Conservatives do not care about finances, then maybe they will care about human suffering and loss of life due to climate change. They have nothing to say about that, but we do.

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government should be concerned about Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet. Canada has shot up rapidly on a global list for being the 25th most expensive country to live in out of 195.

Even though a year ago the governor of the Bank of Canada talked about deflation, he now admits Canada's 40-year-high inflation is increasingly self-inflicted by the government. Canadians cannot afford to eat, heat or drive under the NDP-Liberal costly coalition, so will it cancel its plans to triple its taxes on everything?

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, everybody in the House will have an opportunity very soon to vote in favour of Bill C-22 to make life way more affordable for persons with disabilities living in poverty. They could also make life more affordable by voting in favour of dental for kids with disabilities or rent for low-income persons with disabilities. There are a lot of important decisions to be made. I hope the other side will understand how we can make life more affordable for everyone.

*Oral Questions*

• (1435)

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is these Liberals who are making life more expensive for every single Canadian. They are so out of touch. Healthy groceries are up 15%. Home heating costs will double for most Canadians this winter, and they will triple, up to 300%, for some. Almost a million Canadians cannot heat their homes already. Gas bills have increased 50% since last year, and diesel spiked a record 13¢ this weekend, but these NDP and Liberals are going to make everything more expensive and hike taxes on all essential goods. Will they cancel their plans to triple their cruel carbon tax?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Conservatives have an opportunity to demonstrate that they care and want to help low-income Canadians. They have several opportunities in fact. They could support the bill for dental care for low-income children to get their teeth fixed. They could support the bill that would put \$500 into the pockets of low-income renters. They could support the bill that would provide a disability benefit for Canadians with disabilities.

There are lots of opportunities for Conservatives to demonstrate in the House how they care for Canadians. I just do not understand why they will not.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, since 2015, the Liberals have increased the debt more than all other governments combined. In 2021, before interest rates went up, they spent \$20.2 billion on debt servicing alone. Let us not forget that the Prime Minister and his Minister of Finance said that we could afford to run deficits because interest rates were low. We have seen what happened over the past year. Their excessive spending caused inflation, which has significantly increased the cost of living for Canadians.

When will the Prime Minister cancel his plan to triple the carbon tax, which is also increasing the cost of living?

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me set the record straight. First, Canada has the lowest deficit in the G7. We have been incredibly fiscally responsible. We are the envy of the other countries.

I also want to point out that the Conservatives seem to be attacking our plan to address the climate crisis. I find it rather odd that a member from Quebec is asking me that question when we know how important it is to Quebeckers that we act on climate change.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that in the past two years the Liberal government has increased the deficit by \$500 billion. In that regard, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that \$200 billion had nothing to do with COVID-19. That represents a shameless waste of public money and today, with the increase in interest rates, we must pay more to service that debt. On top of that, the Liberals want to inflict further pain on Canadians already struggling financially by refusing to cancel the tripling of the notorious carbon tax.

Will they cancel it?

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are attacking our plan to fight climate change, which will ensure that we can deal with the climate crisis. Even worse, the Conservatives are attacking our system to help workers, the employment security system for example. The Conservatives continue to attack our seniors as they are taking aim at our pension system. We must absolutely protect our pension system here in Canada and the Conservatives want no part of it.

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## NATURAL RESOURCES

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Environment and Climate Change approved Bay du Nord, he indicated it would be the last oil and gas project he would approve. Last week we learned that it may have only just begun. The Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board just issued a call for tenders for oil and gas exploration in a 100,000-square-kilometre area off the coast.

My question is simple. If Bay du Nord was the last oil and gas project that the minister would authorize, why is his government still undertaking oil exploration projects off the coast of Newfoundland?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question. First, I would like to remind her that the board is at arm's length from the federal government. Second, any new energy production project will be subject to our environmental assessment process, have a greenhouse gas emission cap, and be governed by the strictest regulations on methane emissions reduction, not in North America, not among G7 countries, but in the world. With a target to reduce methane emissions by 75% by 2030, we have the strictest regulations.

• (1440)

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government continues to encourage oil exploration right in the middle of a marine refuge in Newfoundland. When one goes looking for something, it is usually because one hopes to find it. Worse still, the government is allowing drilling companies to bypass environmental impact assessments.

In the midst of the climate crisis, the government continues to look for offshore oil and it even scrapped environmental assessments to speed things up. Basically, it wants to produce more in order to pollute more.

How can this government's environment minister, who used to be an environmentalist, still look himself in the mirror?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for caring so much about my image.

### Oral Questions

What matters to us is setting the record straight. I think my colleague is confusing me, the Minister of the Environment, with the leader of the Bloc Québécois, who allowed drilling on Anticosti Island without an environmental assessment and without any public consultation with the local population or indigenous peoples. That is not how we operate here.

\* \* \*

### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, that aligns perfectly with the new policy Canada unveiled in Washington last week. Canada announced that its new foreign policy and energy policy will put the pedal to the metal to sell more oil and gas to its allies. It has already started. That is exactly what it is doing right now in Newfoundland. It is expediting oil exploration by waiving the requirement for an environmental impact assessment.

Where is the fight against climate change in this energy policy?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that we are putting the pedal to the metal on renewable energy projects, clean tech projects like the one in Newfoundland to produce green hydrogen from offshore wind power. It will be one of the greenest projects on the planet. In fact, that is why the German chancellor spent a week in Canada. Canada is going to be a partner of choice for the green transition, not just in Canada, not just in North America, but around the world.

\* \* \*

[English]

### CARBON PRICING

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is spending like a drunken sailor. As a result, inflation is excessive and Canadians are finding it difficult to make ends meet. As a result of that, many Canadians are cutting back on the amount of healthy food they are purchasing and consuming.

Now the Prime Minister is planning to triple the carbon tax, which would again increase the cost of groceries, home heating and gasoline for people's vehicles. In other words, the cost of living would hike up once again.

Will the Prime Minister exercise some compassion and, for the sake of Canadians, stop his plan to triple the carbon tax?

**Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, that member and the entire Conservative Party continue to put forward policies that would actually put the future of Canadians at risk.

They do that by telling us to stop fighting climate change. They do that by telling us to raid the pensions of seniors. They do that by telling us that child care and dental care is not important.

It is about time we came together in the House to focus on what matters, which is making life more affordable and making sure we grow an economy that works for everybody.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I understand the Liberal talking points and so do Canadians. They have heard them again and again. They are rather disingenuous and incredibly repetitive.

The reality is, to the Canadian families that are struggling to make ends meet, those talking points do not make the difference. What makes the difference is when the government exercises responsibility and cuts back on taxation to make life increasingly affordable for Canadians.

I will ask this again on their behalf: Would the government exercise some compassion, and would the Prime Minister commit today to ending his plan to triple the carbon tax?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us be clear what the results are on each side of the House.

Our government brought in the Canada child benefit, and they voted against it. We brought in the middle class tax cut, and the Conservatives voted against it. We brought in the Canada-wide early learning child care initiative, which is already delivering a 50% fee reduction to families in that member's riding of Lethbridge and across her province of Alberta, and the Conservatives voted against it.

They have an opportunity to vote in favour of dental care for low-income children, rental support for low-income workers and supports for Canadians with disabilities. If they care about low-income Canadians, I hope we see their support.

\* \* \*

● (1445)

### TAXATION

**Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are struggling because of the inflation caused by the Prime Minister.

More Canadians are turning to their local food banks for support. Senior usage of food banks has increased 30%. According to the CEO of a Toronto food bank, nearly triple the number of people visited the food bank in June 2022 compared to June 2019.

These Liberals have caused the cost of living crisis. Will these Liberals scrap the planned tax hikes?

**Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will not take any lessons from the party opposite, whose plan for seniors was to raise the age of retirement to 67. One of the very first things we did as a government was to reverse it to age 65.

We increased the guaranteed income supplement. We put more money into the pockets of seniors by increasing old age security by 10%. We are doubling the GST credit. That is our record for seniors and we are going to continue to deliver for them.

\* \* \*

#### PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians were shocked to learn that the ArriveCAN app cost this government \$54 million, which is more than twice the original estimate, but it gets better. Last week we learned that most of that money went to a company with no offices and only five staff. The government was using this company to shield subcontractors from accountability and transparency. Canadians want answers. They deserve to know where their money went.

Will the government finally take accountability and disclose all the companies that got money from the ArriveCAN contracts?

**Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government has been focused on protecting the health and safety of all Canadians throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. PHAC and CBSA launched ArriveCAN in April 2020 to support the Government of Canada's efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19 and ensure border security. The ArriveCAN app cost less than \$1 million to develop and to ensure security of privacy and accessibility for all users. We will continue to ensure the safety and protection of all Canadians.

\* \* \*

#### CHILD CARE

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, while Canadians are struggling to make ends meet, Ontario is allowing for-profit child care to gouge parents. After signing an agreement with the federal government, Ontario removed profit caps and reduced the oversight for for-profit child care centres. This means higher fees for parents and lower wages for staff to maximize profits.

This morning, the Prime Minister stood with Premier Doug Ford. Did the Prime Minister tell the premier that removing limits on for-profit child care does not work, and will he ensure that federal money is not going to for-profit care?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me very clear. There is a cap on fees in Ontario for all registered child care providers going back to the time that we signed the agreement on March 28, 2022.

However, let me share some good news. We are moving forward expeditiously with affordable child care here in Ontario, and by December of this year, families in registered child care will receive a 50% reduction in fees. This is fantastic news for families in Ontario. In fact, I was in Sudbury on Tuesday where families are already receiving rebates, and we will continue to roll this out throughout the province.

#### Oral Questions

#### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know that EI sickness benefits are an important support for Canadians who need to leave work because of illness or injury. We also know that many workers face stressful income gaps between when they exhaust their benefits and when they are healthy enough to go back to work. That is why in budget 2021 our government extended EI sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 26 weeks.

Can the minister please share with the House more details about this important extension?

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Don Valley East for his tireless work on behalf of his constituents and all Canadians.

Indeed, we recognize that Canada needs an EI system that is fair, flexible and more responsive to the needs of workers and employers. That is why I am so excited to let the House know that, by the end of this year, workers will have access to 26 weeks of EI sickness benefits so they have more time to recover and get back to work safely and in good health.

\* \* \*

● (1450)

#### TAXATION

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, analysts are saying that home heating prices in some places will increase by 300% this winter. That is triple. The Prime Minister's planned increases to the carbon tax and the payroll tax are cold-hearted actions. The Liberals are literally freezing Canadians out.

Is it just inflation or will the government cut its planned taxes?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect that responsible leaders and all members of the House need to address both the affordability issue and the climate crisis. We are certainly working very hard to address affordability issues through doubling the GST tax credit and a range of other things.

I do find it very interesting, though, that during the last election campaign every member sitting in the Conservative Party campaigned on putting into place a carbon tax, so this conversion on the road to Jerusalem is very interesting indeed.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' out-of-control spending and tax hikes are increasing the cost of everything. Food prices in remote indigenous communities are two and a half times higher than the national average, and rising fuel prices are just compounding inflation's economic toll on families absolutely everywhere.

While the minister monitors the situation, families are struggling with food and heat this winter. When will the government cancel its tax hikes and cap its spending?

**Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us be very clear. When the Conservatives talk about payroll taxes, they are talking about EI, a rate which is lower today than it was when the Leader of the Opposition was in charge of the file. They are talking about the Canadian pension plan. We came together with premiers to strengthen the plan and make sure that there was more money in the pockets of seniors when they retired, right when they needed it, and the Conservatives are trying to take that away. When they are talking about carbon pricing, they are talking about a revenue-neutral plan that puts more money in the pockets of eight out of 10 Canadian families.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, certainly Canadians do not believe their plan to tax us more is revenue-neutral. Energy costs are expected to rise by double or, sadly, triple this winter. This is a tremendous burden for Atlantic Canadians. We are already suffering from the cost of living crisis, and of course hurricane Fiona has taken an inconceivable toll on Atlantic Canadians.

Why does the Prime Minister want to punish Atlantic Canadians by tripling, yes, I said tripling, the carbon tax and will he agree to end it?

**Hon. Gudie Hutchings (Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his reference to rural and especially to Atlantic Canadians and Quebec Canadians, as we did bear the brunt of Fiona.

The federal government is there to help with disaster financial assistance arrangements with the provinces and with another \$300 million administered through ACOA to help the agencies, the communities and those who are falling through the cracks. We will be there for Atlantic Canadians and Quebec Canadians as they battle these storms. That is why we need to address climate change. Ask anybody in my home province or Port aux Basques if they believe in climate change; they certainly do.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are at a breaking point. Fifty-one per cent are only \$200 away from bankruptcy. The government's proposed solution is more tax, freezing them out of their homes, if they are lucky enough to even have one. It is going to triple the carbon tax on groceries, triple the carbon tax on home heating and triple the carbon tax on gas. Canadians need hope. They need a break, not more tax. Families need to not choose between buying a winter coat for their children or food on the table.

When will the Liberals do the compassionate thing and stop their triple tax hike?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite raised some important points about the struggles that Canadians and Canadian families are having right now, but she and her colleagues actually have an opportunity to help. There are several pieces of legislation on the floor of the House right now that would support Canadians to make those ends meet.

I do not understand why they do not want to help low-income Canadian children get their teeth fixed. I do not understand why they do not want to help Canadians with disabilities get a benefit. I do not understand why they do not want low-income renters to get a top-up. They have an opportunity. The Conservatives have an opportunity to—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, because of the pandemic, the EI fund is short \$26 billion, but it is not the contributors' responsibility to pay off that debt by themselves. Neither workers nor businesses are responsible for the pandemic and its fallout. The Canada Employment Insurance Commission itself is concerned about the burden the government is putting on contributors.

Will the government take on the EI debt that has accrued since March 2020 instead of passing on the full cost of the pandemic to workers and businesses?

• (1455)

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we understand that Canadians deserve a flexible and proper employment insurance system. That is why we are working so hard to improve and modernize the EI system.

We will unveil our plan before the end of the year. I am very excited, and I think everyone will love it.

**Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the House that the reason the unemployment rate rose during the pandemic was because governments asked companies to close their doors and, consequently, to put their employees out of work. That happened to thousands of workers. It was the right decision, obviously, but it is the government's responsibility to deal with the consequences of that decision.

In terms of CERB, the government is paying off the debt in the consolidated fund. Why is it refusing to take on the EI debt when those benefits were paid out for the same reasons and because of the same pandemic?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we were here for workers and businesses during the pandemic and we will continue to be here for businesses and workers. We are modernizing our system so we can be better prepared if there is another pandemic. We will be here for workers and businesses.

\* \* \*

[English]

**JUSTICE**

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there has been a 32% increase in violent crime with over 124,000 more violent crimes last year than in 2015. Under the Prime Minister, Canadian streets are less safe. That is a fact. Clearly, their approach to prioritizing the needs of criminals over victims is not working.

When will the Prime Minister finally get serious and start protecting Canadian families from violent offenders?

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, too many Canadians have been hurt by gun violence and our government ran on the promise to redouble Canada's efforts to tackle this issue. We always put the safety of Canadians as our number one priority. That plan includes banning and buying back assault rifles, freezing the national handgun market and raising sentences for gun smugglers. My hope is that the hon. member across the aisle will support Bill C-21 at committee and allow us to keep Canadians safer.

**Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, they could start by listening to victims of crime. Sharlene Bosma testified at our justice committee that the one bit of solace that she had after her husband, Tim Bosma, was brutally murdered was that her daughter would never have to face her father's killer at a parole hearing. Since the Liberal government has failed to respond to the Supreme Court's decision to allow mass murderers the opportunity for parole, that one shred of peace has been ripped away.

Will the Liberal government act and end parole hearings for mass murderers?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, serious crimes in this country will always be dealt with seriously. What we are doing on a variety of fronts is being smart on crime so that we can dedicate more resources to attacking precisely the kinds of crimes that my hon. member has raised.

We will continue to go in that direction. As former Supreme Court Justice Michael Moldaver, someone who could never be accused of being soft on crime, has stated, we absolutely need to dedicate more of the resources in the system to fighting precisely these kinds of crimes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there were more homicides in the greater Montreal area in 2021 than in the past 10 years, and this year is shaping up to be even worse. Last week, the authorities found a body in a recycling bin. In August, there was a triple homicide. Last week, a man was stabbed in the Beaudry metro station.

Why does the government want to get rid of minimum sentences and make things better for criminals rather than protect victims?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the safety of Canadians is our number one priority. We support victims, and we are working with them precisely to make the system safer. With Bill C-21, we are increasing penalties for crimes related to gang activity and gun smuggling.

We are strengthening the ban on firearms, which are designed solely to kill people. That is what we are doing and what needs to be done to make Canada safer.

\* \* \*

● (1500)

**SMALL BUSINESS**

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, over the past few years, I have seen many small businesses in my riding, Châteauguay—Lacolle, shift to online retail and upgrade the technologies they rely on. As a result, they are growing faster, increasing sales and exporting more.

Can the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development explain how our government is helping more small businesses succeed in the digital economy?

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, during the pandemic, we witnessed the ingenuity of small business owners and the importance of digital technology and e-commerce. That is why we are investing \$4 billion in the Canada digital adoption program. The world is adopting a digital economy and we are ensuring that Canadian small businesses are on the forefront.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadian small businesses are struggling to stay open. In fact, one in six say they are considering shutting their doors. The CFIB has urged the government not to burden workers and employers with extra costs at a time when inflation has skyrocketed. However, on January 1, the Liberals plan to increase payroll taxes, putting further strain on business owners and providing less take-home pay for workers.

My question today is very simple: Will the government rescind its plan to increase payroll taxes on January 1?

*[Translation]*

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I find this intervention really disappointing. We are talking here about contributions Canadians make that will come back to them. As far as the pension is concerned, it will allow Canadians to retire in dignity.

As far as worker safety and employment insurance are concerned, we know that we are living at a time of major economic instability. We have to ensure that the money will be there for workers when they need it.

*[English]*

**Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is Small Business Week and businesses are worried. A recent survey shows businesses' confidence in the economy is at the lowest point since the pandemic started. Around 75% of businesses believe inflation will be over 3% and they are worried about the rising costs. This includes payroll taxes and the carbon tax, for which there is no rebate.

With the future of the economy uncertain and small businesses worried, will the government cancel its planned tax increases on small businesses next year?

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us remember something: It is this government that has been there for small businesses every single time. We have been there for them during the pandemic. We were there for them during the illegal convoy. We have been there for them in the recent aftermath of hurricane Fiona.

We will always be there standing up for small businesses. We have cut their taxes to help them grow. We have helped businesses export. We are helping all businesses, including women-owned businesses, indigenous businesses and Black-owned businesses, and we are going to keep doing that.

**Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the inflation crisis triggered by the Prime Minister's out-of-control spending and borrowing is devastating small businesses. Small businesses want to increase wages and pay off their COVID debts, but half of them have still not returned to normal revenue. These businesses and their workers cannot afford higher payroll taxes and an ever-increasing carbon tax.

Will the government cancel its plans to raise the carbon tax and payroll taxes on small businesses?

*[Translation]*

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know that small businesses are truly the backbone of our Canadian economy. That is why we were there for our small businesses during the pandemic. We are still there for our business owners and our SMEs.

Contributions will go up next year. In fact, it will happen in April 2024 and these are contributions that will come back to employees through employment insurance and come back to Canadians in the form of a pension.

● (1505)

*[English]*

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today marks the start of Small Business Week. In my riding of Whitby and all across Canada, small businesses are the heart of our communities and the backbone of our local economies. This Small Business Week, we are celebrating the incredible creativity, hard work and grit of small business owners and their many successes.

Could the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development please share with Canadians what our government has been doing to support small businesses all across the country?

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to say happy Small Business Week to all of the incredible entrepreneurs and businesses across the country.

We have been there for small businesses right from the very beginning and throughout this heart-wrenching pandemic that everyone has gone through. We supported small businesses during the illegal convoy. We have supported businesses in Atlantic Canada after hurricane Fiona. We are cutting taxes for small businesses so they can grow. We are helping them export. We are helping them get access to the international marketplace so they can flourish and contribute to the economy.

During this Small Business Week, I want to wish all of our small businesses a happy Small Business Week.



*Business of Supply*

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, for eight months, Ukrainians have heroically defended their country against Putin's genocidal invasion, yet the government's response has been slow and ineffective. The sanctions regime is a mess, with no enforcement and no accountability. The humanitarian aid and the supplies for Ukraine that the government has promised have not been delivered. Even Ukrainian MPs have said Canada's response is "just unexplainable". Now the Conservative premier, Danielle Smith, says that Ukraine should submit.

Ukraine needs and deserves our support. When will the government finally act to support Ukrainians?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I understand the frustration with what is going on in Ukraine, and of course we have to do more. However, we have done a lot since the beginning of this illegal invasion. We have put sanctions on entities and on 2,000 people. We have put \$3 billion on the table for financial assistance, military assistance and humanitarian aid assistance. Indeed, we need to do more and we will do more.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## HEALTH

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, Emmy Pruneau, a young 19-year-old woman in my riding was told in May that she has terminal cancer.

To slow progression of the disease, she needs the medication tazemetostat. The problem is that it was approved by Health Canada in 2020, but it is impossible for Canadian physicians to obtain it despite the fact that it is sold in the United States and Europe.

Doctors have already had to amputate one of her arms, and, if nothing is done quickly she will only have weeks to live.

My question for the Minister of Health is simple: Can he ensure that the administrative hurdles will be lifted so Emmy can have access to the medication? All she wants to do is live.

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague, the member for Richmond—Arthabaska, for being sincere and honest about the extremely difficult situation of his constituent. I invite him to contact me directly to ensure that Health Canada does everything possible so that this individual can receive the services she needs for her health and that of all those who care for her and are there to help her.

\* \* \*

[English]

## PRESENCE IN GALLERY

**The Speaker:** I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Matthew Mackay, Minister of Social Development and Housing for the Province of Prince Edward Island.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

● (1510)

## SOUTH SIMCOE POLICE OFFICERS

**The Speaker:** I understand there have been discussions among representatives of all parties in the House and that there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence in honour of the fallen police officers from the South Simcoe Police Service in Innisfil, Ontario. Please rise.

[A moment of silence observed]

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

## BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

## OPPOSITION MOTION—HIGH FOOD PRICES

The House resumed from October 6 consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** It being 3:10 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

*And the bells having rung:*

[English]

**The Speaker:** The question is on the motion. Shall I dispense?

**Some hon. members:** No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

● (1525)

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

(Division No. 189)

## YEAS

## Members

Aboulttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Benzen
Bergen	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Block
Blois	Boulerice
Bradford	Bragdon

*Business of Supply*

Brassard	Brière	MacGregor	MacKenzie
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Cannings	Caputo	Maloney	Martel
Carr	Carrie	Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Casey	Chabot	Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
Chagger	Chahal	May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
Chambers	Champagne	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)
Champoux	Chatel	McGuinty	McKay
Chen	Chiang	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	McLeod	McPherson
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper	Melillo	Mendès
Cormier	Coteau	Mendicino	Miao
Dabrusin	Dalton	Michaud	Miller
Damoff	Dancho	Moore	Morantz
Davidson	DeBellefeuille	Morrice	Morrison
Deltell	d'Entremont	Morrissey	Motz
Desbiens	Desilets	Murray	Muys
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal	Naqvi	Nater
Dhillon	Diab	Ng	Noormohamed
Dong	Dowdall	Normandin	O'Connell
Dreeshen	Drouin	Oliphant	O'Regan
Dubourg	Duclos	O'Toole	Patzer
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Paul-Hus	Perkins
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz	Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Ehsassi	El-Khoury	Plamondon	Poillievre
Ellis	Epp	Powlowski	Qualtrough
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Rayes	Redekopp
Falk (Provencher)	Fast	Reid	Rempel Garner
Fergus	Ferreri	Richards	Roberts
Fillmore	Findlay	Robillard	Rodriguez
Fisher	Fonseca	Rogers	Romanado
Fortier	Fortin	Rood	Ruff
Fragiskatos	Fraser	Sahota	Sajjan
Freeland	Fry	Saks	Samson
Gaheer	Gallant	Sarai	Savard-Tremblay
Garneau	Garon	Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Garrison	Gaudreau	Schiefke	Schmale
Gazan	Généreux	Seeback	Serré
Genuis	Gerretsen	Sgro	Shanahan
Gill	Gladu	Sheehan	Shields
Godin	Goodridge	Shiple	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Gould	Gourde	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Green	Guilbeault	Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Hajdu	Hallan	Small	Soroka
Hanley	Hardie	Steinley	Ste-Marie
Hepfner	Hoback	Stewart	St-Onge
Holland	Housefather	Strahl	Stubbs
Hughes	Hussen	Sudds	Tassi
Hutchings	Iacono	Taylor Roy	Thériault
Idlout	Ien	Therrien	Thomas
Jaczek	Jeneroux	Thompson	Tochor
Johns	Joly	Tolmie	Trudeau
Jones	Jowhari	Trudel	Turnbull
Kayabaga	Kelloway	Uppal	Valdez
Kelly	Khalid	Van Bynen	van Koevorden
Khera	Kitchen	Van Popta	Vandal
Kmiec	Koutrakis	Vandenbeld	Vecchio
Kram	Kramp-Neuman	Vidal	Vien
Kurek	Kusie	Viersen	Vignola
Kusmierczyk	Kwan	Villemure	Virani
Lake	Lalonde	Vis	Vuong
Lambropoulos	Lametti	Wagantall	Warkentin
Lamoureux	Lantsman	Waugh	Webber
Lapointe	Larouche	Weiler	Wilkinson
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Williams	Williamson
Lawrence	LeBlanc	Yip	Zahid
Lebouthillier	Lehoux	Zarrillo	Zimmer
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)	Zuberi — 327	
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert		
Lightbound	Lloyd		
Lobb	Long		
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)		
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)	Nil	

NAYS

PAIRED

Members

Boissonnault

Gray—2

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

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CANADA

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, the annual report of the 2020-21 Canada account as prepared by Export Development Canada.

\* \* \*

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

**Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration in relation to the motion adopted on Tuesday, October 4, 2022, regarding the immigration response to events in Iran.

The Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration reports that in light of the downing of Ukrainian International Airlines flight PS752 by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, and in light of the killing of Mahsa Amini by the Iranian Guidance Patrol, the committee demands the government stop issuing visas to all Iranian nationals directly affiliated with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, the Iranian armed forces, the Iranian Guidance Patrol or Iranian intelligence organizations and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests a response to this report by the government.

\* \* \*

● (1530)

### FEDERAL FRAMEWORK ON AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER ACT

**Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC)** moved that Bill S-203, An Act respecting a federal framework on autism spectrum disorder, be read the first time.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce Bill S-203 in this House, seconded by my hon. colleague from Don Valley East.

The bill was introduced in the Senate by Senator Leo Housakos, who has long been a tireless advocate for autistic Canadians. It was seconded there by my good friend, Senator Peter Boehm, who, like me, is a father of a wonderful, young, autistic man.

Bill S-203 builds on the work of former Senator Jim Munson, who has been relentless in his pursuit of a national autism strategy for nearly two decades.

As the bill's summary states, it “provides for the development of a federal framework designed to support autistic Canadians, their

### Government Orders

families and their caregivers.” A national autism strategy is long overdue, but never before have we seen this level of agreement and the collective will to see this through.

On behalf of my son Jaden, Peter's son Nikolas, and autistic Canadians and their families from coast to coast to coast, I urge the House to join me and my Liberal friend and colleague in support of this important bill.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

\* \* \*

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order, special order or usual practice of the House, at the conclusion of Oral Questions on Wednesday, October 19, 2022, the Speaker, a member of each recognized party, a member of the Green Party and the member for Elmwood—Transcona each be permitted to make a statement to pay tribute to the late Hon. Bill Blaikie, and that afterwards the House observe a moment of silence, and that the time taken for these proceedings shall be added to the time provided for Government Orders.

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

### 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 would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT ACT

The House resumed from September 20 consideration of the motion that Bill C-22, An Act to reduce poverty and to support the financial security of persons with disabilities by establishing the Canada disability benefit and making a consequential amendment to the Income Tax Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle.

*Government Orders*

Today is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Poverty reduction is an issue I have worked hard to address in Parliament, including as co-chair of our all-party anti-poverty caucus. That notion of “all-party” on this issue has always been an important one because the idea of dignity and equality of opportunity for all should transcend any partisan politics.

We have seen significant progress since 2015, thanks in large part to the Canada child benefit, as well as increases to GIS for seniors and the workers benefit. With respect to StatsCan’s numbers, poverty levels have gone from 14.5% in 2015 to 10.3% in 2019 to 6.4% in 2020. Of course, the 2020 levels were reached due to extraordinary pandemic income supports that have fallen away. On top of that, with the rising cost of living, many more people are being left behind than we see reflected in those 2020 numbers.

It goes without saying that there remains much more work to do and the next step in that work needs to be realizing the proposed Canada disability benefit as ambitiously as possible. People with disabilities are consistently overrepresented in our national poverty numbers and that needs to change. Bill C-22 will establish the Canada disability benefit, with the goal of reducing poverty and supporting the financial security of working-age persons with disabilities.

I want to see the bill realized yesterday. However, it is not enough to support the legislation. Finance needs to step up here too. The cost of poverty to our society is greater than the cost of ending poverty. Finance needs to understand that basic idea and do the right thing in realizing the promise of Bill C-22.

I am going to cede the rest of my time for questions because I want to send this bill to committee as quickly as possible. I encourage all of my colleagues to work together in supporting this bill.

● (1535)

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Beaches—East York for his steadfast support of Bill C-22, including getting parliamentarians across party lines to support an open letter calling for the governing party to reintroduce the bill. I really appreciate his approach to moving us as quickly as possible by ceding his time and the call for what needs to be done to finance the disability benefit. I wonder if he could speak more to what every parliamentarian could do not only to ensure the benefit is financed as soon as possible, but to get emergency supports to Canadians with disabilities who need it the most.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I certainly enjoyed working across party lines with him and others to make sure we would see the retableting of Bill C-22.

I would say that the priority for all of us would be to write to the finance minister as part of the fiscal update, and especially as part of the next budget cycle, to say that this is one of our top priorities. If enough of us across party lines deliver that message clearly to the Minister of Finance, I have every expectation that we would realize the promise of Bill C-22 as fulsomely as we can.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I have had the opportunity to share a few thoughts in re-

gard to the importance of the legislation, and one of the roles the federal government has to play is to support Canadians directly. Through Bill C-22, we would see substantial support for people with disabilities. I am wondering if my friend could provide his thoughts in terms of the important role governments, and particularly the Government of Canada, play in supporting the people of Canada.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** Madam Speaker, the income supports the federal government provides make a world of difference to many different people. We see over \$60 billion delivered to seniors between old age security and the guaranteed income supplement. The lowest poverty rate among any demographic we see in this country is among seniors as a result of that. Should we do more to help seniors? Of course we should, but the work the federal government does, in particular the income supports that are provided, is instrumental in ensuring we are reducing the poverty rate among seniors, as we have.

Similarly, the Canada child benefit has demonstrably dropped the child poverty rate in this country. We are now spending \$30 billion and more to deliver for families with kids, but for both working-age Canadians, those on the Canada workers benefit, there is still much to do. For people with disabilities, who are disproportionately represented in those national poverty numbers I referenced in my speech, we absolutely need to do more. When we look at the transformation of poverty in seniors with respect to the guaranteed income supplement, if we do the very same thing for people with disabilities through the benefit contemplated in Bill C-22, we are going to make a world of difference there as well.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I know full well that my colleague has been passionate in advocating for this disability benefit. I would like to hear from him about the criticism or the approach that some people have that this is charity and should be done outside of government, or that this is something that does not belong to a government program.

I would like to hear the hon. member on that and have his thoughts on just how important it is to help disabled people have financial autonomy.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on that question of autonomy, because fundamentally this legislation is about dignity and ensuring that every single person in our society can live a life of dignity. That comes with ensuring that an individual has enough support to realize their own passions and to realize their own endeavours. It comes with that kind of autonomy.

*Government Orders*

There is an old quote from Dostoyevsky that says, “Money is coined liberty”. That kind of freedom is not freedom from something, but it is freedom to do something. If we do not realize that kind of freedom for everyone in society, especially people with disabilities and in some cases people who are unable to provide for themselves despite their working age, then we are missing an absolute foundational core component of what governments ought to be delivering for our society. We, as a government, need to provide that minimum floor and social safety net, so that no person, whether it is someone with a disability or not, falls below.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today as the representative of the people of Châteauguay—Lacolle to speak to Bill C-22.

As members already know, Bill C-22 is framework legislation that establishes the Canada disability benefit to reduce poverty and to support the financial security of working-age persons with disabilities. It sets out general provisions for the administration of the benefit and authorizes the Governor in Council to implement most of the benefit’s design elements through regulations. That is a very important point. It is framework legislation. All of the negotiations and details will be worked out later among the provincial, territorial and federal governments and, most importantly, those who are most affected, namely, people with disabilities. This legislation will also make a consequential amendment to the Income Tax Act.

As mentioned by my colleagues during this debate, the following benefit components are some of the ones that will be established through regulation: the eligibility criteria for a Canada disability benefit, the conditions that must be met in order to receive or continue to receive the benefit, the amount that recipients of this benefit will receive, the manner in which a benefit is to be indexed to inflation, the payment periods and the amount to be paid for each period, and the application process for the benefit.

In my region, Bill C-22 is music to the ears of people with disabilities and all those who work to improve their quality of life. I am therefore pleased that there is unanimous consent in the House to move this bill forward as quickly as possible. That demonstrates that all political parties understand the importance of the Canada disability benefit for some of the most vulnerable Canadians in the country.

Everyone understands that people with disabilities face unique barriers and situations, especially when it comes to health care, welfare and financial security. According to one interesting statistic I read, nearly one in four Canadians—21% of us—has a disability. Some of those people are members of Parliament. I think that, one way or another, we could all find ourselves in that situation at some point. The difference is that those of us in the House are financially privileged, which is not necessarily the case for people who are born with a disability or who acquire a disability at a young age due to an accident. Clearly, this can have a huge impact on their financial independence. We can make a big difference in their lives by providing the financial tools that enable them to participate more fully in society. This is about independence and human dignity.

In my riding, Châteauguay—Lacolle, and I suspect across the country, the community has long been aware of challenges facing persons with disabilities. We have created a number of volunteer and non-profit organizations to meet some of their needs.

• (1545)

It is often families who take the lead in helping their children, young adults or older relatives with disabilities break their isolation and benefit from educational supports for training, socialization and help with daily tasks.

These people work every single day, for years on end, to provide a better quality of life for their loved ones, and they often do so at the expense of their own physical health and financial security. That is why I think the government has a responsibility to help them, and why Bill C-22 is so important. I believe that other members in the House feel the same way.

I would like to salute all the volunteers and employees who work with people with disabilities in my riding. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the Centre multifonctionnel Horizon in Lery, which is a non-institutional resource for people with all kinds of disabilities. It was the life’s work of a wonderful mother and advocate for these vulnerable people, the late Lyne Loiselle. This wonderful project, the Horizon Centre, offers stimulating activities and respite stays for dozens of families in our region.

Not far from where I live, in Châteauguay, the Mouvement Action Découverte’s mission for the past 40 years has been to increase the individual and collective autonomy of people of all ages with an intellectual disability through educational activities to help youth become more independent.

Les Toits d’Émile in Châteauguay, Chez-nous solidaire in Mercier and Vents d’espoir in Saint-Rémi were also founded by extraordinary parents who wanted to help not just their own children with disabilities but those of others. Their efforts are not focused on providing just community and social support services, but above all on providing housing to foster their independence in an inclusive community.

*Government Orders*

However, these charitable organizations alone cannot provide all the solutions. They already struggle to fund their own activities. Since we know that persons with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty as those who are not disabled, we, as members of a fair and just society, must ensure that they have the financial support to promote their independence and ability to actively participate in our social economy. That is why our government introduced new legislation that will establish the framework for a new Canadian benefit for persons with disabilities.

It is important to mention that this benefit, the cornerstone of our disability inclusion action plan would complement, not replace existing federal, provincial and territorial support measures to lift hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities out of poverty.

In the spirit of the “nothing without us” principle, we will continue to work with the provinces and territories and with the disability community to ensure that this benefit is designed with their needs in mind.

The Canadian disability benefit will help address the financial difficulties people with disabilities have been facing for a long time. It will create a more open economy and society. The benefit has the potential to significantly reduce poverty among the hundreds of thousands of Canadians in this situation. The benefit will thus become an important component of Canada's social safety net, along with old age security, the guaranteed income supplement and the Canada child benefit.

We are not talking about charity here, because we need everyone to be able to participate in our social economy. That is a dream of the people of Châteauguay—Lacolle, and we want to make it come true.

• (1550)

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Madam Speaker, when the minister started the debate on the Canada disability benefit act, she stated that a sum would be paid to each person who is eligible for the benefit. The problem with the wording of the bill is that it does not say how much the person would receive or who would be eligible. There is no mention of the eligibility criteria, which will be determined by cabinet.

In the first days of the debate, I mentioned that the Old Age Security Act would be a good example to follow for making amendments to Bill C-22.

Would the member be prepared to copy some sections and paragraphs from the Old Age Security Act to ensure that persons with disabilities in Canada will be entitled to a benefit similar to the one that was created by the Old Age Security Act?

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. I know that this is a very important issue for him.

We want this benefit to be a supplement, not a replacement. We understand that each province has its own system and its own programs, that there are tax credits, that programs are sometimes established based on very complex criteria, and so on.

That is why it is important to get this framework legislation in place first. Then we can negotiate the amounts. We certainly want it to provide an additional, adequate and reasonable income.

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Châteauguay—Lacolle for her speech.

Last month, I had the opportunity to speak to Bill C-22. I myself have a family member who lived a good part of his life as a person with a disability, but who has unfortunately passed away. I also had the opportunity to speak with Marie-Christine Hon, who heads up the disability advocacy group Dynamique des handicapés de Granby et région. She told me that the bill currently lacks details.

We just talked about how this benefit must be a complement. It must not be deducted from what is already being offered in Quebec and in the provinces.

Since today is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, can my colleague assure us that the federal government will try to deliver this money as quickly as possible and give as many details as possible to the organizations?

I think people with disabilities deserve it.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague across the way. I think we share a basic principle: We must not act in others' stead.

I would like to offer my condolences on the death of her loved one. I understand how hard it is for families, because I know someone in the same situation near where I live. It is very difficult for friends and family.

We know one thing for sure, though. As much as possible, people with disabilities want to have their say, so it is not up to the federal government to tell people how it will work. We need to talk with stakeholders and with our provincial partners.

[English]

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, indigenous peoples with disabilities face extra challenges when trying to access services and, I am sure, will have extra challenges trying to access this benefit once it is available to them.

I wonder if the member could agree that indigenous peoples with disabilities will need to get special provisions in trying to access these services, especially when they prefer to speak or be heard in their indigenous languages like Inuktitut, which is not a federal official language.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Madam Speaker, there is something that I am seeing in my riding, and it is not something that was obvious. We neighbour Kahnawake, which is a very proud and independent nation, but our local organization has been able to partner with social services at Kahnawake to provide projects such as supportive housing for youth in transit, because, of course, the youth are mobile across the territory. However, there are indigenous, certainly Mohawk, social workers and support staff who are working within the project. There was no go-ahead unless we had the shared partnership of our two communities.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Before we resume debate, I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 15 minutes.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill C-22 and, more broadly, to the situation confronting Canadians living with disabilities.

Bill C-22 proposes a new federal financial benefit for Canadians living with disabilities, however, it does not actually define many aspects of the structure of this benefit. I will be voting in favour of the legislation, because I agree with the principle of providing the support, but I am concerned about some of the lacking substance with respect to how this benefit would actually work.

Increasingly, we see from the government a desire to limit the actual work of Parliament in defining the nature and scope of programs. Instead, the government wants a blank cheque from Parliament, legislation that authorizes ministers to shape and define a program independently, according to their discretion.

In general, this is not a good way for governments to operate in a democracy and, in particular, I do not think the Liberal government has shown itself trustworthy when it comes to working out the details of critical programs.

When it comes to the structure of this benefit, the government's message is "just trust us." From a government that cannot figure out how to deliver passports in a timely manner, cannot address the affordability crisis in Canada and cannot secure our borders, the message of "just trust us" seems rather hollow.

I have two specific concerns about the prospective structure of this program that I do want to highlight.

First, I share the concern of many about how this program would interact with other existing programs, including those provided at the provincial level. If a new federal benefit leads to a loss of eligibility for other existing benefits, then it would leave people worse off overall. It is not inevitable that this would be the case, but this is a matter that will require careful and respectful dialogue with other levels of government and hard work at every stage, hard work that the government has not always been prepared to do.

### *Government Orders*

At this point, the government is passing broad framework legislation without ensuring that it will actually leave Canadians with disabilities better off in every case. The government does not have to wait for this legislation to pass to begin those discussions and I would encourage it to actually engage those discussions now about protecting existing benefits, because aspects of those dialogues may inform suggested amendments.

The second concern I have is that it is critically important that the structure of this benefit program protects access for Canadians with disabilities who are working or are trying to get into work. Even with existing benefit programs at other levels, certain Canadians with disabilities may find themselves in a position where entering the workforce actually leaves them worse off. It is critically important that work always leaves people better off financially.

Supporting Canadians, including Canadians living with disabilities, in being able to access meaningful work has long been a key priority for Conservatives.

Why is this important? Overwhelmingly, Canadians of all backgrounds and circumstances want to be able to work and are happier and more fulfilled if they are able to work. In this context, by work, I do not just mean commodified work, but work of any sort, where individuals exert themselves in order to contribute positively to the world around them.

The science of happiness and fulfillment measurement shows us that work generally makes people happier by providing them with meaning and with a workplace-based community, and with a greater level of power and agency. Quite apart from the notably important income-earning properties of work, work also provides meaning and happiness, totally independent of whether it generates income.

Think tank Cardus has done excellent work on this question of work and disability. It has found that most Canadians living with disabilities want to work or want to work more, but it has also found that the vast majority of public policy, focus and money has been toward income support as opposed to supports that help people get into work.

The critical point about work support and income support is that they are not mutually exclusive. In fact, often, they are necessarily complementary. Some people require income support in order to afford the resources and transportation required to find and get a job in the first place. If income supports are withdrawn immediately once people work or start work, they may not be able to afford vital necessities, as well as the things they need to sustain them in their new job.

Having both fulfilling work and steady income are vital for human happiness and fulfillment. Having income without work or work without income are both, in a sense, problematic.

### *Government Orders*

Of course, having income is not just about fulfillment and happiness; it is about basic survival. Canadians with disabilities need income to take care of their own needs and the needs of those they love.

For most of us, work comes with earning income. However, when benefit programs are poorly structured, people may actually be forced to choose between work and income, because benefits are cut off or income is lost as a result of working. In such cases, given how essential income is for survival, people will understandably choose income over work if they are forced to choose between these things. It is cruel and pointless to force people to make this choice, to choose between the happiness associated with work and receiving the financial support that they need.

Income supports for Canadians with disabilities can and should go hand in hand with workplace support, only peeling those income supports back gradually when it is clear that income support is not required because of the level that an individual is able to work.

- (1600)

We saw an example of this terrible choice between work and income during the pandemic with the poorly constructed CERB program. Unemployed Canadians who were accessing CERB, and who were then offered part-time work, were in many cases actually worse off financially if they took that work because part-time work would push them over the threshold for CERB eligibility, even if they were not earning close to what they would have been entitled to receive under CERB. Thus people were forced to remain out of work in order to access the resources they needed to support their families.

Not only does it make zero financial or economic sense to create a financial disincentive to work, but it also puts people in the painful position of needing to choose between the happiness and dignity that come from work on the one hand and from financial security on the other hand. That is why we feel it is very important that this new federal program be structured in such a way that Canadians with disabilities, many of whom can and do work, or want to work, are not rendered worse off by entering the work force.

There is nothing in the text of the bill that would suggest it could not be structured in a way to ensure that work always pays, but the past record of the government gives us significant cause for concern. In the 42nd Parliament, the member for Carleton, now the leader of the Conservative Party, proposed Bill C-395, a bill specifically designed to address this problem of work sometimes bringing about a loss in benefits for Canadians living with disabilities.

Bill C-395 would have amended the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act to ensure that, in negotiations around transfers and the construction of benefits for Canadians living with disabilities, people with disabilities would not lose more through taxation and the reduction of benefits than they gain as a result of working. It would have protected Canadians with disabilities from these kinds of perverse situations where they would have to choose between the happiness that comes from work or the financial security that comes from government benefits.

If Bill C-395 were the law of the land, we could then pass this bill, even as written, with the confidence that the benefits constructed would leave people better off, but when it came to a vote on Bill C-395, Liberals actually opposed it. Liberals opposed the common-sense proposal from our leader to ensure that Canadians who work are better off as a result of the money they earn.

Sadly, Liberals do not seem to appreciate the value, dignity and happiness that comes from hard work. I am not sure if it can be found in the scope of this legislation as written, but I would welcome amendments that would capture the spirit of our leader's past work to protect Canadians with disabilities from being punished for working.

Parenthetically, I want to say something directly to employers about hiring Canadians with disabilities. Research done by Cardus shows that many employers have an exaggerated perception of the cost associated with accommodation. Cardus' work shows that including and accommodating employees with disabilities is often much cheaper than employers initially expect and that funding may be available from different levels of government for businesses, including small businesses, seeking to accommodate customers and employees living with disabilities.

Further, as our leader has previously shared in the context of speaking to Bill C-395, there are many cases of Canadians with disabilities who make incredible, committed and loyal employees who bring unique competencies for the workplace. Governments have a responsibility to ensure that poorly structured benefit programs do not undermine the ability of Canadians to access work, but employers also need to lead in pushing aside stereotypes and recognizing the contributions that Canadians with disabilities can make to their workplace. Many employers are already doing this, and I congratulate those who are doing this already.

Those were the main points I wanted to make on Bill C-22, but it is also very important to speak to the context of the legislation, which is the significant negative impacts on the lives of Canadians living with disabilities that flow from the government's radical ableist approach to euthanasia, the so-called MAID regime. We simply cannot have a conversation about financial benefits separate from a recognition that the biggest threat to the lives of Canadians living with disabilities is that those without disabilities are much more likely to be offered suicide prevention and recovery support, while our brothers and sisters, cousins and friends who are living with disabilities are being denied those supports and actively pushed towards death, even if they are saying they do not want it.



Among those who support legal euthanasia around the world, Canada is still increasingly seen as a cautionary tale, a warning of what not to do. In this vein, I want to start with a bit of history. Euthanasia in Canada started with Bill C-14, which was passed in the 42nd Parliament. This legislation affixed the name “medical assistance in dying” to what had previously been called euthanasia, the process of doctors killing a consenting patient. That legislation sought to define a regime whereby people could choose hastened death if their death was deemed reasonably foreseeable.

• (1605)

I criticized the legislation at the time for, among other things, not being sufficiently clear about what was actually meant by “reasonably foreseeable”. Indeed, there were significant abuses, even in the immediate aftermath of the passage of the legislation, whereby doctors determined someone’s death to be reasonably foreseeable based on a string of hypotheticals when a person had nothing approaching a terminal condition.

For example, back in 2016, I highlighted a case in Vancouver where a physician declared a depressed person eligible for euthanasia without examining the individual because that patient “could easily get bed sores and then die of infection”. A person’s death was, prior to examination, declared reasonably foreseeable because the person could theoretically die from an as yet uncontracted bed sore infection if they were bed bound as a result of the depression. These were the kinds of perverse outcomes that were possible even in 2016 as a result of a lack of safeguards and the ambiguity around what was meant by “reasonably foreseeable”.

The current rules allow someone also to consult many different physicians before finding two who will approve. Therefore, if 20 or 200 doctors say no, the criteria are not met, but then two say yes, the criteria are met, then the killing of the patient can proceed. The ambiguity and the opportunity to consult multiple doctors before getting the desired result means that, indeed, the holes were, and still are, large enough to drive a truck through. These were the pre-existing problems that were already, in particular, raising concerns of the disability community. The lack of clarity around what were and were not circumstances where death was reasonably foreseeable opened the door for people who were living with disabilities to be encouraged to pursue MAID, even if they did not want to, and even if they were actually not eligible.

Members do not have to take my word for it because the minister responsible for this legislation, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion of Canada, during a subsequent discussion of Bill C-7, said, “I regularly hear from families who are appalled by the fact that they take their child, potentially their older child and are offered unprovoked MAID. I think that has to stop.” That is from a minister in the government. This was already the context following the passage of Bill C-14 and prior to the passage of Bill C-7.

The road to Bill C-7 was much more contrived than the road to bill C-14. The already nebulous reasonable foreseeability clause was challenged and a lower court in one province proposed to overturn this restriction. The federal government could have appealed that lower court decision and, indeed, had a strong basis for doing so. An appeal would, at the very least, have given parliamentarians

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more time to consider a broad range of legislative options. Instead, the government made a political choice to embrace the lower court ruling and the artificial timeline it created, pushing medical assistance in dying for Canadians with disabilities. This was not about following a court ruling. This was about something the government could have appealed, but wanted to use the court ruling to advocate for a long-standing objective.

Following this contrived process, the government put forward Bill C-7, which was rightly opposed by all of the leading organizations representing Canadians living with disabilities, as well as by domestic and international human rights authorities.

Krista Carr from Inclusion Canada said, “Inclusion Canada has advocated for safeguards in MAID since we intervened in the Carter case. Our biggest fear has always been that having a disability would become an acceptable reason for state-provided suicide. Bill C-7 is our worst nightmare.” She continued, “By having a disability itself under Bill C-7 as the justification for the termination of life, the very essence of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms would be shattered. Discrimination on the basis of disability would once again be entrenched in Canadian law.”

She said further that the “singling out of one particular...group” of people based on their personal characteristics, which happen to be protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and to use those as grounds to justify the termination of the lives of the people who have those characteristics is just wrong, and that we would never consider doing this for any other group of people, including those who are indigenous, racialized or LGBTQ.

Dr. Heidi Janz from the Council of Canadians with Disabilities said:

People with disabilities are at a higher risk of suicide due to systemic and internalized ableism, yet they face substantial barriers when trying to access suicide prevention services. Medical professionals overlook typical sources of stress. Problems arising from relationship breakdowns, depression and isolation are wrongly attributed to disability. The removal of “reasonably foreseeable” natural death as a limiting eligibility criterion for the provision of MAID will result in people with disabilities seeking MAID as an ultimate capitulation to a lifetime of ableist oppression.

Finally, Bonnie Brayton from the DisAbled Women’s Network of Canada pointed out, “Bill C-7, is sadly lacking in any meaningful public consultation with any people with disabilities despite how much more profoundly it could affect anyone who lives with a disability.” The disability community overwhelmingly opposed Bill C-7 and has repeatedly raised concerns about negative pressure and coercion impacting Canadians living with disabilities.

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• (1610)

What about autonomy? The government would argue that Bill C-7 provides people with disabilities the option of medically facilitated death, but they do not have to choose that option. It is just another option that people have. To this, I would note that autonomy is always expressed in a social, legal and economic context. The context is that many Canadians living with disabilities struggle to access the key supports and services they need.

We do not have sufficient workplace supports in place and there are gaps in terms of community and income supports. In that context, the law and the medical system say to a person living with a disability that they have a simple way out and they can choose to die. If someone is at a point of existential agony and they have a disability, then the system will offer them death as a supposed solution.

In effect, if a person like me, without a disability, is experiencing existential distress and suicidal ideation, and if I were to discuss that distress with a doctor, I would be offered suicide prevention. However, if a person with a disability, the same as me in every other respect, is experiencing the same existential distress and suicidal ideations, and they discuss their distress with a doctor, they will be offered suicide facilitation by that same medical system.

That difference in the way the law and the health system treat those living with and without disabilities obviously sends a message to everyone involved in those interactions about whose life the law and the health system deem to be more or less worth living. The Liberal government has built a staircase to suicide prevention and a ramp to suicide facilitation.

As much as members opposite would like to say that this is about autonomy, the social and legal context that the government has created is not neutral and it is, in fact, discriminatory. Disability rights groups overwhelmingly see this reality, which is why they have been diametrically opposed to the approach of the government, and so much for “nothing about us without us”.

Canadians with disabilities feel devalued by a system that offers them easy death and does not offer them critical supports to live. Sadly, the mentality of the medical system is changing as well in response to these legal changes. The House has heard from many witnesses at different times and in different communities where patients were repeatedly pushed toward death and even called selfish for rejecting that option.

I will quote the minister again who said herself, “I regularly hear from families who are appalled by the fact that they take their child, potentially their older child and are offered unprovoked MAID. I think that has to stop.”

In response to the testimony we heard, Conservatives sought to amend Bill C-7 to guarantee that a physician or other health care worker would not raise euthanasia or MAID with a patient, unless the patient raises it first. This amendment would have ensured that, for instance, a person with a disability who goes to the doctor for something unrelated would not be offered facilitated death out of the blue. This would have solved the problem the minister identified, but the government opposed this—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I have to interrupt the hon. member. We have a point of order from the hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Madam Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, he is completely off topic. We are talking about financial assistance for persons with disabilities, but he has spent the last 10 minutes talking about medical assistance in dying, which is a totally different subject.

I hope our colleague will get back on course.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I understand the hon. member's point of view, but as he knows, we do allow some latitude on how members talk about certain issues.

However, I would invite the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan to get back to the subject of Bill C-22, which we are currently debating.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

[*English*]

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, I will continue to exercise the rights I am given by the House to speak about this pertinent issue, which fundamentally relates to this legislation.

The government does not want to hear the many concerns raised by Canadians living with disabilities. This is critically linked to their quality of life. The structures the government has put in place are denying vital supports to Canadians who need them and pushing them toward this widening door the government has offered when it comes to facilitated suicide.

Again, the minister said, “I regularly hear from families who are appalled by the fact that they take their child, potentially their older child and are offered unprovoked MAID. I think that has to stop.”

Of course, the government wants to go even further. Next year in March, euthanasia for those with depression or other mental health challenges will become explicitly legal and the government is now studying euthanasia for children. In a world imagined by the current trajectory, a parent could bring a teenager suffering from depression to a counsellor and find that the teenager is being offered suicide facilitation instead of suicide prevention support.

Recently, Dr. Louis Roy from the Quebec College of Physicians recommended that euthanasia be legalized for infants with certain disabilities. Imagine that someone would actually come to a parliamentary committee in Canada and recommend the killing of young children because of their disability. So much for autonomy. I hope the government would have denounced the vile views expressed by Mr. Roy, but it has not so far.

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• (1615)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I invite the hon. member to bring us back to Bill C-22, as we are going into a totally different bill, and the hon. member has one minute left.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, I expect better when it comes to ruling on the rules. You know that there is broad latitude. I have a 20-minute speech. I spent the first half of the speech discussing financial benefits, and I said that I would spend the second half of the speech discussing—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I will interrupt the hon. member to remind him that I was very broad in my interpretation of how the rules work, and the member had ample time to expose, precisely, the arguments he has been bringing forth. He has one minute left in his speech, and I would like to remind him to bring it back to Bill C-22. That is all I am saying.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, what I find to be extremely offensive about what just took place toward you is that the member pointed at you and said he expected better from you. That is not the way that any member of this House should treat the Chair, and not even the individual but the respect that is supposed to be shown to the Chair. I would encourage that member to apologize to the Chair.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I thank the hon. member for his care, but we in the chair know that we are subject to displeasing members.

The hon. member may proceed.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, it is very clear that members of the government, like members of the Bloc, do not want to hear about the subject that is a pressing priority for Canadians living with disabilities. They would prefer to talk about how they are introducing generic framework legislation with no particulars. They do not want to talk about the fact that they have been called out by every disability rights organization in this country for the fact that they have put in place a framework that is denying vital supports to Canadians with disabilities while widening the push, for Canadians facing disabilities, toward facilitated death.

People living with disabilities have a great deal to contribute to society, and they need to be offered workplace supports alongside income supports. We also need to recognize that a person's dignity is not dependent on their circumstances, their context, their perceived productivity or their ability to contribute. Human dignity is inherent in all human beings.

I will vote for Bill C-22 while maintaining extreme concern about the way the government views and treats Canadians living with disabilities, and about its apparent lack of desire to hear from parliamentarians and to hear the legitimate concerns that organizations are repeatedly raising.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I was going to make a joke about figures of speech and the need to educate my friend about figures of speech after reading his Twitter feed, but what I want to ask him about is

specifically around the quantum that he thinks should be realized. He spoke about the vagueness of the legislation, the punting of some of the eligibility criteria and the punting of the quantum to the regulations. It is a fair criticism, and in the Old Age Security Act we do not do that as Parliament.

Having said that, would the member support a submission to finance, for the coming budget cycle, that says the amount should be no less for people with disabilities of working age than it is for low-income seniors?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, I am not prepared to name a specific number on the fly, but I do agree in principle with my colleague that it would be legitimate to submit recommendations from parliamentarians to try to provide parameters around the appropriate numbers. I think that should be done in the context of not just saying a specific number for a benefit, but prescribing how the federal benefit would interact with benefits at other levels and how it would interact with the issues I raised about the need to provide appropriate support for Canadians entering the workforce.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I feel compelled to reiterate the comments I made earlier. I am a little annoyed, not to say appalled, that some members are using their speaking time in this House to deliver speeches that have nothing to do with the subject at hand, as my Conservative colleague just did.

Talking about medical assistance in dying and access to suicide while using language like “killing children” is outrageous and pure demagoguery. I am extremely shocked by this.

This is a serious bill that we in the Bloc Québécois will support. It aims to provide financial assistance to people with disabilities, and that is what my colleague should have talked about during his 20 minutes of speaking time. I find this very disturbing, and I wanted to say so.

[*English*]

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, I wish the member was more offended by the realities on the ground in this country and by the impact they have on the lives of Canadians with disabilities than he is by the fact that I have raised those issues in the House.

He did not like the fact that I referenced killing children. Dr. Louis Roy, from the Quebec College of Physicians, gave testimony before a committee of this House in which he recommended offering euthanasia to children who are less than a year old. Maybe the member did not have a chance to see that testimony. I would encourage him to review it. I think it is highly relevant to this conversation. If the message we are giving to parents who have children with disabilities and the message we are giving to Canadians with disabilities is that we are working hard to pave this so-called easy way out, that has a great deal to do with the conversation we are having today.

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**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am going to focus on the very beginning of the member's speech when he talked a bit about the need to support people with disabilities in the workplace. I have had disability advocates, including people with lived experience, come to me and talk about how this is not only discrimination in hiring, but accommodation and accessibility in the workplace. If we want people to feel welcome in the workplace, we need to ensure that we get rid of ableist policies and that we do everything we can to accommodate people with disabilities.

The House of Commons is an ableist workplace. For people with disabilities who want to run to become members of Parliament, virtual Parliament would be a huge step in ensuring that we have policies that support accommodation and accessibility. I am curious as to whether the member can respond to those comments.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, I was with the member for most of the way. I agree that all the things she spoke about in terms of accommodations are important. The House of Commons has within its Standing Orders provisions that allow any standing order to be abrogated in order to accommodate a member with a disability, and that is important and positive.

I believe there are ways to achieve that accommodation without virtual Parliament. My sense is that many members are keen on taking advantage of virtual Parliament and are Zooming in from their own offices, even on Parliament Hill. The institution can accommodate and has accommodated elected officials with disabilities outside of a virtual context.

I certainly agree that accommodation is very important. Cardus's research identifies that for employers, the costs of accommodation are actually much lower than are often initially expected. That research is very important and is hopefully encouraging to employers that are considering doing more in this area.

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Madam Speaker, it was three weeks ago now that we had this debate on Bill C-22 in the House and heard members of all parties communicate their support for Bill C-22. In the time since, I have put forward a unanimous consent motion on that basis to move it to committee so that amendments can be proposed and we can move forward with getting this benefit to Canadians with disabilities.

Can the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan speak to what he could do to get support from parliamentarians in this place to move on with getting Bill C-22 to committee?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, this is an important opportunity to talk about how legislation is scheduled in this place. The government has most of the days and the government schedules when legislation takes place. What the government has done with Bill C-22 is scheduled it for one day of debate, and then did not schedule it for weeks and weeks. Then the Liberals wondered how come the legislation has not passed.

Clearly, the legislation needs to have a certain amount of time for debate in the House. If the government had set this as a priority, and it should be a priority, it could have scheduled it for a number of days in that first week, and we could have completed second reading debate right up front.

It is a bit unreasonable for the government to say that if it is going to move this bill forward, we have to agree to adopt it, even while the government fails to prioritize it among its selection of bills. I think Bill C-22 should be a priority, and I would encourage the government to prioritize it in its selection of days so we can indeed complete the debate required on the issues around it and move it forward.

• (1625)

**Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments on the many issues he has brought up.

It is interesting what I am hearing around the room. I have an earpiece that I have to use because I cannot hear. I am deaf in one ear. People do not understand this because they cannot see my disability and I do not talk about my disability. There was a big concern about that with masks during COVID. People who are disabled because of their hearing read lips, and we could not read lips when we could not hear things. We heard comments from people who said we are speaking too loudly. Well, we speak loudly because we cannot hear and understand them. The issue of invisible disabilities is extremely important to a lot of disabled people.

I would like to quickly speak of a constituent who is 43 years old and has four children. He has lost the ability to raise his children. He had cochlear implants put in. His concern with this legislation is that while there are regulations, they do not tell him what he can do and how he can get back to work.

I wonder if the member would mind commenting on those invisible disabilities and the ability for people to get back to work.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, the member raises many important points, in particular recognizing the diversity of disabilities that exist. When we talk about disabilities, they could include many different kinds of things that in a particular social context make it harder for people to do a job that they could otherwise do. We need to recognize that not all forms of disability fit with what our expectations might be and not all forms of disability are visible.

That is why this program needs to be well constructed. It needs to be versatile and it needs to encourage accommodations for people that respond to their particular circumstances. It is why we would have liked to see more details on this from the government in terms of the legislation. These are important questions we need to be asking at committee.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, going back to the preceding question asked by the member for Kitchener Centre, I do not disagree with the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. He is right that it is the government that sets the days and the agenda. However, a lot of this place operates in good faith. We have to operate under the assumption that we want to move forward to eventually get to a place of voting on a particular bill. The problem, which the member knows better than probably most Conservatives, is that the Conservatives use various tactics to slow the day down. They will move a motion of concurrence that burns away three hours and then will put some points of order in there, again to burn more time to try to burn away a day.

It is very clear and obvious to Canadians as a whole that the Conservatives use multiple tactics to slow down anything getting through this House because they want to see this government fail. That is their objective and motive behind this, and the member knows it.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, look at the facts. This fall, the House has sat for about three weeks and the Conservatives have given unanimous consent to expedite two pieces of legislation, Bill C-29 and Bill C-30. That is a pretty impressive, breakneck speed for the opposition to agree to the option of certain pieces of legislation.

This is only the second half day that we have debated Bill C-22, and yes, it needs to be debated. We support the legislation and want it to move forward, but we want the government to do better, and debate in Parliament is part of the process.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, we heard him say it himself. The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan basically just said, “Yes, we let go some legislation that we all agreed with. Are we not the heroes of the day?” This is legislation that, by his own words, we all agree on. He said that we all agree on it. Then he suggested it is somehow some kind of handout to the government to allow that legislation to pass through this House because they already agree with it. We heard the argument come from him just moments ago.

In any event, I want to start my speech today by referencing what happened during the last speech from the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan and the way he went after the Chair in this House by saying to the Chair that he expected better. It is extremely disrespectful to the chair occupant. It is extremely disrespectful to the individual who happens to be sitting there at the time, and more importantly, it is disrespectful to the institution. The institution of our parliamentary system is based on one individual who presides over the meetings to ensure fairness and comes from an impartial perspective, despite the fact they may have come to this place under a particular party banner. We lend that impartiality and benefit of the doubt and we treat that individual as though they come from that place of impartiality for all chair occupants.

I know I certainly have a great relationship with the Deputy Speaker, who happens to be from the Conservative Party, and I try to extend that to the Deputy Speaker from the NDP and indeed yourself, Madam Speaker. For a member of this House to point at

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the chair occupant who happens to be sitting there at the time and say, “You should do better,” is extremely disrespectful to this entire institution.

Quite frankly, the member should apologize. I asked him to do that when it happened. He did not do that. He will have more opportunities to do that. I really hope he does. He can feel free to interrupt me in my speech on a point of order to apologize to you, because you deserve it, Madam Speaker. You should not have had that occur.

We are talking about this piece of legislation and how all parties in the House appear to be supportive of it. The Bloc has spoken in favour of it, as have the NDP, the Greens and the Liberals, obviously, and the Conservatives appear to be supportive of it. Maybe that is why they spend their entire time talking on this particular topic about anything but this piece of legislation, as we witnessed prior to my speech.

If we go back and look at the actual platform commitments of all political parties, we will see there was some degree in there of moving forward with a national disability benefit. We have come to a certain place in our society where we respect the fact that we need to start looking at our disability benefits from a national perspective.

Right now, like many of the programs we have out there, there are piecemeal projects in Ontario. There is ODSP, which is the Ontario disability support program, and there are various different ones in other provinces. What we saw in the last election was that all parties committed to doing something about this very important issue, and we have been called to do so by many individuals throughout the country, repeatedly.

We know that persons with disabilities face unique challenges, challenges that are not seen and are not realized the same way as those faced by persons without disabilities. We also know that individuals with disabilities, proportionately speaking, represent a larger population of those who are experiencing poverty. As a matter of fact, when we look at poverty rates, they can be significantly higher among individuals who have a disability.

One of the very important things to talk about here is that, at least from the government's perspective, from the Liberal Party's perspective, when we go to tackle something as large as this, because make no mistake, this is a very large program that has a lot of moving pieces to it, we need to work with our counterparts. This is not something that is very clear, clean cut and simple, something that can be just tabled, passed and implemented. This is something on which we need to start going back and talking to various different provinces and regions that are providing benefits like this.

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• (1630)

For example, what we do not want to happen in my province of Ontario is for the federal government to introduce a benefit like this and have our provincial government see it as an opportunity to claw back from existing programs that are already in place, such as the ODSP in Ontario, as I just mentioned. If we do that, the benefit would be counterproductive in terms of providing more supports for Canadians who really need them.

Members can imagine that when we talk about the provinces and territories that have to work with the federal government on this, it is not going to be a one-size-fits-all situation, which is why this legislation is about a framework. It is about establishing the framework by which we can then go and have these discussions to create the right programs, balance them against existing programs that are in place in the provinces and regions, and make sure there is a net gain to actually lift people with disabilities out of poverty. When we talk about that framework, we are talking about the various things the bill would seek to do. It is not simple, as I indicated, and there are a lot of moving parts.

For example, who would be eligible? The bill needs to make sure that it clearly identifies who would be eligible. The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan and others who spoke earlier were saying that the details were not in the bill and that the details should be there right now. Well, these are the things that need to be worked out, such as who is eligible, the conditions that need to be met to determine eligibility and the amount that individuals would receive, ensuring, again, that anything that is given at the federal level is not counterproductive or used as an opportunity to claw back at the provincial level.

We need to see about indexing the benefit to inflation. We are seeing extreme hardship right now as we face global inflation, and we see that the benefit would have to somehow adjust to meet those inflationary increases. There are also the payment periods, or how often the payments would be made, what the most beneficial way is to make the payments and how they would be rolled out to individuals. These are things that all need to be considered.

There is the application process for individuals who are perhaps currently getting other disability payments in their province. How would they apply, and how would we ensure fairness across all provinces and territories, despite the fact that many individuals are already accessing other benefits? There are also the applications made on behalf of people who are incapable of making their own applications. What will the process be to ensure that this can be taken care of?

There will be circumstances in which an applicant would be ineligible to receive the benefit, so we need to make sure that we properly identify that as well. Of course, the other end of that would be establishing a list of offences for people who try to abuse the benefit, and there is a lot of talk about that, especially when people talk about CERB and those who abused it. We need to use the time now to ensure that whatever we put in place properly respects and reflects that.

For example, some of the offences could include people who falsely identify information, individuals who are caught counselling people on how to falsify information with the intent to steal all or a

substantial part of the benefit, or those who knowingly making false or misleading representations in relation to an application. All of these things need to be properly looked at.

The problem, as I indicated previously, is that we are not looking at this just through a federal lens. The legislation, the benefit, would be touching upon other benefits that already exist out there, so, for all the reasons I just talked about, what is being proposed here is framework legislation. This is legislation to set up the framework on which this benefit will be established, which is monumental in terms of a national approach. We have never had a benefit like this before, and it is long overdue. So many Canadians out there deserve it and, quite frankly, have been waiting a long time for it, but we need to continue to push forward and do this properly.

• (1635)

We know that more than six million Canadians over the age of 15, representing over 20% of Canadians, currently identify with having a disability. That is what we know right now in Canada. Only 59% of Canadians with disabilities between the ages of 25 and 64 were employed in 2017, compared to 80% of those without disabilities. Therefore, the data indicate that those who have disabilities are not employed, from a percentage perspective, as much as those without disabilities. That is really important. Persons with disabilities who were working earned less than Canadians without disabilities, 12% less for those with milder disabilities and 51% less for those with more severe disabilities. These are the facts we know of what the current situation is like. We are not even talking about people who are not working; we are talking about people who are working with disabilities and comparing them to people without disabilities, and we see that those with disabilities are making a substantially lower amount compared to those without disabilities.

Around 850,000, or 21% of working-age Canadians with disabilities, live in poverty. These are individuals who are living below the poverty line and quite often are already struggling as it is, in addition to the increased burden that is placed upon them by having a disability. We know that the House has spoken unanimously in favour of bringing forward disability legislation. We are finally seeing this here today. We know that all members of the House support it, and I really hope we can see this move on so we can get to the point where we have a vote on it and see it come to fruition.

There are certain things I believe we should try to avoid being political about, to the best of our abilities, and probably one of the most important is taking care of some of the most vulnerable people in our community. If there is no other reason we assemble in this place or no other reason for government to exist, it is to help the most vulnerable people in our communities. That is exactly what this piece of legislation is doing. It is recognizing the fact that, yes, disabilities are not what people may have thought them to be decades ago, and that they are expensive and include a lot more than those traditional ideas of what a disability was. They include things like, as my Conservative colleague mentioned earlier, hearing impairment and an inability to communicate as a result of that. It is so important that we, as government and as parliamentarians, make sure we establish the supports necessary to take care of people in their moments of need. Therefore, I really hope we can see this legislation pass through this House and work together to ensure the framework is moved along as quickly as possible.

I note that this piece of legislation to establish the framework requires that it be reviewed by Parliament after the first three years of the disability benefit being in place and every five years after that, which is unique, because most of the time that review period is a five-year period. The importance of this, I think, is highlighted in the fact that the government insists there be oversight on this to adjust, balance and reposition in the event that things need to be tweaked along the way.

I will conclude with that. I really encourage all members in this House to vote in favour of this. I hope we can move quickly on it. I did not take the full time allotted to me to speak to this, and I hope others choose to do the same and help to move this along very quickly so we can vote on it, put it into legislation and build that framework.

• (1640)

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the speech from the member for Kingston and the Islands, and I want to reiterate that we do have a point of agreement.

I believe all provinces would have the incentive here to simply claw back or even draw down what they would usually give to someone who is in particularly dire need, particularly persons with disabilities. However, the issue here is that this bill should ideally have had first reading and then been referred to a committee. As in British Columbia, we are seeing more and more legislation coming out that gives absolute power to the minister and department officials to do everything by regulation. That is exactly what this bill does.

As well intentioned as all members who have spoken on this are, essentially it does not take leadership and say that this is the dollar amount we believe every Canadian citizen, every person with disabilities who cannot work for themselves and who is vulnerable, needs to be able to live. Essentially, by abdicating that role, we are going to be giving that power to department officials and the minister. The member may agree with the minister, but later on another government could come in and the number will change. Then none of us will have the ability to do anything other than squawk in the House.

Does the member believe that the bill should have gone straight to committee? Does he believe it should have had a number to show some leadership? Again, I thank him for his frankness around the provinces.

• (1645)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, first of all I would say that I agree with the hon. member in terms of the incentive. Certainly there is an incentive there for other levels of government to use the opportunity to claw back, because they see another form of payment coming, and use that money for something else. It is very basic. It is fair to say that this would be something that would be very attractive to different levels of government. One of the first things we would need to do is to ensure that this does not happen.

The member also asked about the oversight on this and what it would look like down the road. As I indicated toward the end of my speech, one of the things about this bill, which is unique, is that the

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first time it has to be reviewed in terms of the oversight on it is three years after the legislation comes into force. That is unique, because typically it is five years. I would say that Parliament would have oversight on this. I would say that there are a lot of programs out there on which the member might use the logic he brought up. He might consider why the same thing is not done with OAS, for example. I will leave it to him to come back to the House on that.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Madam Speaker, as my colleague already mentioned, the bill is rather vague on the details. Some clarification will be needed. I note, however, that the government seems to be anxious not to interfere in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the Canadian provinces, and that is appreciated.

Currently, persons with a disability or an impairment may be entitled to health benefits, transportation allowances, adaptive equipment and employment supports, among other things. It is important that these support measures not be reduced or clawed back if someone receives the benefit. The bill is currently so vague that it raises concerns about possible clawbacks.

What suggestions would my colleague make to address this lack of clarity in the bill in order to ensure that persons with a disability or an impairment will not be penalized?

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, the concern, again, similar to what we have heard from the Conservatives, is that there is not enough information or details in the bill in terms of who is going to be eligible or how much they are going to get. These are the things that I talked about in my speech.

I talked about why this is framework legislation. Those details need to come out after engaging in that consultation process to determine exactly what it should be. When it comes to spending money, we will still have a budget every year that would have to be approved. That money would presumably be inside that budget envelope and be approved by the House.

The member's last comment, specifically, with respect to how we make sure other jurisdictions do not end up clawing back is one of the most important things here. ODSP in Ontario, the Ontario disability support program, on its own barely lets people get by. What I would hate to see is the Ontario government utilize the fact that there is this new federal program to claw back from the provincial side. Ontario might be different from Quebec, and it might be different from other provinces and territories. That is why we need to make sure that, whatever we do, we respect those jurisdictions but ensure that this is going to be additional to what people are already receiving.

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**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am concerned that there is not enough information on how much people with disabilities will get and who will be eligible, but I am also concerned that there is not a clear timeline on when people will get this benefit. The minister has stated publicly that it could be three years. People with disabilities need help now.

Does the member think it is acceptable to wait three years?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, I do not think that it is acceptable to make people wait any longer than is absolutely necessary. This is long overdue and needs to come into effect as soon as possible.

I also want to ensure that, when it is done, it is done right. I want to make sure that the proper research is done so that, when establishing amounts like the member is asking about, establishing criteria like we have heard from the Conservatives and the Bloc, when all of that is done, it is done in a way that respects the fact that we have multiple different jurisdictions already engaging in disability payments, that they do not claw back on those payments and that people are receiving this benefit equally across the country.

I appreciate the New Democrats' passion on this, but I feel as though they are trying to apply a certain degree of simplicity to what I see as a very complex equation and problem that we need to iron out and make sure we get right.

• (1650)

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I have been listening very intently to debate on this very important piece of legislation and something that sticks out is the evolving concept of “nothing about us without us”, it being simply for the disability community “nothing without us”.

Could the hon. parliamentary secretary comment on how Bill C-22 lives up to this mantra and, additionally, just how important the leadership of the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion has been to the House?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, that question goes back to the other three questions that I have been asked. The questions have all been about timing, amounts and determining all of this stuff in advance right now, but the “nothing without us” concept is all about ensuring that these decisions are made with the disability community and ensuring that, when we talk about how much the payment will be and the criteria for receiving it, it is not a top-down approach but an approach that works with individuals with disabilities.

I personally believe that the new benefit needs to be done in consultation with persons with disabilities. That is why I support this particular framework that we have in front of us.

**Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to know what the member proposes to be part of this legislation. I heard him mention that they do not want us to have to claw back, so I guess that is on Conservatives. In a couple of years' time when we form government, we do not want to have to claw back.

What measures are going to be put into this legislation to make sure that we do not have a similar situation to what we had with

CERB and other programs, and will the program be efficiently administered, unlike what is happening with passports and Veterans Affairs issues right now?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, there is nothing that I can do to ensure that a potential future Conservative government does not claw back or eliminate this entire benefit altogether. As a matter of fact, I am quite worried that something like that might happen.

When I was talking about clawbacks, I was talking about the provincial government clawing back, like the Conservative member asked me earlier. He specifically said it is almost human nature for provinces to want to claw back a bit when they realize that money is coming from another area. That is what we want to ensure does not happen. This is supplemental to other provinces and territories that also provide supports and would not replace them.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, Public Safety; the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Public Safety; and the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Health.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am happy to speak today on this very important bill, Bill C-22, around establishing the Canada disability benefit. I want to acknowledge the work of my NDP colleague, the MP for Port Moody—Coquitlam, and others for their perseverance in bringing the voices of those living with disabilities, as well as the tremendous amount of work led by those living with disabilities and many allies, to Parliament. It is clear we need the government to act now and implement this much overdue benefit.

Constituents in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith with disabilities and allies are asking for their voices to finally be heard. I ask my colleagues to consider what their lives would look like if they were living with a disability and as a result were legislated into poverty. I think of Jocelyn, a constituent from my riding whom I have spoken about before in this chamber, who is struggling to keep food on the table for her and her children as a result of living with a disability.

Jocelyn is a single parent of two young children who holds an education, work experience and a drive to contribute and give back to her community. Unfortunately, Jocelyn was in multiple accidents, leaving her unable to work and relying on the minimal disability income provided to make ends meet. Jocelyn described to me the challenges she experiences in covering just the basic costs of living. Jocelyn was very clear that all she was hoping for is the certainty her children would have food on the table and a place to call home. Housing and food are certainly not luxuries for her and her children. These are basic human rights.



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In the 2015 election, the Liberals ran on a platform of delivering equitable opportunities for those living with disabilities. We had a glimmer of hope before the most recent election called by the Liberals, followed by inaction. This promise could have been delivered within the last seven years of the Liberal government so that those desperately waiting had the basics they need, yet here we are once again with no action.

Why are those living with disabilities being treated by the government as if their lives do not matter? The impacts of this inaction, this complete disregard for fellow human lives, is evident across Canada. It is imperative that federal leadership is taken today to provide Canadians with disabilities the basic human rights they deserve. Instead, more and more Canadians are becoming homeless, relying on food banks, getting sicker instead of better without access to the medications they need, and often left without the affordable and necessary adaptive equipment they need.

A lack of federal leadership trickles down in many ways. People living with disabilities are being made to feel their lives do not matter. I feel it important to once again share the story of a constituent in my riding who described to me that he felt he did not matter and that, because of his disability, his life was considered disposable and was being treated as such by the government. I know this constituent is not alone in his experience. I am hearing from more and more people living with disabilities who feel they have little hope of things ever getting better for them, feeling frustrated by the government and needing action today.

People living with disabilities continue to contribute to our communities in countless ways. I think of Anne, for example, another constituent in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith and also a friend who is living with disabilities. Anne was told by a job placement agency years ago that she should settle for sitting at home and watching daytime television. Despite this clearly misguided and uninformed recommendation, I met Anne when she returned to complete her post-secondary education at Vancouver Island University as a fellow student.

With barriers removed for Anne's success, Anne thrived as a post-secondary student. She graduated with distinction, continued on to finish her master's degree and is now an author and a strong community advocate for those living with disabilities and their right to access barrier-free education and housing and to participate fully in the community. Despite Anne's accomplishments, Anne continues to be bogged down by a student loan with payments that are unrealistic with the minimal income she receives.

When we take a moment to step back, it becomes evident that ensuring those with disabilities are, at minimum, living above the poverty line does not only benefit those living with a disability like Anne and Jocelyn, but it benefits Canadians as a whole. The symptoms of reacting to poverty costs us all. When people cannot afford healthy, nutritious foods, we see increased costs to health care, as just one example. The same applies when people cannot afford the medications they need or a safe roof over their heads. We pay more as Canadians when we are reacting to the symptoms of poverty than if we prepare and respond proactively by providing the means for all to live with dignity and respect.

• (1655)

If people have, at the very minimum, their basic needs met, including a place to call home, healthy food and enough money to pay their bills, everyone benefits. Those living with disabilities are not exempt. Poverty does not benefit anybody. Economists predict that poverty in Canada would be reduced by as much as 40% overall by eliminating disability poverty alone.

Yet another resident in my riding, Kate, shared with me her experience living with disabilities and trying to make ends meet. In addition to living with Chiari malformation, a structural defect in the skull that causes part of the brain to push into the spinal canal, leading to symptoms such as severe headaches, numbness of the limbs, loss of muscle control, coordination issues, dizziness and fainting, Kate suffers with early-onset osteoarthritis, ADHD, anxiety, depression and several food and environmental allergies. To make matters worse, she was also diagnosed with cancer.

One would think Kate had enough to deal with in her day-to-day life. Instead, she has been legislated into poverty by the government, because she is living with disabilities. Compounding Kate's serious health concerns, she has not eaten more than one single meal a day in nearly a year. She skips breakfast and lunch so she can enjoy and afford one dinner a day. As a result, Kate has been prescribed by her doctor a list of supplements to counteract the malnutrition she is experiencing. Unfortunately, Kate cannot purchase the supplements she has been prescribed with the little funds she is forced to live on.

With the increased cost of living, Kate's minimal income is stretched even thinner. Kate described adding a bag of frozen vegetables to her cart just recently, the same bag of vegetables she spent her few dollars on in the past, crying with the realization that this same bag had increased in price from \$4.00 to \$5.29. How much more could Kate possibly cut back from only one meal a day? The reality Kate is facing trying to make ends meet with a disability is unfortunately all too common. Kate describes her experience of living in poverty, pointing out, "Poverty is relentless. It is a constant, nagging, oppressing force that never lets up."

There is a saying that the true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members. In a country as rich as ours, I am sad to say the government gets a fail on how we treat those living with disabilities.

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Let me be clear. Some of the strongest people I know are living with disabilities. The incredible strength I have seen exhibited, despite being kicked down over and over again, is formidable. People living with disabilities are contributing members of our communities with their own unique stories, talents and skills. People living with disabilities have loved ones, hobbies and goals they are working on, just like all of us, yet because many are unable to contribute through financialized forms of labour, we treat those living with disabilities, as my constituent stated, as disposable.

However, many people living with disabilities deserve what everyone deserves: basic human rights. Why must those living with disabilities fight so hard to be able to meet their most basic needs? The Liberal government has let Canadians living with disabilities down at a time when they need the government to step up most.

Thankfully, there are ways we can move forward today to begin treating those with disabilities with the dignity and respect they deserve. With the support of my colleagues in this chamber today, we can move forward with a Canada disability benefit. If it is delivered with the best interests of those living with disabilities and in partnership with provinces and territories, those living with disabilities could once again have hope.

To those who are expressing their concerns and have been fighting for too long, I hear them and promise them that I will do all I can, working alongside my NDP colleagues, to push for this to be done in a timely manner and to finally start doing what is right.

• (1700)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I think what is significant here is that we are taking a historic step in terms of passing this legislation, recognizing how important it is that as a national government we are there to support people with disabilities in a tangible way. In listening to the debate, whether it was on the first day or in today's debate, it is obvious that there are going to be issues that the standing committee will deal with to see if there are ways we could improve upon the legislation.

My question to the member is with respect to that. Does the NDP have, and is she aware of, specific amendments it is hoping to propose at the committee stage, in hopes that this legislation passes soon?

• (1705)

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** Madam Speaker, I do hope this bill is supported by all members and sent to committee to be worked on. There is much work that needs to be done. I have full faith that my colleague, the NDP member for Port Moody—Coquitlam, will bring forward some amendments to ensure that the information within this bill is specific enough and has the timelines needed to implement the program in a way that will benefit those living with disabilities and put that money where it belongs, which is in their pockets so that they can afford to make ends meet.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Madam Speaker, one of the things that I have been asking members on the government benches about, and I am hoping that maybe the member has thoughts on this too, is that there is not a lot of content in this legislation right now.

The Old Age Security Act is actually very similar, when we are talking about providing a benefit to individuals at the very bottom of the income scale in order to support them. Old age security is meant for pensioners, those people who have retired or simply cannot work and happen to find themselves struggling in very difficult situations, which is kind of what we are talking about here, helping those who are unable to work due to whatever disability it is that they have.

The Old Age Security Act already has a lot of good content examples, for things like criteria and cost of living adjustments, to make sure that the benefit received is not impacted by inflation. I wonder if the member would agree with me that we should look at the Old Age Security Act at the committee stage to try to remove some of the ability for cabinet to simply set things by regulation, so that we parliamentarians can then set it into legislation so that it becomes fixed.

Having it in legislation is a much better proposition for persons with disabilities. It gives them certainty. I wonder if the member agrees with that.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** Madam Speaker, it is clear that far too many, in a country as wealthy as ours, are living in poverty. That definitely does include seniors and those living with disabilities. We have a high child poverty rate. There are actions that we know can move us forward to start to alleviate the poverty being experienced. This national disability benefit is one such benefit that can be put into place today and actually start making a difference, a real difference in people's lives.

To answer his question, everybody needs to be lifted out of poverty. Let us definitely look at some examples of what has been working well and get the bill to committee so we can start doing the work.

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith for her strong support of Bill C-22, alongside the rest of the NDP caucus. As she mentioned, there are a number of groups across the country who have called out concerns with respect to what is not in the bill. Today, most recently, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance has done the same.

Can she share more about what she can be doing, working alongside all parliamentarians in this place, to ensure that strong amendments are brought forward at committee as soon as possible to strengthen the bill?

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for all of his work and advocacy around this bill and getting people with disabilities the support they need and deserve.

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It is vital that we are getting all hands on deck and getting this work done today. That includes having our federal Liberal government working alongside provinces and territories to ensure that this benefit is provided in such a way that those living with disabilities are receiving the benefits that they need and deserve. Ensuring that clawbacks are not happening is just one example.

Absolutely, there are many amendments that still need to be done. This is not the bill that the NDP would have put forward, but it is a step in the right direction.

\* \* \*

**COST OF LIVING RELIEF ACT, NO. 2**

## NOTICE OF CLOSURE MOTION

**Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I give notice that, with respect to consideration of Government Business No. 20, at the next sitting of the House, a minister of the Crown shall move, pursuant to Standing Order 57, that debate be not further adjourned.

\* \* \*

**CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-22, An Act to reduce poverty and to support the financial security of persons with disabilities by establishing the Canada disability benefit and making a consequential amendment to the Income Tax Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure and privilege to rise in this House this afternoon to join the debate at second reading of Bill C-22, the Canada disability benefit act. I am particularly pleased to participate in this debate based on many of the conversations I have had over the last few weeks with constituents in my riding of Perth—Wellington.

I want to highlight one specific conversation I had last week. It happened at the Local Community Food Centre in my riding of Perth—Wellington. For those who may not know what the Community Food Centre is, it is a wonderful institution in my riding. It is called “the Local”. We just call it “the Local”. I like to compare it to a kitchen. It obviously has a kitchen but it is like a family kitchen. When someone enters, they are part of a family. The people who greet them are always there with smiles, are always there with a helping hand and are always there for good conversation. When I was invited to meet with community members to discuss issues affecting those living with disabilities, I was absolutely thrilled and honoured to participate in that conversation.

When I arrived last week on Friday at the Local, there greeting me right away was Uncle Glen, with a big smile. He is not officially my uncle, but I call him Uncle Glen. He is Glen Broadfoot. I think I got a hug as well, which was wonderful. I was offered a cup of coffee by another community member, and we began an important conversation about what is needed for Canadians living with disabilities. If there was one word that came out of that conversation that I think encapsulates this piece of legislation and the hopes for it, it is the word “dignity”, dignity for Canadians living with disabilities.

In that conversation around a circle of chairs last Friday, the word “dignity” came up time and time again. One participant talked about how a haircut was considered a luxury. Another individual talked about how she is not able to have a social life due to the meagre amount she receives each month. She cannot even go for a cup of coffee at the local coffee shop, Tim Hortons, to have that interaction with the community. After hearing stories and challenges like that, it becomes all the more important that we have this conversation today about what we as Canadians and parliamentarians want to see to support Canadians living with disabilities.

Another participant in that conversation talked about how she worked a few hours a week and received a certain amount of money, but every time she worked that hour and every time she brought home that paycheque, money was immediately clawed back from her monthly ODSP cheque. Although she enjoyed and was able to take part in that opportunity, it was clawed back.

When we come to discuss this piece of legislation and what we want to see going forward with the Canada disability benefit act, we want to encapsulate some of the concerns that have been expressed by the people whom I and all members of this House have met with. However, one of the challenges with a bill like Bill C-22 is that it is the bare bones. It is the structure and it is the foundation, but it is not the actual meat on the bones. That will come later through regulations.

I want to use the few moments I have this afternoon to highlight some of the things that I think are necessary, and what I think a lot of Canadians think are necessary, for this piece of legislation and should go into it.

The first thing is about the clawbacks that have been mentioned a few times in this House, either from provincial programs or from other entities or work income. It is my hope that when the regulations for this piece of legislation are developed, there are safeguards in place to ensure that when a dollar is earned through this benefit, a dollar is not taken elsewhere, whether it is through a provincial program or through money that someone may have earned from workplace employment. Too often we see governments at one level give a dollar and governments at another level take a dollar away, so that is the first thing I hope to see happen with this piece of legislation.

● (1710)

I want to highlight one opportunity that I think is there. Two parliaments ago, in the 42nd Parliament, the House debated a bill entitled “Opportunity for Workers with Disabilities Act”, which was Bill C-395, and it stood in the name of the now Leader of the Opposition, the member for Carleton. It was a bill that would have ensured that when people earned employment income they were not negatively impacted in their other benefits, including and most specifically disability benefits. Therefore, I hope that, when this bill is considered at committee, and we expect it to be taken up in the next few days, some of the principles from that bill are enshrined within this one to ensure there is not that disadvantage.

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The other thing I very much hope we will see through this piece of legislation once it is implemented through regulatory means is that it is done with a disabilities' lens in mind. What I mean by that is to ensure this program is set up in such a way that it is clear, understandable and easy to use for anyone making applications to the program. We know that as Canadians we file a lot of information with various government entities, whether it be the Canada Revenue Agency or Service Canada, which already have a lot of the information needed to process this type of benefit. It is my hope that when the regulations come into place they are done in a clear, efficient and easy-to-use way so that Canadians living with disabilities from coast to coast to coast are able to access the benefits that ought to be provided through this benefit without additional means, barricades and blockages to prevent them from obtaining these important benefits.

As I wrap up my comments and thoughts on this piece of legislation, I want to read a couple of very short postcards I have received from constituents in my riding, which I think help to summarize the importance of the disability benefit and supporting Canadians living with disabilities.

One constituent wrote to me stating, "We must take care of our most vulnerable. Only by lifting others up do we lift ourselves up." Another constituent wrote, "It's such an important thing to look after and aid the people living with disabilities in our city, in our province and in our country. The challenges of poverty associated with disabilities is demoralizing. Please debate and pass this bill." Those are just two examples of constituents in my riding who have been pushing for this important benefit for a long time.

As I wrap up my comments, I want to once again thank the many constituents who have contacted me on this piece of legislation. I specifically want to point out the good work that is being done by the folks at the Local Community Food Centre, which is working to bring all community members together in a safe and welcoming place that respects and promotes the dignity of persons living with disabilities.

● (1715)

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am happy to chime in today on this very important bill. Also, this debate is occurring on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. I am sure my hon. colleague is aware of this important day. I am also really glad to hear there is a community food centre in his riding. We are neighbours in fact, so it is good to hear that the Community Food Centres is doing so much good work in his community.

I echo the member's comments with respect to dignity and the right that all Canadians have to that dignity, ensuring they can do normal things like go and get a haircut, pay their rent and go to Tim Hortons for a coffee. Today is a day where the whole world is focused on the issue of poverty reduction, so I would like to ask the member this point blank. This is an important bill, one that I am passionate about, one that I signed the letter, with various members of this House, to fast-track. Will he be supporting the Canada disability benefit act?

**Mr. John Nater:** Madam Speaker, I thought I was fairly clear in my comments that I will in fact be supporting Bill C-22. I think it has been clear from the Conservative Party that we will be unanimously supporting that piece of legislation.

However, I want to take a few seconds to again focus on the importance of where we go from here with this piece of legislation. It will be going to committee and later to regulations. We must ensure that this piece of legislation does not get bogged down in a regulatory process where bureaucrats are affecting the outcomes of people's lives. We need to make sure that we are in this for the right reasons and in it to support Canadians who are living with disabilities from coast to coast to coast.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Madam Speaker, today is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, so I am glad we are talking about this and the realities that so many people living with disabilities face. As a collective, as a country, we have to take ownership of the fact that our inability to create accessible spaces has excluded people and left them in poverty, so I am glad we are having that conversation and I hope we continue to actually take the next step.

With respect to this piece of legislation, although I will support it, although I appreciate the intention, what really matters to me is the impact. What we see in this piece of legislation is that there is nothing concrete that is really going to make a successive difference. I do not want to see this just passed and the actions not taken. I wonder if the member could reflect on that.

● (1720)

**Mr. John Nater:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for North Island—Powell River for her important question.

The member is absolutely right. It is the impact. It is the impact that this or other pieces of legislation will have on Canadians living with disabilities, and there is a challenge. However, this is not a concrete piece of legislation. This is a framework, a foundation, but it does not actually list what would come out of it.

From personal experience, as my mother-in-law lives with a disability and uses a wheelchair, I know that different programs in the past, particularly those focused on accessibility, were done with good intentions, but they were not always implemented in a way that is cognizant or reflective of what is needed by persons living with disabilities.

Again, I will give an A for effort on this piece of legislation, but the real work is going to come down the road to ensure that there is a meaningful impact and that this piece of legislation does not claw back benefits that might be received elsewhere or make it more difficult for persons living with disabilities.

**Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his great speech and for recognizing the many types of disabilities that we have out there.

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This past weekend, I was fortunate to be golfing with a young man whose left hand and left foot are disabled due to cerebral palsy, and on the very last hole of the tournament, he was the last guy up. He hit his golf ball on 14th hole of the Estevan golf course, and eight of us watched it sail over the water, hit the green and roll into the hole. He got a hole in one, and it was spectacular.

Now, his nickname is Ace, and I hate to say this, but he has had three holes in one. However, it was such a fantastic thing to see, and the eight of us were all over him, cheering him on with this great and fantastic thing.

I chatted with him a little about the legislation before us during that golf tournament, and one of his concerns was about the steps that were in it, particularly the regulations and what those regulations would be saying, which is a big challenge. I wonder if my colleague could comment on where he sees these regulations, because the reality is, at committee those regulations will hopefully get some answers to them.

**Mr. John Nater:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question, and I congratulate Ace on his hole in one, which is something I have never in my life achieved. However, he is absolutely right about the regulations. Going forward, we need to make sure that the regulations are clear, direct, to the point and do not have any unintended consequences that would negatively impact a person living with a disability.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am so pleased to be speaking tonight to Bill C-22, an act to reduce poverty and to support the financial security of persons with disabilities by establishing the Canada disability benefit and making a consequential amendment to the Income Tax Act.

I was thinking about this bill on my flight to Ottawa last night, and I would be remiss if I did not mention Bethesda Christian Association. For the majority of my mother's life, she has volunteered with Bethesda, and as a child I volunteered with Bethesda as well. My mom also worked for the organization for over 20 years. Working with Bethesda taught me a lot about humanity and taught my family a lot about compassion, humility and respecting the rights of every single person.

I have had the privilege of knowing one woman since I was born, Darlene, who also went to the same church as me when I was growing up. One of my favourite childhood photos is of me sitting at the family piano with Darlene. To know Darlene today has brought richness to my life. Darlene lives with mental disabilities, but she lives life to the fullest. She has taught me so much, even though I am an outgoing person, about getting out there and not being afraid to shake the hand of a stranger or say something in church at the appropriate time. She has brought so much richness to my life.

I also know that women like Darlene have been challenged financially. Irrespective of government, we have seen a reduction in support staff and direct supports for women like Darlene living with disabilities. That is not good. As a Conservative, one of the tenets I hold to is that the government has a responsibility to take care of people who cannot take care of themselves. Many Canadians living with disabilities, especially those with mental challenges like Darlene, really do need support from taxpayers to live their

best and full lives. For a country as rich as Canada, I do not think that is a hard threshold to reach.

I am pleased to say that I will be supporting this bill today because of what I learned from Bethesda Christian Association growing up and because we need to do more to support those living with disabilities. However, when I looked at Bill C-22, especially the "Regulations" section, clause 11 of the bill, it says a lot. I will give a couple of examples. Paragraph (a) says, "respecting the eligibility criteria"; paragraph (b) says, "respecting conditions that are to be met in order to receive or to continue to receive a benefit"; and paragraph (c) says, "respecting the amount of a benefit or the method for determining the amount".

The bill goes on and on like this for about a page and a half, but it does not say some of the things that people are looking for. How much will they actually receive from the government under a Canada disability benefit? What would a Canada disability benefit cost to the public coffers, and when will the disability benefit be costed out? Another question that I was struck with upon reading the bill is this: What amount does the government plan to provide persons with disabilities through the Canada disability benefit?

How does the government plan on coordinating the Canada disability benefit with other provincial benefits? If this benefit is to operate in coordination with provincial benefits, how will the government ensure that there is no provincial disparity for those accessing the benefit in respect of the tax code?

As another point, what will the eligibility be for the Canada disability benefit? Will it include those living with invisible disabilities? How will that criteria be established?

Will the Canada disability benefit be indexed to inflation? With the rising cost of inflation in this country, this is a big concern to many currently living with a disability.

Here is another point: When should Canadians expect to start receiving the Canada disability benefit once the bill is passed? Currently, the bill's coming-into-force date is to be determined by an order in council. In addition, since almost all information about the benefit is to be determined through regulation, will the government be open to increasing the parliamentary oversight outlined in the bill?

• (1725)

How will the government ensure that the Canada disability benefit considers the complex web of programs currently in place, which, for many Canadians with disabilities, can result in benefit cuts and higher taxes as a consequence of taking on work. Especially in the context of veterans living with disabilities, that is a very important point.

*Government Orders*

How will the government ensure that the applying of the Canada disability benefit is inclusive and not a difficult bureaucratic process? How will we make this form simple to fill out? How will we ensure that the Canadians who need this support will get it as quickly as possible? How will the Canada disability benefit be impacted if there are changes to provincial or territorial programs?

I will be supporting this bill, but there are a ton of fundamental questions that the framework needs to answer when this bill is hopefully passed by Parliament and brought before what I assume will be the HUMA committee.

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague and friend for the speech. I am looking forward to doing some Canada-Netherlands Friendship Group work with him if he is interested. We have some work to do and he is my co-chair, so I will be counting on his engagement there.

My friend talked about how it is important, as a Conservative, to stand up and help people who need it most, people who do not have access to certain services. I am glad he is so engaged in this bill and I am thrilled to hear he is supporting it.

Does that category of people, the people who need it most, include families with young kids who cannot afford to get their teeth fixed?

• (1730)

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Milton for his question, but the debate today is on Bill C-22, not Bill C-31.

As I mentioned in my speech on Bill C-31, we have to look at the inflationary impacts of what we are doing. As I outlined in the suite of questions I posed, which I hope committee members and the government listened to, we need to do a full costing of this bill to see what impact it will have on Canadians and on Canadian taxpayers in the context of the inflationary period we are in right now.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see you in the chair for our rather late debates.

Does my colleague find the bill to be well drafted? Does he not feel that the government is being given a blank cheque of sorts? Should the bill not include some terms and conditions? Should the government's intentions be more transparent? Above all, should the money be transferred to the provinces so they can redistribute it to people? Once again, this may be more the jurisdiction of the provinces rather than that of the federal government.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that this bill needs a lot more work. I hope that the Bloc Québécois will support this bill so we can study it in committee and make changes and amendments. This will ensure that the legislation is compatible with provincial programs.

[*English*]

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Over a million Canadians right now are living in poverty. Having a disability bene-

fit is so critically important, but the government has failed people with disabilities again and again. It is now asking people with disabilities to wait three years. It has presented a bill that does not actually tell us how much people will get or who will be included.

Can the member speak to how vital it is that people with disabilities know how much they will be receiving, who is going to be receiving this benefit and when this benefit will come?

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Mr. Speaker, on the points raised by the member for Victoria, I think they are essential.

Going back to Darlene, whom I mentioned in my speech, when she goes out for coffee at Tim Hortons or an ice cream and a burger at McDonald's, she has to tabulate that every single month. She lives dollar to dollar. The Bethesda Christian Association that supports Darlene lives dollar to dollar as well.

Yes, getting that critical information, like when the benefit will come into force and how much people with disabilities will be living on, is essential. I hope that information is brought forward by public servants at committee as soon as possible, because there is no point going through this legislative exercise if we do not have answers to those fundamental questions.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my aunt was actually one of the residents of Bethesda, so he may have run into her. She passed away a number of years back, but it was interesting to hear that in his speech.

One of the big concerns I have and that I hear from the disability community is around access to MAID and approval for MAID. Over and over we are hearing of people who are in distress, but not necessarily terminal, accessing MAID. I was wondering if he could address that as well.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Mr. Speaker, just last year, or this year if I am mistaken, a woman in my community received MAID because she could not find adequate housing. What we need to do as a government and as a society collectively is to ensure that human dignity is respected, and we need to ensure that people living with disabilities have hope and support. I hope with this framework and with amendments at committee, we can get there and provide a new level of dignity and a new level of hope for those Canadians.

*Government Orders*

• (1735)

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-22, an act to establish the Canada disability benefit. In short, what this legislation seeks to do is provide an income supplement to Canadians with disabilities that complements provincial programs and supports. Unfortunately, in Canada, many persons living with disabilities are stigmatized and marginalized. Many live in poverty. Indeed, those who are of working age and live with a disability are significantly more likely to live below the poverty line than those who do not live with a disability.

Persons with disabilities deserve to be supported so they can live healthy, happy, productive and meaningful lives in which barriers are removed. They deserve a helping hand to escape poverty. In that spirit, I support this bill in principle.

However, there is much that is unknown about this bill. We do not know who would be eligible for the benefit. We do not know what amount someone who is living with a disability would be entitled to receive. We do not know payment periods. We do not know how the benefit would be dealt with in terms of being indexed for inflation. We do not know what the application process would look like. We do not even know when the benefit would take effect.

Those are a lot of unknowns. After seven years and now more than a year since the government introduced a substantively similar bill on the eve of the Prime Minister's calling an unnecessary and opportunistic election, we have legislation that provides no further details. We have a minister who has been unable to shed any further light. All we have is a loose framework, with all of the details to be determined at a later date, perhaps years down the road. As a consequence, I would submit that we, as members of Parliament, are in an untenable position in some respects, being asked to support a bill the details of which are unknown in terms of the scope and impact of the Canada disability benefit.

The Minister of Employment and Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion stated in her speech that she is, quite appropriately, working with her provincial and territorial counterparts to ensure the benefit has its intended impact, that it is an income supplement and that there are not unintended consequences, including clawbacks and taxes that would undermine the effectiveness of the benefit.

While it is good that the minister is engaging in those discussions with her provincial and territorial counterparts, the issue of clawbacks for the disability community is a much broader one than simply in respect of this proposed new benefit. I certainly support providing an income supplement to low-income Canadians living with a disability, but we know the best social program is not a new benefit. The best social program is employment for those who have the opportunity and ability to work. After all, employment provides an opportunity for dignity and self-worth; it provides a sense of purpose. It provides opportunities for social connectedness, in contrast to the isolation many persons living with disabilities face each and every day.

• (1740)

Employment improves mental health and one's overall well-being. Not all Canadians living with disabilities are able to work, but

many are and many do. Nearly one million Canadians living with a disability are in the workforce, including 300,000 Canadians who are severely disabled. Many more would like to work, but for all practical purposes, they are unable to do so. They are unable to do so because when they go out and work and earn a bit of income, their earnings are offset by the clawing back of programs and supports. We know that in some provinces, for every dollar earned, one can see a clawback of a dollar or nearly a dollar in social support. Therefore, for many Canadians living with disabilities, there is in fact a disincentive to participate in the workforce. This is counter-productive, it is unfair and it has the perverse effect of trapping Canadians living with disabilities in a cycle of poverty, which is something that this bill seeks to address.

As my colleague, the member for Perth—Wellington, stated in his speech, my friend, the leader of the official opposition and member for Carleton, introduced a bill in the 42nd Parliament, Bill C-395, to address this unfairness. In short, that bill sought to ensure that any person living with a disability would never be disadvantaged, that they would never see more in clawbacks and taxes than what they would earn in income from going out and working. Instead of supporting that bill, the Liberals voted against it.

One can debate the particulars of that particular bill, but it is not just the member for Carleton who has raised this issue. In 2017, a unanimous report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources recommended, as a key recommendation, that the federal government play a leadership role to ensure that Canadians with disabilities are not disincentivized from participating in the workforce.

In conclusion, let me say that this bill is a step in the right direction. There are a lot of details that remain and time is of the essence, but there is more work to do beyond this bill to remove barriers, so that, most importantly, Canadians living with disabilities can enjoy the same opportunities that other Canadians enjoy to be able to go out into the workforce and earn a living and have that dignity and self-worth that come with a job. That is how we reduce barriers. That is how we reduce stigmatization and marginalization, and that is how we lift Canadians living with disabilities out of the trap of poverty.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to have a chance to join in this debate. It is clear that Bill C-22 is far less than what was expected. It does not provide the details and so much is left to be filled in later, yet the needs are clearly urgent. People living with disabilities in this country are disproportionately and scandalously exposed to poverty.

I totally agree that having a job is a great way to build self-worth and respect, but would my hon. colleague not agree with me that no one with a disability should live in poverty, whether they can find a job or not?

*Adjournment Proceedings*

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, I absolutely would concur with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands that we have to do everything to ensure that Canadians living with disabilities are not trapped in poverty. We need to remove barriers so that Canadians living with disabilities can find employment, but we also have to provide other supports. This is one additional support and it is one that I support if it is ever rolled out the door, because unfortunately it could be some time between now and the time that the money is actually delivered to Canadians living with disabilities. It has, frankly, been too long.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech on this International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

Keeping people with disabilities active in the labour market, finding accommodation measures and promoting their integration also helps to address the fact that too many people with disabilities are in a vulnerable situation. That was confirmed to me by the director of Dynamique des handicap s de Granby et r gion, Marie-Christine Hon.

How does this fit into the discussions we need to have about accessibility? People with disabilities are not asking for much.

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, the question posed by the member for Shefford raises an important issue about access and taking steps to reduce barriers to help those living with disabilities.

The member for Carleton provided a concrete measure in his bill that would help persons with disabilities be able to have that opportunity to enter the workforce through free, concrete measures within that bill, namely measurement, action and enforcement. It was very disappointing that the Liberals voted against that very good bill.

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, inevitably, there will always be people with disabilities who cannot be gainfully employed. I hope they are not going to be ineligible because of that.

I want to ask, instead, about indigenous peoples with disabilities and others who have disabilities who live in rural and remote communities, communities that have a higher cost of living. I wonder if the member agrees that maybe there needs to be a supplement to this benefit for people who live in rural and remote communities.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, what we have to do to address the cost of living is to tackle inflation, which is at a 40-year high. It is inflation that is the result of the Liberal government's out-of-control spending, propped up with the support of the NDP.

If the member is serious about reducing the cost of living and making life more affordable, that would be a good place to start.

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we were talking about the lack of benefits for people with disabilities and the poverty that is often the reality for them, and the sad state where they are actually being given an option of using MAID as a terrible solution to the problem.

Could the member speak to that, and maybe to some of the reasons why we want to get behind our folks with disabilities in Canada?

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, it speaks to the record of the Liberal government in not listening to persons with disabilities and disabilities rights organizations when they expressed alarm at the reasonably foreseeable criterion being struck down by one judge in one decision.

We have seen heartbreaking cases now of people who have turned to MAID because of such things as a lack of adequate housing, which is something completely not what MAID was set up to do. When I asked the Prime Minister a question about that, instead of addressing the issue, and instead of showing some compassion, he said that we were wrapped up in ideology. I think that speaks to his attitude toward Canadians living with disabilities and how insensitive he is.

• (1750)

**The Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** The question is on the motion.

[*Translation*]

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

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

[*Translation*]

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, the recorded division stands deferred until Tuesday, October 18, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands on a point of order.

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to boldly travel through time to 6:45 p.m. and see the clock as such.

**The Speaker:** Do we have unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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



*Adjournment Proceedings*

[English]

## PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today's question relates to the number of lives that could be saved if the government would instruct the RCMP to install automated external defibrillators, also known as AEDs, in each cruiser.

I have been raising this issue since the Liberal government came to power in 2015, but the government unfortunately has taken no action. By my calculation, about 300 lives would be saved every year if AEDs were installed in Canada's 5,600 RCMP cruisers. Let me tell members how I have come to that calculation.

The purpose of an AED is to reduce fatalities from the kind of heart attack known as sudden cardiac arrest, a pathology that typically starts with what is known as pulseless ventricular tachycardia and ventricular fibrillation. An academic paper published in the *Annals of Emergency Medicine* makes the following remarkable assertion regarding this pathology: "Every patient with a witnessed ventricular fibrillation cardiac arrest should survive. If the patient does not survive, the goal is to determine why."

In principle, AEDs, which are the devices used to counter this kind of cardiac issue, should save a lot of lives. How many? Well, ventricular tachycardia and ventricular fibrillation are the source of 85% of all sudden cardiac arrest deaths. Among this population, if each cardiac crisis were witnessed and responded to instantly by a first responder equipped with an AED, there would in principle be a perfect survival rate. In practice, the survival rate is going to be lower, but when the rate is at its highest, in controlled, highly monitored situations such as airports and casinos, it is impressive. At O'Hare airport in Chicago, for example, the save rate is 75%.

However, time is of the essence. According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, for every minute the application of an AED is delayed, the chance of survival drops by about 7% to 10%. After 12 minutes, the survival rate is under 5%. This is why the public policy responsible, both here and in the U.S., is focused so intensely on speeding up response time when a victim or bystander contacts 911. This is why police vehicles are equipped with AEDs in places like Vancouver, Kingston, Laval, Fredericton, Medicine Hat and even Smiths Falls, in my riding.

There is an AED in the trunk of every one of the over 150 cruisers of the Ottawa Police Service. As long ago as 2012, this resulted in 22 interventions and nine successful saves of heart attack victims. In 2013, there were 23 interventions and eight lives were saved, and so on, in a long record of success right here in Ottawa. Ottawa's experience, which is typical, shows that on average, one life will be saved every year for every 17 AEDs installed in police cruisers. There is no better place to put an AED than in the trunk of a police car.

AEDs that are purchased in bulk cost a little over \$1,000 each. Training costs are essentially zero, as RCMP personnel are already trained, and the cost of responding to 911 calls is not a factor, as the police already do this. We can multiply this success rate by the number of cruisers in the RCMP. If each one of the 5,600 RCMP cruisers carried an AED, it would result in 320 lives being saved

every year. Since an AED remains operational for 10 years, we could save 3,000 lives over the next decade at a cost of \$2,000 per life.

With these considerations in mind, why is it that the government has not, after seven years in power, arranged to have AEDs in every RCMP cruiser in the country?

● (1755)

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the hon. member, not only for his advocacy but also for his donation of AEDs to his local police service.

According to Heart and Stroke, approximately 40,000 Canadians experience sudden cardiac arrest each year, and 80% of these occur outside of a hospital setting. This is one of the reasons all RCMP officers are required to be trained and recertified in CPR and first aid, including the use of AEDs. The RCMP is committed to our communities, with CPR, AED and first aid training included in the standard first aid curriculum, in which all members are required to recertify every three years. This represents a demonstrable enhancement of our public safety role as first responders.

The RCMP is aware that some police services equip police vehicles with AEDs.

I was also present when we studied Motion No. 124 at the public safety committee, looking at the hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska's private member's bill on the issue. AEDs increase the chances of survival by 75%.

At the time of our study, the Library of Parliament provided us with a 2014 report that the public safety committee had done on the economics of policing. Municipalities pay 60% of policing in Canada, and it takes up to 50% of their budgets. While I was doing some research on police forces in North America that have these devices in their cars, it appears that many of them got them through either donations or grants, much like the hon. member across the aisle did with his police service.

Currently, the RCMP provides contract policing services to all provinces and territories except Ontario and Quebec, as well as some 150 municipalities. These services are provided through the police services agreements, which see the costs for RCMP services shared by the provincial and municipal governments and the federal government.

In consultation with the RCMP, provinces, territories and municipalities establish the level of resources, budget and policing priorities in their respective jurisdictions. It is through these consultations and decisions by the government of local jurisdiction that the RCMP is allocated funding for the purchase of new equipment.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

The financial impact of procuring AEDs for RCMP vehicles would also have to be completed in consultation with contract partners to determine the extent to which these devices could be deployed. Currently, AEDs have been approved for installation and used in select RCMP operational areas, including emergency medical response teams, some protective policing details, and in provinces where provincial policing standards require that AEDs be available.

Another important consideration that came up during our study of Motion No. 124 was that only 15% of Canadians live in communities that are serviced by the RCMP. Obviously, equipping RCMP vehicles would help, but it would not reach as many communities as we would like.

In equipping RCMP vehicles with AEDs, several operational rollout and financial considerations must be assessed, including consultations with our contract partners.

• (1800)

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for that very informative answer. There were a number of pieces of information that I was unfamiliar with.

One thing I picked up was her reference to what she calls contract partners, which really means the provincial and territorial governments. I am going to ask her if she is saying the following, that if the initiative were taken, say, by the government of Alberta or Saskatchewan, that would be sufficient to start the ball rolling in that province. She also indicated a willingness to work with private sector partners who provide the necessary funds to purchase these things.

May I assume that if that were to happen in some part of the country, and if the RCMP hierarchy were to resist, and it does appear that there has been resistance, institutionally, in the RCMP, that the government would override it and say, “Look, these things have been given for free. Please install them where they are being offered”?

Could she respond to those two questions?

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Mr. Speaker, it is difficult for me to answer a question on RCMP operational details, but I think, as the hon. member knows, right now, the Alberta government is talking about getting out of contract policing and instituting its own police service.

I think, certainly, the hon. member has heard what I am saying, in that it requires consultation with the provincial or municipal partners before we can move forward. As he knows, the cost of this policing is split between the federal and provincial governments. If the hon. member had a private company that wanted to donate AEDs to all RCMP vehicles, I would be happy to work with him on that.

PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, I take this opportunity to thank my constituents for their care and encouragement. I could not do my job without their support.

On February 14, 2022, the NDP-Liberal socialist coalition issued a proclamation declaring a public order emergency. The anti-democratic, bouncy castle emergency order has been recognized around the world as a despicable, egregious violation of human rights. Canada's image has been tarnished internationally.

Canadians have been encouraging me to follow up on my request of the Prime Minister to stop his unacceptable campaign of hate and divisiveness against ordinary Canadians. Now that the Emergencies Act inquiry is under way, it is time to start focusing on the deep wounds in Canadian society created by the Prime Minister and his profane coalition.

Liberals need to accept that many Canadians believe those who disagree with them on policy matters are not wrong. Canadians struggle to understand how those on the big government, radical left side of the political fence could possibly hold so many wrong-sided views.

The trucker strike was brought about by widespread resentment of hysterical reporting throughout the pandemic by the Liberal bought-off media. The attempted cancellation of anyone who dissented over lockdowns, whether on scientific grounds or civil liberty grounds, further exacerbated the problem.

How can Canadians trust the Prime Minister or the Liberal Party when he and his caucus are on public record as misleading Canadians nine times on the need to invoke the Emergencies Act? For example, the NDP-Liberal coalition representative stated that “the invocation of the Emergencies Act...was only put forward after police officials told us they needed this special power”. That is false. No police service asked for the Emergencies Act.

Next, the NDP-Liberal coalition Minister of Finance got in on the act by grossly inflating estimates of the freedom convoy's impact on the economy. While Canadians are struggling to buy groceries and heat their homes, this same minister directed public servants to run around and waste taxpayer dollars by begging local Ottawa businesses to accept money for non-existent losses. In fact, after the severity of the Liberal pandemic lockdown, many businesses enjoyed a boom in business.

The Prime Minister and his coalition's false accusations are interpreted by the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide as accusation in a mirror. This is the rhetorical practice of falsely accusing others of conducting, plotting or committing precisely the same transgressions one plans to commit against them.

The claim by the Prime Minister and senior members in the Liberal Party that members of the freedom convoy were racists, misogynists and undesirables is a textbook example of the demonizing and dehumanizing that comes by labelling certain groups in society as undesirable. An appalling example of this divisiveness is when the Prime Minister accused a granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, my Conservative colleague, the member for Thornhill, who is Jewish, of standing with racists.

Canadians see the hypocrisy in the Prime Minister accusing others of being racist when the Prime Minister enjoys dressing up in costumes and in blackface to make fun of other people's cultures and skin colour. The accusation is a propaganda technique that has been used in non-genocidal and other forms of persecution committed against Jews, Blacks and first nations, among others.

It is time to face some inconvenient truths about the Prime Minister. His behaviour is dividing our country. Being angry all the time is not demonstrating leadership. To this day, members of the Liberal Party refuse to condemn the Prime Minister's racist act of wearing blackface.

• (1805)

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, holy smokes, the rhetoric and misinformation coming from the other side of the House is a bit hard to respond to, but I am going to do my best.

Last winter, safety concerns from illegal blockades had shut down businesses, prevented citizens from moving about in several Canadian cities and cut off supply chains, hampering the ability of small business owners to contribute to the well-being of their families and communities.

We had a large blockade in the city of Ottawa and other communities were also impacted. Alberta, Manitoba, British Columbia, Quebec and cities within these provinces all faced illegal blockades that threatened people's safety and livelihoods. The situation was so critical that the Province of Ontario, City of Windsor and City of Ottawa all declared states of emergency.

The Government of Canada knew that a safe resolution to these illegal blockades would require the collaboration of all partners. That is why we engaged closely with law enforcement and provincial, territorial and municipal officials to share situational updates and intelligence and explore the ways we could support one another. These discussions were ongoing throughout the crisis.

The decision to invoke the Emergencies Act was informed by these discussions and consultations. The ultimate goal was always to bring an end to the blockades peacefully. In full transparency, we have made public a document that provides the reasons for issuing the declaration of a public order emergency. This fulfills the requirement in subsection 58(1) of the Emergencies Act, and the Government of Canada is pleased to provide this public information.

In addition, the Government of Canada has provided a public document describing the consultations we undertook before invoking the act. This document clearly demonstrates that we were closely engaged with all key partners in order to bring all expertise to the table to solve this public order crisis.

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

I would encourage my colleagues to review these public documents. They would make clear that, for several weeks last winter, illegal blockades were growing, strengthening and threatening law and order in numerous communities. Provinces, territories, municipalities and law enforcement all clearly communicated their views and concerns to the Government of Canada. Crucially, these partners asked the Government of Canada to lend support to the police of jurisdiction to counter the illegal activities.

We explored all other possible strategies to counter and to bring a peaceful conclusion to the many illegal blockades in Canadian communities at the time. It was at this time, and following extensive and ongoing discussions, that the decision to invoke the Emergencies Act was made. This was not an easy decision and we took the path with an appropriate sense of gravitas.

Importantly, invoking the act provided law enforcement with additional tools that allowed them to bring an end to the blockades. I must reinforce that this peaceful resolution was achieved, in large part, because of our close and ongoing consultation with provinces, territories, municipalities and law enforcement.

The Government of Canada did not keep the Emergencies Act in place any longer than necessary. We revoked it as soon as possible once it had achieved its intended purpose and law enforcement no longer needed the additional tools.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, in a secret memo, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, CSIS, rejected the false claims by the NDP-Liberal socialist coalition that the freedom convoy was infiltrated by Nazis. According to CSIS, the freedom convoy participants considered themselves to be patriotic Canadians standing up for their democratic rights. The Canadian flag was the most prevalent flag on display in the crowd, likely reflecting participants' belief they were patriotic Canadians standing up for their democratic rights.

CSIS went on to advise the government that a small number of individuals displayed handwritten statements or images on their flags in an attempt to focus their message. Specifically, several added a swastika to the flag, not necessarily to identify as Nazis, but to imply the Prime Minister and the federal government were acting like Nazis by imposing public health mandates.

The memo marked "secret" was dated February 2, 2022. It concluded by reminding the NDP-Liberal far-left coalition that freedom of expression is constitutionally protected in Canada.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

• (1810)

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Mr. Speaker, let us take a step back and remember what it was like here in Ottawa last winter. While the hon. member and many of her colleagues were playing footsies with the illegal blockade, many Canadians were suffering. Many Canadian businesses were suffering. They were being held hostage by these illegal blockades. People did not feel safe going about their lives in their own communities.

I am pleased to share with the hon. member a quote from the interim chief of the Ottawa Police Service, who told the following to members at the public safety committee: “I...want to thank the federal government for invoking the federal Emergencies Act.” He went on to say, “From a policing perspective, the legislation provided the OPS with the ability to prevent people from participating in this unlawful protest”. He referred to the invocation of the act as a “critical piece” of their efforts.

## HEALTH

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in May I asked the Minister of Health what scientific advice he had received in regard to travel mandates. Today I ask the same question.

On September 26, the ministers of health, public safety and transport announced the lifting of the pandemic precautions effective October 1 by allowing the special orders under the Quarantine Act to expire. This effectively meant that foreign nationals no longer needed to be vaccinated to enter the country, incoming travellers would not be subject to random mandatory COVID-19 tests, unvaccinated Canadians would no longer have to isolate, travellers would no longer have to report or monitor for COVID-19 symptoms, the wearing of face masks on planes and trains was no longer mandatory as well, and submitting public health information through the ArriveCAN app would effectively become optional.

While Conservatives have been appealing to the government for a long time to lift the mandates, and we are happy to see them gone, my questions remain as follows: What was scientific about October 1? What evidence was this decision based on? Why was Canada so slow to lift the mandates compared to other countries?

The second issue I would like to raise tonight relates to the ArriveCAN app. Like a lot of Canadians this summer, I used the ArriveCAN app. I went to visit some family in the Netherlands. When I came back home I was on a flight through Iceland, and I had to use the ArriveCAN app. I did it properly to get on the plane, and I did it for my spouse as well. When we arrived in Toronto the app had broken down. I went to the CBSA officer, who said that was a normal thing to happen and that it had been happening quite a bit.

It was not an easy process, but we went through and it all got worked out. However, that goes to say, as some other members in the House of Commons have raised today, we wonder why the ArriveCAN app was so poorly designed and why it cost so much money.

Right now, Canadians are recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and government restrictions. Community groups are starting to refocus and get membership out again. Sports groups are doing the same thing. That is all well and good, but I would be remiss if I

did not mention in the chamber that right now Canada needs to look back very closely with respect to what happened during the last three years.

My other question to the government today is this: Would it consider a royal commission to determine how much money was spent on COVID-19 programs, how much additional money was spent during the COVID-19 pandemic, what consequences of that spending were, and what the long-term impacts both for our society and our fiscal coffers will be?

We are in a period of inflation right now, and we need to be very careful about how we spend money moving forward, but Canadians are equally concerned about how their rights are going to be protected moving forward as well. I think we have a responsibility in the House to ensure that critical work is being undertaken, so I would like to petition the government with my time today to empower every parliamentary committee, if not a royal commission, to look at program spending over the last three years and look at which programs worked, which ones did not, which ones cost the most, which ones had the most take-up and which ones did not have any take-up at all. A lot of things were spent on, and we do not know the consequences and the impacts of that spending.

We need to look at how the rights of Canadians under the charter are going to be protected moving forward. There are a lot of unanswered questions. I know there are some cases before the federal courts, but I think here in Parliament we need to look very closely at things such as the ArriveCAN app.

I will give one final example. Just three weeks ago, before the October 1 rescindment of the Quarantine Act, a senior citizen constituent who has never had a smart phone was told by a CBSA officer that he needed to get a letter from his MP to go into the United States for the day and come back. That is not what the charter calls for, and we need to stop those things from happening again.

• (1815)

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my understanding of this was that hon. members would ask for information to elaborate on a question they had asked in the House. The hon. member has greatly expanded on what he had asked. I will focus on a couple of things, but in particular NEXUS, as he had asked about it. He did not mention that tonight, but I will deal with it.

The ArriveCAN app is something we brought in to keep Canadians safe. We will always make the health and safety of Canadians our number one priority. I recall that at the time, hon. members from the other side of the aisle were calling for us to close the borders and stop letting people into Canada. The ArriveCAN app was a useful tool that we brought in during the pandemic, and it is no longer mandatory, as the hon. member knows.

I would like to talk a bit about NEXUS, which is what the hon. member had asked in his question of the Minister of Health.

We know NEXUS is extremely important for travellers. We also know that Canadians are travelling again. That is why we are working with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to restore NEXUS enrolment services in Canada. I hear from my own constituents about concerns with being able to get a NEXUS appointment.

It is a joint program managed by both Canada and the United States. When our American counterparts are ready to deploy officers to Canada again, we will be ready to immediately facilitate it. Canada and the U.S. are in discussions right now about the timing of the reopening of Canadian enrolment centres. However, until that time, enrolment centres in Canada will continue to be closed.

Canadians can now travel to the U.S. to complete their interviews and applications. We are also allowing existing NEXUS members who renew their memberships before the expiry date of their card to retain their membership privileges for an additional 24 months from the date of expiry.

The hon. member talked at length about our Charter of Rights, and I just want to assure the hon. member, as well as all Canadians, that on this side of the House we will always stand up for Canadians' charter rights. We always have and we always will.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that all members of the House, all 338 of us, care about the Charter of Rights and its

#### *Adjournment Proceedings*

application. What I am saying here today is that we have made so many consequential decisions, even on this side of the House, and have not properly examined the impact on our rights, the societal impact and the fiscal impact they are going to have on future generations in Canada.

I do not recall referencing NEXUS in my question for the minister, but I will take that in good faith from the member. I would simply ask, then, as my primary question in the minute I have left today, about the reason the American government has not decided to reconstitute offices in Canada. Is it related to the application of firearms for American officers on Canadian soil?

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister of Public Safety and his U.S. counterpart have been in discussions to get NEXUS back in Canada. I will reiterate that when our American counterparts are ready to deploy their officers to Canada, we will be ready to facilitate it.

Canadians want to get back to their lives and put the pandemic behind them, and I assure the hon. member that we continue to work with the United States to ensure that our American counterparts can deploy their officers in Canada again.

**The Speaker:** It being 6:20 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:20 p.m.)

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