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# House of Commons Debates

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 14, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following two reports of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development: the ninth report, entitled “The 2002 Extreme Flooding in Pakistan: Saving Lives and Supporting a Climate-Resilient Recovery”, and the 10th report, entitled “The Russian State’s Illegal War of Aggression Against Ukraine”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to each of these two reports.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary opinion to the second report mentioned with respect to Ukraine.

The Conservatives are pleased to fully endorse the main committee’s report. Our supplementary opinion identifies three areas where we wish to go further in supporting international peace and security. These areas are as follows: contributing to global energy security and food security, combatting foreign interference and recognizing the failure of the Gazprom turbine policy.

The Conservatives believe that Canada should be expediting key energy projects to support global fuel and food security and countering dependence on Russia by fellow democracies. Not nearly enough is being done to combat foreign state-backed interference by the Russian state, but also by other actors. While the main report acknowledges that ending the Gazprom turbine waiver was a good step, we believe that granting the turbine waiver in the first place was a grave mistake and a betrayal of the Ukrainian cause. Canada must be resolute in its support for Ukraine, including through the consistent application of sanctions.

[*Translation*]

#### PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

**Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, two reports from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. The first is the 25th report, entitled “Processing Disability Benefits for Veterans”.

[*English*]

The second is the 26th report, entitled “Greening Government Strategy”.

I believe we will hear from the hon. member for Edmonton West, who has two dissenting reports to table immediately after me.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to each of these two reports.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to table two dissenting reports.

The first one is on the Auditor General’s report on processing disability benefits for veterans. The Auditor General’s report shows that Veterans Affairs is in crisis. At the time of the audit, the median wait time for processing for veterans was 39 weeks. The standard is 16 weeks. Despite achieving just 13% of annual targets, Veterans Affairs paid out bonuses to 98% of their management executives.

We table this report with two recommendations: first, that Veterans Affairs study the effects of automation to improve the service time for veterans’ disability benefits; and second, that the performance, at-risk and bonus compensation for Veterans Affairs executives be withheld until such time as backlogs of disability benefit claims have been cleared and the department’s service standard target for assessing future applications is consistently met.

The second dissenting report is on the “Greening Government Strategy” report. The Auditor General, in her report, states the government has provided the worst GHG emissions outcomes in the entire G7. Furthermore, the report states that Treasury Board rules require that the department sign off on the integrity of its GHG emissions. Seventy-five per cent of the departments, including the Department of Environment, refused to sign off on integrity, showing that their emission results are much like their environmental plan, which is a sham.

*Routine Proceedings*

We therefore submit three recommendations: first, that the Treasury Board Secretariat ensure that all departments follow the rules and that the assistant deputy ministers sign off on the integrity of their mission data; second, that the Treasury Board provide clear, transparent projections of costs to the Canadian taxpayers to achieve net-zero by 2050; and finally, that all federal department plans to reach net-zero emissions by 2050 be based on existing technology and policies to accurately monitor, evaluate and communicate the performance of each department in reducing GHG emissions.

\* \* \*

• (1005)

**CANADA PENSION PLAN INVESTMENT BOARD ACT**

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-315, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act (investments).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased and honoured to rise in the House today to introduce my private member's bill, which would amend the investment policy standards and procedures of the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board to ensure that no CPP funds are invested in any entity that has committed human, labour or environmental rights violations. My bill would also ensure pension funds are not invested in any arms or munitions of war prohibited under international law or in any company guilty of corruption.

The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board manages over \$500 billion in assets, and it is mandated to invest in the best interests of CPP contributors and beneficiaries by maximizing returns without undue risk of loss. It is important to note that my bill would not change this mandate. The Canada pension plan is an important part of our retirement system, but Canadians expect that its investments are not contributing to human misery around the world. By amending section 35 of the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act to specify human, labour and environmental rights considerations, this bill would do just that.

I would like to thank the incredible member for New Westminster—Burnaby for seconding this bill.

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

\* \* \*

**PETITIONS****FIREARMS**

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition on behalf of a number of my constituents, in particular law-abiding firearms owners. There are two aspects to the petition. The petitioners are calling on the government to drop the last-minute amendments to Bill C-21, which I note has occurred, and in particular to focus on criminals and not law-abiding firearms owners.

The petitioners emphasize the requirement for the government to use its own data, in particular Public Safety's commissioned report done a few years back by Hill+Knowlton. It points out that over 100,000 Canadians oppose a firearms ban in this country.

The petitioners are calling upon the government to stand up for law-abiding firearms owners, sport shooters and farmers with gun legislation, quit targeting them and go after criminals instead.

**INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE**

**Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to present a petition sponsored by The Canadian Federation of University Women's chapter in Orillia. It relates to a very important issue: domestic partner violence.

Four in 10 women and one third of men have experienced some form of intimate partner violence. In fact, in 2018, 44% of women, or about 6.2 million women aged 15 and over, reported experiencing some kind of physical, psychological or sexual abuse in the context of an intimate relationship in their lifetime. Almost a third of all police-reported violent crimes in Canada are calls involving intimate partner violence. Of all partners charged with intimate partner assault, 50% violate their bail conditions and at least 25% commit further crimes. In fact, in 2020, 160 women were killed by violence in Canada, which equals one woman or girl every 2.5 days.

The petition calls on the government to make important judicial reforms, including to only grant bail for first-time alleged IPV offenders who have not violated any previous bail conditions, have not committed a weapons-related offence and have not demonstrated a coercive control pattern of behaviour over a victim; to make it a legal duty to inform the offender's victims immediately about the exact time, day and location of the bail hearing and ensure safety concerns are submitted to the bail hearing; and if bail is granted, to make it a legal duty to require that a repeat or high-risk accused individual wear a GPS tracking device to strengthen the effectiveness of the restraining order.

• (1010)

**EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE**

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am honoured to table a petition from 88 folks in Delta, Port Coquitlam and North Vancouver who are expressing a lot of concern about expanded polystyrene and the impact it has on the environment, especially, of course, the marine environment.

The petitioners note that there is significant harm to marine life, seafood resources and ecosystems when it is added to the system. It is difficult if not impossible to clean up the shorelines after it breaks down, and it has a very high likelihood of entering the marine environment from damaged marine infrastructure, whether it is encased or not.

The petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to prohibit the use of expanded polystyrene in the marine environment.

## HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to table today a petition signed by the residents of Winnipeg North with respect to the Canada Health Act. They make reference to the fact that the Canada Health Act sets out a framework to ensure that we have a true national health care system from coast to coast to coast.

The petitioners are asking governments of different levels to work together to ensure that issues are dealt with, to broaden health care responsibilities, to take into consideration mental health and long-term care and to continue on the path set out for dental care, pharmacare and issues of that nature.

I am sure the petitioners were quite happy to see that we just recently made a \$198-billion commitment over the next 10 years to build upon the national health care system.

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today from petitioners recognizing that some companies based in Canada are contributing to human rights abuse and environmental damage around the world, and that the people who protest the abuses and defend their rights are often harassed, attacked or killed, especially indigenous people, women and marginalized groups.

The petitioners are calling upon the House of Commons to adopt human rights and environmental due diligence legislation that would require companies to prevent adverse human rights impacts and environmental damage throughout their global operations and supply chains, that would result in meaningful consequences for companies that fail to carry out and report on adequate due diligence and that would establish, importantly, a legal right for people who have been harmed to seek justice in Canadian courts.

\* \* \*

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Before I go to orders of the day, I want to wish everyone a happy Valentine's Day.

*Business of Supply***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

● (1015)

[English]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

## OPPOSITION MOTION—RISING INFLATION AND COST OF LIVING

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC)** moved:

That, given that,

- (i) after eight years of this Liberal Prime Minister, inflation is at a 40-year high,
- (ii) after eight years of this Liberal Prime Minister, the cost of groceries is up 11%,
- (iii) after eight years of this Liberal Prime Minister, half of Canadians are cutting back on groceries,
- (iv) after eight years of this Liberal Prime Minister, 20% of Canadians are skipping meals,
- (v) after eight years of this Liberal Prime Minister, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment across Canada's 10 biggest cities is \$2,213 per month, compared to \$1,171 per month in 2015,
- (vi) after eight years of this Liberal Prime Minister, 45% of variable rate mortgage holders say they will have to sell or vacate their homes in less than nine months due to current interest rate levels,
- (vii) after eight years of this Liberal Prime Minister, average monthly mortgage costs have more than doubled and now cost Canadians over \$3,000 per month,
- (viii) the Governor of the Bank of Canada, Tiff Macklem, has said that "inflation in Canada increasingly reflects what's happening in Canada",
- (ix) the former Governor of the Bank of Canada, Mark Carney, has said: "But really now inflation is principally a domestic story",
- (x) former Liberal finance minister, Bill Morneau, has said that the government probably spent too much during COVID,
- (xi) former Liberal Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister, John Manley, said that the Liberal Prime Minister's fiscal policy is making it harder to contain inflation,

the House call on the government to cap spending, cut waste, fire high-priced consultants and eliminate inflationary deficits and taxes that have caused a cost-of-living crisis for Canadians.

He said: Madam Speaker, Biggie Smalls once said, "Mo Money Mo Problems". With the Liberal government, it seems like the more the Liberals tax, spend and waste Canadians' money, the more problems Canadians have.

After eight years of the incompetent Liberal government and its economic mismanagement, Canadians are feeling the pain. A 40-year high in inflation, high interest rates, and tripling taxes have led to Canadians running out of money.

*Business of Supply*

Even before COVID hit Canada, the Prime Minister was spending record amounts on consultants and his Liberal insider friends. On top of all that, there was \$100 billion in deficit spending. Of course, the spending has never ended. During COVID, the government felt good about adding half a trillion to the national debt, 40% of which had nothing to do with COVID spending.

We know now that the Prime Minister's nearly \$700-billion spending spree has been more about helping insiders than actually supporting Canadians. Instead of making life better, the Prime Minister spends \$15 billion a year on high-priced consultants with whom he has personal connections. Lucrative contracts have gone to companies like SNC-Lavalin and the WE Charity, as well as a company run by former Liberal MP Frank Baylis. He flushed Canadians' money down the toilet each time just to make his friends richer.

The Auditor General has even reported that \$32 billion went to subsidizing criminals, foreign nationals and even dead people. Will the government get Canadians' tax dollars back from the people who should not have gotten them? Of course not. Is it going to be knocking on those coffins or tombstones to ask for the money back? The CRA seems more interested in going after law-abiding, living, breathing Canadians than Liberal-friendly corporations and criminals.

No wonder everything feels broken in this country today. Even our health care, airports and trains are a mess, and standard government services like passports or immigration are so backlogged it will take years to undo the damage once the Conservatives take over.

The cost-of-living crisis in this country is only getting worse. Inflation remains three times higher than the Bank of Canada's 2% target. Grocery prices are inflating by 11% every single month, and Canadians cannot afford home heating even if they can afford a home.

The fiscal policies of the Liberal government have left Canadians in a hole. The Prime Minister, who admits he does not think about monetary policy, is clearly not thinking of fiscal policy either. The result of hundreds of billions of dollars being added to the national debt is that the government has created inflation, which has taken the money out of everyday Canadians' pockets. It has taken the food out of Canadians' mouths and the roof from over their head, and the possibility of retirement is now just a dream. Now one in five Canadians is out of money, skipping meals, or accessing charities for help just for basic necessities; 60% of Canadians are cutting back on groceries, while 41% are looking for cheaper, less nutritious options.

Even if people can get their grocery bill down, the Liberal government's inflation is making everything else expensive. The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment across Canada's 10 biggest cities is \$2,213 a month, compared to \$1,171 a month in 2015. That is an almost 90% increase in rent. One of the issues complicating the price of renting is the need for more supply. Inflation has made the price of building housing units substantially more expensive while increasing red tape and taxes, disincentivizing builders from creating much-needed units.

Canada is becoming a nation of renters. According to RBC, the number of renters has increased at three times the rate of the number of homeowners in just the past 10 years. It is not only young Canadians who are increasingly turning to rent. The shift to renting is across age groups and geographic areas. RBC is projecting that the rapid growth in renters is not going to slow down, and it is clear that the home affordability crisis plays a significant role in that. The number of new homes completed in a year has increased only by 13% from 2015 to 2022.

I am glad to share my time with the great member for Simcoe North.

● (1020)

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation says that if the current rates of new construction continue, housing supply will increase only by 2.3 million units between 2021 and 2030. CMHC projects that Canada must construct an additional 3.5 million units by 2030 to restore house price affordability.

What is most concerning to me is the lack of understanding that the government has of Canada's housing supply crisis. Instead, the Liberals continue to blame other factors or people for their own failures. We do not import land, workers or many of the supplies needed to build a house. I was in the homebuilding industry before coming to this place. I know first-hand that houses can be built using Canadian lumber, metal and workers. Russia, Ukraine and China do not play a part in that, yet house prices have doubled and Canada has the fifth-biggest housing bubble.

While home prices have come down from the crazy highs of last year, they are still significantly higher than prepandemic levels. The government's solution is to give tax credits and handouts, which do not address the housing supply issue, and provide more money to drive home prices. Even if homebuilders can meet the need for 5.8 million new units by 2030, Canadians still face high mortgage costs and diminished purchasing power.

Inflation has decimated paycheques and for first-time homebuyers, paying for a new home is daunting. As of 2021, Canadians would have to spend over half of their disposable income to purchase a home, and that number is only growing. Mortgages are now costing Canadians 60% to 70% of their paycheque and, at the same time, banks continue to raise mortgage payments to respond to the eight consecutive rate hikes by the Bank of Canada. Over 80% of homeowners with a variable rate mortgage have hit the point where their mortgage payment is made entirely of just interest and none of that on the principal.

*Business of Supply*

I hear from industry experts and people in the financial sector that they are already seeing a rise in the number of people turning in their keys and defaulting on their mortgages, a sign that we are dangerously close to repeating the Pierre Trudeau era. The ratio of household debt to disposable income is at an all-time high of 183%, proving that Canadians are over-leveraged amidst the Liberals' overspending. Bank of Canada governor Tiff Macklem is using this as a reason for pausing interest rates, despite him and the current finance minister telling Canadians it was okay to spend and borrow as much as they liked because interest rates were going to be so low for so long.

Now, when Canadians face this affordability crisis and high inflation and interest rates, Governor Macklem and the finance minister seem unconcerned with the potential for a debt default crisis. Instead, the Liberals are so ignorant that they keep spending on inflationary waste like their insider consultant contracts.

Random Liberals, like Bank of Canada governor Tiff Macklem, former governor of the Bank of Canada Mark Carney, former finance minister Bill Morneau, and former deputy prime minister and finance minister John Manley all warn that inflation is a domestic issue and the government is overspending. Debt is only going up, and nothing is being done to address it. Canadians are going hungry. Seniors are turning off the heat just so they can afford groceries, and young adults live in their parents' basements because home ownership is nothing but a dream. Household and national debt are at absolute highs.

Conservatives are ready to come in and clean up this mess. We are ready to rein in the wasteful spending and cut the rising taxes. Canadians need more of their money left in their pockets. We will unleash Canada's amazing private sector to create the technological advancements needed to address climate change. We will unleash the homebuilders, who will build more affordable housing supply, and the farmers, who will grow affordable food to stock our grocery stores and feed the world. We will get gatekeepers and red tape out of the way of our world-class energy sector, which can provide all Canadians with affordable, clean Canadian energy.

This is how to address this affordability crisis. This is how to grow an economy without increasing inflation. This is how to actually help Canadians. Enough with corporate handouts and insider contracts. Enough with government waste and out-of-control inflationary spending. Enough with the record deficits and doubling the debt. Conservatives will fire the gatekeepers and high-priced consultants, rein in the spending and axe the failed carbon tax. Let us get Canadians back on track and make Canada the freest country in the world.

• (1025)

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member spent some time discussing the importance of building homes and of the supply side of the housing crisis here in Canada. We, as a government, put forward a national housing strategy that would address that very issue, and the Conservatives voted against it. I would like to understand why it is that the member opposite talks about the importance of building new homes and yet votes against the very measure that would create more supply of housing here in Canada.

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan:** Madam Speaker, we will always vote against inflationary measures that will only hurt Canadians further. None of those measures have been working. It is obvious to see when rents have doubled, mortgages have doubled and the house prices in this country have doubled all the way across. That does not make any sense at all.

The government is absolutely great at blaming everyone else for its own inflationary problems. It is kind of like me and the member for Kingston and the Islands blaming other people for being as big as we are. It is like saying the environment is the reason we are the way we are. No, it is because we did that to ourselves, much like the government is the one that spent so much money that it created this inflationary crisis, and random Liberals agree with us.

[Translation]

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Madam Speaker, in *The Art of Poetry*, Horace said that things become pleasing through force of repetition. I think that may be why we keep hearing “triple, triple, triple” lately. Nevertheless, as it says in Ecclesiastes, “there is nothing new under the sun” in today's motion. It seems as though the Conservatives are just repeating things that they have already told us, and nobody knows why.

I would like to understand the rationale behind this hodgepodge of things that have already been said.

[English]

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan:** Madam Speaker, obviously what we are repeating is working, since that member repeated what we are repeating. It is definitely working. It is too bad the Bloc party will not stand with Canadians, will not stand with Quebeckers, to help lower the cost of living today that the collective parties have caused on Canadians. There is more pain today than ever. It is too bad they are not standing with those 1.5 million Canadians who are visiting a food bank in a single month, the one in five Canadians who needs to skip meals or the seniors who need to turn down the heat and use blankets because they cannot afford to heat their homes and buy groceries at the same time. Conservatives will continue to fight this unjust tax and make sure Canadians can keep on living and have the best way of life.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member is rising on a point of order.

*Business of Supply*

• (1030)

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 43(2)(a), I would like to inform the House that the remaining Conservative caucus speaking slots are hereby divided in two.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I thank the deputy whip for the official opposition for that.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I hear Conservatives talk a lot about inflation. When we look at the size of corporate profits, for example oil and gas, their profits since 2019 have gone up 1011%. All we hear from the Conservatives on that figure is crickets, so I would like to hear from my friend. When are Conservatives going to take a stand for Canadian families, when are they going to fight the real inflation, which is the absolute concentration of corporate power in Canada, and when are they going to take them on to make sure Canadians are not being raked through the mud by these overbearing corporate increases in prices on everyday items?

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan:** Madam Speaker, it is too bad the NDP does not talk about government greed, the greed that actually is hurting Canadians. That is the tough part. New Democrats actually team up with the Liberal government to make sure home heating is more expensive, gas is more expensive and groceries are more expensive. Conservatives will make sure we axe the tax and make sure Canadians can keep the heat on.

**Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure in this place. Today, I want to talk about inflation and spending. I have been here for just over a year. I have driven all over Ottawa, and I still cannot find the money tree that the government seems to have in its backyard, which it finds to spend on just about everything.

Let us find out why spending matters. It drives inflation. There are two kinds of inflation. There is demand-side inflation, where there is too much demand for too few goods or, as we often hear, too much money chasing too few goods. There is also supply-side inflation, which is not enough goods to meet the demand. We have both of those in Canada.

The problem is that the government would have us believe that the only issues causing inflation are supply-side issues that are outside of Canada's borders. However, many are now pointing out that inflation is being driven by too much demand in Canada, because we have too much money chasing too few goods. That is because we extended COVID supports longer than we needed to. We have prominent Liberal members, former members of Parliament, former finance ministers and former governors of the Bank of Canada suggesting that there is too much demand in Canada.

The Bank of Canada is trying to lower demand. That is why it keeps raising interest rates. However, when one raises interest rates, it really hurts people, including those vulnerable folks who are looking for shelter.

Inflation is even worse. Inflation hurts the lowest-income people, seniors and the most vulnerable Canadians the most. Every time

they go to the grocery store, they feel like they are getting squeezed. They see it every day.

One of the main drivers of inflation is energy prices. It has been happening for the last number of years. Consistently, on this side of the House, we have put forward ideas to reduce the cost of energy. If one reduces the cost or the price of the thing causing inflation, one will reduce inflation.

I talked about spending and COVID supports. The government would have us believe that this is a binary discussion, and if one does not believe in government spending, then one did not support any of the COVID supports. That is not what we have been saying on this side of the House. In fact, this side of the House supported, in the very earliest days, the government putting forward programs to help people.

However, as COVID wore on and it became clear that there was abuse and that people were receiving COVID support payments that they should not have received, including prisoners, people who were lying, fraud artists and organized crime, people said, hang on a second, maybe we should consider making some changes. Even the Auditor General recommended that the government make some changes to the process they were using.

The government said not to worry. At the end it would go back, it would audit everybody and it would recover the money. However, the cheques were cashed and the money is gone. The CRA, which is supposed to be in charge of auditing the payments, said that it is not really worth the effort to go after everybody the Auditor General identified. That seems a little unnerving.

We are talking about \$32 billion that the Auditor General said should be investigated. That is for payments that went to individuals who were ineligible but who got money anyway. There are also additional billions of dollars that went to people who were eligible, because of the government's poor design of a program, who should not have been eligible. That includes corporations that paid dividends to their shareholders, and they took the wage subsidy. They also had money to repurchase shares. That was about \$7 billion or \$8 billion. The Canadians for Tax Fairness put out a report yesterday showing how much abuse there was of the wage subsidy by very high-earning corporations.

In addition, we gave money to students, when the economy was open, to stay home and not work. That was another \$8 billion or \$9 billion. We are talking about almost \$50 billion of COVID support payments out of a total \$200 billion that might have gone to people who should not have had it. That is like 25% of the program.

That is why we are concerned. That is why we think that the Auditor General has given the government pretty good advice when she says that it should identify, go after and recover the payments.



It will increase Canadians' confidence in the integrity of the system. If the government just hopes that we all forget about it, Canadians are not going to believe that the government is working in their best interests. In fact, we need the government to take more seriously those who abuse the system so that it ensures the integrity of the system.

● (1035)

Canadians' support for institutions is falling, because the institutions are failing Canadians. We cannot simply say it is going to be too hard to look at these payments or to recover the money, so it is not really worth the effort. It should always be worth the effort to make sure that we recover payments that were improperly paid to Canadians.

We could have an honest discussion about those very low-income individuals who made an honest mistake when they applied. The amount is probably one or two billion dollars, and we could have a discussion about what kind of program, repayment or amnesty would make sense.

The Auditor General has called into question some of those payments. The Parliamentary Budget Officer also identified that over 40% of all spending that happened during COVID never actually went to helping Canadians through COVID. Those are two respected, independent officers of Parliament who have called into question the government's entire COVID support plan.

In times of inflation, we should always worry about top-line government spending, because when the government spends, it competes for goods. The government is spending 25% more per year, every year, than it did pre-COVID. The government calls that fiscal restraint. I have never met somebody who increases their spending by 25% and says they are spending a lot less money than we think they are.

We also have the tightest labour market ever seen. Unemployment is at an incredible low, yet the government continues to hire employees at a blistering pace. The private sector is trying to hire employees. They want to grow their businesses, to recover from COVID, to employ people who pay taxes and who pay corporate taxes. They cannot find anybody to work.

We have hotels with entire floors shut down, because they cannot find anybody to work there. It is not that they do not have the demand. They are turning people away. However, they do not have people to work, to open the rooms, to get the revenue, to pay the taxes, to pay the labour and to grow the GDP. Instead, the government wants to hire all those individuals and have them work for the government. That is not the way to grow ourselves out of this issue.

The government said, for almost five or six years, that we have to spend money because interest rates are so low. When the government was asked what happens if interest rates go up, it said not to worry because interest rates were going to remain low for the foreseeable future. When the government was asked what would happen to the cost of servicing the debt if interest rates went up, it said that was never going to happen.

Just this year, the government is going to spend \$43 billion a year servicing and paying interest on the debt. Last year, it was \$24

### *Business of Supply*

billion. Do members know how much we will spend on health care transfers to provinces next year? It will be \$45 billion. We are going to spend almost as much money on servicing the debt as we will on transfers to the provinces for health care.

Everybody is wondering where we could find more money for health care. How about we spend less money on interest on the debt so that we would have more money for the things that Canadians rely on. However, that means we would have to spend less money on the things that are not important. The government has so many priorities that it has absolutely none at all.

The other issue is that the government does not need more revenue. The government has decided to continue to increasing taxes on things like the excise tax, which is a great example. The excise tax is going up on alcohol, beer, spirits and wine. It is going to cost industries tens of millions of dollars, which may even increase the price of those libations that members of Parliament and Canadians enjoy.

The government is increasing the excise tax because it linked it to inflation. However, when it decided to link that tax to inflation, no one believed that inflation was going to be 7%. All reasonable people are saying to take a pause on raising that tax. We do not need to continually hurt people as they try to purchase a six-pack of beer, a bottle of wine or a bottle of their favourite spirit.

The government does not need the revenue. It is making more money than it has ever made before. It is breaking records every day. The government needs to reduce its spending, to make sure that it is not taking on as much debt, to reduce the interest cost on the debt and to make sure that it does not compete with the private sector.

We need to make sure that we reduce inflation and to make sure Canadians can afford to live in this country.

● (1040)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for two things in particular. The first is for acknowledging the fact that Conservatives voted in favour of a lot of that spending. The second is for not invoking The Notorious B.I.G. in the House, like the member for Calgary Forest Lawn did. That reminds me of the time that Paul Ryan, former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, tried to suggest that he listened to Rage Against the Machine because it was a really cool band, and he did not fully realize the irony that he was the machine.

Is it the belief, based on the rhetoric that we hear from Conservatives, that inflation is 100% a domestic issue? Can the member comment on whether Conservatives believe that other elements, like the war in Ukraine and other things that are going on globally, can contribute to the inflation Canadians are seeing? If they do not believe it as much as we do, then do they believe it at least to some degree, or are they just hell-bent on the idea it is—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member for Simcoe North.

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**Mr. Adam Chambers:** Madam Speaker, I will resist the temptation to quote Nickelback, but if the hon. member listened to the speech, I had recognized that there are two causes of inflation. One is demand and the other is supply, both of them cause inflation in this country. More recently, economists, former Liberals and Bank of Canada governors are suggesting that the causes of inflation are more domestic than they are international. That means the things that happen here at home are causing inflation.

[Translation]

**Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I have been listening to my Conservative colleagues and, once again, they are pointing out something that everyone already agrees is a problem. Inflation is causing a lot of problems for people in terms of the cost of groceries, mortgages and housing.

Moving beyond all of the problems that the Conservatives raised, if they were in power and had to present a budget tomorrow morning, what solution would they propose to deal with these problems?

[English]

**Mr. Adam Chambers:** Madam Speaker, if Conservatives were in power, one of the things we have consistently said we would do is to reduce energy bills by cutting the carbon tax, or we could take the suggestion of the NDP and reduce the GST on energy bills. However, we would also reduce government spending.

We are spending \$15 billion a year, every year, on high-priced consultants to do things that the civil service could do. There are many ways that we could reduce the size of government and free up some money to spend on the things that everybody cares about, such as social security, supports to help the most vulnerable and, of course, health care.

• (1045)

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, the member for Simcoe North said that he was looking for an invisible money tree. I suggest that he look at Shell, which showed \$40 billion in profit in 2022. Does he agree that there needs to be a windfall tax on corporations like these, as well as the removal of the GST on home heating?

**Mr. Adam Chambers:** Madam Speaker, I will consider any recommendation that sees the energy bills of Canadians reduced.

In addition, if the member wants to talk about profiteering corporations, I am not sure how a windfall tax is going to lower inflation for Canadians. However, I do support reviews by the Competition Tribunal and other independent officers as to whether there is unnecessary profiteering or price gouging going on. These are officers and agents of the country. We should be listening to them and taking their advice. There is a grocery study happening at committee. The Competition Tribunal is also looking at the grocery study. If we want to do more of that, I would be open to that as well.

[Translation]

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Sherbrooke.

I am actually rather delighted to take part in today's debate on the economy. In examining the Conservatives' motion, I suspect that I am not the only person to note the unbridled enthusiasm with which the Canadian economy is being bashed.

Indeed, the Conservatives' motion makes it sound like Canada is causing all the problems around the world, while that is obviously not the case. I am delighted to have this opportunity today to disabuse the Conservatives of this notion.

[English]

The Conservatives seem unaware that we experienced a once-in-a-generation pandemic and that such an event would inevitably have significant and widespread adverse impacts around the world, impacts from which Canada was not and is not immune. The pandemic necessitated a shutdown and a restart of our economy, not just here but in countries right around the world.

Vladimir Putin then illegally invaded Ukraine, sending shockwaves through global energy and commodity markets, with predictable and compounding adverse impacts on economies around the globe.

[Translation]

Analysts have clearly indicated that the ensuing global inflation was not the result of decisions made by one government. On the contrary, global inflation is due to the combined aftershocks of two and a half years of historic turmoil. These global historic events cannot be dismissed or ignored.

Unlike the Conservatives, our government did not ignore them. We faced them head on, and we gave Canadians the assistance they needed to overcome them. As a result, Canada is doing better than most of the other G7 countries during this extremely difficult period.

[English]

I would like to point out that inflation eased throughout the last several months, notably in December. In total, I believe it is down 22% since its peak. I also do not want to minimize or dismiss the fact that the cost of living has gone up, which it has, and that inflation does remain higher than normal. The cost of goods has risen, but it has risen all over the world, and every indication is that it is better to be living here in Canada during this time of global economic instability than just about anywhere else in the world. Inflation is lower here in Canada than it is in the United States. It is lower here in Canada than in the average of the European Union as well.

There is every indication that the current challenges flowing from the pandemic supply chain disruptions and from Russia's illegal war on Ukraine are receding. The Bank of Canada and private sector economists expect inflation to ease towards the 2% target over the next two years.

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Moreover, as a result of the targeted investments we have made as a government in order to support Canadians and our economy through these difficult times, Canada has experienced a strong rebound from the pandemic recession, with our 3% growth so far in 2022 being the strongest among G7 countries.

With close to 150,000 jobs created in January alone, our 5% unemployment rate is now close to historical lows. In fact, my friend, the hon. member for Simcoe North just said in the House that unemployment is at an exceptional low here in Canada. At the same time, the labour force participation rate rose once again to over 65%, and we are seeing labour force participation hit record highs across the board, but in particular for women aged 25-55.

● (1050)

[*Translation*]

Canada also saw the largest increase in real disposable income in the G7, and that should not be downplayed. Outperforming our peers in times of global challenges is a sign of strength, not weakness.

That is not to say that we are not still facing challenges, which is why the rising cost of living is at the heart of our government's concerns. There is no doubt that we see this as the number one economic challenge facing our country at this time.

[*English*]

That is why we introduced our affordability plan to support Canadians who are having a rough time making ends meet. It is already making life more affordable for millions of Canadians. Under our affordability plan, we have doubled the GST tax credit, which is providing targeted support to roughly 11 million individuals and families, including more than half of Canadian seniors. Many received that additional payment just recently, in November.

We have enhanced the Canada workers benefit to put up to an additional \$2,400 into the pockets of low- and modest-income families starting this year. We set out a plan to further improve the workers benefit so that it reaches up to 1.2 million additional hard-working Canadians. This means, in total, the workers benefit will top up the income of up to 4.2 million of the lowest-paid Canadians, because no one who works a 40-hour week should have to worry about paying the bills or putting food on the table.

[*Translation*]

As part of our affordability plan, we also introduced a permanent 10% increase in old age security for those over the age of 75. That began in July.

This year we will provide a one-time payment to 1.8 million low-income Canadian renters who are struggling with housing costs. We have also reduced child care costs. The majority of provinces and territories managed to reduce fees by at least 50%, on average, by December 2022 as a result of agreements we have reached with our partners. We are building a dental care plan for Canadians, starting with hundreds of thousands of children under the age of 12.

In addition, indexing benefits to inflation means that key benefits that Canadians rely on, such as the Canada child benefit, the GST

credit, the Canada pension plan, old age security and the guaranteed income supplement, increase with inflation.

[*English*]

These supports are targeted, and they reflect the actions of a responsible government. We have the lowest deficit and the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio among all G7 countries, and we have ensured those fiscal metrics while we were supporting Canadians who needed it.

Allow me to conclude on that note. Our approach is about balancing fiscal responsibility with compassion, and it is working. We are outperforming our global peers in the face of this shared challenge of the global economic instability we are all facing. We are supporting Canadians through those challenges while being fiscally responsible.

● (1055)

**Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the Trudeau legacy of the 1970s and 1980s was a disastrous inflation crisis, energy crisis and fiscal crisis that was terrible for Canadians at the time over those 15 years when that government ran deficits in 14 out of 15 years. A generation later, it led to \$35 billion in cuts to transfers for health care, social services and education under the Chrétien and Martin Liberal governments. It was \$35 billion in cuts because of the disastrous Trudeau economic policies of the 1970s and 1980s.

Is the member concerned today that, at a starting point, the \$4.5-billion broken promise on a Canada mental health transfer, a promise her own party made in the last election and cannot afford to keep, is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of things that will have to be cut for Canadians because of the disastrous economic policies of her government?

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Madam Speaker, if we are talking about cuts to programs and services that are essential for Canadians, we need only look at the years of the Harper government. The Harper government actually cut health transfers to provinces. It is our government that is attempting to fix the health care system in this country.

I was personally both surprised and glad to hear that the leader of the Conservative Party would support and maintain the transfers that the Prime Minister announced just last week following a meeting with premiers from across the country.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** On a point of order, the hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin.

**Hon. Mike Lake:** Madam Speaker, I believe it is against the rules of the House to mislead the House. The Harper government did not cut transfers. It raised transfers—

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**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** That is not a point of order; it is a point of debate.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Repentigny.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Outremont for her speech.

She spent quite a bit of time on the preamble of the motion. I will focus on the motion itself, specifically the part that says, “fire...consultants”.

I must admit that I completely agree with that part of the motion. When consultants such as McKinsey are used, government policy is being subcontracted out, and that is unacceptable. When contracts are awarded to external consultants, we end up paying double. What is more, multinational consulting firms operate on the periphery of democracy, and using their services undermines democracy.

If the Conservatives had put a period after “fire...consultants”, we would be voting in favour of the motion. Would the Liberal Party also be voting in favour of the motion?

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Madam Speaker, I find it interesting that the Bloc Québécois is talking about consultants. The use of consultants is necessary in order to provide Canadians with services that meet their expectations. I do not understand why the Bloc is criticizing the federal government's use of consultants when the Government of Quebec, the government of Mr. Legault, uses the same consultants to provide services to Quebecers. The Bloc does not seem to have a problem with that.

[*English*]

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, I want to ask a question about this statement. The Conservatives have quoted Tiff Macklem saying, “inflation in Canada increasingly reflects what's happening in Canada”. To me that shows that Loblaws, which had a 38% increase in its third-quarter profits in 2022, is not being taxed enough.

Does the member agree that there needs to be a windfall profit tax on corporations like Loblaws?

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Madam Speaker, I would like to point the member opposite to the taxes that we have introduced on large corporations, including large banks and large insurance companies. We agree that everybody needs to pay their fair share.

With respect to her specific question regarding Loblaws and perhaps other grocery store chains, I am very encouraged by the fact that our minister of innovation has demanded that the Competition Bureau review grocery store chains in order to ensure that the prices are fair for Canadians. I look forward to its report, which should be coming out in the next few months.

• (1100)

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to this opposition motion on the economy. Since we are still relatively early in the year, I think it is worth noting the strong rebound of the Canadian economy from the pandemic recession.

Early data shows that the Canadian economy grew by 3% so far in 2022, the strongest performance in the G7. The unemployment rate is at 5%, close to historical lows. Labour force participation for working-age Canadians is at record highs, 80.3% among Canadians between the ages of 15 and 64, and 85.6% among women aged 25 to 64. Both figures are higher than in the United States.

I am quite disappointed the member opposite did not mention this in his motion.

[*Translation*]

Not only is the economic recovery well on track, but the inflation data is also encouraging. The consumer price index rose by 6.3% in December 2022 compared to the same period the previous year. Everyone realizes that it is still high, but when we consider that inflation was at 8.1% in June, it is clear that there has been some progress.

That being said, we are well aware that many Canadians are still struggling with the rising cost of groceries and gas. That is why we are supporting those Canadians who are most affected by these price increases.

The Canada workers benefit is a particularly effective measure.

[*English*]

The Canada workers benefit is designed to reduce barriers to employment for low- and modest-income workers by giving them a sizable tax refund. It tops up their income. We introduced it in budget 2018, before the pandemic and the recently elevated global inflation, to encourage more people to join the workforce and stay in it. Right from the start, it put more money in the pockets of more people than did the old working income tax benefit it replaced. The program has proven its worth, and with the pandemic and the rising cost of living, we knew we had to make it even better. Low-wage workers were among the hardest hit during the pandemic, and they are still the most affected by the rising prices at the counter.

First, we expanded and enhanced the benefit so it could reach three million Canadians: hard-working people who do important jobs, but unfortunately, do not get paid very much. Then, in last year's fall economic statement, we further improved it. We expanded the program to reach up to 1.2 million additional Canadians through advance payments. This was an intentional policy choice to top up the incomes of up to 4.2 million of the lowest-paid Canadians. No one who works 40 hours a week should have to worry about paying the bills.

The Canada workers benefit can mean up to \$1,400 for a single worker and up to \$2,400 for a working couple every year. It also includes an additional \$740 disability supplement to give greater support to Canadians with disabilities who face financial barriers to entering the workforce. People living alone and earning up to \$33,000 per year receive the Canada workers benefit. Those earning \$23,495 or less may receive the full amount. The benefit is also available to families earning \$43,212 or less per year. They may receive the full amount if their adjusted family net income is \$26,805 or less. The Canada Revenue Agency automatically determines whether people are eligible for the benefit. All eligible workers receive the CWB when they file their tax returns.

[*Translation*]

We have also taken into account the fact that targeted benefits based on household income may discourage the secondary earner in a household from returning to work. Most of the time, that earner is a woman. The first \$14,336 that the secondary earner contributes to the household does not affect their family's eligibility for the Canada workers benefit. This enables skilled female workers to enter and remain in the labour force. It also makes life more affordable for hundreds of thousands, even millions, of Canadian families.

Our affordability plan put a suite of measures in place to help Canadians who need it most. In addition to the Canada workers benefit I just talked about, we doubled the GST tax credit for six months. This is extra help for about 11 million people and families in Canada. With the one-time top-up to the Canada housing benefit, we gave \$500 to nearly two million low-income Canadian renters who have a hard time paying their rent.

We permanently increased old age security for seniors aged 75 and over. More than 3 million seniors are benefiting from that. That means an additional \$800 in the first year for seniors receiving the full pension. We worked with the provinces and territories to reduce child care costs by 50%. This is saving families, on average, up to \$6,000 per child per year. For Quebec, which already has its own child care system, the government's plan will help create roughly 37,000 new spaces.

We introduced the Canada dental benefit for families with annual incomes under \$90,000. This benefit will provide up to \$1,300 per child under the age of 12 over the next two years to help pay for dental visits. We are continuing to index benefits for Canadians, including the Canada child benefit, the GST credit, the Canada pension plan, old age security and the guaranteed income supplement.

• (1105)

[*English*]

We are also helping Canadians fight climate change. In the provinces where the federal system applies, individuals and families receive climate action incentive payments. This fiscal year, a family of four will receive \$745 in Ontario, \$832 in Manitoba, \$1,101 in Saskatchewan and \$1,079 in Alberta. Most families, eight out of 10, receive more than the cost they face from the price on pollution. Low- and middle-income families benefit the most.

Our support programs help those most affected by inflation. We cannot help everyone; that would be fiscally irresponsible. Our

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ability to spend is not infinite. It is about balancing fiscal responsibility with compassion. We need to help those who need it most, but we also need to ensure that government spending does not make it more difficult for the Bank of Canada to return inflation to its target.

We will continue to put Canada on the road to success. We will ensure that the most vulnerable get the support they need; we will also keep our finances on a sustainable track in the long term.

**Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Madam Speaker, in her speech, the member mostly talked about low unemployment and 3% GDP growth, basically suggesting Canadians have never had it so good. However, when the Canadians who are watching these proceedings today go to the grocery store, they know that those prices are not going down. If anything, they are still going up, and the problem with inflation is that once those inflationary prices are baked in, they are there to stay. Canadians know that this is going to be a serious, ongoing problem.

The member did mention spending, very briefly, at the end. Given the fact that former Liberal colleagues, finance ministers and governors of the Bank of Canada have said that Liberal government spending is a major contributor to inflation in Canada, how is her government going to actually control spending going forward so we do not have those inflationary pressures anymore?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière:** Madam Speaker, with all due respect for my colleague, what I said was that we are there for people having a hard time making ends meet, and we are doing so in a fiscally responsible way.

We know that inflation is improving; the inflation rate is decreasing and, hopefully, will continue to decrease in the coming months. Nevertheless, these are difficult times for many Canadians. That is why we put in place the various measures I spoke about, in particular the doubling of the GST credit, the one-time top-up to the Canada housing benefit and the Canada workers benefit.

We are stepping up for those most in need.

• (1110)

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Madam Speaker, there are many things we have often heard about in the House, and I would remind members that simply repeating something without adding anything new is just tedious.

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That said, earlier, we heard that the government needed the services of consultants to provide expertise, which is a good idea. However, we should not forget that when the public service is depleted of its expertise, there is unfortunately no choice but to hire highly paid people to replace what was already working.

I would like my colleague to tell me if she agrees with the fact that, over the years, the government got rid of its expertise, which made it possible to hire McKinsey.

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière:** Madam Speaker, we actually contract professional services to complement the work of the public service, which must respond to the various demands and unexpected fluctuations. This is all being studied in committee right now, and I am confident that the committee will come up with the best solution.

[*English*]

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Madam Speaker, something just does not make sense to me here. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said that if the government extended the temporary Canada recovery benefit to the big box stores and to the oil and gas sector, it would generate \$4.3 billion in revenue. Therefore, I really do not understand why the government did not do that. Why is it protecting the interests of a dozen CEOs in this country and leaving millions of Canadians struggling to get a meal on the table?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière:** Madam Speaker, as I said in my speech, our priority is to really be there and work for Canadians and families who need it most.

That is why we have introduced concrete measures that put more money in the pockets of those who are struggling to make ends meet. We know that these are difficult times. I see the price increases myself when I go grocery shopping. That is the point of our measures. They really are helping Canadians.

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleagues for their unwavering support. I would first like to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague, the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

As usual, our esteemed Conservative colleagues have decided to repeat their usual mantra, which is to repeat, repeat, repeat something over and over in the hope that voters will come to believe it.

First of all, if the Conservatives want to talk numbers, they should start by double-checking theirs. Let us be clear: The seven years, three months and nine days that this Liberal government has been in power should not be rounded up to eight years, as the Conservatives repeat seven times in their motion, but down to seven. They need to remember the importance of accuracy, accuracy, accuracy.

The teacher in me would say that, simply put, the motion does contain some truthful statements about the state of the economy, but the Conservatives' proposals are pretty shaky and they would fail economics 101.

Let us take a look at their motion from the beginning. The Prime Minister has many faults, as the majority of the House would agree,

but he is not responsible for the entire economic situation. He is not that competent.

Today's motion addresses an important issue, which is that the difficult economic context and inflation are real problems that are making life difficult for many Quebeckers and Canadians. It is true that groceries are more expensive, mortgage costs make home ownership far too expensive in some cases, and rents and gas prices have also risen.

The Bloc Québécois agrees that these are critical issues. However, eliminating taxes is not going to solve inflation.

Let us consider the causes of inflation. Supply chain issues arose during the pandemic, Russia invaded Ukraine, and the pandemic was followed by rapid economic recovery and overheating. The labour shortage also contributed to inflation. A lot of different factors are involved. There was also a return to interventionist policies around the globe, in places like Europe, the United States and Canada, to fuel the economic recovery that everyone in the House is hoping to see.

Do the Conservatives think that taxes cause inflation? Just look at our neighbours to the south. They have far fewer taxes, yet they are still experiencing inflation.

As I have explained to the House before, the conduct of budgetary policy consists mainly of choosing the right level of taxes for the right level of spending, while ensuring quality public services. I think we can all agree that that is not really happening right now.

This is a detailed exercise that requires nuance. Unfortunately, nuance is in short supply around here. One of the most important aspects of good government is the sound, intelligent management of taxes.

Contrary to what is proposed here, drastic tax cuts do not constitute a reasonable and effective budgetary policy. However, reckless spending is no better. The government needs to play an important role in the economy.

Let us remember that a government's main tool is its ability to collect and distribute funds. When we take away the government's ability to collect funds, we directly limit its ability to invest in the economy.

Let us take a look at the solutions proposed in the Conservatives' motion. First, they suggest firing "high-priced consultants". If they had stopped there, we probably would have been in agreement. It is true that the Quebec government hires consultants, but never to the extent that the federal government has done it in recent years. There is not just McKinsey, but also IBM, PwC and Deloitte. Many companies are being paid exorbitant amounts by the federal government, for no discernible reason. Their services are not superior. Quite the contrary, in fact.

Second, the Conservative motion proposes cutting waste and capping spending. As I mentioned, a good government knows how to levy taxes and how to spend them effectively. We can agree that some taxes are necessary for sound economic management. A good government knows how to do both. That is not the case here. I could give plenty of examples of exorbitant and useless spending items that could be cut, but spending does not play a role in the inflation we are facing today.

Now let us look at the final section, where the Conservatives suggesting eliminating inflationary deficits and taxes. If we read between the lines, this proposal is really about eliminating the carbon tax. The Conservatives have been repeating this message in the House for months now, and it is wrong.

• (1115)

Let me take a moment to talk about what a carbon tax is.

It is an example of an effective tax. Remember that, by 2014, Quebec already had a cap-and-trade system, but it was forced to partner with California because there was no interest in Canada, except for the Ontario government, which later changed its mind. That is what happened. We had to partner with California to implement a proper system that works. We have the figures to prove that the system works.

Quebec has already shouldered its responsibilities when it comes to fighting climate change. I will give a small but important example to demonstrate how well these measures are working. By 2015, Quebec had reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 8.8% over 1990 levels. Putting a price on GHG emissions works.

If the Conservatives agree that we need to fight climate change, and I am really eager to hear one of them say so, they need to propose solutions. A carbon tax, like a cap-and-trade system, is a solution that works, because it also follows the rules of the market. They should be happy about that, but they are not. Why not? It is because the oil lobby is too important to the Conservative Party.

Remember, too, that the cost of climate change is higher than the cost of taking action to fight climate change. It is a simple cost-benefit analysis.

Let us talk about the high costs of climate change.

First, there are the health costs. Scientists all agree that the increasingly frequent heat waves will mostly affect the most vulnerable, such as seniors and newborns. People will die. People are already dying, but it will happen more and more. Second, there are zoonotic diseases. As temperatures rise, vector-borne diseases such as Lyme disease and West Nile virus are moving north and spreading throughout southern Canada and Quebec. These diseases cost society money. Lastly, even allergies have costs in terms of productivity and have an impact on the economy.

In terms of infrastructure, more and more floods are happening, including flash floods and ice-jam flooding. There are enormous costs associated with these types of floods, and they are becoming more frequent as a result of climate change.

There is also the matter of permafrost. Reserves in northern Canada and Quebec are being forced to rebuild their infrastructure.

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The loss of permafrost, which is melting as a result of climate change, is jeopardizing their infrastructure. Entire cities and villages have to be rebuilt. Another way climate change is affecting infrastructure is through erosion. Along the shores of the St. Lawrence and other rivers in Quebec and Canada, roads and villages need to be moved, because erosion due to climate change has a tremendous impact on the economy.

Now that I have demonstrated that the costs are high, we may be able to finally agree on the fact that levying a simple tax on greenhouse gas emissions makes a little sense. The cost-benefit analysis is simple. Why does the Conservative Party insist on denying the facts?

If they want solutions for curbing inflation and cutting wasteful public spending, that is great. We can start by reforming the competitive system. The federal government has an annoying habit of encouraging monopolies. Several companies in Canada, especially in the transportation and telecommunications sectors, have few competitors, and their fees are among the highest in the world. If we want to give consumers a break, we could perhaps start by lowering prices, which are currently far too high.

What will we say to major companies like Rogers and Shaw, which are awaiting a final decision from the government? “Yes, prices will go up, but that is not a problem. Let us avoid reforming the competitive system at all costs because that would make lobbyists unhappy.”

Essentially, we have a totally obsolete competitive system. How come ministers have the power to decide whether companies can sign agreements that conflict with the Competition Bureau's rulings? It makes no sense. Instead of stirring up anger, which is not helpful, let us stop and propose practical solutions, as the Bloc Québécois is used to doing.

• (1120)

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. It is quite refreshing to listen to someone who really knows what she is talking about. As an economist, she spoke in depth about a number of subjects today. She indicated that there were costs, not just because of climate change but also because of the lack of support for the most vulnerable people and populations.

I would like to know whether my colleague agrees with the official opposition, which says that financial supports for the most vulnerable individuals are inflationary measures.

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** Madam Speaker, indeed, I believe that the social safety net is essential. That is what we have in Quebec, and we are often considered models of social democracy around the world.

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However, I believe that the federal government is in a poor position to help the most vulnerable members of society because it just throws money around. Unfortunately, it only duplicates work already being done. For example, we do not need an employment insurance system managed by Canada, particularly when it is very badly managed by Canada. We should simply have one system in Quebec that actually works.

[English]

**Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague challenged the Conservatives about accepting climate change and whether there was something we could do about it. Of course the climate is changing and as Conservatives we will do something about it. We would bring in more projects like LNG Canada in Kitimat so we could export clean natural gas to the world. That would displace 50% of the emissions being produced by coal throughout the world by those countries that do not have the option to use natural gas.

Would my hon. colleague like her province to lift its ban on producing natural gas so Quebec could be part of the solution and could help export clean natural gas to the rest of the world to displace dirty coal?

• (1125)

[Translation]

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** Madam Speaker, first, let us set the record straight: Quebec does not need natural gas at this time. We have hydroelectric power, which works quite well.

We could export it. However, natural gas is a fossil fuel and there is a purchase option for this type of natural resource, as Bernard Landry said.

For now, we do not know all the potential effects of natural gas on the environment. Why would we use resources that are not necessarily good for the environment when we can develop our own resources, as we do with hydroelectricity in Quebec?

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the motion moved today by the Conservatives simply proposes spending cuts. Under the Harper government, all they wanted to do was cut spending for health, veterans and crime prevention.

There is also the issue of revenue. The evidence was very clear: We know that Canada loses more than \$30 billion of taxpayer money to tax havens every year.

What does my colleague think of the Conservatives' motion, which does not address the issue of the \$30 billion that goes to tax havens every year?

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** Madam Speaker, my colleague, the member for Joliette, is working very hard on the issue of tax havens. Oddly enough, we never see the Liberals working hard on the issue of tax havens. Once again, there is patronage involved and, clearly, some measures are not effective. There is waste, including money sent to tax havens, and quite frankly that is shameful.

I agree that we must fight tax havens. As I said in my speech, we must make better use of the resources we have. That is what a good, well-functioning government does.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Terrebonne for her excellent speech. I also thank the members of the Conservative Party for giving me the opportunity to speak in the House about the difficult conditions in which thousands of people find themselves and to examine some possible solutions that ultimately do not seem to fix much.

Inflation is real, galloping and impacts the cost of everything, from gas, to housing, to food, to cars. It requires far more comprehensive measures than today's populist proposals. I am not surprised by any of the general statements at the beginning of the motion. It is true that inflation can wreak havoc on families' budgets and that it is currently causing the cost of goods and services to skyrocket.

Social housing is a topic that speaks to me. I was just at a meeting this morning with people from the Coop d'habitation Boréale, a housing co-operative in Rouyn-Noranda. As an aside, I would like to say hello to my friend Jean-Philippe. It is his birthday today, and I wish him a happy birthday.

This co-op's model is adapted to our region's reality, with a total of eight entrances. These are duplexes with backyards. This model provides for affordable housing for families. However, it is incredibly difficult to obtain financing for the necessary renovations, both from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC, and lenders.

In order to get this money, the co-op is being asked to increase rents to match market pricing. So much for affordability. The government's maze of red tape makes it hard for volunteers, and it takes far too long to get answers. Not so long ago, CMHC employees were able to guide these volunteers. They no longer have the time to provide the same support.

The co-op housing model is a viable option for tackling the housing shortage. It addresses inflation and rising rents. However, this model should not be seen as mere apartment buildings. It should also be seen as the possibility of having duplexes, triplexes and other types of residences that will better suit families. Having a backyard and parking is also a way to improve the quality of life for younger families with less income.

It is important to ensure that co-operative housing developments like these remain in place to continue to provide affordable and accessible housing. CMHC needs to ensure that the co-op model remains an option and adapt its programs to help small co-op models make the necessary repairs.

If the Conservatives really want the government to help people deal with the rising cost of living, we invite them to support the solutions put forward by the Bloc Québécois. These are more equitable solutions to help ensure that prosperity is more equally shared.



*Business of Supply*

Immediate relief must be provided to those hardest hit by inflation. This must be done by increasing the purchasing power of seniors living on essentially fixed incomes, by providing direct financial support to low-income earners, and by creating a program to support those most affected by a sudden spike in fuel prices, to the point of threatening their livelihoods. This includes farmers, taxi drivers and truckers.

We have to make the economy more resilient by tackling the structural weaknesses that cause inflation; reducing our dependence on fossil fuels, whose chronic instability causes price shocks; restoring essential links in the supply chain; and tackling the labour shortage that prevents businesses from offsetting supply shortages by increasing local production. We also have to take care of health, our children's education, and the environment.

The Conservatives' stubborn refusal to think about things, to ground their choices in this new industrial revolution, will cause a rift. In this motion, the Conservatives are repeating previous motions that were all rejected by the House. When they talk about inflationary taxes, they mean cancelling the carbon tax, reducing EI premiums and reducing Quebec pension plan contributions. They talk about cutting spending, but they do not specify what spending. These proposals would help briefly, but they are not real solutions. They will probably just exacerbate our problems.

Let us come up with solutions to deal with the labour shortage. One good way to do that would be to increase people's income. Another would be to encourage older workers to keep working by not clawing back their guaranteed income supplement. Still another would be to make it easier to hire temporary foreign workers in high-demand occupations by transferring responsibility for that to the Government of Quebec, which is already doing the impact studies the federal government requires of business owners. The Standing Committee on Industry and Technology actually just completed a study on this and will be releasing its report in the coming days.

• (1130)

We need to do a better job of protecting what has taken us all these years to build: our expertise in green mining, our hydroelectric capacity, our expertise in heavy-duty electric transportation, and our battery and electric vehicle supply chain. We need to leverage our expertise in quantum technologies and artificial intelligence. We can do even more with centres of excellence on advanced materials and the accelerated commercialization of micro-electronic components.

I could talk at length about Quebec's capabilities, but my colleagues will be joining the debate shortly to highlight these aspects.

These are the steps that the government could take to address the source and effects of inflation. It is important to understand our approach.

Our monetary policy ensures a balance between supply and demand to keep price increases within a range around 2%. This policy is the responsibility of the Bank of Canada, which makes decisions independently.

The government also has a role to play. Its challenge is threefold: to protect the poorest, especially annuitants and those on fixed in-

comes, from the effects of inflation; to try to ensure that the inflation we have today, which is essentially due to current circumstances, does not become structural or long-term; and to work to make the economy more resilient and less vulnerable to inflation shocks by addressing its structural weaknesses.

The Bloc Québécois proposes a balanced and responsible approach, namely, targeting support programs for individuals and businesses to help those who need it, without exacerbating the upward pressure on prices, and clearly identifying the drivers of inflation so that we can address it directly.

In terms of solutions, we need to help those who are hardest hit, specifically seniors who live on fixed incomes and their savings, which are losing value at an alarming rate. They are the most affected by the rising cost of living. Before the surge of inflation, Canada was one of the industrialized countries where retirement income replaced the lowest percentage of working income.

The Bloc Québécois proposes to immediately stop reducing the guaranteed income supplement for the poorest seniors who are seeing cuts this year because they received the Canada emergency response benefit or the Canada recovery benefit last year and to increase old age security to protect the purchasing power of seniors who are faced with the rising cost of living.

We need to build more social and community housing. After growing by 6.8% in March, housing costs increased by 7.4% in April over the previous year. This is the steepest increase since June 1983. The housing shortage was already a serious problem, but it was aggravated by pandemic-related factors. Low-income households, which spend a larger share of their earnings on housing, are particularly affected.

Building social housing takes time and requires permanent and predictable programs rather than ad hoc programs, like far too many of the ones we have now. In Quebec, federal intervention has been particularly problematic. Quebec is the only province that provides ongoing funding for the construction of social housing through its AccèsLogis program. Quebec needed an asymmetrical agreement that gave it full control, which the federal government blocked for two years.

The Bloc Québécois proposes to boost the construction of social and community housing. The federal government should permanently allocate 1% of its revenues to Quebec through flexible and predictable transfers, which could provide additional funds for its programs.

*Business of Supply*

We need to safeguard the independence of the central banks and tackle the labour shortage. The Bloc Québécois proposes establishing a tax credit for young graduates in the regions, as well as for immigrants, calling on experienced workers, transferring the temporary foreign worker program, establishing a productivity policy that includes measures such as research and development support based on productivity and support for investments in the empowerment and digital transformation of businesses.

We need to make supply chains stronger and more resilient, which would enable our SMEs to identify weak points in their supply chains, help them connect with domestic suppliers and propose new ways of managing inventory, to make them less vulnerable.

We need to strengthen our competition system through the Competition Act to limit the concentration of corporate ownership and major companies' ability to abuse their dominant position, which makes prices rise.

We need to limit our dependence on oil. We know that the price of oil rose by 33% between December 2020 and December 2021. We need to accelerate the energy transition to shelter the economy from sudden spikes in the price of fossil fuels. This can be done through the electrification of transportation, energy retrofitting, support for businesses that want to move away from fossil fuels and toward renewable energy and redirecting financial flows toward green economic development.

In Ottawa, however, the Liberals downplay the problem and propose waiting for it to resolve itself, while the Conservatives want a more restrictive monetary policy and question the independence of the Bank of Canada.

• (1135)

Then there is the NDP, which is proposing an all-out spending spree that could further fuel inflation.

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, as the member was concluding his speech, he spoke about what the Liberals are doing, what the Conservatives would be doing and what the NDP would be doing. Could the member inform us, if the Bloc Québécois were to form government in the House, what it would do?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Speaker, it will be very refreshing to have our own national government in Quebec. Our economy will be based on the needs of Quebec and Quebec alone.

It is clear that Ottawa is hurting Quebec's development in all sectors. They are focusing their energies and centralizing, concentrating, health expenditures without taking into account what Quebecers need. I find that problematic.

Ottawa is also causing a systemic slowdown, particularly in terms of housing, by signing agreements with Quebec two or three years after signing with Ontario. That, in my opinion, is the heart of the problem. A Quebec government by and for Quebecers would be a magical solution.

[*English*]

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I listened to the hon. member with great interest. He listed at length all the ways in which he demands the federal government support the social programs and social spending in Quebec, yet when it came time to listing what New Democrats were asking for, he basically dismissed investments in our provinces.

Which one is it? The member cannot have it both ways. Does the hon. member want more investments in his province of Quebec, or would he run an austerity budget, just like the Conservatives would?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question and the strength of his values and convictions.

In the current context, I think that we need to make realistic suggestions, but there are some things that we cannot compromise on, such as helping those in need. Not everyone is in need right now. In that sense, the next budget should set out robust measures to support economic development. There are some important things that need to be addressed, such as the construction of housing. With regard to the labour shortage, one of the biggest problems back home is that people are unable to find housing. We need to find solutions to those problems.

I am also thinking of seniors. In my opinion, it is very important to implement a fixed and recurring income increase for them because right now they are not able to earn any additional income. We will approve this type of measure, but we will be expressing our concerns about others.

• (1140)

[*English*]

**Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I hear my hon. colleague speak so eloquently to our need to give up on our oil and gas industry here in Canada, but we know that the royalties and revenues from oil and gas go to fund the equalization formula.

I wonder if my colleague could speak on behalf of the people who elected him as to whether they would be happy to do without the portion of the transfer payments that comes from the royalties from oil and gas.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Absolutely, Madam Speaker. I look forward to no longer being treated like a poor province because of equalization. Quebec systematically receives less than its fair share because of the way the federal government works.

Rather than constantly trampling all over the provinces, the federal government should be making real health transfers to them, like the ones that should have been made through an agreement with the provinces. The federal government created an imbalance by backing out of funding for health care, which dropped from 50% to 22%. We are talking about billions of dollars a year. Honestly, we can do without the equalization money.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

**Mr. Matthew Green:** Madam Speaker, we had a total of 1,462,795 visits to food banks across Canada last year, 31% of whom were children and 8.9% were seniors. Meanwhile, Loblaws is making record profits.

Does the hon. member agree that we should extend the profit windfall tax, which has been applied to banks and insurance companies, to grocery chains such as Loblaws to double the GST and allow Canadians to be able to feed their families?

[Translation]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Speaker, that is food for thought. Competition will absolutely need to be fostered, and I think that the Competition Act may permit that. I believe that the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology would like to examine this issue next. That is my answer, given the time at my disposal.

[English]

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to say that I will be sharing my time with the terrific member of Parliament for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski. She will be doing the second half of our response to yet another Conservative opposition day.

For once, we are seeing the Conservatives not doing the same thing that they have done multiple times. We can talk about a waste of opposition days. Basically, numerous times over the course of the past year, they have put forward opposition days saying, “Let us make pollution free again.”

Today, the Conservatives have put forward a motion that calls on the government to do a number of things. They say they have learned lessons from the terrible carnage of the Harper years, the slash and burn we saw under the Conservatives for nearly a decade, a dismal decade in Canadian political life.

They say they have learned their lesson, and they reference a number of things. They are really concerned about the Canadian public and regular families this time. Yes, when they were in power, all they cared about was the ultrarich and billionaires, but they have learned a lesson from that, or at least that is what they are ultimately saying.

The Conservatives have put forward a number of very vague suggestions. I would like to talk about how that contrasts with how the Conservative Party acted during the dismal decade it was in power.

First of all, they decry deficits. You will recall, Madam Speaker, as you were in the House for many of these years, that the Harper government had record deficits. It had eight deficits in a row. Members of that government were horrible money managers.

We do not have to rely on my word or the word of the many Canadians who threw them out of office. We can also rely on the Department of Finance. It produces fiscal period returns. It compares government political parties, such as the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party and the NDP provincial governments. We have not yet formed a federal government, but the time is coming.

The fiscal period returns of the federal Minister of Finance actually show that the Conservatives are as bad as the Liberals when it comes to managing money. When it comes to putting in place the financial structure around federal government finances, the Conservatives are just as bad as the Liberals. The best party at managing money, and this comes from the fiscal period returns issued by the Department of Finance in Ottawa, are NDP governments. That is something we are proud of.

Tommy Douglas, our founding leader, was one who brought forward the proposition that one of the ways to ensure we adequately manage money is to ensure that the ultrarich pay their fair share. Obviously, the Harper government failed to do that, which is why we had eight consecutive years of deficits.

This motion, as far as Conservatives are concerned, is basically saying to the Canadian public, “Do not do as we do, but do as we say.” Their track record was absolutely lamentable. Why was the Harper government so bad at managing money? That brings me to my second point, where they talk about limiting expenditures.

The Harper government put in place, and it is true that the Liberal government that preceded it started to lay the foundation, but the Harper government really put into place that intricate network of overseas tax havens, which today cost Canadians over \$30 billion a year.

The member for Carleton is the current leader of the Conservative Party. It has changed leaders a lot in the last few years, so we will see how long he lasts. The member for Carleton was part of the finance committee that studied the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report that talked about that \$30-billion figure.

In fact, the PBO said that is a conservative figure. It may be far beyond that. The Harper government signed tax treaties with alacrity and with any tax haven that wanted to step up. The Conservatives were there making sure that the rich and the billionaires had a place to put their money, and that they never had to pay their fair share of taxes.

This is linked because Conservative financial management really is an oxymoron. It links the fact that we had deficits to the fact that it allowed the widespread, indiscriminate taking of money overseas so the wealthy in Canada never had to pay their fair share.

● (1145)

This is simply bad financial management. That is why the Conservatives have a track record just as dismal as the Liberals in putting in place measures that ensure investments in the country, investments from the federal government that go to those who need it the most, and that is to Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet.

*Business of Supply*

As an aside, it is kind of rich that at one point in this very long motion, which really does not talk about anything specific in terms of action, the Conservatives do mention that housing costs have doubled under the Liberal government. That is indeed true, but they forget to mention, and maybe it is in the fine print or in a footnote, that housing prices doubled under them as well. Therefore, they are half the problem. The Conservatives doubled housing prices and the Liberals have doubled them again.

What we need is an NDP government that can ensure there is affordable housing for Canadians so they can have a roof over their head at night.

What did the Conservatives do in this appallingly bad period, the dismal decade of awful financial management?

It is interesting that we hear the Conservatives piping up. I am not sure what they are saying, but I am sure they will have time during the question period.

What they did with these eight-time deficits—

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member wanted to know what I was saying. I was saying that we already had an NDP government.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** That is not a point of order. There is a bit of chattering on both sides, including from parliamentary secretaries, who should be leading by example. I would ask all members to please give some respect to the hon. member who has the floor. If others have questions and comments, then they should wait for me to indicate that it is time for that.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby. I am sure everyone wants to hear what he has to say.

• (1150)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, absolutely, we can see the Conservatives and Liberals competing. The Conservatives are saying that they did more for tax havens and the Liberals saying that they did more.

We know the banks got a ton, hundreds of billions of dollars both in liquidity support from the Liberals and from the Conservatives as well. This was another by-product of the dismal decade of the Harper government, \$160 billion in so-called liquidity support for Canada's big banks to maintain profits. This is something else that Liberals and Conservatives fight over, who did more for the big banks.

In this corner of the House, we actually believe that regular people should be the ones who are the focus of the federal government. We have certainly shown this over the course of this Parliament, with dental care and a rental supplement. These are all things that the NDP fought for, the member for Burnaby South and the entire NDP caucus, and now we are fighting for pharmacare. We are fighting for more things that will actually benefit people.

I need to get back to the final point of this motion, which talks about cutting spending. As I have already mentioned, the Conservatives sprinkled their largesse to billionaires and banks indiscriminately like there was no tomorrow, but they did cut spending in a few key areas.

Appallingly, the Conservatives cut money to health care. The health care crisis that we see today is a by-product of that dismal decade of the Harper government but also the refusal of the Liberals to make up for what the Conservatives destroyed in health care.

The Conservatives also destroyed the network of veterans centres, to ensure that our nation's veterans, who fought for our country, who put their lives on the line for their country, no longer had access to services. The Liberals have made that up in part, but they still have a long way to go. Our critic, the member for North Island—Powell River, has spoken eloquently about the fact that we have a debt to our nation's veterans and that we need to make up for that.

One of the most bizarre aspects of the Harper government and its cuts was the slashing and burning of the crime prevention centres across the country. Crime prevention centres are absolutely fundamental in ensuring that the crime rate goes down, not up. We know that a dollar invested in crime prevention saves us \$6 in policing costs, in court costs, in prison costs. It is very cost-effective.

What did the Harper government do? Did it cut back on its largesse to the big banks? No. Did it cut back on its largesse to pharmaceutical companies? No. Did it cut back on the indiscriminate opening of doors to overseas tax havens? No. It signed more tax treaties with tax havens to ensure that the ultrarich had more places to hide their money.

However, the Conservatives did cut the crime prevention programs across the country. They gutted them, and we see the results today.

I will be voting against this motion, as will the NDP caucus, because, quite frankly, this is not the direction in which the country needs to go. We need to ensure that we are focused and that we invest to help regular families, seniors, students and people with disabilities right across our country. That is what the NDP believes in.

**Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague used the word “largesse” a number of times in talking about the Conservatives and their support for corporate Canada. I would like to remind the member that the coalition of which he is a part used the same largesse when they dished out money to Loblaw's to help it buy some new refrigeration equipment. Just a short time ago, Loblaw's announced it was dropping its price freeze.

I would like the hon. member to explain to the House his efforts in lobbying Loblaw's to bring back the price freeze, given the generous financial contributions that the coalition government gave it over the years.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, that is so incomprehensible I do not even know where to start.

First, yesterday, the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford actually forced through the agriculture committee the greedflation study that would compel the CEO of Loblaw's to come forward to Parliament. The Conservatives did not do that; the NDP did it.

Second, we know about the hundreds of billions of dollars, almost a trillion dollars between them, that the Conservatives and the Liberals poured into liquidity support for Canada's big banks. Quite frankly, the Conservatives have no lessons to give anybody.

The network of overseas tax havens is absolutely unbelievable, the \$30 billion that Conservatives put in place. That has robbed Canadians each and every year. That money is taken from seniors, students, families, people with disabilities and small businesses. The Conservatives should be ashamed of themselves.

• (1155)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I wish the NDP and that member, our partners in this supply and confidence agreement, a happy Valentine's Day. It is certainly one of the more challenging relationships I have ever been in, but, nonetheless, happy Valentine's Day to them.

The member brought up the agriculture committee. I could not help but reflect on a comment that was given last night at the agriculture committee by Dr. Jim Stanford from the Centre for Future Work. He said that clearly inflation was not due to the Prime Minister either, that our inflation and our food inflation were both below average for industrial countries.

Would my colleague like to comment on how inflation is a global problem? While it does not bring a lot of comfort to those who are experiencing it in Canada, we are experiencing these problems throughout the world.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, the member for Kingston and the Islands is right. It is a challenging relationship. In some respects, the NDP has forced through real things that will have a real impact on people, dental care being one of them, as well as the rental supplement and the additional affordable housing, which the Liberals gutted 30 years ago. Finally we are starting to see investments that will lead to more Canadians having a roof over their head.

However, the Liberals need to follow our advice in a whole range of areas. That includes the greedflation about which the member spoke. The reality is that the Competition Bureau needs to have enhanced powers to cut back on what we have seen, which is the most egregious gouging of Canadians. Both the Liberals and Conservatives seem to think that is okay.

For the windfall taxes, the Liberals only have put in place 2% of what is needed. We are losing over \$30 billion a year and the Liberals need to ensure that those who are winning these amazing excess profits actually pay their fair share to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby for his speech and his humanism.

We are talking about the cost of living and inflation. In my opinion, the most vulnerable people are seniors who do not necessarily have the means to re-enter the workforce and earn a higher income.

Would my colleague agree that OAS should be increased by at least 110% for seniors aged 65 and over?

### *Business of Supply*

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, the NDP believes that a guaranteed annual income is absolutely essential for persons living with disabilities and seniors. There are seniors across the country, including in my riding, who spend the night sleeping on the ground outside or in their car.

It is incomprehensible that the major banks are making billions of dollars in profits and that there is a lack of investment in seniors.

[*English*]

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to discuss the Conservative Party's opposition day motion, a deeply unserious solution to a deeply serious problem.

Life in our country is becoming increasingly unaffordable for many, for working people, for people on fixed incomes, for people who live here in northern Manitoba and in so many parts of our country. It is clear from the speeches we have heard so far in the House that both the Conservatives and the Liberals are more concerned with the theatrics of being seen to take the issue of the cost of living crisis seriously, but are not prepared to do what it takes and what is necessary to build an economy that works for everyone.

We are all familiar with the statistics. More than half of Canadians are \$200 away from insolvency. One and a half million Canadians are relying on food banks. One out of every four kids is living in poverty. One third of Canadians live in inadequate, unaffordable and unsuitable homes.

First nations children living on reserve are over four times more likely to live in poverty than non-indigenous children. Almost half of all first nations children live in poverty, a number that is in contrast to 12% of non-indigenous, non-racialized, non-newcomer children who live in poverty.

In a lot of ways this reality is becoming worse. The median hourly wage for Canadian employees was \$26 in 2021, down from \$26.36 in 2020. This is a reality fuelled by corporate greed, where prices have increased and Canadians are falling further and further behind, unable to afford groceries, rent and the basic necessities. Nineteen per cent of low-income Canadians in 2022 were forced to borrow from friends or relatives or to take on more debt to survive.

The greedflation crisis is increasing the divisions in our country, and those at the bottom are being asked to take on more while the richest in our country thrive. We still live in a country where the six biggest banks can pay out more than \$19 billion in bonuses. The median CEO bonus came in at \$1.95 million, up nearly 38% from 2020. The typical CEO gets a bonus equal to 170% of their salary, but this is the way our system was designed.

*Business of Supply*

A couple of years ago, the NDP looked into the 100 richest Canadians, all billionaires, and to whom they donated. Fifty-six of them donated to the Liberals and 61 to the Conservatives, and are they getting their money's worth. Both the Liberals and Conservatives refused to close down tax havens on which these billionaires rely. They both refuse to bring in a wealth tax. When corporate Canada got out of paying \$30 billion using tax avoidance schemes in one year, we in the NDP immediately proposed solutions to end these tax scams, but the Liberals and Conservatives shut that proposal down, as is tradition.

This is the Canada where successive Liberal and Conservative governments helped build the system, but we know that it should not have to be this way. Both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Conservative Party have a long record of coddling the ultra-wealthy. Neither the Prime Minister nor the Leader of the Conservative Party are willing to admit it, but I will let Canadians in on an open secret. Both the Liberals and Conservatives largely agree on the majority of issues that affect Canadians day-to-day lives. There may be some degrees of difference.

When the Leader of the Opposition was in government, our corporate tax rate was 15%. The current rate, under a Liberal government, is also 15%. When the Conservatives were in power, they gave billions of dollars to big oil. The Liberal government is doing the same. They both have blocked every effort we have made to have a same tax policy, a fair tax policy that ensures the rich pay its fair share.

This what they have built, a system that allowed 123 corporations to deprive the Canadian people of \$30 billion in taxes in 2021 alone. We are seeing increased corporate consolidation. Shaw and Rogers are about to merge, which would only make things more expensive for Canadians. I say this coming from a province where Bell bought out MTS, and we were promised more competitive cellphone and Internet prices. All we have seen is prices go up.

• (1200)

We know that the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry is going to sit idly by while life gets more unaffordable. This is a type of, dare I call it, "champagne socialism" where risk and loss are the responsibility of the taxpayer but profits and price gouging are just business as usual. That is their record.

When we in the NDP saw the corporate greedflation driving food costs, we took action. The cost of food recently hit a 41-year high. People in my generation have never seen inflation this high. We knew action was needed, and we called on the Competition Bureau to investigate grocery chain profits. It may not surprise Canadians that grocery stores that had been caught fixing the price of bread in the past could also rip off Canadians trying to feed their families. This apparently shocked Liberals and Conservatives. However, we knew it needed to be done. We knew that there needed to be justice, and we need to make a difference in people's lives.

Let us not pretend that this motion is anything other than the type of faux populism we have learned to expect from today's Conservatives. They identify some parts of the problem, such as spiralling grocery costs and unaffordable housing, but then turn around and propose the most harmful of solutions. These solutions, once again,

place the burden on Canadians rather than on those driving up costs.

Capping spending on services that Canadians rely on will not allow struggling Canadians to afford groceries. Cutting taxes for the wealthiest people in this country will not mean that people are finally able to buy a house. It will just mean that those with the most are still being asked to help the least.

This sort of upside-down politics is at the root of what is wrong with our political system. We must imagine a better way. Imagine a government that did not make it as easy as possible for the richest corporations in our country to park their money in tax havens. Under the Prime Minister's watch, Canadian assets in the top 16 tax haven jurisdictions have gone from \$126 billion to a whopping \$400 billion. The ultrawealthy have never had it so good.

Imagine we had a windfall tax, something this government has refused to implement. A recent report by the Parliamentary Budget Officer found that the NDP's proposal for a windfall tax on big oil and gas and big box stores, which includes big grocery chains, would generate \$4.3 billion over five years. Imagine what we could do with that money to help Canadians. Instead, we see the CRA targeting Canadians who tried to stay afloat during the pandemic, demanding CERB repayments, rather than targeting corporations that used the Canada emergency wage benefit to fund stock dividends and buybacks.

These misplaced priorities punish already struggling Canadians while robbing those same Canadians of the services they could get if we actually took corporate crime seriously in this country. However, we do not. We do not even have real fines for when corporations engage in tax avoidance schemes. They get caught, but there is no fine; they just have to pay the taxes they should have paid in the first place. These general anti-avoidance rule violations mean that there is no reason for corporations to keep from trying to cheat the system. The worst-case scenario is that they owe what they should have paid in the first place.

We in the NDP have consistently presented a vision where billionaires pay their fair share; Liberals and Conservatives have worked to block it. We have called on the government to bring in a wealth tax, raise the corporate tax rate to 18% and beyond, bring in a windfall tax, close the capital gains loophole and stop the billion-dollar giveaways to big oil. This could raise billions of dollars in revenue taken directly from the ultrarich, which could be spent on the services that Canadians desperately need.

I will not be voting for this motion. I am proud that we in the NDP are speaking out against this, calling out both Conservatives and Liberals for their hypocrisy. I will continue to stand up for the people here in my home, including working people and people on fixed incomes who need help now. I will continue to take on the rich and powerful and the two political parties that enable them.

• (1205)

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we could certainly imagine what an NDP government would look like in Canada. Frankly, we do not need to imagine it: We are seeing a coalition between the NDP and the Liberals that forms a very NDP government. Even in my home province of British Columbia, we have an NDP government. I hear its members proudly saying “Go, go”, but we just had two mills close. One in Prince George lost 300 employees and another in Chetwynd lost 200 employees, all because of policy from the NDP policy and this Liberal federal government that destroyed those mills and the allocation.

I guess the mystery to me, and I think what a lot of Canadians are asking, is that if the Liberal government is so bad, why does the NDP keep propping this corrupt Prime Minister up?

• (1210)

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** First, Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the challenging times that people in northern B.C. are facing. I have family in Prince George and heard the news of the closures. I certainly hope that support is there.

Let me tell this member what his Conservative government did to my home community of Thompson. It approved the buyout of Inco, a profitable Canadian company, by Vale, a Brazilian multinational. Vale received supports from Export Development Canada and others, but it went on to slash half the jobs in my home community. There are no more processing jobs here in Thompson, Manitoba, thanks to what the Harper government did in selling off our resources and selling off well-paying Canadian jobs. Therefore, I will not take any lessons from Conservatives when it comes to standing up for good, working-class jobs in the resource sector.

I am proud of the work the NDP is doing nationally to call on corporations, including those that are shutting down jobs in our communities, to pay what they owe. We are particularly calling on those that have seen excessive profits, including in mining, oil and gas, and other resource areas. I hope they will join us.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member went on an attack and wanted to point out hypocrisy from the Conservatives and the Liberals in terms of corporate taxes. She pointed out that we have not increased or reduced corporate taxes, and in particular, we have not increased them. I want to remind the member that the only government that I have witnessed offhand decreasing corporate taxes was the NDP provincial government in Manitoba. Not once but several times, the NDP, who have never been in office here in Ottawa but have been in my province, decreased corporate taxes. Does the member feel that there might be a bit of hypocrisy if we put this into the context of what she was saying?

### *Business of Supply*

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, as might be expected, I would remind the member that the NDP has not been in power in Manitoba for many years, going back to 2015. Therefore, in 2023, when we are seeing corporate profits through the roof and an inflation crisis we have not seen in over 40 years, I would ask the member and his party, the governing party of Canada, to get with the program. I would certainly ask them to learn from like-minded countries that have imposed a windfall tax and increased the corporate tax rate, including our neighbours to the south. I ask them to take on real measures at the national level that seek to redistribute wealth in our country, stop giving favours to their wealthy friends and support Canadians in their time of need through bold initiatives on tax fairness. Let them support our plan.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when inflation and the cost of living go up, housing becomes a key issue.

Does my colleague see boosting funding to buy properties and support affordable and community housing as a solution? If the number of units goes up, would that not bring prices down because of supply and demand?

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, the member is right. The current housing crisis is a huge part of the cost of living crisis our constituents are experiencing right now. Investments in co-operative housing, affordable housing and housing in indigenous communities are crucial. That would be part of the solution.

[*English*]

**Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for South Shore—St. Margarets.

I am always honoured to rise in the House of Commons on behalf of my constituents to speak for individuals, families and communities in New Brunswick Southwest. New Brunswick is a place where people work hard, play by the rules and sacrifice for their kids and grandchildren. In this way, the Maritimes are really just like any other part of this great country.

Today, working hard is just not paying off like it once did. This is because the current federal Liberal government is not upholding its end of the bargain. It is not delivering on its promise to Canadians. Canada is at a difficult crossroads. The economic skies are very dark, and times are hard for Canadians. I remind the members opposite, the MPs who represent the Liberals and the NDP, that federal tax increases, sky-high deficits and out-of-control inflation are all results of deliberate policy choices made by the government, which they have supported for the last eight years.

What are the consequences of botched federal policies?

*Business of Supply*

After eight years of the current Liberal Prime Minister, inflation is at a 40-year high. Since last year, the cost of groceries is up 11%. Half of Canadians are cutting back on groceries. Twenty per cent of Canadians, or one in five, are reducing or skipping meals to control costs and help make ends meet.

After eight years, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment across Canada's 10 largest cities has doubled to over \$2,200 a month, compared with less than \$1,200 per month in 2015.

Nearly half of variable-rate mortgage holders are saying that rising interest rates could force them to sell or vacate their homes by the end of this year. Average monthly mortgage payments have more than doubled; they now cost typical Canadian family households over \$3,000 per month.

Canadians are being squeezed by a vice grip of inflation and Bank of Canada mismanagement.

Liberal monetary policy has been a disaster, but this should not be a surprise. The Liberal leader informed Canadians in 2021 that he did not think about monetary policy. I actually thought the PM was boasting about not thinking, but look at the mess Canada is in. Liberal budgets are also moving in the wrong direction. The central philosophy is tax, spend and regulate. When that does not work, the Liberals hit repeat. They tax, spend and regulate.

Reckless Liberal spending, fuelled by easy debt, is the root cause of Canada's soaring inflation. The Government of Canada ballooned our national debt. It has doubled in the last eight years. The government has accumulated more debt than all previous prime ministers combined going back to 1867. This debt binge was encouraged by the Bank of Canada's policy of quantitative easing, and today, Canadians are paying for this entirely predictable effect of policy carelessness. The federal tax bite has worsened over the past eight years. Today, taxes on consumption and everyday living increase every year, while Canadians are falling further behind.

For the past eight years, the federal government has pursued a plan to make our affordable and abundant energy more expensive through regulation and ever-rising taxes. Home heating fuels, electricity and prices at the pump are all more heavily taxed, and the Liberals keep raising those taxes.

Canada can do better.

If we look back to eight years ago, taxes for families, businesses and individuals were lower in this country. If one earned a low income, one actually paid no federal income tax. The GST was cut to help low-income Canadians.

• (1215)

Our manufacturing and natural resources sectors were growing because Canada had a federal government that understood what fuels our economy and shared prosperity. Budgets were in surplus and taxes were cut. This allowed more households to save for the future, because federal government spending was focused on improving services and better outcomes for Canadians. Home ownership was growing, and people were able to afford the basics and save for tomorrow. Canadians, in short, were getting ahead.

Today, it is a completely different story. Inflation is at a 40-year high. Half of households earning less than \$40,000 a year are worse off, because we know, should know or have learned that inflation is the price Canadians pay for all the government benefits the Liberals and their NDP coalition partners said would be free. We know that is just not true. Meanwhile, our allies across the globe are making desperate energy deals with dictators to buy oil and gas as Canada ignores requests for help. This is true in Asia and is true in Europe.

None of this happened by accident. It is the result of policy choices supported by the Liberal-NDP coalition. That is why today's motion is so important. It is a motion introduced by the Conservatives to get Canada back on track. It is a necessary course correction. We are calling on the Liberals to cap spending, cut waste, fire high-priced consultants who do not do much and eliminate inflationary deficits and taxes that have caused a cost of living crisis.

Unfortunately, I do not think members opposite will take advantage of this opportunity to fix their mistakes. They are committed to their belief that the federal government's primary role is wealth redistribution. In fact, the previous speaker said the government is about wealth redistribution, instead of what Conservatives believe in, which is expanding opportunity and creating wealth so we have the resources to fund our social programs and ensure Canadians get ahead. The Liberals are also preparing the next blow to our economy with a plan for a so-called just transition away from hydrocarbons.

I am a member of the public accounts committee, and we recently studied the government plan that seeks to shut down natural resource sectors to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. The government's planned transition will be so painful that it is being compared to the collapse of the northern cod fishery in Atlantic Canada in the 1990s, which was devastating. I note that the labour minister recently said Canada needs more oil and gas workers, not fewer, and cursed the misleading term "just transition". That is because the member represents Newfoundland and Labrador and understands the danger the just transition poses to his economy and provincial economies across the country.



*Business of Supply*

The members opposite are so desperate to hide this reality from the public that they are testing new buzzwords. How do they sell job losses? It is by mentioning “a fair economy, a green economy, a progressive economy, an economy that works for all Canadians, and an inclusive economy.” That is nonsense. What is so fair or inclusive about a federal government determined to put Canadians in the unemployment line? When someone is working two jobs just to make ends meet, pay their rent and buy food, as some of my constituents are, how can they possibly save enough to get ahead?

For years, the Conservatives said the carbon tax was a tax on everything. Members opposite scoffed, but today nobody is laughing as families struggle under punishing energy and consumer prices. The Liberals and NDP like to blame the Russians, but in my part of the world, over in the state of Maine next to New Brunswick, a litre of gasoline is 50¢ less after exchange than it is in New Brunswick. The Russians have nothing to do with it. That is tax policy and regulation policy driven by the Canadian government.

Members of the Liberal Party and the NDP are committed to a set of policies that are going to continue to push Canada down the wrong track. Government is about protecting and advancing the interests of Canadian families. The NDP-Liberal coalition has failed to do this. That is why it needs to be replaced so Canadians will not just get by but get ahead.

• (1220)

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

Mr. Speaker, if we look at inflation throughout the globe and do not look at it just domestically, as the Conservatives like to do, we will recognize that Canada's inflation rate is among the lowest in the G7. Japan has an inflationary rate of 4%, France is at 5.8%, Canada is at 6.3%, the U.S. is at 6.4%, Germany is at 8.5%, the U.K. is at 9.2% and Italy is at 10.1%. When we look at energy specifically, both the U.S. and Canada have a 7.3% inflation rate. The rest of the G7 is anywhere between 15% and 64%. These are January 2023 numbers.

How is it that Conservatives can continually get up in this House and say it is the sole responsibility of the Prime Minister of Canada that we are experiencing the inflation we have? One of two things is happening. One, they are just not paying attention to what is going on in the rest of the world, or two, they think the Prime Minister of Canada is incredibly capable of influencing inflation throughout the world. Which one is it?

• (1225)

**Mr. John Williamson:** Mr. Speaker, it is obviously not the latter, because the Prime Minister has told us he does not think about monetary policy.

We are not asking the Liberal government to be held accountable for inflation policies around the world. We are talking about this country. The Liberal government flooded our country with \$400 billion in deficit spending, and we all know, or should know, that inflation is a monetary policy. The government devalued the value of Canadian currency and our savings, and we are paying for it now because of higher prices.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the preamble to the opposition motion contains many truths. I will refer once again to the text of the motion. We agree with the part that says, “fire...consultants”. McKinsey, for example, recommended investing in carbon capture and storage when we know it is too costly and ineffective.

The motion also says, “cut waste”. We agree with that too, especially when it comes to oil subsidies. That \$3.6 billion could be rapidly redirected to carbon capture and sequestration. I am sure the opposition would vote in favour of that.

Oil companies have been raking in mind-boggling profits thanks to high gas prices. Does anyone really think they need money? Why are the Conservatives not talking about that?

**Mr. John Williamson:** Mr. Speaker, we are talking about several different things. Today we are talking about taxes and the government's massive spending that does not make much sense. We think that energy sources should not be subsidized, full stop.

[*English*]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am really amazed at the audacity of the Conservatives on some days. I listened to the member talk about the pain at the pump that his constituents are experiencing, but nowhere in his speech did he mention the massive increase in oil and gas profits, which are up 1,011% since 2019. I invite the member to stand up in this place, stand up for his constituents who are experiencing pain at the pump and take on the corporations that are gouging them every single day. That is the cause of inflation in Canada.

**Mr. John Williamson:** Mr. Speaker, once again we are getting a lesson that does not follow economics 101. There is no doubt that profits for oil and gas have gone up, but that is because the policy of the government, with its NDP coalition, has been to restrict supply and ensure that demand is ahead of supply. We need to bring more hydrocarbons to market to bring down prices at the same time as we cut the carbon tax to give consumers and families a break. That is how we break the vice grip of inflation. It is not by contraction and pain. It is by growth, hope and opportunity.

**Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member for Kingston and the Islands got me thinking. I am just reflecting, but I feel like there was a Prime Minister Trudeau before the current government who ran massive inflationary policies that led to economic devastation in the seventies and eighties and massive cuts in the mid- to late nineties to health care, social service and education. I am wondering if my hon. colleague remembers that as well.

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**Mr. John Williamson:** Mr. Speaker, I am vaguely aware of the first Trudeau. What I find interesting is that the national energy policy that was devastating to Alberta and western provinces at least had Canada as the beneficiary, particularly industries in central Canada. However, I think it was a misguided policy.

I look at what the Liberal government is doing today, and it is not only ruining energy policy in this country but, at the same time, making energy more expensive and selling it to Americans and Europeans at a cheaper price. It is completely backwards.

The Prime Minister, in many senses, is doubling down on bad policy and is hurting Canadians.

\* \* \*

● (1230)

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations with other parties, and I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion, which seeks to correct the record from yesterday's two votes.

I move:

That notwithstanding any Standing Order

That the Journals of the House of Commons for Monday, February 13, 2023, be amended, under Division Nos. 257 and 258, to indicate the following members as paired:

The Minister of Foreign Affairs with the member for Shefford

The member for Ottawa South with the member for Beauport—Limoilou

The member for Parkdale—High Park with the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot

The member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill with the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY****OPPOSITION MOTION—RISING INFLATION AND COST OF LIVING**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise in this House to speak to this important motion that our party has put forward on the issue that is of most concern to Canadians today.

I know all of us in the House, and I am sure government members are hearing it as much as we are, receive calls and emails to our offices every day from struggling working people having trouble paying their bills. People who live on fixed incomes are having to make the most difficult choices in life, like the choice between paying for heat, paying for food, paying for medication or paying for gas in the car to go get food. These are the choices that people

are making as a result of the actions of the Liberal government after eight years.

We are in an unprecedented situation of a 40-year high in inflation caused by the policies of the government after eight years. After eight years, people are working harder, but they are falling further behind. I know members of the Liberal Party love it when we raise Pierre Trudeau, so I will raise Pierre Trudeau. We have not had inflationary numbers like this since Pierre Trudeau was in government. That was a difficult time in the 1970s and 1980s for people. The sins of the father are now being delivered through the sins of the son.

Housing prices are now twice as high as they were in 2015. After eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, the cost of groceries is up 11%. After eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, half of Canadians are cutting back on groceries. After eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, 20% of Canadians are actually skipping meals. After eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment across Canada in the 10 biggest cities is \$2,213 per month, compared to \$1,171 per month when the Liberals were elected.

After eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, 45% of variable mortgage rate holders say they will have to sell or vacate their homes in less than nine months due to current interest rates. After eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, the average monthly mortgage costs have more than doubled to now over \$3,000 a month.

We can see that these costs are going up and that is why we are getting these calls. I am going to relate it a bit to what we experience in the Maritimes. Mr. Speaker, as a Nova Scotian, I know you are getting calls along these lines. The policies of the government have killed the investment in most industries in Canada. Bill C-69 is affectionately known as the “no pipelines bill”. I call it the “no capital bill” because it has really killed all capital investment.

The result of that is that in Nova Scotia and in New Brunswick, and my predecessor who spoke, the member for New Brunswick Southwest, has the same issue, we have to burn oil from Saudi Arabia to heat our houses. To give members an idea of what that costs, because of the policies of the government, it costs \$1,800 to fill a tank of oil. Half that tank will be burned in four weeks.

These are the expenses that are killing people on fixed incomes in my part of the world and making them think about selling their houses. We have good, clean, ethical Canadian oil and natural gas that we could be bringing to Atlantic Canada to reduce our cost of living, but the government has brought in policies to stop that.

Of equal impact on inflation is the fact that the Liberals never saw a tax they did not like. What is the first thing they did? They thought they could put in carbon tax, a tax they thought would stop everything that goes on in the world with regard to weather. Carbon tax is inflationary by its nature. If it were to work, which it does not, the design of it is that it has to make everything much more expensive in order to cause people, theoretically, to change their behaviour.

In my rural riding, we do not have transit. We do not have options for how we get around, how we take our kids to school, how we get to work, how we get groceries, or how we go visit our parents and family members. We have to drive. Transit is not an option that we have. The Liberals believe that imposing a carbon tax would actually change the fact that we have to drive everywhere in rural Canada.

• (1235)

The imposition and tripling of this new tax, which would come into place this year in Nova Scotia, because the Liberals have not had enough of destroying our economies with their taxation, will make fuel cost an extra 40¢ a litre by 2030. For the mom taking her kids to hockey practice or taking her kids to school, this is a huge amount of money, on top of having to burn gasoline produced from oil from Saudi Arabia.

That tax costs families thousands of dollars a year when they are trying to make healthy meals and trying to figure out how to heat their houses. Heating houses, and this may come as a shock to the Liberal government, is not optional in Canada. We actually have to do that, and a tax that makes home heating more expensive for seniors living through our frigid winters is nothing short of cruel.

I am talking about the Liberal carbon tax, the tax on everything, the tax making everything more expensive. If the Prime Minister was serious about making life more affordable for our seniors, workers and families, he would cancel the carbon tax imposition in Nova Scotia, and he would cancel the tripling or quadrupling of the carbon tax that he is planning to do to make life more unaffordable for Canadians.

Instead of freezing that obscene tax, the Liberal government is raising taxes on the people who are struggling to make ends meet. Of course, the Liberals pretend that somehow, magically, in their world of math we could actually get more money back than we pay. That math does not add up in grade 6, but apparently it adds up for the Liberals.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer, in his reports on the carbon tax that exists now, has actually pointed out something the Liberals tend to ignore. I will read from the report: “most households in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario will see a net loss resulting from federal carbon pricing” by 2030. That is a little different from the lines we hear. By then, the carbon tax levy will have increased to \$170 a tonne. The moment we decide to decarbonize the economy in a relatively short period of time with a tax, if it were to work, we are talking here less than 10 years to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it is clear that there is going to be a cost.

The PBO goes on to report, “Most households...under the backstop will see a net loss resulting from federal carbon pricing under the HEHE plan” in 2030-31. The Parliamentary Budget Officer continues by stating, “Household carbon costs—which now include the federal levy and GST paid...and lower income...—exceed the rebate and the induced reduction in personal income taxes arising from the loss in income.”

In other words, this is not what the Liberals say during question period, that somebody magically pays into taxes to Ottawa and gets

### *Business of Supply*

more back. I do not think anyone has believed that existed since the temporary imposition of income taxes when they first came in. It is just about as believable.

An additional element of this high-priced system that the Liberals have brought in is that we have fallen behind the U.S. in our per capita economic output. In 2015, we were equal to the United States, and now we are 40% less. That is \$100 billion a year lost to the Canadian income, according to the IMF. I know the Liberals like to make up their own numbers, but the IMF says that is \$100 billion a year that is lost to our income relative to the United States because of the policies of the government. Up until 2015, we were fairly equal.

I have many more issues, which I am sure I will get to address in the question and answer period, particularly with the member for Kingston and the Islands. I look forward to those questions.

• (1240)

**Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member is from Nova Scotia. In Nova Scotia recently we have seen some terrible hurricanes, including Fiona. We are seeing ponds not freezing over. We are seeing places where indigenous folks used to ice-fish for years but are not able to ice-fish anymore because of climate change.

I wonder if the member opposite could tell me if it is right, and if there is something we need to do to put a price on pollution. Does the member agree with the Supreme Court that climate change is real? Does he agree with the scientists that climate change is real? Does he believe that we should act on this?

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member for Sydney—Victoria would be supportive of the idea of getting natural gas to Nova Scotia, since 62% of our electricity is generated by burning coal from Colombia. If the Liberals will support getting natural gas to Nova Scotia through a pipeline, we can cut our emissions in half and impact those issues that the member raises around climate change.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in his speech, my colleague talked about natural gas as a source of clean energy. We need to define “clean” because natural gas leaks and contaminates water sources. Natural gas needs to be flared off. I am sorry, but that is not clean. It is a polluting fossil fuel.

[*English*]

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member from Quebec, where over 52% of Quebec's energy comes from fossil fuels from western Canada. In addition to that, natural gas burns much cleaner, which is what I said, than other forms of electricity generation like coal.

*Business of Supply*

I am sure the hon. member would be interested to know that Pakistan just announced that because it cannot get enough natural gas from around the world, it is going to quadruple its coal production and burning in Pakistan. I am sure the member would like to see that coal burning going down by bringing good, cleaner Canadian natural gas to Pakistan and other parts of the world.

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rather enjoy the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets. We get along famously. We have ongoing conversations in this House. He talked about the poor Liberal mathematics. I will find some common ground first. I would agree, and I will put this on the table, that we cannot tax ourselves out of climate change and that is a fact.

However, his math is not math. He talked about the good people in Nova Scotia who cannot afford to pay their bills and cannot afford to heat their homes, but not once did he talk about corporate profits. I am here to say today that if we were to abolish carbon pricing, the 1,000% profits that the oil and gas sector has had over this last year, in 2022, would continue to make it unaffordable for his residents.

The hon. member is a pragmatic man. Could he at least not agree that the corporate gouging, this ridiculous out-of-control profiteering, is the economic driver that is keeping the cost of heating the homes in his home province unaffordable for working-class people?

• (1245)

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Hamilton Centre and I do have some spirited conversations, which I enjoy.

I will say that the cost of our energy in Atlantic Canada is driven by the fact that we have to buy Saudi Arabian oil. However, I am always curious that the members of the NDP, part of the NDP-Liberal costly coalition, seem to hate any type of profit. Without profit, the member would not have the Apple iPhone that he carries around with him, because it creates innovation and jobs. I would like to hear NDP members once in a while get up and say it is great that we are able to move forward and produce better medicines, produce better technology and produce a better lifestyle for Canadians and for the world through profits and innovation.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Kings—Hants.

It is a nice, sunny day outside, I think, although I am not really 100% sure. However, I can say that on days like this, when the Conservative Party brings forward its best efforts to try to sway public opinion, it is like an ominous black cloud covers the House of Commons and the chamber. One can get fairly depressed just listening to the bafflelegab that comes from the other side. This is a kind of warning for people who are following the debate not to believe everything the Conservatives say, because, quite frankly, they are very good at stretching the truth, if I can put it that way and still be parliamentary. I find it truly amazing just how deep in darkness the Conservative Party can really be.

I would like to show some contrast between the dark side and a party that, through the years, has been there in a very tangible, real way for Canadians for the last seven years. Maybe that is a good place to start. It is kind of ridiculous that we hear the Conservatives stand up time after time and say, “eight years of Liberal government”. They should do their math. Even if we round it off, it is not quite eight years yet; it is actually closer to seven, so they will be able to regurgitate these exact same speeches a year from now.

We will be getting to eight years eventually. Hopefully, with the blessing of Canadians, we will be able to double down on that in the time to come, but we need to be able to show that, at the end of the day, we are prepared to respect what we have been given.

We were given a mandate to manage the economy in a minority situation, meaning that we have to work with all political entities here in order to get things passed through the House of Commons.

From my perspective, the essence of the motion before us today can be broken down into two things, the amount of spending and the inflation issue. First and foremost, we have to understand and appreciate that the everyday lives that Canadians are going through can be very challenging. Costs have gone up and we have recognized that. That is why we have brought forward programs, whether through legislation or budgetary measures, to support Canadians in every region of our country in a very real and tangible way by putting money in their pockets.

Let there be no doubt about that. We are concerned about the issues of being able to have groceries and pay those bills. That is one of the reasons why we are developing the programs and putting them out, even though the Conservatives vote against those programs.

What is truly amazing is how the Conservatives try to misrepresent the reality in the world today. If we listen to the Conservatives, we would think that the inflation rate today is unique to Canada and is all because of this particular government. Absolutely nothing could be further from the truth. Surely to goodness, the Conservatives do not believe that Canadians are so dumb as to believe that.

Canada is, among many other nations, doing reasonably well in terms of the inflation rate. We are doing better than the United States, England and the European Union, where the inflation rates are higher than Canada's.

As much as the Conservatives try to give the impression, the Prime Minister of Canada is not causing worldwide inflation. The Prime Minister and the government are providing supports for Canadians in a very real and tangible way, so that we can assist them in dealing with the inflation rate here in Canada, because we understand and recognize the hardship.

What happens when we do that, when we recognize that, first and foremost, yes, we have to take action, even though we have a lower inflation rate than countries around the world? We have to do things such as doubling the GST rebate on a short-term basis. Originally, the Conservatives came out against that particular policy stand. They had to be shamed into ultimately coming onside and supporting that particular initiative.

What about others, such as the rental support program? They voted against that. On the one hand, they are criticizing the cost of rent. On the other hand, when we provide a support for a good number of Canadians on that front, what do they do? They vote against it.

What about the benefits being provided to children under the age of 12 for dental care? Tens of thousands throughout the country, thousands in Manitoba, have already taken advantage of that program. We are talking about hundreds of dollars in the pockets of families for dental work for kids under 12. What did the Conservative Party do? It voted against that too.

We bring in programs that are having a real, tangible impact, such as the Canada workers benefit. For workers out there having a difficult time and working hard, we are topping off their salaries, making life more affordable for them. Do members know that over four million Canadians will benefit from that program?

• (1250)

We get criticized by the Conservatives regarding how much money we are spending. They say that we are spending so much more than just what has to do with the pandemic.

Yes, we are spending money. We are investing in children. By having a national child care program, we will have more people engaged in the workforce. We will improve the quality of care for children. We will improve the quality of life for Canadians in general, as more people will enter the workforce as a direct result. We have seen first-hand in the province of Quebec, when it instituted that very same policy, how that had such a positive impact. In fact, there is a cost to the program, but because of it, revenues will actually increase. We know that.

We just signed off on a \$198-billion health care agreement to enforce a national health care system. I wish I could have half an hour to expand on why that is so important not only to the people of Canada today, but also to future generations.

Those who want to talk about mental health, palliative and long-term care, waiting lists and doctor shortages, the need for the managing of health care, accountability and transparency should be supporting this initiative for the \$198-billion, 10-year proposal. I am so glad to see that the provinces are now onside with it. Our health care system is a part of who we are as Canadians.

People have an expectation of the government, that we will be there to protect them and to have their backs when the economy is having some difficulties, whether during a pandemic, a slowdown, inflation, or whatever it might be. This government from day one has been investing in Canadians and in our infrastructure, and has been building a stronger, healthier economy even during the turmoil of a pandemic. By providing those types of supports, and, yes, the billions of dollars, the government has put Canada in a better position to build back better. We believe in Canada's middle class. We want to see an economy that works for all Canadians.

There are a lot of good things taking place in Canada today, contrary to what the Conservative Party might try to get Canadians to believe. There is reason to be very optimistic, because as we deal with those economic measures, we are not forgetting about the en-

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vironmental measures. We are not forgetting about those important social programs that Canadians are so dependent on and very fond of.

This is a government that will continue to bring in progressive legislation and make budgets that will be there every day for Canadians no matter where they live.

• (1255)

**Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that was quite something. In response to Conservatives saying that the current government, after eight years, is destroying the country, the hon. member corrected us by saying that it has been destroying the country for only seven years and that we should get our facts straight.

In response to our saying that the record levels of spending by the Liberal government are destroying our economy, his answer was to ask why we will not support the government in spending billions more.

One thing he talked about was truth. I have a very specific question. With all of the record levels of spending the government is doing, somehow it has not found enough money to fulfill the promise it made during the election, on page 75 of its platform, costed out at \$4.5 billion, for the Canada mental health transfer. Right now the government was supposed to have spent almost a billion dollars. I want a straight answer from the member because he talked a lot about truth. Where is that money? Where is the almost \$1 billion that was promised to have been spent by now for the Canada mental health transfer?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, in a humorous way, the member tries to make the difference between seven and eight versus the word “broken”. I understand that Conservative members who stand up and use the word “broken” probably get little gold stars put beside their names in the Conservative room. That is all part of the Conservative spin.

The Canadian economy and society are not broken. We continue to move forward. We continue to build. I would gladly debate that particular member any time and anywhere, as long as it is somewhat reasonable, in terms of the planning of the things we have been able to accomplish compared to 10 years of Stephen Harper.

With regard to the issue of mental health, I would remind the member that part of our health care system is recognizing that the administrative responsibilities lie with the provinces. From an Ottawa perspective, we are investing historic amounts of money in health care. We continue to raise the profile of mental health, unlike the previous Harper regime.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, fortunately, I am in a good mood.

I thank my colleague for his speech. He mentioned the Liberal government's great generosity several times, but what about health transfers? What about the money that has been owed to us for years?

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Our health care system is underfunded, and yet the Government of Canada's own health department gets billions of dollars in funding even though it manages not a single nurse, hospital or doctor and does not provide any care whatsoever.

When will we get the health transfers that Quebec deserves?

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I was hoping that the Bloc would have had an opposition day motion based on health care transfers. I think this is the first time in a generation when we have had such a long-term commitment toward a truly national health care system. It has just been signed off on, with the provinces now agreeing to the principles of the \$198-plus billion over the next 10 years. There is a history of fiscal transfers. We have the highest number of federal dollars going toward health care in the history of Canada.

The tax point shift was made back in, I believe, the late 1970s, toward tax points versus actual health dollars. I am very happy to say that, because of this particular agreement, we are going to see a permanent, solid presence of health care throughout the country. There will be more transparency and accountability and a higher sense of a national program, which I think all Canadians will be very proud of.

• (1300)

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, if the government had extended the Canada recovery dividend to stores like Loblaws and the oil and gas sector, it would have generated \$4.3 billion in revenue.

Can the member say that the Liberal government will learn from the Parliamentary Budget Officer and extend that recovery dividend to such box stores?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I know that, whether it has been the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, they have been very clear in terms of the issue of tax fairness. We have brought in some measures to ensure there is more accountability.

Taxes coming in from banks is an example from the financial industry. I am sure that all things are on the table as the government tries to ensure a higher sense of fair taxation.

[Translation]

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here debating the opposition motion moved by the Conservative Party.

The motion focuses on affordability. This is of the utmost importance to all Canadians at this time. It is important for people around the world because inflation is a global issue. It affects all of the world's economies.

First, I would like to talk about some government programs that target low-income Canadians. The rest of my speech will focus on issues with the competitiveness of our businesses.

In her fall economic update, the Minister of Finance created a GST credit for low-income Canadians. It is a temporary measure, but it is very important to those who need help now.

There is the national child care program. We introduced a bill in the House to ensure that this program will remain in place for future generations. That is one way to help families with children save money. It is also a way to create spaces for rural communities, remote communities and all Canadians.

I would also like to mention the 10% increase in old age security for those over 75 years of age. That is another measure put in place by the government to help vulnerable people.

Lastly, there is the subsidy to help renters pay their rent.

[English]

We have a number of programs in place that really speak to affordability. We know it is a tough question, and it is ultimately about making sure that the government is there to help support, in a targeted way, without adding to inflation.

I will speak to the opposition motion.

The questions around affordability are fine to raise, but the way the motion reads, of course, it is not designed for any member on this side of the House to support it whatsoever. It is framed in a way that any issue, any challenges of the day, are simply at the foot of the government. I want to talk about some of the elements that I thought the member for Calgary Forest Lawn missed in his opposition day motion.

There is not one word on competitiveness. I really think that we have seen the government step up, and the member for Winnipeg North talked about the fact that the government has been here to help support with additional money. However, it looks as though those bilaterals are going to be coming into place over the next couple of months.

We, as a government and a country, have to respond to the Inflation Reduction Act. The Americans have put down a significant package that is going to, frankly, drive investment decisions for clean energy for generations to come. Our country and our government would be unwise to not do something to respond to that.

I guess my questions to those across the way would be these: Do my Conservative colleagues not agree with that type of spending? Should the government not be moving in that direction? There is no mention of that whatsoever and no mention of competitiveness. This will be a lens that I will talk about in my remaining time.

Yes, right now, we are spending on health. We are going to spend on clean energy transition. However, we have to get more creative on things that do not cost money that could drive benefits for stakeholder groups and benefits for the competitiveness of the Canadian economy, and I intend to give members a few of those here today.

One that I have talked about before is the idea of a presumptive approval. Every day, Health Canada regulates products from hockey helmets to fertilizers to crop protection products. However, certainly on new products that are coming to the market, applicants are usually coming with an approval in hand from larger jurisdictions, because the reality is that a company that makes some of these products is going to start to try to get regulatory approval in the United States or in Europe before it comes to Canada. They are just larger markets and the smarter play for companies.

• (1305)

Usually applicants arrive at Health Canada with an application in hand from a trusted jurisdiction. I would submit that, if the United States goes through a process to grant approval of a particular product, we can trust that was a rigorous scientific approval and not some kangaroo approval from a jurisdiction that may not take those issues seriously. It is the same thing in Europe, as well as Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the United Kingdom. I could name certain jurisdictions that I think have that alignment, yet we do not have an expedited model where an applicant can get a presumptive approval to allow that product to be available to Canadian farmers, or whatever the case may be, through Health Canada.

There is a way we can close the gap by simply providing the presumptive approval based on the science of other jurisdictions and go through the regulatory process. If there are any issues along the way, a red flag could be raised and that presumptive approval could be dismissed until such time as that the application is in good standing. There is one example of a regulatory innovation that we could use that would drive competitiveness in this country.

I want to talk about streamlined approval of major projects. I have spoken in the House at great length about my requisite concern about the need to drive major projects that would focus on our decarbonization and our future. That can be different things to different people, in the types of industries and technologies we can use.

When I look at the mining approval process in this country, the Minister of Natural Resources himself recognizes that is a 12-year to 15-year process in some cases. We need the critical minerals. Canada is going to be relied upon globally to meet that. Yes, this government, and I commend it for it, has been putting money on the table to help drive innovation, to help work on processes, but at the same time, there are some things we could do to help streamline those approval processes without compromising our values. It is easier said than done, I understand, but otherwise we are going to be facing a situation where we do not have the critical minerals to drive our decarbonized future.

I have a couple of suggestions on that. It is no mistake that I have been a strong proponent of nuclear energy. I have talked about it often in this House. I think it is going to be needed to drive our future. Right now, under the Impact Assessment Act, there is a threshold. If the project is over 300 megawatts, it goes to the Im-

pact Assessment Agency. If it is under, it goes with the Nuclear Safety Commission.

We should be leaving the determination of whether or not projects are safe to the actual experts and deal with a regulator that is recognized around the world. Let us either increase that threshold or leave nuclear projects that are being contemplated, SMR or otherwise, to the nuclear regulator. That is one suggestion I have that would drive competitiveness in the important decarbonization that has to happen for our clean energy future.

The next suggestion concerns provincial approvals and federal approvals. How can we find a one-window approach where, if the Impact Assessment Agency and DFO are asking for the same thing, as well as transport and other agencies, how do we not allow that to be a duplicative process and just allow one agency to take the lead? That is something we need to do a better job on. It is not necessarily an absolute critique of this government, but it is something that I want this government to take notice of and that we all as parliamentarians should be pushing for, because that matters for our clean energy future. That matters if we are genuinely serious about decarbonization and getting emissions down. We have to seriously focus on these types of issues.

The last suggestion involves transport regulations. I have had conversations with agriculture interests. The government just introduced ELD, which is an electronic logging device. It is to make sure that we have safety for truck drivers in this country. I absolutely agree with the premise of what we are doing. However, there is a need for Transport Canada to provide a policy clarification for truck drivers. Although they might be at the very upper echelon of what they are allowed to drive in this country, if there is an adverse weather delay and animal safety is in question, we need some clarification that truck drivers would be able to finish perhaps even 30 minutes of driving as opposed to waiting eight hours on the side of a highway.

These are some of the examples among the many out there that we all need to be focused on to drive in the days ahead. It matters for our competitiveness in this country, and I really want to see all of us talking more about these types of things.

The Conservatives talk about the capping of spending. I am okay with looking at fiscal restraint and where we can find efficiencies in the government sector, but we have heard very clearly that the leader of the official opposition supposedly would not vote down any type of measures that we are putting on the provinces with health. They talk about capping spending. Would they not meet the moment right now in the spending that will be needed to drive our transition to a lower-carbon economy and to make sure that we have a place in the industrial revolution that is happening in relation to clean tech? That has yet to be determined. They like to talk out of both sides.

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• (1310)

**Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that my friend from Kings—Hants talked about competitiveness. He had some really good ideas. I have heard of the issue with electronic logging devices, as well, when loading and unloading cattle, and some common sense approaches to that, but he did not touch on inflation very much or some of the spending his government has done that has added to that inflationary fire.

I have one simple question: Does he believe the CRA should try to get back some of the \$15 billion that it said, by its own numbers, was spent on people in jail, companies that did not need it and even some people who are dead? Should we work hard on that? I know there has been an increase in capacity at the CRA. Why would we not be sure they would do the good work to get those hard-earned taxpayers' dollars back into the pockets of Canadians?

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about inflation. As I mentioned, it is a global challenge. There are a number of reasons that are driving that, including demographics in the western world, supply chains and some of the resulting impacts of the war in Ukraine.

Some of it, a small portion, is going to be related to government spending, but that member opposite was the same member who, in the 43rd Parliament, was calling on the government to do more to spend and help support businesses during that time, so it is easy to be an armchair critic on the other side and suggest somehow the government did too much. When we look at how the economy has rebounded and the amount of people who are working in this country today, we see I believe somewhere around 800,000 more Canadians working today than prior to the pandemic. Our job numbers are strong.

We are still in a strong fiscal position, as it relates to our G7 comparator countries. On the CRA question, because I want to address that, yes, CRA has said that it will respond and it will make sure there is an ability to recoup that money. We have to do that reasonably in a way that actually makes sense with the resources we have, but the government has been very clear that this will be a policy moving forward.

[Translation]

**Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it takes a strong stomach to sit here in the House and listen to Conservatives tell us about inflation yet again. If we read between the lines, it is clear that this motion is about the carbon tax, as if we were not living in 2023 with climate change. The Conservatives do not see the problem and think we should continue to encourage oil and fossil fuel companies that do not contribute to clean-up efforts in any way.

As for the government, its talking points must be getting crumpled with use, because we keep hearing the same things over and over. The Liberals talk about the universal child care program, even though Quebec has had one for 27 years. The Liberals talk about the dental care program that no one asked for but that the government decided to put forward even though it will never be able to administer it. The Liberals also talk about the one-time \$500 cheque for housing assistance, which 87,000 Quebecers will not

be eligible for because we have better social programs than elsewhere.

However, the government never talks about its inability to provide high-quality, timely services to citizens. Currently, workers and families have to wait six, seven, eight, 10 or 11 months to receive an EI cheque for which they have contributed. EI reform is not part of the Liberals' commitment.

I would like to see the government come up with real solutions to help workers and improve the quality of services, which it is not even able to deliver, instead of telling us how we should deliver our own.

• (1315)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The questions are good, and some of the answers are good, too, but I think it is taking far too long to ask and answer questions. Not enough people are getting the opportunity to really participate in the discussion we are having.

The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question, although it was less of a question and more of a speech that contained several points.

I am in favour of certain measures that I believe are necessary to ensure that our businesses, owners and entrepreneurs are competitively positioned in the global market.

There are a number of questions to ask, but I support the proposal to ensure that government expenditures produce acceptable results in relation to the amount of money spent to provide services.

[English]

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight elections, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the residents of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke who continue to vote for me to be their parliamentary valentine.

As dean of the Conservative caucus, it is my role to provide institutional memory and a bit of history. After nearly eight months under the leadership of the member for Carleton, our party is more united than ever. After eight years of the Liberal government, Canadians need our party to be more united than ever, because after eight years of reckless inflation-fuelled spending Canada is broken. After eight years of the Prime Minister, he cannot protect our citizens. The paid-off media claims our military is short 10,000 soldiers. In truth, it would be hard pressed to muster 10,000 soldiers if they were needed.

We have foreign incursions into our Arctic waters with no way to monitor traffic below the surface. Within weeks of the 2015 election, the Liberal Prime Minister was dismantling our national defence, starting with our navy. As one of his very first acts, he tried to deep-six the project to build a naval supply ship, when our country had none.



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We have four submarines, which were catastrophically flawed from the time they were purchased used, and we are lucky to have one in service at any given point in time. We have one submarine operational. Four in total are needed due to the maintenance schedules. A submarine takes 10 years to build, even if it is off the shelf from an ally. Instead of taking action to replace them now to ensure we have underwater capability a decade from now, the Liberal Prime Minister is throwing good money after bad on retrofits.

After eight years, Canada cannot protect our airspace. Thanks to the U.S. media, Canadians saw for themselves how the absence of an early warning system left us vulnerable to penetration by air.

With the Internet three decades old, Canada does not have a cyber-defence force stood up yet. Sure, the Liberal Prime Minister has plans to censor the Internet, just so his warped, woke doctrine can be propagated. However, after eight wasted years, we cannot protect our electrical grids, our water systems or our transportation systems from cyber-attacks.

After eight years of the Liberal government, we cannot afford four more. Not again. I say not again because it really feels like we have been here before. In 1972, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau lost his majority, so he cut a deal with the NDP. Spending went up, debt went up and inflation took off. By 1984, the deficit had reached 8% of GDP.

Canadians were tired of Pierre Trudeau and his irresponsible policies, so they turned to Brian Mulroney, and he won the largest majority government in history. I do not want to raise expectations for the member for Carleton. I just think my colleagues across the way should mentally prepare themselves. If they continue to ignore recent Canadian history and to spend without concern for the future, there will be a reckoning.

After eight years of the Prime Minister, Canada is broken. Canadians can feel it. After eight years of the progressive Prime Minister, public spending is up. There are more public servants and more consultants, but basic services are falling apart. Nearly a year ago, I wrote to the minister responsible for passports and warned them that service performance was plummeting. It was not until June that they announced a task force to look into the problem. Recently, the minister was claiming mission accomplished. Congratulations. The government is now processing fewer passports with more personnel.

Famously, the government has a productivity problem, which is not a surprise from a government that brags about doing less with more. It is not just passports. How many members across the aisle tried to renew their possession and acquisition licence? I will go out on a limb and guess zero. How many members heard from constituents who cannot even reach someone on the phone? After eight years of the Prime Minister, the Canadian firearms centre is broken. If Canadians are starting to feel as if everything is broken, it might be because it is.

● (1320)

The Financial Consumer Agency has been conducting a regular monthly survey since the start of the pandemic. At the height of the lockdowns, with business closures and mass layoffs, 26% of Canadians had to borrow to make ends meet. Now, with no lockdowns

and a labour shortage, 38% of Canadians have had to borrow just to make it through the month.

The number of people using payday loans has risen from 1.4% to 4.5%, but percentages really do not tell the story. In 2020, there were as many people living in London, Ontario, as there were using payday loans. After less than three years, it is now as many as the number of people living in Calgary.

How many of my colleagues across the aisle got into politics to triple the customer base for payday loans? That is part of their legacy now, and that might be a hard truth to swallow. After eight reckless years of deficits, the medicine cannot be sugar-coated. One cannot borrow forever.

The government tried to convince itself that as long as the debt-to-GDP ratio was not increasing, it could borrow until kingdom come. Unfortunately, for the gang who cannot spend straight, reality has a fiscal bias. At first, the Liberals tried to deny that inflation was even happening. We saw prices skyrocket.

It turns out that when one gives high school students CERB, they use it to buy NFTs. When one keeps interest rates artificially low, people with houses buy more houses. When one forces everyone to work from home, many opt to buy a better home. When one increases the carbon tax, the cost of everything goes up.

Once inflation could no longer be denied, the Liberals and their media allies instantly pivoted from denying the reality of inflation to denying the cause of inflation. First, it was magical supply chains causing inflation. The problem for inflation deniers is that we do not import hairdressers.

Many of the critical bottlenecks in shipping cleared well before the consumer price index started to rise. Prices were already increasing before Putin's invasion. Countries around the world, which had all followed similar expansionary, fiscal and monetary policies, began experiencing inflation.

The new line was that inflation is a global problem, which was a pretty convenient excuse for a Prime Minister who brags about his intellectual disinterest in monetary policy. However, a fly just flew into the Liberals' delusional ointment.

The Governor of the Bank of Canada said, "inflation in Canada increasingly reflects what's happening in Canada." First, they denied inflation. Then they denied the cause. Finally, the finance minister tabled her fiscal update.

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In her speech, it sounded like she got it. The words fiscal responsibility poured from her mouth like a mountain spring, but the numbers on the page told a different story, or rather the same old story. Taxes are up, spending is up and they are borrowing more. After eight years, Canadians are tired of this broken record.

Many Canadians might not remember, but after the massive deficits of former prime minister Pierre Trudeau, Canada hit a fiscal wall. Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin were forced to balance a budget. They slashed spending and laid off tens of thousands of people. They devastated health care in Canada. The crisis in health care today is that eventually, with socialism, one runs out of other people's money.

The Liberals thought they could laugh in the face of history. They thought they could deny economic reality, but the world has a way of catching up. As they prepare for their next budget, they should pay some mind to the lessons history can teach. The most important lesson is the bill always comes due.

• (1325)

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it was quite entertaining to hear about those woke little green men who are flying around and were invited by the Prime Minister.

However, let us talk about reality. Let us talk about Stephen Harper. In 2011, when reports came in that Defence Research and Development Canada had been targeted by the Chinese government, the Harper government did nothing. The Harper government sat on the fact that the Chinese government was hacking both the finance department and Treasury Board. The Harper government did not have a problem with that. Then, Stephen Harper tried to sell off the oil sands to China. He sold \$15 billion of a state-owned company to a Chinese state government and then invited Huawei in.

We are not even beginning to get to the perfidy of this. It was a secretive free trade deal that allowed Chinese state companies to sue municipalities in this country. That is how the Conservatives rolled over. Could members imagine the Americans letting China sue Montana, Washington or Miami? Stephen Harper was willing to do that, as he left us open to cyber-attacks, as he supported Chinese state intervention in our economy. He was willing to sell—

**The Deputy Speaker:** It seems that I am failing at my task dramatically. I do not want to fail the members of the House of Commons in making sure that everyone gets an opportunity to ask questions and, of course, that we get the answers. Let us make sure we keep our questions short and keep our answers short so that everybody can participate.

The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' coalition of spending wants to talk about former prime ministers. The longer they delay, the bigger the bill.

Pierre Trudeau's reckless spending led to the GST and to massive cuts to health care. Canadians pay more but get less. It is another shining example of the Liberals being unproductive. Like father, like son. Just like his father, he centralized power in the Prime Minister's Office. To hear former finance minister Bill Morneau tell it,

the Prime Minister has adopted many of his father's worst instincts: imperious, aloof and dictatorial.

• (1330)

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Mr. Speaker, the words that are said in this place matter for our democracy. In her speech the member mentioned paid-off media. She mentioned media allies. I think this leads Canadians to believe there is someone in the governing party who is paying the media to say certain things.

I wonder if the member could give examples of what so-called paid-off media is. If not, could she retract the statement?

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, decisions are made on the basis of what would make the best headline rather than what would make the best policy. It is all style and no substance.

After eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, more Canadians than ever are living paycheque to paycheque. The cost to rent a two-bedroom apartment has doubled. More Canadians are using food banks than at any point in history. After eight years, Canada is broken. Canadians have little hope that the government is even capable of making life better. However, for the sake of our nation, could the Liberals at least stop making the situation worse?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is a bit of a discussion here. Some members want to know who wrote the speech that the member has provided. Is it her, or does she have someone who writes it and then she edits it? We are really quite curious about who wrote the speech.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, members are looking at the author. They can vote for this motion, cap spending, fire the high-priced consultants, eliminate inflationary deficits and scrap the taxes that have caused a cost-of-living crisis for Canadians. After eight years of the terrible Liberal government, it is time for a change.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we hear my hon. colleague talk incessantly about cutting spending, cutting taxes, making cuts everywhere.

When will we hear that member call for cuts to fossil fuel subsidies?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, we believe that if one is going to spend more, one has to find some way to take from other places that do not impact on Canadians' day-to-day lives.

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Unfortunately, with the government and all their partners who vote with their money bills, they are not doing that. We just dig deeper into the hole. Eventually, that bill comes due.

**Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to join in the debate this afternoon.

I have been sitting here for most of the morning listening to some of my colleagues' speeches. I am proud to see that the member for Timmins—James Bay still has Harper derangement syndrome, proud that he is still full-fledged with that last question.

The House leader for the NDP has full-on Harper derangement syndrome as well. He still blames the former prime minister for almost everything that has gone wrong in his life, probably that he did not get the Christmas present he wanted as well. Mr. Harper probably does not think about them whatsoever anymore, so I am glad he is still making breakfast in their kitchen.

I want to talk about a few things around competitiveness and how people are doing in Canada right now. The motion is quite long, and a few people did not get to the motion. The member for Kings—Hants talked about competitiveness more so than inflation. A few of the members started on the issue of inflation and how it was affecting Canadians. I want to really dive into that and how it has affected people in Regina—Lewvan and my community.

One thing I want to put on the record are a few comments that the Prime Minister a couple of years ago. I remember when the budget was delivered. Speaking through the national media to Canadians, he said that the government decided to take on the debt so Canadians would not have to. I will never forget that moment. As soon as those words came out of his mouth, I thought, if the government takes on debt, who eventually pays that back? It shows that he does not think about monetary policy. No government in the world has ever actually created wealth. They do not create revenue. The way the government gives revenue is that it takes it from people who work and pay taxes. It takes it from businesses that make revenue. The government does not create its own stream of revenue.

That was probably one of the most out of touch comments I have ever heard a leader of our country make. As my colleague, who just wrapped up, said, eventually the bill does come due, and it is the Canadian taxpayer who has to pay that bill.

We are seeing that in the very real result of inflation. I know that Tiff Macklem and random Liberals like Mark Carney and Bill Morneau are all talking about how inflation is more and more a made-in-Canada issue. That inflation has hit everyone hard. It has hit the parents trying to take their kids to sports and buy healthy groceries.

People take pictures of their groceries and send them to me to show me what \$200 of groceries looks like, and it is four bags of groceries. It is a real issue for people right now trying to make good choices to feed their families.

As we have talked about in question period, parents are skipping meals so their kids do not have to; 1.5 million Canadians line up each month at food banks. We are the bread basket of the world, and 1.5 million Canadians are using food banks.

Members of the government and the coalition should listen to that. That is a real number. People are making these decisions to go to a food bank. They cannot afford groceries because of inflation.

One of the huge things that has driven up the cost of groceries is the carbon tax. When we have brought in opposition motions about scrapping the carbon tax, immediately everyone says that we do not have an environment plan. We will hear that from the NDP and the Liberals, that there is no environmental plan on this side and why would we want to scrap the carbon tax.

As we say all the time, a carbon tax is not an environmental plan; it is a tax plan. We can see it in the results. We asked our Liberal colleagues and the NDP, which always supports the Liberal carbon tax, about the results. What targets have they hit? Could they show us an emissions target they have hit in the last eight years to sell the carbon tax to Canadians. They are trying to sell it as this green plan but emissions have continued to go up.

• (1335)

At the last COP meeting, where everyone flew their private jets in and had a fancy gathering, we heard that Canada was 58 in the world in reducing its emissions. That is over the Liberal government's whole history. Being 58 in the world is not something to be proud of. Therefore, when the Liberals are trying to sell this carbon tax as a tax plan, it is not true. If they are trying to sell the carbon tax as an environmental plan, it is not working. Maybe they have to go back to the drawing board for something that actually would lower emissions across our country.

With regard to competitiveness, as my friend from Kings—Hants mentioned, I met with the Canadian Steel Producers Association. We had an all-party steel caucus. One of the things that it brought up was competitiveness.

I will take this time right now for a shout-out to say that my heart is with the 100 or so USW 5890 workers in Regina, who are on the verge of being laid off. One of the reasons they are having more layoffs at Evraz steel in Regina is because we cannot sell our product, because our country is being flooded with cheap steel from countries like South Korea, China and India. Their steel is costing pennies on the dollar of what our steel is costing. Because of the carbon tax, it costs so much more now to make that steel.

We want to talk about being more competitive, and my friend is shaking his head and agreeing. He was on the Zoom meeting as well from Flamborough—Glanbrook, and I really appreciated his contribution.

*Business of Supply*

One thing we can all agree on is that when it comes to made-in-Canada steel, it is way more environmentally friendly than any other steel that people are using in infrastructure projects in our country. We have the most environmentally friendly steel. We have a steel industry where our workers are treated well and they are paid a fair wage for a fair day's work. In a lot of other countries that does not happen. The fact is this. If we not only used more Canadian steel in our infrastructure and in our projects but exported it to other areas of the world, it would lower emissions in our country. That is just in one sector of our economy.

That is where we want to talk about competitiveness and what inflation does, not only to our whole economy and people's day-to-day lives but for the growth of our economy.

The Conservatives agree. We are always talking about growing that pie, not cutting it up into smaller chunks for each individual province or sector. We have an opportunity in our country now, coming out of COVID, to grow our economy, to get stronger and we do not see that happening with the current government.

I just heard the member for Winnipeg North say that they were going to build back better. Many Canadians would look him in the eye and tell him not to worry about building back better; just put it back the way it was. We hear this all the time, that we should quit trying to make things better because all the Liberals are doing is making Canadians fall further and further behind.

I was an MLA for eight years before I became a member of Parliament. One of the things I heard a colleague say was that sometimes one of the best things government could do was to get out of the way. Sometimes the best thing it can do is nothing and let the entrepreneurs of our country do it. Canadians are very good at knowing what to do with their own money. I say in many of my speeches that a dollar in the pocket of the person who made it is worth twice as much as having the government take it and spend it.

The Liberals were talking about their job numbers. Since February 2020, 80% of all the jobs made under the government were in the public sector. It seems like the Liberals have forgotten about the private sector and entrepreneurs, those people who invest their money and create jobs, where the government does not have to do it for them every day.

I am proud to represent Regina—Lewvan and to put some of the people's stories on the record today. Inflation is hitting everyone hard across our province and in our city. Under a government led by our new leader, we would take the tax off and keep the heat on.

• (1340)

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I find it a bit ironic that the member opposite would have presented as a candidate in the last election by talking about carbon pricing. This was something on which that member ran.

I take notice that he and the Conservative Party may not agree with the approach that this government is taking. He talked about it as being an environmental plan. However, really the core of what the carbon price is about is trying to incentivize changed behaviour. It is trying to drive technological innovation.

I was in the member's home province of Saskatchewan. Federated Co-operatives Limited is making a hundreds-of-million-dollars investment on the basis of trying to benefit from getting around the idea that there is a market mechanism to change behaviour.

I take notice that the member might not like this plan, but an honest and genuine question back to him is this. What would he suggest is the best mechanism from government to actually try to drive the innovation and technology that is needed? Is it government regulation? Is it big, bossy government programs? What exactly would he like to see? On this side, I think it is a market mechanism, which is inherently a conservative play. Why does he not like it?

**Mr. Warren Steinley:** Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy it when a Liberal shows up in Saskatchewan, because we have not had one since 2019.

Federated Co-operatives Limited is putting \$1.3 billion into a renewable diesel plant and a canola crushing operation, which is going to be fantastic. What the government could do is appreciate some of that private money going toward making new jobs.

While we are on are on the topic of promises during elections, that government also ran on a promise to never to never increase the carbon tax over \$50 a tonne. The member is going to have to go back and explain to his constituents why it is going to \$170 a tonne, which will triple the cost of heating their homes in the winter.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I think I missed what the member said at the beginning, so I will stick to what the motion says.

When the Conservatives talk about cutting spending, do they want to cut the \$65 billion in old age security and guaranteed income supplement payments to seniors? Do they want to cut the \$7 billion in GST rebates for low-income earners? Do they want to cut the \$4 billion in veterans' benefits? Do they want to cut the \$43 billion in EI benefits? Do they want to cut health transfers?

When they talk about cutting spending, exactly what are they talking about?

• (1345)

[*English*]

**Mr. Warren Steinley:** Mr. Speaker, that is a very fair question. What we are talking about cutting is the \$119 million to McKinsey & Company. What we are talking about cutting is the \$15 billion in programs that went to prisoners, dead people and companies that did not need the COVID spending. What we are talking about is the \$400 billion that the government said it was going to use for COVID programming but never used it. That is the Parliamentary Budget Officers' numbers. That is over \$500 billion in spending that we are talking about already.

*Business of Supply*

There is a lot of largesse that the Liberal government has spent over the years. There are a lot of places where we can cut and deliver better services.

I would ask my Bloc colleague this. There has been an increase in the public service, there has been an increase in contracting out and there has been an increase in spending, higher than any other government in the history of our country, but have we seen better services for our citizens?

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, I would like to thank the member for discussing the increased usage of food banks.

While this increase has been happening, at the same time Loblaw's gross profits were up by 30.8% in the third quarter of 2022. Corporate greed as such needs to be taxed so families can stop going to food banks. Does the member agree?

**Mr. Warren Steinley:** Mr. Speaker, one of the first things I would not have done is given \$20 million to Loblaw's for new freezers. The Liberal government decided to do that and her party supported it. Therefore, the member should talk to her party leadership about supporting corporate welfare for Loblaw's as well.

I talked about one thing that hurt the most vulnerable and that was a tax on everything, the carbon tax. It makes groceries more expensive for everyone. It makes the shipping of those groceries to the grocery stores more expensive. If we want to help the most vulnerable among us, the first thing we have to do is lower the taxes and control our spending to get inflation back down to that 2%.

**Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member said that the best the government could do sometimes was to get out of the way. Imagine if government got out of the way when we looked at public education in provinces and in the country. What if government got out of the way during nationalizing universal health care or got out of the way during the pandemic?

Does the member not believe that sometimes government has to come together for the common good and as a collective as Canadians to identify issues that are of a national scope and actually focus and use the power of government for good?

**Mr. Warren Steinley:** Mr. Speaker, this is an easy answer, and that is exactly the difference between Liberals and Conservatives. The Liberals think governments can always do it better. The Liberals think governments can take money from people and spend it better than they can. The Conservatives believe that individuals can do that better with some of their own money. The Conservatives believe that the private sector can solve some of these problems. The Conservatives believe that entrepreneurs in this country are what built it, not government.

Government is not always the answer to problems. Many times it needs to get out of the way, as I said. The member can believe that a government should look after people from cradle to grave, but some people are going to have different opinions.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge today.

Before I start talking about this opposition motion, I note that the Speaker has allowed a lot of latitude regarding where people have gone when talking about it, especially the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, who spoke a few minutes ago. She spent a lot of time talking about NORAD and our defence system despite the fact that this motion has nothing to do with that.

I thought it would perhaps be relevant to reflect on the previous opposition motion that was before this House, brought forward by the Bloc, on the use of the notwithstanding clause. I would like to observe that very few Conservative speakers spoke to it. I think there were three in total. None of them really asked any questions, and when they did, they never talked about the subject. Then, of course, yesterday, they all voted in favour of encouraging premiers like Doug Ford to continue trampling on individual constitutional rights by supporting that opposition motion, which said provinces should be using the notwithstanding clause.

I found their approach on that a couple of days ago very interesting. They did not say a word, but voted in favour of it when the time came. I hope that Canadians paid attention to that, because it was very revealing, in my opinion, as to how the member for Carleton and Leader of the Opposition will treat the courts if he ever has the opportunity to be the Prime Minister.

I will just leave that for a moment and focus a bit more on the opposition motion, or the omnibus opposition motion, that is before us today.

The Conservatives are really trying to get this “eight years” thing to stick. I do not understand it. I do not think Canadians really see the difference between seven and eight years, but it is the new talking point. They have mentioned “eight years” in the motion probably about a dozen times. I am still trying to understand how that is supposed to be anywhere near as crafty as the “triple, triple, triple” thing, which I still have not even figured out. I wonder who they are testing these slogans on before they roll them out to the public.

I heard the member for Calgary Forest Lawn earlier today talk specifically about the measures the government brought into place and how, in his words, “None of those measures have been working.” He specifically said this. However, look at some of the measures we have brought in, such as topping up the GST, assisting people with paying their rents and other previous initiatives brought forward during COVID. For a member to get up in this House and suggest that those are not working is absolutely ridiculous and completely out of touch with the reality of what is going on with Canadians.

Let us talk about those specific programs, the programs the Conservatives are saying contribute to inflation. When we top up the GST for some of the most vulnerable people in our country, the people who need it the most and who will immediately go out and spend it on things they actually need, not on luxuries, that is not going to contribute to inflation.

*Statements by Members*

Do not take my word for it; take the word of the countless economists who have come forward. As a matter of fact, just last night, before the agriculture committee, a few witnesses spoke to that. I know the member for Foothills, the member for Beauce, the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and the member for Battle River—Crowfoot, who were all at that meeting yesterday, would have heard the following two quotes.

The first is from Dr. D.T. Cochrane of Canadians for Tax Fairness, who said, “Inflation is a complex phenomenon. Unfortunately, an overly simplistic claim about the cause of inflation being ‘too much money chasing too few goods’ has driven an overly simplistic policy solution—higher interest rates. This claim also lends itself to blaming the federal government for inflation because of the money created to support Canadians during the pandemic.”

Another witness, Dr. Jim Stanford, said that clearly, it is not due to the Prime Minister either and that our inflation and food inflation are both below the average of other industrial countries.

That leads me to my next point. It is this idea that in a globalized world, where we are trading goods and services in a free market, which Conservatives support because they support free trade, apparently, somehow we can isolate ourselves from the policies that other countries make and the effects those policies will have on Canada.

• (1350)

The member for New Brunswick Southwest, in an answer to one of my questions, specifically said that inflation is driven by monetary policy, and he was implying that the Conservatives were not worried about the rest of the world. When I asked him about the impact the rest of the world has, he said they do not care about the rest of the world and that this was only about Canada.

The reality is that when we work to have a market like Canada's, which is open to other developed countries in the world, policies created in other countries are going to have an impact on Canada and vice versa. That is why, in my opinion, it was important for Canada to stay in lockstep with other countries throughout the world, particularly those we do a lot of trading with, rely on and have shared values with, during the pandemic. We needed to provide supports and resources to our population, just as those countries did.

Now, somehow, the Conservatives imply that if Canada had not gone that route to support Canadians and taken care of them to the best of our ability during the pandemic, we would not be subject to this inflation right now. That is an absolutely ludicrous claim. They are trying to suggest that every other country out there experiencing inflation can do the same thing by controlling, in isolation, their own inflation even though their markets are globally connected as well.

Where are the inflation rates right now? Let us recap. In the G7 alone, the inflation rate in Japan is 4%, in France it is 5.8%, in Canada it is 6.3%, in the U.S. it is 6.4%, in Germany it is 8.5%, in the U.K. it is 9.2% and in Italy it is 10.1%. These are numbers as of January this year. If we drill down into energy specifically in the G7, Canada and the U.S. have the exact same inflation, at 7.3%. The rest of the G7 is anywhere between 15% and 64% inflation.

I think it is very important, when we have these discussions, to focus on the fact that inflation is not just domestic in nature or completely controlled by our government. Because of the relationship we have with other countries throughout the world, inflation relies on the trading that happens throughout the world, and our policies feed into the inflationary impacts in different countries.

This leads me to my conclusion. The Conservatives want to completely wash over the fact that a lot of what has happened with inflation has to do with global issues that are happening right now, in particular the war in Ukraine. That is driving so much of this, and every economist will tell us that.

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

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives, who are heckling right now, will try to say that the Prime Minister is responsible for all of it. I have one thing to say to my Conservative colleagues in response to that.

• (1355)

**The Speaker:** Let us pause for a moment. I am not having a hard time hearing the hon. member, but it is rather disturbing that while he is trying to get his point across, he is being interrupted. As much as one side or the other enjoys it, it is not parliamentary procedure.

I will let the hon. parliamentary secretary continue.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, the Conservatives like to suggest that the Prime Minister of Canada is completely responsible for inflation. Let us not forget that this is an individual who they routinely say is incapable of doing anything, yet on the other hand they say he is capable of controlling global inflation. Let that sink in for a couple of minutes. Either they are completely unaware of what is happening in the rest of the world or they think the Prime Minister of Canada is capable of controlling the inflation rate throughout the world. One of those two things is happening.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### ONTARIO'S GREENBELT

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the greenbelt is a vital part of Ontario's ecosystem and protects thousands of acres of wetlands, forests and watersheds. It is also home to several farms located on some of Canada's best agricultural land.

When protecting our climate, we need to be consistent across orders of government. Developments of the greenbelt that are proposed in the province of Ontario conflict with federal legislation, such as species-at-risk legislation and impact assessment legislation, and infringes on the Rouge National Urban Park.

Canadians are feeling the impacts of climate change, which is why, since 2015, our government has protected over 290,000 square kilometres of land as part of our historic commitments and investments in nature conservation. As we continue our path to net-zero emissions by 2050, now more than ever, it is important that we protect areas such as the greenbelt.

\* \* \*

• (1400)

#### CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE AWARENESS WEEK

**Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, happy Valentine's Day. Speaking of matters of the heart, every year more than 250,000 Canadian babies are born with congenital heart disease, the number one birth defect in Canada.

This week is Congenital Heart Disease Awareness Week. My wife Ally and I have a personal connection. Over seven years ago, we lost our son Teddy to congenital heart disease. He was born and died just 22 minutes after birth. There is not a day or year that we do not think of what could have been. My wife has been a tireless advocate for infant loss and congenital heart disease while writing a blog: [alwayschooselove.net](http://alwayschooselove.net).

Many families have a story similar to ours, but many families have stories that last a lifetime, with significant needs ranging from multiple invasive procedures, such as open-heart surgery, to daily therapies for breathing and physical rehabilitation. This week, look in Toronto at the CN Tower lit up in red, or alongside B.C. Place, Cabot Hill and Montreal Park Tower. The warmth of the red signifies that there is a need for Canadians to support our babies born with a broken heart.

This Valentine's Day, have a heart, and support and share stories of congenital heart disease. Let us help find a cure.

\* \* \*

#### MICHAEL FINLAY

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, do you have a neighbour who sits on the porch? Maybe you notice them and remember them every day. Well, that was Michael Finlay. He was a member of The Pocket neighbourhood, and people remember him for being on the porch reading and for the interesting music he listened to.

More Canadians will remember him for his important contributions to journalism. He was with the CBC for over 30 years and worked on *As It Happens* and *Sunday Morning*, one of my favourite shows, as well as *Dispatches*. He will be remembered as a storyteller, documentary maker and editor. People say he saw what other people did not see. He made important contributions to journalism, and people really looked to his leadership. One person said, "Every reporter he ever worked with said their story was made better because of Michael."

Michael died in a violent assault a few weeks ago last month, and I am very sorry to see his passing. His memorial will be at one of his favourite local spots, Gabby's, next week. We will all remember Michael Finlay, and we thank him so much for his contributions to journalism.

#### Statements by Members

[Translation]

#### GENETICALLY MODIFIED SALMON

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have some excellent news. Although Canada was the first country in the world to allow the consumption of genetically modified animals, consumers in Quebec and Canada will not, as it turns out, find genetically modified salmon on their plates, especially without their knowledge. We know that this government is unwilling to require labels for GMOs, of course.

Whom do we have to thank for this about-face, which will benefit all those who want to know what they are eating? Is it Health Canada or the federal government? No, it is environmental groups like Vigilance OGM and Nature Canada.

Politicians like those in the Bloc Québécois, as well as a significant part of the population, rallied together to say no. This grassroots movement made the American company AquaBounty give in.

While I welcome that decision, we should all be concerned that the government, which should be protecting us, did absolutely nothing about this issue.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### FRASER-HICKSON LIBRARY

**Hon. Marc Garneau (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to acknowledge the Fraser-Hickson library, which is celebrating the 10th anniversary of its minibiblioPLUS book delivery service on Feb 14. This service grew throughout the pandemic and now supports 130 partner organizations, impacting 14,000 participants, bringing more than 10,000 books to children and delivering 5,000 hours of programming. Its staff and board of directors are deeply committed to the cause of early literacy and promoting reading to children, particularly in their first 100 days of life.

[Translation]

The Fraser-Hickson Library was founded in Montreal on October 15, 1885, and was the first free library open to the public. It received the enthusiastic support of Honoré Beaugrand, the then mayor of Montreal. Today, the library's collection of books is spread out across my riding and across Quebec.

The Fraser-Hickson Library continues to foster a love for reading and promote early literacy.

Congratulations to the Fraser-Hickson Library.

*Statements by Members*

● (1405)

[English]

**FREEDOMS IN CANADA**

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, using Bill C-11, the Prime Minister and his government will control everything that Canadians can see online. Renowned author Margaret Atwood has started speaking out about this. She has labelled the government's actions “creeping totalitarianism”.

Despite the enormous opposition, however, the government is ramming its way forward and steamrolling over opposition voices. It has ignored YouTubers, TikTokers and Instagrammers who have spoken up from all corners of this country. Voices of indigenous creators have been stifled. Black creators have been suppressed. French creators have been silenced.

Now, however, the Government of Quebec is standing up and speaking out. It is sounding the alarm bells. It does not want to be dictated to by the Liberal government, or for that matter, any government. Therefore, it is urging the Prime Minister to give the provinces a voice. Unfortunately, My NDP and Bloc colleagues are standing with the Liberal regime. On this side, my Conservative colleagues and I are standing with the Province of Quebec as it calls on the Liberal government to give it a voice.

We are asking that the government send this bill to committee, give an opportunity for voices to be heard and for this legislation to be adequately—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

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**HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS DAY**

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, February 22 is National Human Trafficking Awareness Day. Whether it is forced labour, forced marriages, sex trafficking, organ trafficking or cybersex, it is hidden in plain sight right here in Canada.

Statistics Canada reports that in 2019, 97% of human trafficking victims were girls and women, 89% were below the age of 35 and 50% were indigenous. Human trafficking is vicious, profitable and growing. All Canadians have the opportunity to make a difference by doing the following: listening to survivors; learning the signs; advocating for change; supporting Bill C-308; and supporting Bill S-211, which will have its third reading on March 6.

Not all modern slavery involves human trafficking, but all trafficked persons are slaves. On National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, let us take the necessary steps to end this scourge in our country.

\* \* \*

**RECOGNITION OF SERVICE**

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate a Canadian Armed Forces veteran and my constituent, Mr. Kenneth Andersen, for his 40 years of service with the B.C. Corps of Commissionaires.

Ken first joined the commissionaires in May 1982, serving until August 1995. Following a short break, Ken re-enrolled in June 1996; he has served continuously ever since. Commissionaires BC is a not-for-profit security and enforcement organization that has served British Columbia's mainland communities since 1927. Ken is one of only five individuals in his division to surpass 40 years of service over its 95 years of existence.

I urge all members to join me in thanking and congratulating Mr. Ken Andersen for his loyal and dedicated service.

I wish members a Happy Valentine's Day.

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**LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years, Canadians are out of money and cannot afford to eat, heat or house themselves because of the failed NDP-Liberal policies that are breaking this country. Paycheques dwindle with out-of-control Liberal tax increases. Spending power dwindles as inflation runs rampant because of NDP-Liberal spending.

Drug overdoses are up, thugs with smuggled guns are terrorizing our communities and the number of people living on the street continues to rise. Canadians feel how broken this country has become. However, we can recover.

Conservatives will crack down on crime. We will go after the gun smugglers, tackle the gang problem and reform the revolving-door bail system. Conservatives will end the inflation crisis and make it more affordable to fuel our cars and heat our homes. How will we do this? Instead of constantly increasing the carbon tax, Conservatives will keep the heat on and take the tax off.

\* \* \*

**EARTHQUAKES IN TURKEY AND SYRIA**

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the death toll continues to rise because of the tragic earthquakes in Turkey and northern Syria, our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the victims. There are over 36,000 dead and 90,000 injured; the numbers climb every minute.

Nothing can be done to bring loved ones back to their families, but we can step up to do everything we can to help. Canada has committed \$10 million in humanitarian aid to Turkey and has a second matching fund set up for \$10 million for donations to the Red Cross relief efforts. We are looking at doing much more.



I had the chance to visit the Turkish community over the weekend, and it was heartening to see its members come together to accept donations of blankets, arctic tents and sleeping bags, which they are packing to send to the impacted regions.

Thanks to the many heroic leaders for stepping up to lead these efforts, including Samit Ahmad, Mehmet Solmaz and Bekir Elmaagacli, in addition to many Turkish businesses and the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations.

Our hearts go out to all those impacted by this awful tragedy. Canadians are united in our support.

\* \* \*

• (1410)

### CARBON TAX

**Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the cost of food production in Canada is soaring because of the government's failed carbon tax. A family farm is now expected to pay \$150,000 in carbon tax every single year. Families will pay over \$16,000 a year in groceries. It is no surprise that Canadians are visiting food banks at record rates: The Prime Minister has failed the producers who put food on the table.

It does not need to be like this. Conservatives will stand up for farmers, ranchers and consumers, and we will axe the failed carbon tax.

\* \* \*

### THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it has been eight years since the Prime Minister and Liberal Party came to power. That is eight years of fancy slogans, grand proclamations, masterful political manipulation and Liberal elites getting ahead.

However, let us talk about what Canadians are facing: out-of-control inflation and the highest costs in a generation; housing costs doubled both to own and rent; tax hikes at every turn, meaning that folks are not only paying more but also taking home less; a tax on our nation's most valuable industries, which devalues the hard work of Canadians; a nation more divided than it has ever been; and a government that cannot fulfill its basic duties while it acquires more debt than ever before.

Canadians are losing hope. They are out of money and cannot afford to eat, heat or house themselves. However, hope is on the horizon. Conservatives are ready to keep the heat on and take the tax off.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### BLACK HISTORY MONTH

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take this opportunity today, in honour of Black History Month, to highlight the important integration and inclusion work that is happening in my riding.

### Statements by Members

A little-known fact is that Châteauguay—Lacolle is home to the second largest Caribbean community in Quebec.

[English]

In recent years, we have also welcomed many families from African countries such as Cameroon, Burundi and Senegal. I salute our local grassroots groups that work together to promote the contribution of the Black community in the region. Of note is the Horizon Association; since its founding by the late Clinton Ritchie more than 30 years ago, it has raised money for the education of young people and organized events where everyone is welcome to participate, meet and connect.

[Translation]

I would like to acknowledge the Horizon Association's contribution.

\* \* \*

[English]

### HAVE A HEART DAY

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on National Have a Heart Day.

I thank the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society for providing ideas on what to do. One can visit [haveaheartday.ca](http://haveaheartday.ca) to see what one can do towards reconciliation.

In advance of budget 2023, I call on the government to implement call for justice 1.3, which reads:

We call upon all governments, in meeting human and Indigenous rights obligations, to pursue prioritization and resourcing of the measures required to eliminate the social, economic, cultural, and political marginalization of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people when developing budgets and determining government activities and priorities.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### MUNICIPALITY OF SAINT-VALENTIN

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my riding is home to the love capital of North America and, even though the municipality of Saint-Valentin has a population of less than 500, people around the world know about it. Lovers, but also collectors from around the globe, send their letters there to get a one-of-a-kind postmark.

Saint-Valentin has also made a name for itself by hosting a festival featuring artists, entertainment, activities for kids and local products.

That is not all. Saint-Valentin is also the only municipality in Quebec, other than Montreal, to become sister cities with a city in Japan, Mimasaka. This partnership is celebrated regularly with manga and origami workshops, exhibits, concerts featuring traditional music and so on.

### Oral Questions

On February 2, the Japanese consul in Montreal gave Mayor Pierre Chamberland a certificate of merit from the Japanese foreign affairs minister for his excellent initiatives.

In short, for all of these reasons, I want to say that I love Saint-Valentin.

• (1415)

**The Speaker:** I would like to remind members that their colleagues are giving their members' statements right now. It would be better if members would quietly continue their conversations elsewhere rather than shouting across the chamber at one another.

The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

\* \* \*

[English]

### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is never the crime; it is always the cover-up. As journalists were getting wind that some random Liberal had stayed in what we now know was a \$7,000-a-night, posh London hotel, the Liberals went into full panic mode. They tried to spin and twist the story in any way possible, even blacking out emails identifying who stayed in the room. Imagine that, Mr. Speaker. Does anyone remember when the Prime Minister said that this was going to be the most transparent and accountable government in history?

Many Canadians are barely able to afford food, groceries and heat; moms are going to bed worried about keeping a roof over their families' heads. While Canadians are suffering the pain of the Liberal's self-inflicted inflation and affordability crisis, I wonder who on that side thought it was okay to spend \$7,000 a night on a hotel and then try to cover it up.

After eight years of scandals and ethical violations, Canadians are now seeing that this out-of-touch and entitled Prime Minister cannot be redeemed and must be replaced.

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### GREAT LAKES SUMMIT

**Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today, we opened the Great Lakes summit on the Hill, welcoming the people responsible for ensuring the water that comes from our Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway system is safe to drink, can support fish stocks, is safe for families to enjoy and can sustain one of the largest trade corridors in the world.

They arrived here to celebrate a successful year of action taken to preserve the integrity of our freshwater systems, as well as to call on our government to continue the work necessary to ensure we do not allow the same destructive conditions to arise that many of us experienced in the past. We remember when our drinking water was unsafe. We remember dead fish on our beaches and the impact on our communities when our water was polluted. We remember the extraordinary reversal many dedicated people made happen through effort and good governance.

I thank all my colleagues from both sides of the floor and the border who joined us and continue to support our efforts to keep our binational fresh waters healthy and safe.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

### FINANCE

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, eight years of Liberal waste and corruption has driven inflation to record highs, and nowhere is this more obvious than in housing costs. In fact, after eight years of Liberal deficits driving up inflation, the average renter now pays over \$2,000 a month in rent.

To a wealthy Prime Minister who brags about his vast family fortune, that might not seem like a lot of money. Maybe that is why he signed off on a \$7,000-a-night hotel stay in London last fall.

Why did the Prime Minister think it was okay to bill taxpayers for a single night's hotel bill what the average renter pays in three full months?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians have the right to ask themselves why it is that every time real supports for renters come to the floor of the House, the Conservatives vote against them.

They voted against the Canada housing benefit, which is delivering and investing an average of \$2,500 to vulnerable renters across the country. They not only voted against the \$500 one-time top-up to the Canada housing benefit, but they also played procedural games in the chamber to prevent real help for Canadian renters.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this scandal stings taxpayers so much because it comes at a time when housing costs are taking more and more out of Canadian paycheques.

After eight years of Liberal deficits, interest rates have risen, meaning homeowners have to pay more to the banks in interest payments just to stay in their own homes. In fact, after eight years of the Liberal government, the average monthly mortgage cost has more than doubled and the average \$600,000 mortgage sees interest costs go from \$12,000 a year to over \$30,000 a year.

Again, does the minister think it was a good idea for the Prime Minister to bill taxpayers for one night's hotel stay what homeowners pay in two full months on their mortgages?

• (1420)

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, does the hon. member think it was smart to vote against real help for homebuyers, the first-time homebuyer incentive, \$40,000 tax-free savings account for first-time homebuyers, doubling the first-time homebuyers' tax credit, introducing a once-in-a-lifetime rent-to-own program, \$200 million in supports for first-time homebuyers in terms of increasing supply, and banning foreigners from owning Canadian residential real estate?

Does the hon. member really think it was smart to vote against those supports for Canadian homebuyers?

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always smart to vote against inflationary deficits that drive up the cost of living.

The Liberals have learned the wrong lesson from this hotel bill scandal. One would think that, after billing taxpayers \$6,000 a night for a single room, the lesson learned would be to book a cheaper room next time. Instead, the lesson the Liberals have learned is to cover it up better.

Emails between the PM's staff reveal government officials scheming to cover up the scandal. One even suggested burying these costs in next year's public accounts. The word finally came down from the minister herself to simply stop answering questions altogether, all this at a time when Canadians are paying more just to stay in their own homes.

Why is treating taxpayers' money with respect never the lesson the Liberals learn?

**Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last fall, Canadians mourned the death of a monarch of 70 years. We had a delegation led by our Governor General and our Prime Minister that was appropriate and was important for Canadians. It was actually essential we attend that.

While that side of the House is focusing on us, we are focusing on Canadians. We are focusing on their cost of living. We are focusing on their cost of housing. We are focusing on their cost of child care. We will continue to be focusing on Canadians while the Conservatives focus on us.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we know that they think it is normal to pay \$6,000 for a night at a hotel. After eight years under this Prime Minister, Canadians are worse off. Inflation is eating away at their wallets. Today we are debating a motion calling on the government to cap its spending, stop wasting resources and eliminate the taxes and deficits that are causing the cost-of-living crisis.

Will the government take the necessary fiscal and budgetary measures to get the country out of this disastrous inflationary crisis?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when the people in the

### *Oral Questions*

Conservative Party talk about spending and waste, it is important to understand what they are really talking about. They are talking about helping families in need with programs targeting the most vulnerable in our society. When we talk about providing a \$500 top-up to the Canada housing benefit, it is to help people in need. When we make dental care accessible to families, it is to help those who need it most.

Instead of voting against all the measures we bring in for Canadians, the Conservatives might want to propose some solutions.

\* \* \*

### THE ECONOMY

**Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one solution would be not paying \$6,000 for a hotel room.

After eight years of this government, food banks are facing record demand. One in four families will pay an extra \$1,000 for food this year. On top of that, a majority of businesses say they will have to raise their prices. This mess is just part of this government's pattern of shortcomings, failures and other displays of incompetence.

When is it going to apologize and set things right?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that when our party took office in 2015, one in eight Canadians were living in poverty. Since taking office, we have lifted over 2.7 million people out of poverty.

When the Conservatives talk about cutting spending and not helping Canadians, what they are talking about is sending those people back into poverty. That is unacceptable.

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### HEALTH

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there is no health agreement. An agreement requires that people agree to it.

The Prime Minister imposed his offer on his counterparts. He exploited the fact that Quebec and the provinces are stretched to the limit by a health crisis, which was caused by federal underfunding that he himself is responsible for. They are so hard-pressed that they must accept the unacceptable.

The Prime Minister could have resolved the problem of chronic underfunding of health care. All he did was buy some peace, and for not a lot of money at that.

*Oral Questions*

Why did he not choose to truly help care for those in need?

• (1425)

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and his interest in this very important issue.

We are delighted with the announcement made today by the Council of the Federation, and we thank the members and the chair of the council for their very important work.

After the Prime Minister convened the meeting on health care last week, we met with the provincial and territorial premiers and the health ministers from across the country.

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Quebec and the provinces were demanding that the federal government pay its fair share, meaning 35% of total health costs. The Prime Minister's offer ups its share from 22% to a paltry 24%.

Let us not forget that when the Liberal Party came to power in 2015, the share was 24%. The government is merely righting its terrible wrong. We need 35%. It started at 24%, got cut to 22%, and now it is going back up to 24%. Nothing is changing; we are going in circles.

Does the government realize that, in the meantime, our health care systems are following a nice straight line, straight into the wall?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know where my colleague was this morning when the headlines were touting the federal-provincial health care deal. Newspapers across the country are reporting on this agreement. It is a good agreement that will improve access to family doctors.

I think it is worth it. It means having front-line physicians, investing in our health care workforce—the heroes, the men and women who make a difference every day in health care—investing in mental health, and ensuring the sustainability of the health care system.

This is a good deal. The Bloc Québécois might not like it, but it is a good deal.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### TELECOMMUNICATIONS

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada reports that nearly half of Canadians, 44%, are reporting that they are struggling with paying their rents and groceries. On top of that, Canadians pay some of the highest cellphone and Internet fees in the world. The Rogers-Shaw merger will only make things worse. Canadians who are already struggling will have to pay even more for their cellphone and Internet fees.

The government has a choice today. Will it stand up for families and say no to this merger, or will it put billions of dollars into the pockets of billionaires? Which is it?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is very simple. We stand on the side of Canadians.

That is why, yesterday, my hon. colleague was saying we should direct it to the CRTC to lower prices for Canadians and bring more competition into the sector. The member knows, as I have said before, what matters for me is to bring down prices and bring in competition, and the best way we have done that in this country is to have a fourth national player. We will always act in the best interests of consumers in Canada.

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, if I just heard the minister correctly, does that mean he will oppose the merger today?

[Translation]

We know the Rogers-Shaw merger will drive cellphone service prices up. Canadians already pay some of the highest fees in the world. This merger will make things worse and raise prices.

The minister has a choice today. Will he block the merger and stand up for Canadians, yes or no?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important question.

As my colleague knows and as Canadians tuning in today will be aware, we issued a new direction to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission yesterday, asking the CRTC to adopt policies to lower prices in Canada and increase competition.

I have been very vocal about this: It is in everyone's best interest to bring prices down and make sure there is competition. The best way to do that in Canada is to have a fourth national player.

Canadians watching us know this. We will always be there to protect consumer interests.

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[English]

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister's incompetence, home heating has become a luxury. He said he could not find a business case to provide the world with clean Canadian energy and cancelled pipelines, making the cost of home heating double in this country, yet he found a business case to shovel billions of dollars to his Liberal crony insiders, giving them cushy contracts. Now, Canadians are having to turn down the heat and wear blankets right before he triples his failed carbon tax.

Will the Prime Minister come up with a real climate change plan and stop with the virtue signalling so Canadians can keep the heat on and take the tax off?

• (1430)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my hon. colleague that the policies we are putting in place will help Canadians reduce their dependency on expensive fossil fuels and replace them with Canadian-generated clean electricity, reducing their energy bills, which is why we have worked to help Canadians in Atlantic Canada and across the country reduce their home heating bills.

\* \* \*

### CARBON PRICING

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the problem with that plan is that it is not an environmental plan. I looked for it and I could not find it. Can anyone else find it? Mr. Speaker, did you find it?

What I did find was a tax plan that made gas, groceries and home heating more expensive. It is a tax plan that has not helped the Liberals meet a single emissions-reduction target, and they have made emissions go up.

When will they stop their fake virtue signalling and cancel the failed carbon tax so Canadians can keep the heat on?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat rich coming from the opposition that flip-flops on carbon pricing faster than I can flip my pancakes in the morning. One minute, the Conservatives are in favour of carbon pricing. The next minute, they are not. The minute after that, they are for carbon pricing. In the last election, the members of the opposition campaigned on carbon pricing and now they are saying they—

**The Speaker:** I am going to have to pause for a second. I am having a hard time hearing the answer up here because of the heckling going back and forth. I know that everybody wants to hear the response, just like they want to hear the question.

The hon. minister has 15 seconds left.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the Conservative Party of Canada, with its reckless policies, flip-flops on carbon pricing faster than I can flip my pancakes in the morning. It is impossible to know what its position is at any given minute because it changes its position so often.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, Canadians are facing a generational cost-of-living crisis. According to the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, Canadians are now facing the biggest financial challenges of their lives, yet the Liberals continue to double down on increasing the carbon tax, which will occur again on April 1. Conservatives would keep the heat on and take the tax off.

Will the Prime Minister show some compassion and scrap the carbon tax?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is important in the House that we are actually not misleading Canadians. As the official opposition members know, eight out of 10 Canadian families—

### Oral Questions

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

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister, from the top, please.

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson:** Mr. Speaker, the opposition members know full well, even though they actually do not say it publicly, that eight out of 10 Canadian families get more money back than they pay in the price on pollution. Certainly, affordability is a critical issue, but so is climate change. I would say it is enormously rich for a party that cannot even acknowledge the reality of climate change to be asking about the government's climate plan.

\* \* \*

### THE ECONOMY

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals do not have an environmental plan; they have a tax plan. They are starting to sound like a broken record of broken promises and failed policies. The reality is that 38% of Canadians are nearly broke. This is according to the federal government's own researchers. Just this morning, I met with some students from Burnaby's Simon Fraser Student Society, who told me that students are missing meals because they cannot afford to eat.

Will the Prime Minister take responsibility for students who cannot even afford to feed themselves, or will the Conservatives have to fix what he broke?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, certainly affordability issues are critically important for all Canadians. I think everybody in this House can agree on that.

Certainly this government is taking steps to address affordability concerns across the board, but one of those, to be honest, is a price on pollution where eight out of 10 Canadian families get more money back. It is an important policy to reduce emissions and fight climate change but do so in a manner that promotes affordability.

My goodness, it is far past time that the official opposition actually acknowledged the reality of climate change and put forward a plan that Canadians can look at.

\* \* \*

• (1435)

### CARBON PRICING

**Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the reality is that after eight years of the Prime Minister, one in four Canadians cannot afford a \$500 unexpected expense. Nearly half of Canadians are concerned about affording their rent and their mortgage payments, which have doubled under the current Prime Minister, and too many Canadians are concerned about heating their homes, because it has become so expensive under the current Prime Minister.

*Oral Questions*

Now, on top of that, the Liberals are going to triple, triple, triple the carbon tax. Will they help Canadians out by keeping the heat on and taking the tax off?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hypocrisy of the other side is astounding. We are talking about affordability, about helping Canadians to make ends meet, and members on the other side voted against a \$500 top-up on housing. They voted against dental supports for 500,000 kids. They voted against rental supports. They voted against supporting Canadians at a time when they needed it the most. They have no plan. We do, and we will keep supporting Canadians.

**Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what we voted against was putting more fuel on the fire. We cannot spend our way out of inflation.

The fact is that the Liberals' carbon tax plan is a failed plan that has not met any target that they have set. Even the Bank of Canada governor has admitted that the carbon tax is contributing to inflation, and the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that households will pay more in carbon tax than they will get back in rebates.

Will the Liberals help Canadians out by keeping the heat on and taking the tax off?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Fort McMurray forest fires cost Canadians almost \$6 billion; Alberta floodings in 2013, almost \$4 billion; the ice storm in Quebec, \$3 billion; atmospheric rivers in British Columbia, \$8 billion. These are only a few of the examples of the increasing cost to Canadians of climate change.

What is the answer from this reckless opposition party? It is to make pollution free again. That is unacceptable. On this side of the House, we will support Canadians and we will fight climate change.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am going to talk about the notwithstanding clause, the only bit of autonomy that the Constitution guarantees Quebec and the provinces. It was the compromise that Prime Minister Trudeau senior came up with so that the provinces would agree to his Constitution, which, by the way, was never signed by Quebec. The notwithstanding clause gives Quebec and the provinces the right to make different societal choices without having them overturned by the courts or the federal government. Yesterday, Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau's son's Liberals and the NDP voted against that right.

Why is it that the Liberals and the NDP think that any little bit of autonomy for Quebec and the provinces is too much?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government has always been clear about its concerns regarding the pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause. The charter is there to protect rights and freedoms, and it was created to protect minorities across Canada.

The pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause shuts down dialogue between the courts and the House. That is why we are against the pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause.

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it seems complicated and difficult. Maybe my colleague should reread the Constitution, or perhaps read it for the first time. Nowhere in section 33 does it say that the notwithstanding clause represents the first or the last word. It is exclusively up to Quebec and the provinces. That is written in black and white. Therein lies the rub for the Liberals and the NDP. The notwithstanding clause guarantees in black and white that certain decisions can be made by governments other than the federal government, without having to ask its permission.

Is the real problem with the notwithstanding clause the fact that the Liberals do not get the last word?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I remember the debates that took place at the time of the Canadian Constitution very clearly. The notwithstanding clause was always there as the last word during constitutional negotiations.

It is a very serious matter when legislation is used to abrogate the rights of individuals in Canada, which is why the notwithstanding clause must be used only in exceptional circumstances. This is especially true when it eviscerates dialogue between the courts and the House.

• (1440)

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the notwithstanding clause has basically only been used by Quebec, in order to protect and promote our national language and our unique values.

It is no coincidence that the Liberals and the NDP are attacking it today. They want to contest Bill 96, which protects French in Quebec, and Bill 21, which protects state secularism. They want to prevent Quebec from tabling any other legislation that they do not agree with.

The real problem is that Quebec is different and the notwithstanding clause allows it to live differently. Is that not what the Liberal government's real problem is?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will talk about the Bloc Québécois's problem.

The Bloc Québécois had an entire opposition day to talk about an issue of their choice. We could have spent a whole day talking about the fight against poverty, how to help our seniors, the environment or the cost of living.

However, they chose to talk about the Constitution. That was their choice. That does not put food on the table. It does not help seniors and it does not help families. They must be really out of touch with reality to do what they did.

*Oral Questions**[English]***CARBON PRICING**

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the current Prime Minister, Canadian businesses are beginning to sound the alarm. Take Gio, who owns a small coffee shop in Edmonton. He has to bring his beans up from South America, but due to the rising costs of fuel, transportation and utilities, he has had to hike his prices 25%. It is policies like the Liberals' carbon tax that continue to drive up these costs.

Conservatives will keep the heat on and take the tax off, so when will the Prime Minister get out of the way so Conservatives can fix what he broke?

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will tell the hon. member what this side of the House does for small businesses. We have their backs every single time. During the pandemic, it was about keeping their employees on the payroll. It was about giving them a loan so they could get through every single day.

Now, it is about helping them get new customers by going through e-commerce. It is about helping those businesses get access to new markets all around the world. I might say that those businesses are doing terrific, because they are increasing their business and creating great jobs for Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister wants to tell us about small businesses. I think it is the Ethics Commissioner who just told us what the Liberals do with small business.

It has been reported now that more than half of Canadians are spending \$200 a month or more to heat their homes. Let us ask Linda, who has a family of four. She is choosing to skip meals to heat her home.

Conservatives will keep the heat on and take the tax off, so when will the Prime Minister get out of the way so Conservatives can fix what he broke?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder why my colleague from Edmonton voted against tax breaks for small business when he had the opportunity to support them.

I can tell members that, in the jobs report for January, 150,000 new jobs were created and 121,000 were full-time. I do not know where he is, but in Edmonton things are going well.

We are supporting Canadians. That is our job.

**Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the current Prime Minister, British Columbians are really struggling. Liberal policies have pushed home, rent and fuel prices through the roof. We pay the highest prices in North America. Gas is projected to hit \$2.65 a litre this summer. The Liberal solution is not to double down but triple down on the carbon tax to force Canadians not to drive to work or take their kids to soccer.

Will the Prime Minister take responsibility for making life more expensive? Will he keep the heat on and take the tax off?

• (1445)

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind my hon. colleague that eight out of 10 Canadian families actually get more money back than they pay on the price on pollution, but I would also remind—

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

**The Speaker:** Order. I think things are getting a little out of hand. I am going to ask everyone to take a deep breath and, when someone is speaking, not say anything, other than the person who is entitled to speak.

The hon. minister.

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson:** Mr. Speaker, I would also remind my hon. colleague, who comes from the same province I do, that it was in 2008 that the British Columbia government put in place the first price on pollution in North America, showing enormous leadership in the fight against climate change. If he has a problem with the price on pollution in British Columbia, he might want to raise that with the premier.

**Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister should know that British Columbians receive zero back in carbon tax rebates from the federal government. After eight years of the Prime Minister, everything is more difficult. In Surrey, a thousand Indo-Canadian owner-operators met to protest that the Liberal government and the port authority do not care about their livelihoods. They are being unnecessarily forced to buy new trucks. They are also struggling to pay increased fuel prices, including the carbon tax that is tripling.

Will the Prime Minister take responsibility for his actions and admit he does not care for hard-working Canadians?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the hon. member points out that British Columbians do not get a refund, as every Canadian who lives under the federal system does. Eight out of 10 Canadians get more money back under the federal system. If he has a problem with how that process is implemented, and I believe the hon. member used to be a member of the political party that brought the price on pollution in, he should raise it with the premier.

*Oral Questions***HEALTH**

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, for-profit clinics across Canada are selling preferential access to surgery for those with the money to pay for it. They are exploiting a loophole in the Canada Health Act that is costing Canadians up to \$28,000 per procedure. Even former Liberal health minister Jane Philpott says this contravenes the principles of medicare. New Democrats believe Canadians should have access to care based on need, not wealth.

Why are Liberals letting for-profit clinics prey on the desperation of patients and allowing two-tier access to care in Canada?

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my colleague and his collaboration on the health committee.

We believe, on this side of the House, that all that people should need in order to get health care is their health card, not their credit card. We will always stand up for Canada's universal, public health care. Canadians are proud of our system, which has always been based on need, not their ability to pay. Our discussions with the premiers included the importance of upholding the Canada Health Act, which means making sure that services are based on need and not a person's ability to pay.

We will always protect Canada's equitable access to universal health care and services.

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**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals said they would defend public health care, and now they are not.

Another example of Liberals putting the interests of corporate profits over people is the flailing Canada Infrastructure Bank. The bank has failed to deliver the climate-resilient infrastructure needed by communities, and Liberals do not want people to know this. The government is keeping that information secret and out of the hands of Canadians.

Why are the Liberals protecting a bank that is not delivering for Canadians?

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, the Canada Infrastructure Bank is an innovative way to deal with infrastructure gaps that our country faces. For example, the Manitoba fibre project has created over 400 jobs, and 49,000 households will be connected to broadband. Would the member opposite like to tell those residents, those people who are employed, that the Infrastructure Bank is doing nothing for them?

We are going to continue to invest in good infrastructure right across this country.

**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia's wine, grape and fruit-growing sector is facing an uncertain future. On the weekend of February 3-4, a polar vortex event hit Nova Scotia with sustained temperatures of -25°C and a wind chill record of -43°C. This, coupled with the fact that we had one of the mildest winters on record in Nova Scotia, has resulted in significant damage. Early estimates suggest that we will completely lose the vinifera crop and up to 50% of hybrids, and the fruit industry is concerned about peaches, cherries and stone fruit.

Can the Minister of Agriculture provide some guidance to producers in my riding and across the province about what programs they can use and whether she has received any application from the Government of Nova Scotia for an AgriRecovery framework?

● (1450)

**Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague from Kings—Hants for his continuous dedication to agriculture.

We recognize that the recent weather events impacted the grape growers of Nova Scotia and have caused them significant stress. I want to ensure them that we stand ready to assess the disaster as soon as the province submits a request for AgriRecovery. Until then, I invite them to check their eligibility for the AgriInsurance, AgriInvest and AgriStability programs.

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[Translation]

**CANADIAN HERITAGE**

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, interesting news this morning: the Quebec government is urging the Liberal government to include a mechanism for mandatory consultation in Bill C-11 to ensure the protection of Quebec culture.

It is asking the Prime Minister, who still enjoys the Bloc's support, to ensure that, before Bill C-11 passes, it includes an official consultation mechanism with the Quebec government.

Do the Prime Minister and the Bloc agree with Minister Lacombe when it comes to Quebec culture and the fact that the government needs to send the bill to committee?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we co-operate extremely well with the Government of Quebec on culture and on many other files too.

The Bloc Québécois, the NDP and the Liberal Party understand the importance of culture. They understand the importance of asking various streaming platforms, like Netflix and Disney, which are very popular, to contribute to Canadian culture.



There is a party that decided to abandon the cultural industry, as well as our actors, our creators, our producers and our directors. It decided to abandon all those who produce the very best in the world. That party is the Conservative Party.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is nice to see the Minister of Canadian Heritage, who often says that the Bloc is picking fights, all of sudden say that the Bloc is his biggest ally. As was the case for several bills, bills C-5, C-75 and C-11, the Bloc is a great ally to the Liberals.

Can the minister give us an answer? Will the government send Bill C-11 to committee so it can study the request of the Government of Quebec?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is true that the Bloc likes to pick fights a lot of the time, but sometimes it wants to collaborate, and that is the case for Bill C-11.

I wonder how a member from Quebec and the other colleagues from Quebec can come here to debate and say that we do not need this bill when everyone in Quebec is calling for it. We need C-11 for every industry, including the music, television and film sectors, so we can continue being the best in the world in what we do, despite the Conservatives.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, how can a member from Quebec, a minister from Quebec, refuse to listen to the demands of the Government of Quebec?

I understand that the purpose of Bill C-11 is to centralize power in Ottawa, with help from the Bloc Québécois, which I might have to start calling the “centralist bloc”.

Will the Liberal government and its Bloc Québécois buddies allow the parliamentary committee to study the Senate amendments and Quebec's legitimate request?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, again, we have a good working relationship with Quebec and have had a number of collaborations in the cultural industry.

The Conservatives just want to filibuster. They have gone on at great length about everything under the sun—very eloquently, I will give them that—but at the end of the day, we need this bill.

We are competing with global giants. We need to keep putting our very best out there. We need Bill C-11. We will keep working with Quebec regardless of what the Conservatives do.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would urge the minister to be cautious. Listening to Quebec does not mean filibustering. It means being respectful of the will of the Government of Quebec and the Quebec National Assembly.

While the Liberal government may be very happy with its new friends from the Bloc Québécois, which has become the centralist Bloc, and may be refusing to abide by the unanimous position of the Quebec National Assembly and Quebec's request, we, the Conservatives, want to have those debates.

### Oral Questions

Will the government accept our proposal to send Bill C-11 to committee so that the committee can examine the Senate's definitive request and, more importantly, listen to the Government of Quebec?

• (1455)

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again, we have a very good working relationship with Quebec. We maintain an ongoing dialogue. In fact, I am meeting with my counterpart, Quebec's minister of culture, on the weekend, and I am very pleased to do so. The Conservatives are saying that culture is important? Come on.

As far as dog-and-pony shows go, this is the biggest one of the year. It is even bigger than the one put on by the Bloc Québécois. The Conservatives have been filibustering since the beginning of the year. They do not give a damn about supporting culture.

Despite all of that, we are going to move forward. We are going to help our creators, our producers and the cultural community.

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

**The Speaker:** Order. I know that emotions can sometimes run high in the House and that it is easy to get carried away and say things that we should not. I would like members to pay attention to what they are saying and make sure that they are using parliamentary language.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

\* \* \*

### IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, authorities are concerned about an 846% increase in irregular border crossings. Border services are worried, saying, “it is extremely dangerous, particularly in inclement weather, which our Swanton Sector has in incredible abundance”. It is not the federal government saying so, it is the Americans. The Americans are worried because it is dangerous to cross the border through the woods in the winter. However, in Ottawa, when we raise the same concerns about Roxham Road, the government calls us intolerant.

Should it not be concerned about people crossing through the woods in the winter?

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely unacceptable to say that asylum seekers are taking advantage of the system. The reality is that these people are fleeing violence and looking for a safe haven.

Our government will always work for vulnerable people and we are proud of the work we have accomplished. We hope that the Bloc Québécois is on board.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, not only is that our view as well but we hold the same positions as migrants who are calling for the suspension of the safe third country agreement. That is the crux of the impasse at Roxham Road.

*Oral Questions*

Migrants are being exploited. Children are crossing alone in winter. People are being detained indefinitely. The United States is on one side of the border. They know that it is dangerous, but will not lift a finger because it suits them. The federal government is on the other side, incapable of moving beyond rhetoric and of understanding that this is not how to welcome people with dignity.

What is being done? When will the minister realize that there is only one solution? Nothing will change until the safe third country agreement is suspended.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, the Bloc Québécois has lost all credibility, because it believes that asylum seekers cross that border for an all-inclusive vacation package and that the situation asylum seekers must face is a joke.

This is no joke to us. It is serious. We are working on it. We are speaking with our American counterparts, and we will modernize this agreement.

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[English]

**CANADA REVENUE AGENCY**

**Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the government now believes that it no longer needs the Auditor General's advice.

The Auditor General identified \$27 billion of COVID support payments that should be investigated, except that the CRA says that it is not worth the effort to review those payments. The Parliamentary Budget Officer is now ringing the alarm bells saying that he, too, is concerned that the CRA will not review these payments.

Will the government finally take the advice of the Auditor General, review these COVID payments and make sure that Canadians recover the improper payments paid by this government?

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a very good working relationship with the national revenue critic for the Conservatives, but he knows very well, with regard to the CRA, and this was verified at the public accounts committee some days ago, that this verification work is ongoing. I have said that many times in the House. I am glad to repeat it again.

The government instructed the CRA to carry out that work. Every member in the House voted in that direction, so let us let that work continue. Instead, the Conservatives are continuing to play political games to undermine a very important public institution in this country. It is not acceptable.

\* \* \*

• (1500)

**PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years, government services are broken. Liberals have significantly grown the size of the public service while still giving billions of dollars to outside consultants, yet nothing seems to work.

The Prime Minister has admitted that he personally recruited Dominic Barton and provided him with preferential access, access that his company, McKinsey, used to do over \$100 million in business with the government.

How can the Liberals explain the fact that the public service is larger, and the services that Canadians receive are declining, yet Liberals are still able to find so much money for their well-connected friends?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the use of contracts by the government, which is done independently, at arms length, by the public service, is something that is incredibly important in the provision of services.

I would say to the member opposite that right now there are almost two million more Canadians who have jobs who did not when the Conservatives were there. There are 2.7 million Canadians who are not in poverty now, who were when the Conservatives were in power. The idea that progress is not being made is not substantiated by fact.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, hiring more people at McKinsey is not a jobs plan.

The House leader should listen to his Prime Minister because the Prime Minister said of Dominic Barton, "we recruited him". Now, Dominic Barton admitted in testimony that Andrew Pickersgill, the head of McKinsey's Canadian operations, supplied analysts to the Prime Minister's growth council. McKinsey then used that access to set up sales meetings. The Prime Minister recruited McKinsey's leaders and gave them privileged access to government that allowed them to get over \$100 million in contracts.

Will the House leader stop this charade and admit what the Prime Minister has already admitted, which is that it was these Liberal politicians who brought in McKinsey?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on numerous occasions the member opposite has inferred that political interference would be something that they would engage in to tell the public service who they would engage in contracts.

Let me say that, on this side of the House, we will tolerate no such action. The independence of the public service in engaging contracts is absolutely important. The number of conspiracy theories the member has peddled have been disproven in front of committee. There are forums on Reddit where he can continue to pursue these, but I would suggest that the House of Commons is not the appropriate forum.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, although inflation has declined steadily over the past seven months, many Canadians are still struggling with the cost of living.

Can the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance inform the House about what the government is doing to help Canadians deal with this global phenomenon?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague from Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle for his question and hard work.

Throughout the world, people are going through tough economic times and Canadians are no exception. That is why we reduced child care costs, doubled the GST credit, eliminated interest on student loans, gave a one-time top-up of \$500 for rent and helped 500,000 young Canadians with dental care.

We are taking action and keeping the promises we made to Canadians.

\* \* \*

[English]

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal trade minister had former Liberal minister Michael Chan chair her election campaigns. It turns out Mr. Chan is on a CSIS watch list for alleged connections to a spy network of the Chinese Communist regime, and the Prime Minister's senior staff, including Katie Telford, were told to warn the trade minister to be cautious in her dealings with Mr. Chan. The trade minister refused to answer the question yesterday, so I will ask again.

Why did the minister ignore the warnings from the PMO and Canada's intelligence service about having Mr. Chan chair her campaign, even though he had ties to spies for Communist China?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, embedded in the question is a false notion that I think all members, I would hope, would want to reject. That is that any member of Parliament is not completely and totally committed to Canadian democracy. The idea that there is anybody in the House who would tolerate foreign interference in any form is simply inaccurate and not appropriate to put forward as a supposition.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, obviously some members are more concerned than others. Let us be clear. It is our national intelligence service that has alleged that former Liberal minister Michael Chan has direct connections to a spy network from Communist China. That is why he is on its watch list. He also chaired campaigns for the Liberal trade minister. The Prime Minister was warned about Liberal minister Michael Chan and was told to warn the trade minister.

Who is the Liberal trade minister taking her advice from if she is ignoring the PMO and CSIS?

● (1505)

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think that we need to be very careful when we talk to one another about casting aspersions about our loyalty to this country and our loyalty to democracy.

It is a presumption in every question we ask that every member is—

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

**The Speaker:** I want to thank all those who went quiet all of a sudden, as well as the person who did not see me rise and kept going.

The hon. government House leader may begin from the top, please.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, the supposition is that the member they are questioning, the minister they are questioning, is not loyal to her country, is not loyal to Canada or to our democracy, and is somehow subservient to a foreign force.

Let me be very clear. I would not say this to any member on the other side. We may disagree on policy, but to suggest that anybody here is not loyal to our democracy, to try to cast aspersions on a member of this place, to say that they do not have this country at their core interests, is unacceptable.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. The Liberal Minister of International Trade was found guilty of contravening the Conflict of Interest Act for awarding a contract worth several thousand dollars to her best friend. We learned this week that the same minister hired a former Liberal cabinet minister, Michael Chan, to work on her election campaign.

The problem is that CSIS informed the Liberals that Mr. Chan is on a watch list because of his connections. With whom? With the Chinese Communist regime.

Why has the minister not yet resigned from her position for blindly following the bad examples set by her Prime Minister?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is completely unacceptable. There is no one in the House who is not loyal to our country.

It is clear that not only the minister, but every member of the House is entirely loyal to Canada and to our democracy. It is unacceptable to say otherwise.

*Points of Order*

[English]

**NORTHERN AFFAIRS**

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, isolated Arctic and northern communities face complex food security challenges, including access to local food options.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, I know that northern and indigenous partners are implementing innovative solutions to address the mounting challenges they face, including food sovereignty in their communities.

Could the minister update the House on the work our government is doing in partnership to address food security in the north and the Arctic?

**Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Fredericton for her important question. I know how hard she works, and I know she is absolutely passionate about this issue.

All Canadians, no matter where they live, deserve access to healthy and affordable food all year round. Just this month, increased subsidy rates are reducing the cost of food in communities across the north and the Arctic. Our government is funding the harvester support grant. It supported over 5,500 harvesters, 150 hunts and 120 food-sharing initiatives in its first year. Together, we are delivering locally led solutions for the north, by the north.

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, Nunavut communities want to be part of the solution for climate emergency. They want to stop relying on unreliable and outdated diesel plants.

The Kivalliq hydro-fibre link is an Inuit-led project that would transition several Nunavut communities off diesel to renewable energy. The government needs to keep its promises and continue to invest so that this project could become a reality.

Will the Prime Minister commit to the Kivalliq hydro-fibre link in the 2023 budget?

**Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government is absolutely committed to transitioning northern and Arctic communities to clean, reliable and renewable energy. We have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in the remote and indigenous clean energy hub. We have developed the indigenous climate leadership initiative.

Just last week I had a fantastic meeting with the Kivalliq hydro group. We have invested significant sums in the Kivalliq project, as well as in the Atlin project in Yukon and Taltson in Northwest Territories. There is a lot of work to do, but we are going in the right direction.

● (1510)

**LABOUR**

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there has been radio silence from the Prime Minister since Alberta energy workers called out the government to get serious about a clean energy future.

Joe Biden's clean energy tech investments are transforming the American economy. Alberta workers have been clear. There is a huge opportunity to create a sustainable future rooted in clean tech and good-paying union jobs. However, that means the government actually comes to the table with investments.

Could the Minister of Natural Resources tell us if the government actually has a plan? Is it ready to commit, in this coming budget, the funds necessary for a clean energy economy?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with many of the things the member said. It is increasingly and incredibly important for this country to have a relevant economic strategy for a world that is moving toward lower carbon. That is something that we have been working on for the past number of years.

We certainly saw it reflected in the fall economic statement with respect to the tax credit for hydrogen and for clean technology deployment. We are going to continue to ensure that we are working forward to build a strong and prosperous economy for Canada in the context of fighting climate change concurrently.

Again, it would be lovely if, in the House, the Conservative Party would actually acknowledge the reality of climate change and have a relevant economic plan.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Marie-Célie Agnant, the 10th parliamentary poet laureate.

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

\* \* \*

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, while the member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge was asking his question, I heard the member for Timmins—James Bay call him a monkey.

Given that he has been in the House for nearly 17 years, I think the comments I heard are unbecoming of a parliamentarian who should set an example and apologize.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I take the rules very seriously. I am not actually sure what my hon. colleague is even talking about, but I have been trying to be fair in giving political advice to anyone across any aisle, as I often do. If anyone takes offence to it, I am very sorry, but I am not really sure what he is talking about.

I am careful in the advice that I give out, and it is all for free.

*[Translation]*

**The Speaker:** We will look into what was recorded and what was said.

If necessary, we will come back to the House with a response.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

*[English]*

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

#### OPPOSITION MOTION—RISING INFLATION AND COST OF LIVING

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is always great to rise to address the House on a very important topic, which is the opposition motion today.

Since being elected in 2015, the government that I am part of has put middle-class Canadians first and has been there to assist Canadians working very hard to join the middle class.

*[Translation]*

Our government is well aware that many Canadian families are struggling to make ends meet. Families across the country are facing a rising cost of living and high inflation.

- (1515)

*[English]*

We know Canadian families have endured a lot these last couple of years, including COVID and the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by Russia, which has caused economic consequences such as inflation. Our government has been there to assist Canadians as we go through these events. We have also been there to put down a long-term plan for economic growth and for job creation. That is what we are seeing. We see Canada at a level of 126% with regard to job numbers. That means our economy is growing and Canadians are working and finding employment, but we do face some challenges.

*[Translation]*

Canadians are feeling the pinch when they buy groceries, fill up with gas, and pay their rent or mortgage.

However, I would like to remind my hon. colleagues that inflation is high around the world and that no one is being spared, sadly. Canada has never been immune to it.

As we know, we have been through a once-in-a-generation pandemic, and we are still suffering the consequences.

China's zero-COVID policy resulted in plant closures and supply chain disruptions, and the impact is still being felt around the world. We are still grappling with the economic impact of Vladimir Putin's illegal and brutal invasion of Ukraine.

These factors continue to hinder the flow of goods, creating shortages and exacerbating price increases.

*[English]*

Prices have gone up in Canada, and inflation has taken hold. Thankfully, we have seen some strong indicators that inflation is slowing down and it is coming under control.

We put in place a number of policies in the last year to help Canadians. We doubled the GST tax credit, which helped over 11 million Canadians in this beautiful country. We implemented a \$500 supplement for Canadian renters, which over 500,000 Canadians have utilized. We instituted a dental care plan, and in the initial step, over 200,000 children went to see the dentist in 2022, and this year they have received benefits from that. Those are real, tangible measures where we help on affordability.

At the same time, we laid the foundation through the fall economic statement, through our budget 2022 and the forthcoming budget 2023, where we continue to grow the economy. We demonstrate the values of why Canadians have sent us here to the House to build an economy based on inclusive economic growth, where every Canadian succeeds. It allows them to fulfill their potentials and their passions in life. Those fundamental policies that we put in place reflect our values of building a strong and inclusive economy and an economy that works for all Canadians.

Our national day care and early childhood learning plan that we put in place has reduced fees in the province of Ontario by over 50%. For example, at the day care that my beautiful daughter, whom I love so much, attends, the fees have gone from \$1,500 a month to \$700 a month. That is a savings of almost \$800 for families. We are very blessed. This is for families not only in that day care but also day cares across Canada. It is very important to identify for Canadians how we are helping.

We put policies in the fall economic statement. We are reacting, much like the Europeans are reacting, to the IRA and the CHIPS Act from the United States. We will ensure that we entice investment to this country.

*Business of Supply*

Last night, I was joined by the Minister of Innovation in a meeting with representatives from Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters. They talked about the opportunities that Canada has for job creation, for growth, and to continue generating economic growth and prosperity for all Canadians. It is not just for the top 5% or 10%, but it is for all Canadians. That is what is important. That is what is driving us.

On affordability, we put in place two massive cuts to reduce taxes and put more money in the pockets of Canadians through our tenure. We cut taxes for the middle class. We raised the basic personal expenditure amount to \$15,000. Just that one measure means \$350 to \$400 a year extra in the pockets of seniors, students and individual working-class Canadians, those who go to work, save every day, work hard, do the right thing and who want to create a better future for their families. We have their backs.

During COVID, we put in place measures that would prevent the scarring of our economy, which is something I do not believe the official opposition understands, so our economy could bounce back very quickly from the pandemic when the economy opened up, and it did, faster than almost every other developed economy. We were there. We supported our businesses and workers, which was so important.

On trade, the opposition motion talks about items that are very important to Canadian citizens, but it ignores the circumstances that we have come through, such as COVID, the war in Ukraine and supply-chain issues, which are being ironed out. We need to put in place that long-term economic plan, which we are continuing to do. It is so great to be part of a government that understands that not only is it important to take care of the affordability factor, which we are doing with these measures, but it is also very important to continue putting in place measures that will support economic growth.

We just had the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in northern Ontario to announce with the provincial government a very large energy storage project, \$200 million or \$300 million. We are partnering with other levels of government. We know that the transition is taking place within the energy sector. We know the transition is taking place to cleaner, lower GHG energy sources. We are there, again, dealing with the long-term issues that face us, but also assisting Canadians with a number of measures that we have implemented.

On jobs, which is very important to note, we are now at a point where our employment participation rate in Canada is at its highest on record for women. Why? We put in place a Canada child benefit. We no longer send cheques to millionaires and people who make a lot of money and really do not need it. God bless them. They work hard, they pay their taxes and they create jobs but they do not need that monthly cheque of a hundred bucks. We sent it to families who needed it the most. Those are based on the values of this government to ensure that middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join the middle class have that opportunity.

God bless the entrepreneurs. I have so many of them in the city of Vaughan, and it makes my heart warm because I know they are working hard and they are creating tens of thousands of jobs. God bless them. We will always be there to support them. Whether it is through putting in place policies like the strategic innovation fund,

the Canada growth fund and the Canada Infrastructure Bank and ensuring taxes are competitive versus our peers, we will always be there for the entrepreneurs. Our values guide us to ensure that those hard-working Canadians, those middle-class Canadians working hard and those working hard to join the middle class have that opportunity.

For students, we eliminated the interest on student debt and apprenticeship loans. It is very appreciated by all the private sector unions. It is very appreciated by the Carpenters Union and its trade headquarters in my riding. It is very appreciated by LiUNA Locals 183 and 506. Local 183's training centre and its headquarters are in my riding. It is very appreciated by the hard-working electricians, millwrights and tinsmiths. It is not like the Conservatives who put in place anti-union legislation that we had to repeal. That is their record, so they can stand and take responsibility for it.

With respect to the Canada workers benefit, we put in place measures to help a lot of individuals, which was good to see.

We have much more work to do. We have a budget coming out. Competitiveness and productivity is something I am very proud of as well as economic growth. That is what our government is delivering upon day in and day out.

• (1520)

**Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the blathering on of those incredible and ridiculous statistics is interesting. When we look at the real household income per capita and real GDP per capita, the only two countries in the G7 that have had actual negative growth, if there is such a thing, are Canada and the U.K.. That is no surprise given the current Liberal government.

The member talked about his daughter paying \$700 a month for day care. Does she have three and a half children? At \$10 a day, 20 days a month, if she has one child, it should be only \$200, not \$700. For my daughter, who cannot even access day care because there are no spots to be had, how does the member justify the amount of \$700 at \$10 a day?

• (1525)

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, I will be more than happy to explain the math. In the province of Ontario, the federal government came to an agreement with the Province of Ontario to implement a national day care accord. The first reduction was a 50% reduction by the end of 2022, which was done. Now we will work toward a \$10-a-day reduction.

Is the member opposite forgetting that the Conservative Party just voted for Bill C-35 to support the national day care plan or are you going back on that already?

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am not going back on that. I know the member is not saying that, but members should ensure they direct their questions and comments through the Chair.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is really like Groundhog Day with the Conservatives. For six months, all the opposition days have been the same. They are always about inflation and the carbon tax. It is unbelievable. Last week, I had the opportunity to give a speech on the carbon tax. When reading the motion, I felt like it was the same thing. They are fixated on this topic. They keep repeating themselves and creating some cognitive dissonance for those tuning in.

I would like to ask my colleague a question.

It is difficult to talk about inflation without talking about housing. A few months ago, the Government of British Columbia launched a very interesting program. It gave \$500 million to community organizations so they could buy private homes, taking them out of the market and ensuring that they remain affordable. This seems like a very worthwhile initiative. It is supported by many groups that are interested in the issue of housing in Quebec and across Canada.

Would my colleague support the federal government implementing such a measure?

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very important question about housing across Canada. We have to do many things to reduce the cost of housing.

[*English*]

We need to do everything we can on the housing front, working with all partners and collaborating with the provinces, municipalities and regions. That is how our country is made, and that is what we must do. We unveiled the rapid housing initiative and the national housing strategy.

[*Translation*]

The Bloc Québécois member has many ideas.

[*English*]

I encourage the member to put forward those ideas to the government, and we will most certainly look at them, as we would any good idea that comes forward.

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, the Liberals have voted against an excess profits tax on oil and gas that would make them pay what they owe. Despite their promises to end fossil fuel subsidies, they have increased them even though big oil is showing record profits.

When will the government extend the Canada revenue dividend to big oil so those profits could be used to help families?

### *Business of Supply*

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, since 2015, we have put in place a number of measures, beginning with asking the wealthiest in Canada to pay a little extra on their personal income taxes. We even increased corporate tax rates on a number of different sectors with the Canada recovery dividend tax that we put in place. We put in place a special tax on share repurchases by corporations, which will be coming into effect.

We always look at measures that will improve the competitiveness of our economy, but also ensure that the government is collecting the revenues to produce and to provide the services Canadians depend on day in and day out.

**Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question. In the face of affordability, our government has increased the indexing for the CCB, the OAS and the GIS. How important is that for the member's community?

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, the indexing of all benefits will allow Canadians to alleviate inflation. We allowed increases for old age security, GIS, the Canada child benefit and a number of programs that we put in place to benefit Canadians and help with affordability. Our government is about helping Canadians and having the backs of Canadians, whether it is today or tomorrow.

• (1530)

**Mr. Frank Caputo:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I just wanted to wish my wife and all spouses and partners out there a happy Valentine's Day.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before everybody tries to do the same thing, let us all wish our spouses and our loved ones a happy Valentine's Day.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House are romantics, so I too wish everyone a happy Valentine's Day.

I am pleased to share my time with my colleague from Prince Albert.

I am very happy to speak today about this important motion introduced by my colleague from Calgary Forest Lawn. I congratulate him on it. I think he has done an outstanding job.

Unfortunately, the Bloc member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert is criticizing us for speaking often and extensively about the cost of living. In my opinion, it is our duty as members of Parliament to discuss these things. These concerns and issues worry and trouble the lives of our constituents, Canadians and especially Quebecers.

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I will read part of the motion, because it contains extremely important elements that can never be repeated too often to get the government to see reason. It reads as follows:

(i) after eight years of this Liberal Prime Minister, inflation is at a 40-year high, (ii) after eight years of this Liberal Prime Minister, the cost of groceries is up 11%, (iii) after eight years of this Liberal Prime Minister, half of Canadians are cutting back on groceries, (iv) after eight years of this Liberal Prime Minister, 20% of Canadians are skipping meals, (v) after eight years of this Liberal Prime Minister, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment across Canada's 10 biggest cities is \$2,213 per month, compared to \$1,171 per month in 2015...

I would like to remind the House that 2015 is the year the Liberals came to power with the current Prime Minister.

...(vi) after eight years of this Liberal Prime Minister, 45% of variable rate mortgage holders say they will have to sell or vacate their homes in less than nine months due to current interest rate levels, (vii) after eight years of this Liberal Prime Minister, average monthly mortgage costs have more than doubled and now cost Canadians over \$3,000 per month...

I will keep it short because there may be more information to be shared from our colleague's very important motion. What we are ultimately asking the government to do is stop spending recklessly so that our economy can get back on track.

I am going to address some very specific elements of the cost of living, ones that affect different sectors, whether it is housing, groceries, or other aspects of people's daily lives.

On the overall economic front, I would like to remind the House that the Prime Minister of this Liberal government is the one who has single-handedly run up more deficits than all previous prime ministers of Canada. That is a lot of money. Somebody, somewhere, has to pay for that. We must also remember that the federal debt has doubled since the Liberal government took office.

I would also like to remind the House that this Liberal government has never managed to table a balanced budget. It repeatedly told us that there would be just small deficits for a time, not for all time. In the end, that has not been the case.

Experts have issued a warning to the government. It will have to rein in its spending if it wants to avoid adding further inflationary pressures. I am not the one saying this, but rather the experts. Still, we know that this Prime Minister almost never listens to anyone. In a report published in January, the Business Council of Canada and the firm Bennett Jones said that the forecasts in the last budget were overly optimistic. Not only do the Liberals not know how to count, but they are throwing money around like it grows on trees.

Let us talk about the state of mind of Quebecers. I am a Quebecer, so I would like to talk about what is going on in Quebec. I should mention that their state of mind is at its worst. According to a Leger survey, Quebecers are going into 2023 with a high level of stress, and their number one concern is the impact of rising consumer prices.

• (1535)

The Bloc Québécois has the nerve to stand up in the House and tell us that we are repeating ourselves and that we need to stop talking about this, when this is the number one concern of Quebecers right now.

Furthermore, over 20% of respondents are worried about not having enough money and said that increased interest rates are problematic.

I want to quote a worker at the Association coopérative d'économie familiale de la Rive-Sud de Québec, a well-known organization in Quebec that helps Quebecers ensure that they have a budget that they can stick to. The worker said this, and I quote: "People are very stressed about this. Before, they used to ask us how they would get by. Now they are telling us that they are not getting by anymore".

Let us talk now about businesses. The results of a recent study by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business were released this week. According to that study, 73% of Quebec's small businesses, about three-quarters, said that they will have to raise their prices to deal with inflation.

If businesses raise their prices, Canadian and Quebec consumers who need to purchase goods and services are the ones who will be affected in their everyday lives. Quebec businesses are now telling us that things are so bad that they will be forced to raise prices for consumers once again. Obviously, this will have a major impact on Quebecers' wallets.

The study also found that just over half of companies, nearly 60%, plan to work longer hours to reduce labour costs. This really bothers many businesses.

There is a lot of information in this survey, and one statistic that was really troubling to me was this: 43% of SMEs plan to temporarily reduce their profit margins in order to remain competitive, and 32% of SMEs are going to reduce their investments and growth forecasts. What does this mean in concrete terms?

The vitality of a society is also measured by the vitality of its businesses. If businesses do not have confidence in the future, but rather fear it, they stop investing. It is not hard to see what this means. When a business stops investing, it is because it does not have confidence in the future. A lack of confidence disrupts society's economic balance.

Do I have to remind the House that Canada is in the middle of a major housing crisis? Young adults are sleeping in their parents' basements because they cannot afford a house. What are the consequences of that? It puts pressure on the rental market and drives rents up.



House prices have doubled in the past eight years. If I remember correctly, prices have gone up 21% in and around Quebec City. If we cannot house our people, we have a real problem. The cost of housing has gone up way too much, and now people, young families, cannot afford a house. Not only are they living in their parents' basement, but some students resort to shelters because they have nowhere else to go and not enough money for decent housing.

In closing, I want to touch on the environment. The government loves to crow about its environmental record. Not to rain on its parade, but I would like to see it set a more ambitious agenda in that department.

After eight years of Liberal rule, Canada is ranked 58th out of 63 countries in the fight against climate change, according to the UN. The government must carry out a full review of all the bad decisions it has made and its entire vision, because it is the wrong one and is getting us nowhere.

• (1540)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I always find it amazing when one does a contrast between the government and the Conservative Party. The member says, as the Conservatives have, that we are spending too much money, and yet when we take a look at the money we are spending, in good part, we think of the billions on child care. Conservatives say they do not want that child care, and yet when we brought in the legislation to support it, they actually voted in favour of the legislation. We just made a commitment of \$198 billion toward health care, and now the Conservatives are saying they would not cut that money back if they were to get elected.

The Conservatives seem to be of the impression that they can just criticize and provide no actual plan. Does the hon. member not feel, whether it is on the environment, health care or child care, that it is an obligation of the official opposition to provide its plan on some of these important social issues?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** Mr. Speaker, just a short while ago, during oral question period, some of my colleagues rightfully and frankly pointed out that this government has been making very bad decisions for the eight years that it has been in office. We are not the only ones to say so. Experts have also been saying that the Liberal government is spending recklessly and that it must turn off the taps.

We are proposing a much more rigorous vision for public finances. This will allow the country to be in a more peaceful and balanced situation. What we are saying is that every dollar spent must be accounted for by the public service and government.

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will be pleased to respond to my colleague who mentioned me in her speech. I very much like and respect that colleague. Unfortunately, in her speech, she echoed the mantra of my Conservative friends, who never have answers to the fundamental questions.

Last week, we were talking about the carbon tax. The Conservatives want to scrap it. That is all well and good, but one of the ma-

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ajor challenges of our time is the climate crisis. A carbon tax of \$15 or even \$50 is not going to cut it. The UN says that it should now be more than \$200 a tonne for us to even begin to think about dealing with this challenge.

My colleague also talked about the housing crisis. It is easy to say that there is a housing crisis and that young people cannot afford housing. I know it because I am in the midst of it every day myself. A few months ago, Scotiabank published a study saying that Canada needs 3.5 million housing units over the next 10 years. It has been reported that in Quebec alone, the market will build 500,000 units on its own. The governments need to intervene one way or another to build 600,000. We have to pay if we want to house the least fortunate in society.

I am not hearing any response from the Conservatives. They have nothing to say about housing or the climate crisis, and that is a big problem.

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** Mr. Speaker, that was more of a comment than a question. I am rather surprised to hear the Bloc Québécois criticizing us today for wanting to talk about the cost of living and about how badly Canadians and Quebecers are suffering because of what is currently happening in Canada, with high costs and families overburdened by tax hikes and increased housing costs.

What we are proposing is to make sure that we are spending in a smart and careful way. For every dollar spent, there must be a dollar found in savings.

[*English*]

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, allowing big polluters off the hook needs to stop. Does the member agree that as a way to do this there needs to be taxation on big oil, which keeps having record profits? Does the member agree that in order to make sure we are coming up with better solutions, more revenue needs to be put into the Canada revenue?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** Mr. Speaker, taxes are high right now. I think we are an overtaxed society. After eight years under the Liberal government, Canada is ranked 58th out of 63 countries when it comes to climate change. That is a total failure.

• (1545)

[*English*]

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is nice to see you acknowledge the member for Prince Albert to get up to speak in front of members today about the state of the Canadian economy and just how broken things are here in Canada.

*Business of Supply*

Before I get started, I have to do one special thing. It is my anniversary today. My wife and I have been married for 36 years. I would not be here without her. I would not be here fighting for the constituents of Prince Albert without her sacrifices. She is making a sacrifice today by letting me be here to talk about something that is very important to the constituents in my riding, and I thank her dearly for that, as I am sure the people of Canada do.

In 2015, the government inherited an amazing situation for Canada. If we think back to what it looked like in 2015, it was the good old days. People could buy a house and afford it. They could get a mortgage and actually pay it off. People could go to a restaurant and buy a meal. They could go to the grocery store and fill their shopping cart. They could do a variety of things with their family, because their family was a strong mechanism. People could go on holidays. Both parents had a job. Let us look at what we have today and what we had back then.

We had a balanced budget. We went through a global recession in 2008 to 2011. We spent money on infrastructure. We took on deficits, but we paid them back. We got to a balanced budget in 2015, so we have proven that we can go through all sorts of different crises, global crises, like the ones the Conservatives faced, and actually pay it back and progress.

We had a united country from coast to coast. East and west were celebrating each other's victories. I used to take pride, and I still take pride, in a vehicle that is made in Ontario being sold in Saskatchewan, or somebody in Newfoundland buying bread made from wheat out of Saskatchewan. We worked together as a country. We functioned together. We were not divided. There was no city-rural division like the one we see today. Canadians were united.

Back in 2015, Canadians did not look at the government and worry about how the coming budget was going to impact them, as they do with this budget that is coming forward, because they know that the Liberal budget is going to impact them one way or another. That means the government has become too involved in the day-to-day activities of the Canadian lifestyle.

We had infrastructure being built. The port of Vancouver was functioning. It was one of the higher-ranked ports in the world, which it is not today. We had a health care system that was being rebuilt from years of cutting by the federal Liberals previous to the Harper Conservative government. We had a prime minister who had global respect. When he went around the globe, people respected him. They respected the country of Canada. We punched above our weight. We were principled in how we conducted ourselves with the global countries, in the global environment and on the global stage.

What do we have today? We cannot help but say that it is broken.

In 2015, if people wanted to get a passport and needed it today, they could pay an extra fee and actually get their passport today. What do we have today? If people want a passport and they are not travelling within six weeks, they are not even going to get looked at. If they need a fast passport, they can forget about that. Getting a passport is broken. People cannot get a passport.

If they have a problem with the CRA and want to talk about an issue because they want to make sure they are doing things right,

they call in and sit on hold for three hours. They take a number, relay their question and are told that someone will get back to them in three weeks. That is customer service brought to us by the current Liberal government.

When we look at the things the government used to provide on an ordinary basis, it is now extraordinary. It is so disgusting and sad to see, because we know that in 2015, when these civil servants were working under a Harper government, they did their job. They knew what they were doing. They were happy in their job and functioned very well. They were not covering up expenses on hotel bills or spending time trying to hide ministers' expenses.

We had a government of honour. We had a minister resign because of a \$16 orange juice. We had another minister who resigned because of an ethics breach and who came back into cabinet. They knew what the right thing to do at the time was and they did the right thing. The biggest scandal we had in the Harper government was the chief of staff paying back taxpayers for another member's unwillingness to pay. That was the biggest scandal.

When we look at the government today, what do we see? Things are broken, broken, broken. I was sitting in a board meeting with my constituents about three months ago and that is how one person put it to me, that things are broken. It does not matter what department one deals with, it is broken.

• (1550)

If we talk to Health Canada, it is broken. If we talk to passports, it is broken. If we talk to CRA, it is broken. If we look at our military and defence, it is broken.

If we look at our transportation system and airports, they are broken. The Port of Vancouver is now ranked second-last in the world for ports. It is broken. This is eight years of the Liberals' accomplishments, and they are broken.

Can one afford a house now? One sure needs to have the income to do it. We heard our Bloc friends talk about the shortage of houses. Well, in eight years, why is there, all of a sudden, a shortage of houses? What has been in the Liberal policy book to encourage housing to be built or continue to be built? It, in fact, did the opposite. It encouraged people not to build houses.

We can look at our business sector and competitiveness. We hear Canadian manufacturers and exporters talk over and over again about how we are losing businesses to the States and other jurisdictions because we are not competitive.

What is the reason for that? It is bad Liberal policy.

When we look at the policies under the Liberal government, they just have been added on, and they are the thousand cuts that have impacted our economy and our businesses.

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What does that mean? When we do not have a strong business sector, like we had in 2015, what happens? The Liberal solution is to spend more. The government will fill the void. Instead of an employer in the private sector, or a small and medium enterprise growing its enterprise, what happens? They get choked and smothered out by taxes, regulations and overburdening federal government policies. They go out of business. They cannot get employees.

What do the Liberals do? They shrug and say, “Well, we can just write another cheque. We will just borrow some more money.”

We have seen that. We have got \$15 billion in extra payments that went out that CRA says is not worth collecting. It is not worth collecting \$15 billion. How can that be? How can it be that broken that it does not know where that money went, who it belongs to, who should have had it and who should not have gotten it?

How can it not go back and say, sorry, someone did not deserve this payment, so they need to pay it back or we are going to claw it back? How can they say that it is not worth it? That is a political answer. That is not an answer that has the value of Canadian taxpayers in mind.

We look at this federal government and how it goes about conducting businesses and the military. For example, the F-35s should have been bought in 2015-16. They probably should have been bought before that. I will admit that. As a member of the Conservatives, I thought we should have bought them sooner.

What did the government do? It bought some used piece of junk out of Australia to fill the gap, a gap that is now a serious concern because of what is happening in the globe.

Has it prepared this country for the future? Let us think about that. Have we hit any of our environmental targets? No. Are we prepared to have an efficient, functioning manufacturing base? No. Have we encouraged our SMEs to take on the free trade agreements that Conservative governments, and some Liberal governments, put in place? No.

We are seeing no activity in this economy that will grow. All we see is increasing government spending, deficit after deficit and out-of-control inflation.

Let us go back to the grocery store. When we go to the grocery store and look at people's carts, are they full? No. They are half empty. Why is that? It is because of inflation, which was created by this government.

When we go to go buy a house or take out a mortgage, can we afford it? That is the question that my daughter is facing right now. Kids in their 30s are looking at this and asking if they will ever be able to afford a house now. Well, what has happened in this government?

Houses have gone out of control because of the inflation it created, and they cannot say that it is a global thing when houses go up in price. House are made in Canada and sold in Canada. It is not a global recession item. When people cannot afford a house in Canada, it is because it has spent too much money, or printed too much money, and created inflation.

Also, the interest rates have gone up and, all of a sudden, their take-home pay is less, as they are paying higher mortgages. I should not say take-home pay, but their mortgage is consuming more and more of their actual income.

What have we got? We have a government that is tired and broken. When we ask it about the future, it is a continuation of being tired and broken. There is no imagination.

There is a better way. There is a way, and we proved it in 2015, where we had a strong economy, a balanced budget, and we could deal with climate change. They can deal with it and do it all at once. If they cannot do it all at once, then I would encourage the Liberal government to get out of the way, and we will do it for them.

● (1555)

**Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to first congratulate my hon. colleague from Prince Albert on his anniversary today.

I will pick up on a few things he talked about in his speech when he spoke of how things were under the Harper government, particularly on the environmental front. When we came into office, emissions were set to rise 15% by 2030. Now we are on a track to reduce emissions by 40% or more. In the last inventory, emissions went down nine per cent.

Under the Harper government, on the international stage, Canada was lambasted as the fossil of the year and received the lifetime unachievement award for how we impeded not only reducing emissions nationally but also progress globally. In Canada, under the Harper government, there was a muzzling of the scientists who were bringing forward information that was not politically palatable to the government, so the few scientists who were kept were not able to share that information.

I was hoping the member opposite could comment on that.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Mr. Speaker, it is nice to see another member of the Liberal Party stand up to ask a question because this Parliament is broken, and only two members of the Liberal Party usually ask questions. The rest sit there. I give him credit for doing that, and I thank him for his comment on my marriage. It is very important to me.

The member talked about things that needed to be worked on in the Harper years, such as the environmental program. A good environmental program needs to balance the economy and the environment. We need to have results in both.

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The government has maybe achieved a bit of results on the environment, but I would not even give it that, because if we look at its targets, it has not hit any of them. What has it done? It has doubled down on the carbon tax. What has the carbon tax done? It has actually pushed people out of the economy. It has made it unaffordable to heat their houses. It made it unaffordable to grow crops, and it has created a worse situation for people here in Canada.

That is the problem with the Liberal plan. It is a cult that the Liberals have. They have not looked at the big picture. They just looked at the little picture, and that is all they tried to solve, but they could not even get that right.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to wish you a happy Valentine's Day. I really appreciate you.

I am feeling a bit torn. On the one hand, we have a government drifting on a sea of appalling departmental dysfunction and, on the other hand, we have an opposition party playing games and giving fake, facile solutions to a very real problem that is far more complex than it cares to admit.

After all, inflation did fall from 8.1% in June to 6.3% in December, although it fell almost everywhere in the world.

I would like to ask my Conservative friend the following question. Since inflation is a global, heavily interconnected problem, what solution does he propose to keep Canada, which is part of this world, from being affected by this inflation?

[English]

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Mr. Speaker, he is asking me to fix mistakes from the past. I cannot not spend the money the Liberals have already spent, but what I can do is do the right policy things that make our economy function in a fashion that will allow businesses to grow and prosper and families to be employed, and work its way out of the system and get back to a 2% or 3% point. If the Governor of the Bank of Canada was doing his job, it would not have become out of control as bad as it did, so let us call a spade a spade.

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, I extend my congratulations to the member and his wife for their anniversary.

What I think is broken is oil and gas companies seeing a 1,011% change in their net annual incomes since 2019. That is a \$38-billion change, according to Statistics Canada.

I would like to ask this member what he tells his constituents as Conservatives continue to protect these profits from taxation, which could go toward helping families who are struggling to pay for groceries.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Mr. Speaker, one needs to look through the whole equation. Yes, they have had huge profits, but they are also paying out huge dividends that go to pension funds, and to communities in the surrounding areas and right across Canada. They pay for health care, roads and bridges. That revenue is coming into Canada and being distributed among Canadians, so that is good for Canada.

• (1600)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I agree with the member for Prince Albert about all the things that are broken with Service Canada, calling for passports and waiting on hold. Unfortunately, and I do not want this to sound partisan, but I have a very good memory.

I remember when, in the Harper years, Service Canada and Shared Services Canada were created, and all the individual departments within individual branches of the Government of Canada were consolidated into one big 1-800 number that nobody answers. We ought to, in a non-partisan way, step back.

I know they are looking at this now. Did this work? We got the Phoenix pay system out of this, by consolidating services and shutting down individual departments. It looked like efficiency, but I would suggest we now know it did not work.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Mr. Speaker, we always have to review what works and what does not work. We should actually build on the mistakes and make things better. That is what a Conservative government would do. We learn from previous mistakes and build upon them.

That is one thing the Liberal government has not learned. It has made a pile of mistakes with the carbon tax. One would think it would back away from it and do something different, but it does not. The Liberals never learn from their mistakes.

**Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to be speaking to this important motion.

As members know, affordability is not just a question here in Canada. It is also a question that is extremely important right across the world. It is important that we have those discussions. That is what it is all about. It is not about politics. It is about bringing new ideas and suggestions to the table.

Throughout my speech, I will try to underline some of the key initiatives that we were able to bring forward in the fall and what we will continue to work on as we move forward.

The global pandemic was very challenging. I know as a member of Parliament—

**The Deputy Speaker:** We have a point of order from the member for Elmwood—Transcona. I do hear a bell ringing, maybe a cellphone ring.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, there does seem to be a bell ringing. I had heard that the member might be interested in sharing his time. I wonder if perhaps the ringing bell distracted him from that fact.

**The Deputy Speaker:** While I wait for the bell to leave, I would remind all members to have their phones on vibrate or turned off.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

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**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his suggestion. It is all about timing. I had this planned for halfway through my speech, but I will make sure that he has his opportunity. I will be sharing my time with the member for Elmwood—Transcona on this very important motion, which we as Canadians need to be discussing.

There is no question that grocery prices are very high. The price of gas is higher than normal too. Many of our costs are very high, but the same thing is happening in other countries. In the United States, as people are telling me, the prices are even worse than in Canada. We have to find ways of supporting Canadians.

What started all this? I think we have to contextualize the situation. By that I mean that the pandemic was a two-and-a-half-year challenge for the world. I tell my kids all the time that the reason they pay taxes is to ensure they have services when they need them. If they are paying a certain per cent in taxes, some of it goes toward paying for hospitals, some of it goes toward paying for roads and some of it goes toward paying for schools. That is how we are contributing to the success of the country.

However, when we are in a global challenge with over three million people losing their jobs in a short period of time and with people going home to face their family and say they do not have a job, then we are in a major crisis, and people expect their government to be there for them because they have been there contributing. That is exactly what happened during the pandemic.

I have never been prouder of being a member of Parliament than I have been during the last two and a half years. For 67 nights in a row, we worked together as members of Parliament when the Liberals were looking at different policies and programs we could bring to support Canadians. It was challenging, because when we bring in a program, it might work for 90% of people but not for all. That is why we had to do lots of tweaking in our supports.

There were many programs. We helped individuals with the CERB, with the wage subsidy for businesses, with the bank account for businesses and with rental assistance. Then there were all the organizations. We were able to give \$20 million to the legions so they could do great work to support our veterans as we moved forward. That was one challenge.

The second challenge, of course, is the invasion of Ukraine. There is no question that it is playing a very big role in the challenges relating to the cost of living and inflation right across the world. That is adding to costs in the supply chain too.

Those two challenges are facing every country, including Canada, and Canada has done extremely well with them, if I can say so. We were one of the most successful in the G7 coming out of the pandemic, which was extremely important. We have over 117% of the jobs we had prior to the pandemic, and now we are seeing inflation come down, from 8.1% in June to 6.2% as we speak. I know that is still way too high, but we are going to work to improve on it. The central bank is increasing interest rates to drop inflation, and I know that is putting more stress on Canadians. We have to be there, and we have to do more.

That is why, in the fall, we brought forward some major initiatives that are helping Canadians with affordability.

First of all, there was the doubling of the GST rebate. Members have to understand that 11 million people benefited from this initiative. Half of our seniors benefited from it, which is extremely important. They received a doubling of their GST rebate for two payments.

There was an enhancing of the Canada workers benefit, which is very important as well. This is for low-income Canadians working very hard each and every day. This will help them. They will receive up to \$2,400 per year, helping another 4.2 million Canadians.

● (1605)

There is the 10% increase to the OAS for those aged 75 and older. That is extremely important. That is helping about three million seniors, which is a large number of seniors. Some people ask why 75 years old. Well, people are more vulnerable at 75. There is a more of a chance that they will lose their partner or spouse. The cost of living challenges are higher, as they only have one salary. We have to be there for those seniors, and we have been.

In addition, rent for low-income Canadians was topped up by \$500. That is another very important initiative for those who are struggling. About 1.8 million Canadians benefited from that initiative as well.

Members know as well as I do that child care fees being dropped this year to 50% is a major help to Canadians with young families. It is helping with affordability. Do not forget that parents who were paying \$1,800 a month for three kids are today paying \$900 a month. That is a savings of \$900 a month. That extra \$900 a month can help with affordability, which is crucial. It can help with mortgages, which are much higher because of increasing interest rates. That was a very important initiative that we were able to bring forward as well.

There is also dental care for families making \$90,000 or less. Children 12 years of age and under can benefit from that now. That is supporting families. When families brought their kids to a dentist, they used to pay more. Now they will have more money for food.

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People forget about the indexing of inflation, but that is extremely important. Let us take the CCB. By increasing the CCB to meet inflation, people basically still have the same income. The GST credit increases with inflation too. For seniors who are retired, the CPP will be increasing with inflation to help them, and so will the OAS and the GIS. Those are major initiatives that we were able to pass, some of which were not supported or voted for by the Conservatives. However, that is not what is important. What is important is they were passed and Canadians are benefiting from them.

I want to talk about the Canada workers benefit for a second. I mentioned it, but it is important to note that we now have advance payments. Because of the high cost of living and affordability, instead of people having to wait 12 months to do their income taxes and receive their money, we are now going to give it through four payments based on their salaries from the previous year. That is allowing people, every three months, to have more money to pay for the challenges they may be facing.

With the child care benefit, along with economic gains there are social gains in supporting Canadians. More women are now able to join the workforce. As we know, there are about 1.5 million vacant jobs and we need to find workers to fill them, so more women will join the workforce. Today, 82% of working-age women are working. That is the highest rate ever recorded in Canada.

I will conclude with student loans. Students do not have to pay interest on the federal portion of their loans, which is a big help for students, because we know the cost of education at the post-secondary level, such as at universities, is very high.

• (1610)

**Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member talked a lot about the workers benefit. In the update, the Liberals changed the rules. Yes, it is prepaid, but what if it turns out someone was not eligible after the fact? Normally the money would be clawed back, but they changed the rules so that the government will not be clawing back that money even if people were not eligible for it. The Parliamentary Budget Officer states that over \$4 billion of taxpayers' money will be written off in advance by the government.

Let us consider the fact that this is a politically motivated decision and that the CRA said not to go after the \$15 billion in overpayments for the wage subsidy. Along with the other \$4 billion, does the member support this waste of taxpayers' money that the government paid out to ineligible people whom it will not go after?

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Mr. Speaker, eligibility is very important. That is why we should be talking about it.

We are now saying that people have to meet all the criteria. That puts the onus on the individuals applying, but also on the public service to make sure the criteria are being respected. We are going to work closely to support Canadians.

[Translation]

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is awfully pleased. He is very satisfied with his government's actions and spent 10 minutes talking about how everything is fine, move along, nothing to see here.

One subject he did not talk about was seniors. We know seniors were among those hardest hit by the pandemic and that it was very hard for them. The health transfer negotiation was kind of a slap in the face for them. The provinces asked for \$6 billion but got less than \$1 billion. We know that problems with the health care system affect seniors more than anyone else.

The government indexed old age security benefits for seniors over 75, as though groceries did not cost them the same as they do seniors between 65 and 74. Those in Longueuil pay the same prices. At Provigo, a pound of ground beef costs the same whether the consumer is 68 or 78. Does my colleague think seniors between 65 and 74 should get an OAS raise too?

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. He always has very good questions.

In my speech, I explained why we prioritized seniors 75 and older. However, my colleague did not mention that doubling the GST credit gave 50% of seniors more money.

We have also indexed old age security, the Canada pension plan and the guaranteed income supplement to ensure that people can continue to enjoy the money they have today. We have been there for seniors and we will be there for seniors in the future as well.

• (1615)

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns I have with this motion is that it ignores the role of greedflation in inflation. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and Canadians for Tax Fairness have shown that corporate greed accounts for up to 25% of inflation here in Canada. This is at a time when we are seeing Canadians struggling.

I spoke to a taxi driver the other day. We were talking about how many people are using food banks, and he said something that broke my heart. He said he is hungry but cannot go to the food bank because he is someone who gives to the food bank. It is unacceptable that in a country as wealthy as ours, people are going hungry. It should not be everyday Canadians who are paying the price. It should be the corporations that are profiting off these crises. We want a windfall profits tax on insurance, oil and gas, and big box stores.

Will the member push his government to ensure that we make big, greedy corporations pay for the support Canadians need so that it is not struggling Canadians paying the price?

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**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Mr. Speaker, what she is sharing is really important. We have seen, during the pandemic, some large corporations making humongous profits, and that conversation needs to be had. We need to find ways to ensure that these corporations are sharing their wealth with Canadians.

Our government has focused on the most vulnerable, and we will continue to focus on the most vulnerable. However, to be honest, I agree we need to do more work in this area.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise, with thanks to the member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook for sharing some of his time.

I think it was another colleague who said earlier that he had some rather mixed feelings about today's motion because there is a lot that is true in it, particularly the first parts that name and provide some useful facts and figures about the very difficult situation Canadians are facing. We know that many Canadians right now are concerned about losing places to live, whether because the interest rate on their mortgages has gone up and they are not sure their family incomes can absorb the additional costs, because rents continue to climb, or for various other reasons.

Certainly one important reason is the continuing corporate presence in the Canadian housing market. In Winnipeg, for instance, we just saw Lions Place be offered up to a private developer who has a history of taking over buildings where there used to be affordable rents, doing some superficial renovations and then jacking up the rents. That activity is going on. It is happening and it is a real challenge, putting pressure on the cost of rent.

We know that Canadians are struggling with the 11% increase in the cost of groceries and that that puts pressures on household budgets. It is not an optional extra that people can choose to do without. It is a cost that they either have to absorb or, as the member for Victoria was just pointing out, go hungry because they do not have any good alternatives. We are facing a really difficult moment.

Where I take issue with the motion before us is that it would lay all of that problem at the feet of government and suggest that it is sufficient just to cap government spending, cut waste, fire high-priced consultants and eliminate inflationary deficit and taxes that have caused a cost-of-living crisis for Canadians. There is, again, some truth in that. I am in favour of cutting waste, for instance, but I think my Conservative colleagues and I might have some differences of opinion as to what constitutes a proper cutting of waste, that is, what is truly wasteful and what is not.

As an example, I have been doing a lot of advocacy alongside folks outside of Parliament, like campaign 2000 for a CERB low-income repayment amnesty. I think it is wasteful to chase the poor for money they do not have because they took the government at its word, during a global crisis of unprecedented proportion, that if they needed help they should apply for it. When it turned out that they were not quite eligible because they were not poor in the right way, the government then said that they owe all of that money back. It will pay people to hound them even though it knows they do not have the money, and it will never get that money back. It is going to throw good money after bad. That is waste.

If that is what the Conservatives mean by cutting waste, I will show up any day of the week for that. I suspect it is not what they mean, because I have heard them talk about other things that I value and that I think are good investments. For instance, when we talk about pharmacare on this side of the House, that is a cost. Capping spending is not going to allow us to have a federal pharmacare plan, but do members know what a federal pharmacare plan would do? Ultimately it would save money for Canadians and reduce the cost of accessing prescription drugs in Canada, not just in individual budgets but in government budgets too.

The latest reports, pre-pandemic, on pharmacare in Canada said that Canadians were paying about \$24 billion a year on prescription drugs. That was a combination of government expenditure, private insurance plan and out-of-pocket expenditure. The findings of many different studies over time, including in this particular example, was that a national pharmacare plan would cost about \$20 billion a year. Depending on who pays and what ledger it is on, Canadians stand to save at least \$4 billion a year on the prescription drugs they are already buying.

To me, it is not the right approach to say the federal government should just arbitrarily cap its spending when there are investment opportunities that could reduce costs to Canadians overall. I think we should be more discerning in our judgment around this place, in a way that this motion simply is not. We have seen a lot of change and we are going to see more change in the economy over the years to come, particularly in regard to energy. We are seeing that happen already.

● (1620)

Many of our allies are trying to lower their dependency on fossil fuel. That is happening, whether Canada wants it and gets on board or not. It is happening for the sake of both the climate and energy security. I do not think anybody in this place needs a lecture on that after the last 12 months, not only with Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and what has happened to global energy supplies but also the real pinch from Russia's supply of oil to Europe and other parts of the world, as well as the power that that has given it.

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There are many reasons the world is trying to lower its dependency on fossil fuel for basic things that we cannot do without, such as heating our homes. Canada's choice is whether it shows up to that or not. Back in the 1970s, Peter Lougheed made real investments, as did the federal government, to create the oil and gas industry that exists in Alberta today. That was not at all a spontaneous creation of the free market. There was a lot of very deliberate policy work and financial investment by governments in order to create the oil and gas economy of the late 20th century. Those who say otherwise would be kidding themselves and anyone who listens.

Before us is another moment of policy and financial investment to create a new energy economy for at least the next 50 years. Canada has to decide whether it wants to get on that train. We are not going to do so for free. Arbitrarily capping spending right now just takes Canada out of the game at a time when our biggest continental partner, the United States, is finally getting into the climate change game in a meaningful way. It is doing this with the Inflation Reduction Act. A lot of companies that are in the new energy economy and are also making incredible amounts of profit are sizing up the places where they want to invest.

We should value that investment as much as we value investment in the oil and gas sector, but Canada does not. It has not shown up for other industries, particularly new energy industries, in the way that it did for oil and gas in the 1970s and continues to do today. Mr. Speaker, just think of the over \$20 billion that the federal government found overnight to get into the pipeline business, something it has no business being in in the first place.

Do not tell me money is lacking for other important things. Of course there is money. The Liberals have proven that by going out and spending on things like pipelines, which they should not have done.

We are in this moment where we are trying to address critical challenges for individual Canadian households, and at the same time, many businesses that are still reeling from the effects of the pandemic. The world is preparing and laying the foundations for the next-generation economy. It is important to my children and to the children of people in this place and across the country that Canada get that right. This will make good-paying union jobs available to the next generation of Canadian children in the same way that those jobs were available for oil and gas workers in Alberta.

We want to make sure that those jobs continue to be available. Some of them will be in oil and gas, but there are going to be fewer of those in the future. This is not because the Canadian government of any stripe decided that was going to be the case. It is because many governments the world over are deciding that must be the case, if we are going to have a planet to have an economy on in the first place. They are not wrong about that. Canada needs to get with the program, and we are only going to be able to do that through serious investment.

I will close because I know my time is running short. I thank the Speaker for his diligence. I will just mention health care. I do not know that we need to do much more than that, but the idea that we are going to solve the very real problems in the health system without investment is false. In this time when people are struggling to

get access to care, government will need to make investments. Provincial governments have been willing to pay through the nose for private agency nurses, overtime work and sending people to the United States to get treatment.

That is not a health system. We need to build it, or rebuild it, here. That will require investment. It is worth paying for. This is why it is not the time to endorse a simple spending cap.

● (1625)

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

Before I begin my question, I want to recognize the life of Cliff Branchflower, the former mayor of Kamloops, who passed away earlier this week. I wish his family the best at this difficult time.

My colleague mentioned that we are going to have decreased oil and gas jobs in the future, not because the current government wants it but because all governments really want that. Here is the thing. As it stands right now, it seems as though the current government wants fewer oil and gas jobs and wants fewer of them in Alberta. His point is that we are all going to get off oil and gas. However, when we are considering how much oil and gas is required today while we are weaning off it, does my colleague not agree that those good-paying jobs that could be located in Canada should stay in Canada as opposed to countries that do not have respect for wages and human rights? That is where those jobs are going right now. Why are they not staying in Canada?

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, I would say this is an example of the one-two punch the oil and gas industry gets in this House between the Liberals and Conservatives. The Liberals spent over \$20 billion on a pipeline, and the Conservatives get up and say that the Liberals are not supporting the oil and gas industry. They can debate whether they want to or should support the oil and gas industry with massive government expenditures, but I would say the Liberals have been trying really hard to do so. I do not think they are failing to try.



In fact, I would criticize the Liberals for the extent to which they are doing that. I think of the opportunity cost of that \$20-billion investment. We are told that we cannot have a western power grid that would help share hydroelectric energy from British Columbia and Manitoba across the provinces. This is because we do not have the money to build it. Then they turn around and build a \$20-billion pipeline. We cannot afford to be sinking that much money into new oil and gas infrastructure when we could be spending it on different types of infrastructure that would also create really good-quality jobs here in Canada. The point is to create those jobs in a way that is going to be sustainable over time. I would say that the Liberals have placed their bet on the oil and gas industry, and we think that is the wrong place for that bet when it comes to the next generation of Canadian workers.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated my hon. colleague's speech.

I agree with him. The Liberals are putting more money into the oil and gas industry than the Conservatives did before them. I believe that is unheard of in Canadian history. The oil industry has never had so many subsidies.

Unfortunately, I have a question and I am not sure my colleague will be happy that I am asking it. At this moment in time, when we are fighting climate change and the government has never put so much money into subsidies for the oil and gas industry, how can his party support the government when it is time to vote on a budget like that?

• (1630)

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge the decision that Canadians made in the last election.

We are here to try to achieve progress whenever possible. I do not think that holding an election tomorrow will resolve the issue of the Liberals and Conservatives giving significant support, on behalf of Canadians, to the oil and gas sector. That is something we want to resolve. We are working with people in Canada and Quebec who want to change that, but we are not yet there.

We are in a position where we can have a federal dental care program, which we believe is a good thing. We will achieve gains wherever we can and we will continue to fight wherever we must.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would be inclined to ask a quick question regarding what the member thinks about the NDP-Liberal B.C. agreement on LNG. I could possibly ask him what he believes Rachel Notley has to say about the purchase of the pipeline. However, I would rather pick up on what he said in his speech about how government can actually spend where there is a very high return. Could I get his thoughts on the national child care program and its net benefits, which were clearly demonstrated in the province of Quebec?

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, I am very familiar with the arguments in favour of a national child care program. I recall making them as a candidate in 2015, against Liberals who said it was a bad idea and it was not the federal government's business to invest in

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child care. I am very glad to see the government come around on that, and I am glad to see some of the positive effects that were anticipated by New Democrats and others who knew better.

I welcome the Liberals to the party. I hope they will join us on some other things while we are at it.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** 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 Calgary Centre, Carbon Pricing; the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship; and the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Foreign Affairs.

[*English*]

**Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when our Conservative leader first spoke before the fall economic statement was introduced last November, he made two very clear and simple demands on behalf of our Conservative Party.

First, we wanted the Liberal government to stop the taxes. This included cancelling all planned tax hikes and the tripling of the carbon tax. Fast-forward a few months to February, and it is clear that the current Liberal government is on track to do the exact opposite. Taxes went up on Canadians this past January, and this April it is only going to get worse.

Late last year, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation sounded the alarm about five incoming Liberal tax hikes in 2023. These hikes include increases that Canadians will see at the gas pumps, an alcohol escalator tax, increases to the Canada pension plan, hikes to employment insurance contributions and increases to payroll taxes for anyone making \$40,000 or more this year.

This April 1, gasoline is set to go up by 14¢ per litre, and alcohol taxes are automatically set to rise by 6.3%. This is no cruel April Fool's joke. This is the damage done by bad Liberal fiscal policy. Locally, across Niagara, these taxes, particularly the alcohol escalator tax, will punish many wineries, craft breweries and distilleries, as well as anyone who enjoys consuming these wonderful Canadian-made products while visiting Niagara, which is the number one leisure tourism destination in all of Canada.

The second demand of our Conservative leader was for the Liberal government to stop the spending. Any new spending by Liberal ministers in the government must be matched by an equivalent savings. The government must cut wasteful spending and stop the inflationary deficits that drive up the cost of everything for Canadians. Again, fast-forward to this month, and the Liberals are failing to make good on this demand.

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In fact, as time goes on, more and more wasteful and reckless Liberal spending is being uncovered. In the fall, there was the \$6,000 luxurious hotel room that our Prime Minister stayed in for a one-night stay in Europe. Then, there was the \$54 million wasted on the disastrous ArriveCAN app. Recently, the Auditor General blasted the CRA for its lack of rigour in trying to identify and recoup a minimum of \$27.4 billion in suspected overpayments of emergency aid benefits, including \$15.5 billion for the Canada emergency wage subsidy.

In response to the comment from the Auditor General, the government's own CRA commissioner had the gall to inform Canadians that "it wouldn't be worth the effort" to review and try to recover every dollar of the \$15.5 billion in CEWS overpayments. That insufficient response from the CRA commissioner did not get by our Parliamentary Budget Officer, who recently said it was "a bit disconcerting when you hear that and the government is faced with a deficit."

For these reasons and more, Conservatives are asking the House today to call on the Liberal government to cap spending, cut waste, fire high-priced consultants and eliminate inflationary deficits and taxes that have caused a cost-of-living crisis for Canadians.

Simply put, after eight years of the current Liberal government, Canadians pay more today for their goods and services and are getting less. Groceries, gas, home heating and more are getting more expensive by the day because of the reckless Liberal spending habits. After eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, the cost of groceries is up almost 11%. After eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, half of Canadians are cutting back on groceries. After eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, 20% of Canadians are skipping meals.

In Niagara, a recent report found that almost 39,000 people are being assisted by local food banks across the region. Those serving on the front lines are witnessing people struggling who have never struggled before. Under these deteriorating conditions, Canadians work harder to try to get ahead, but they take home less money because of higher costs for the things they need to buy and the higher taxes they will have to pay.

Just yesterday, in fact, we had new data provided by the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, which reported that nearly four in 10 Canadians are now borrowing money to pay for groceries, shelter and other daily expenses. According to the report, "many Canadians are facing the biggest financial challenges of their lives. More are borrowing money to cover their day-to-day expenses, including by using high-cost loans." It is no wonder Canadians feel like everything is broken and they have lost control. Many are falling behind, even as they try hard to get ahead.

● (1635)

It comes as no surprise that the same reckless Liberal spending habits, which have played a big role in driving up inflation, have also caused our national debt to soar. Debt interest payments have become so big under the Liberals that the costs are projected to be larger than what the federal government spends on the budget for the Department of National Defence. We should remember that the next time we have to scramble our outdated and under-equipped

CF-18s and watch the Americans shoot down airborne threats over our territory.

It is getting so bad that some former Liberals are finally starting to acknowledge it. One random Liberal is former finance minister Bill Morneau. He has said that the government probably spent too much during COVID. Meanwhile, former Liberal deputy prime minister and finance minister John Manley said that the Liberal Prime Minister's fiscal policy is making it harder to contain inflation.

There are direct consequences to the Liberal government's recklessly spending the cupboards bare. Will the government be able to live up to the expectations it set for its new federal tourism growth strategy? The tourism minister has spent the last several months asking the industry to think big on ideas to expedite economic recovery from the devastating impact of COVID-19, yet fear is now beginning to grow in the tourism community that the Liberal government is once again failing to understand that the industry is still in recovery mode. It appears that, once again, the Liberal government is setting itself up to over-promise and under-deliver. That is a great shame for tourism communities across the country, such as mine in Niagara, which welcomes visitors from around the world.

As well, what is to happen to the wine sector support program, which was put in place because of the Liberal government's ineptitude on trade policy? The two-year, \$166-million program has ended, yet the industry has asked for it to be extended, and there have been no updates about its renewal. Last year's budget showed that the government would raise \$390 million over five years in new revenue by now applying the excise tax to 100% Canadian-made wines. Where are those funds going?

For months, Conservatives have been warning the government that its out-of-control spending would lead to an increase in interest rates. The government responded by telling Canadians not to worry and to go ahead and take out big loans since interest rates would remain low for a long time and there would not be any negative consequences. Well, after eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, 45% of variable rate mortgage holders now say they will have to sell or vacate their homes in less than nine months due to the current interest rate levels.

After eight years of the Liberal government, everything feels broken, and Canadians are having a harder time not only getting by, but simply hoping to try to get ahead. After eight years of this Liberal recklessness, Canadians have to work harder, work longer and even work multiple jobs just to take home less earnings and to get by.

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Enough is enough. While Liberals are expecting Canadians to pay for their reckless spending habits, Canadians can count on Conservatives to provide them with the sound financial planning and path ahead when they elect us into government after the next federal election.

Canadians must realize that as the Liberals make more and more promises for a better tomorrow to distract us from the issues of today, none of the problems they have created, which Canadians now face, are getting fixed. Canadians need real solutions to these real problems that they are facing right now, and only a Conservative government can deliver on this for Canadians.

• (1640)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Conservative Party says that if we are going to spend the money, we have to find the money in order to do so. Now, we just made a major announcement for the future of the national health care system, \$190 billion over 10 years, and there are hundreds of millions flowing this year. The Conservative leader has now endorsed it. He has said that Conservatives will not cut back on that commitment.

Can the member now share their plan? When they talk about money being spent only if money is coming in, in terms of programs, what programs would the Conservatives be cutting as a result of the commitment that the Conservative Party leader has made?

**Mr. Tony Baldinelli:** Mr. Speaker, in my remarks earlier, I talked about the Auditor General, who found that \$4.6 billion went to ineligible individuals, and we estimated that at least \$27.4 billion in payments to individuals and employees should be investigated further. Among the individuals who received money and should not have, \$1.6 billion went to people who quit their jobs; \$6.6 million went to people who were in jail the whole time; \$3.3 million went to people who did not live in Canada; and \$1.2 million went to dead people. Why do we not start there?

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, I have been in this debate all day, and I have heard similar responses to this question that I have asked, which is about the disparity between major for-profit corporations raking in billions in profits and people like those he described in his constituency, people struggling to pay for groceries.

How does the member explain the disparity between those major corporation profiting in the billions and people struggling to pay for groceries?

**Mr. Tony Baldinelli:** Mr. Speaker, well, first of all, as Conservatives, we all believe that every company, every organization and every individual should pay their fair share of taxes. Let us begin with that.

Again, some of the decisions made by the government benefited those who did not need the support. To my colleague's earlier question about eliminating the types of programs and funding for those organizations that do not need them, why do we not start by looking there, so we can reduce those costs and provide the assistance to those who need it the most?

• (1645)

**Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise to behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. Before I get into my question, I also want to recognize the life of a titan of Kamloops politics, Pat Wallace. She was a pioneer who spent many years, decades, in Kamloops on Kamloops city council, paving the way for so many others. She recently passed away. May an eternal light shine upon her. I wish her and her loved ones all the best in this difficult time.

I want to ask my hon. colleague a question. It builds on the question I asked my NDP colleague. It is about this notion of where we should be putting our business dollars and what we should be supporting. There has been, obviously, a push that we move away from energy on the global end.

Would he agree with me that, while we do move away from all sorts of energy, we should be really emphasizing Canadian energy over energy that comes from jurisdictions that really do not support the things that we do, such as freedom, workers' rights and things like that?

**Mr. Tony Baldinelli:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with him 100%. We should be supporting those energy sources that are sourced here in Canada, done by Canadian workers.

Just building on what he said about this notion of moving to a cleaner and cleaner economy, the Independent Electricity System Operator in Ontario estimated that it would cost \$400 billion to get it to a carbon-neutral 2050 in Ontario.

How are we going to do that? We will need nuclear. We will need and continue to need natural gas and, of course, that clean hydroelectric power that comes from Niagara Falls, all 2,200 megawatts, done by the people of Niagara.

**Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been in power, has been in that chair, for eight years. For millions of Canadians, things have never been worse than they are right now.

For eight long years, Canadians from coast to coast to coast have been left behind by the Liberal government. After eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, inflation is at a 40-year high. After eight years, the cost of groceries has sky rocketed.

After eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, half of Canadians are cutting back on the groceries they buy. After eight years of the Prime Minister, 20% of Canadians are skipping meals. It is unbelievable that this happens in a country like Canada.

After eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment across Canada's 10 biggest cities is over \$2,000, compared to only \$1,100 per month in 2015. After eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, 45% of variable rate mortgage holders say that they will have to sell or vacate their homes in less than nine months due to the current interest rate levels.

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After eight years of the Prime Minister, average monthly mortgage costs have more than doubled, and now Canadians are paying over \$3,000 a month. After eight long years of the Prime Minister, everyone seems to be aware of the damage the Liberal government has done, except for the Liberals themselves.

The Governor of the Bank of Canada has said that “inflation in Canada increasingly reflects what's happening in Canada.” The former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney said, “inflation is principally a domestic story.” According to bank CEOs, tens of thousands of Canadians could default on mortgages due to these rising rates.

Former Liberal finance minister Bill Morneau has said that the government probably spent too much during COVID. Former Liberal deputy prime minister and finance minister John Manley said that the Liberal Prime Minister's “fiscal policy is making it harder...to contain inflation.”

It is clear that this is a homemade problem. Everyone seems to get it. Canadians, themselves, get it. The experts get it. Even those random Liberals get it, except for the Prime Minister himself. He does not seem to get it.

Our Conservative motion today calls on the government to cap spending, cut waste, fire high-priced consultants and eliminate inflationary deficits and taxes that have caused this cost of living crisis for Canadians. Inflation is at the highest its been in 40 years. Interest rates are the highest in a generation, and home prices and rent are the highest they have ever been.

After eight years of the Liberal government, Canadians are struggling to keep up with the rate at which the government prints and spends money. It has spent more dollars chasing fewer goods. It has created a dire situation, and it is one it will not be able to spend its way out of.

Over half of Canadians are uncertain if they will be able to afford to retire. A recent study by the Bank of Montreal found that Canadians will need \$1.7 million to retire, which is up 20% from 2020. Now, someone has to be a millionaire in Canada to retire.

The Liberals' wealthy friends, who they are very fond of handing off lucrative contracts to using Canadian taxpayers dollars, might have no problem with this, but for everyday, hard-working Canadians, this is simply not realistic.

Each day, I receive letters from hard-working Canadians in my riding who feel that many aspects of life in Canada are broken. More Canadians visit food banks just to get by. Half of Canadians are cutting back on their groceries, and one out of five are skipping meals.

A recent poll showed that 60% of Canadians think that the country is broken, and 73% of them feel this way in my home province of Alberta. This is heartbreaking.

• (1650)

We must turn things around instead of making things worse for Canadians. We could start by getting rid of the carbon tax. I have been hearing from Canadians right across the country who are

spending hundreds of dollars a month, large portions of their income, just to keep up with this punitive Liberal carbon tax.

I recently heard from a senior who is struggling to afford to heat her home. She now has to pay an additional \$73 a month on her bill just for the carbon tax. This is an elderly person on a fixed income whom the government has left behind. She is now considering selling her home because she cannot afford to heat it. This is tragic and unacceptable. Canadians should not be punished for heating their homes or for driving to work. They are already struggling enough as it is.

However, the Liberal insiders have never had it so good. The thousands-of-dollars-a-day consultants at McKinsey are very happy with the Liberals. In fact, the consulting contracts have gone up 100% in the eight years since the Prime Minister has been in power. The lobbyists, whose contracts have also increased by 100%, are also very pleased. It is Canadians who pay for these outrageously expensive contracts with their hard-earned tax dollars whom the government continues to leave behind.

We call on the government to cap spending, cut waste, fire high-priced consultants and eliminate inflationary deficits and taxes that have caused this cost-of-living crisis. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister refuses to take any responsibility for the hurt he has caused so many Canadians.

As Canadians struggle to afford home heating and groceries, the Prime Minister treated himself to a \$6,000-a-night hotel room. He then had the officials try to cover it up by redacting relevant information in internal correspondence related to this scandal. The government is out of touch and Canadians cannot afford to pay for the Prime Minister's luxuries.

After eight long years of wasteful spending, the Prime Minister is still finding new, creative ways to spend Canadian tax dollars. His latest inflation plan is to hire more pollsters to poll Canadians for buzzwords on the budget. This madness needs to end.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am trying to understand, and maybe the member could help me by telling me how putting food on the table during a crisis, how helping Alberta get oil to tidewater, how lowering child care costs and how providing dental care to children is contributing to inflation.

*Business of Supply*

• (1655)

**Hon. Tim Uppal:** Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that inflation has continued to grow under the government. The Governor of the Bank of Canada has said that the government's inflationary policies have contributed to what is happening in Canada. Inflation continuously goes up and almost every day we stand up in this House to ask the government to help Canadians keep the heat on and take the tax off. We have asked it to take the carbon tax off. Instead, what the government is planning to do is triple the carbon tax and add more burden on Canadians. This will cause more inflation, so it actually is the government's policies and actions that are hurting Canadians and making things much worse for them.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we know that the Liberal government has introduced very few budgetary or legislative measures to try to fight inflation. We all agree on that.

Fortunately or unfortunately, the Bank of Canada has had to use the monetary tool at its disposal, that is, increasing interest rates, to try to check this inflationary spiral.

Does my colleague agree that, ultimately, increasing mortgage rates was still the right thing to do?

[English]

**Hon. Tim Uppal:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague makes a very good point, that it was actually the actions of the Liberal government, its inflationary policies and the fact that it spent so much money it really did not have, that caused the inflation we have. The Bank of Canada had no choice and was forced to increase the rates to what we see today. The result of that is that Canadians are paying for it. Mortgage payments have doubled for many Canadians. This is forcing Canadians to consider selling their house. Many Canadians are now saying they will have to sell their house within the next nine months because of how high these rates have gone. These rates are that high today, at record levels today, because of the 40-year inflation the Liberal government has caused. Its inflationary policies have put Canadians in the position they are in today.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the motion today talks a lot about expenses and what the government is spending money on. I know the member and I disagree quite a bit on what the government should be spending money on, but there is another side of that: revenue. The Liberal government has spent lots of money in Alberta to clean up oil and gas wells. The New Democrats asked for strings to be attached and they were not put in place. Now Premier Smith is giving \$20 billion of Alberta money as a gift to her friends in the oil and gas industry.

I am wondering whether the member agrees with her decision and whether he thinks the federal government should put more strings on the provincial government to make sure that oil and gas well money is used to clean up oil and gas wells.

**Hon. Tim Uppal:** Mr. Speaker, the answer to more revenue, especially in the energy sector, is not always more money. The government does not necessarily need to be spending more money in the energy sector. What the government needs to do is have good, proper regulation and have an environment where the industry can produce and do what it does best, which is create energy. It is envi-

ronmentally friendly energy, much more so than that of many other countries. It is ethical energy and is much better than that of many other countries.

I would suggest to the government that it should be creating an environment where our energy sector can grow and where it can hire more Canadians and Albertans to do the job they do best. That is the best way not only to support Alberta jobs, but to help support Canadians right across the country. Sometimes the best thing is for the government to back off and allow business to do what it does best.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, like my colleagues, one of the issues I have with this motion is that it does not place any emphasis at all on the role that corporate profits have in driving up the cost of living in this country. It is quite clear that this is the case.

Another issue I have is with the Conservative orthodox economic thinking that deficits invariably cause inflation. If that were the case, we would have had rampant inflation in this place when the Conservative government of Stephen Harper ran seven consecutive deficits from 2008 to 2015, which did not happen.

I have heard the Conservatives say it is inflationary to spend money on dental care, yet the leader of the Conservative Party has said he would adopt the recently announced health care accord for the next 10 years, which injects an additional \$46 billion into the economy. Can my hon. colleague explain how that is not inflationary if other government spending is?

• (1700)

**Hon. Tim Uppal:** Mr. Speaker, as a government, it is important to support Canadians, and the Conservatives will be there for Canadians to ensure that health care is funded properly and that Canadians have that support. What we will also do is save money in other places where there is wasteful spending. That is what we are asking for the government to do. We did not say to cut all spending. What we said was to cut wasteful spending.

The Infrastructure Bank was not something we needed. Contracts for Liberal insiders should be cut and consultants should be fired. The government's gun buyback program is not needed. The Liberals are going after law-abiding Canadian citizens when they could be spending that money at the border where the real problems are. There is also the ArriveCAN app.

There are so many examples of where the government could be cutting funding. That is what the Conservatives would do.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will take a few seconds to remind or inform my colleagues that this is the first St. Valentine's Day that the NDP and the Liberals have spent together since they struck their alliance. I wish them a happy Valentine's Day.

We, in the Bloc Québécois, are sovereignists, and we want Quebec to be its own country. We would like Quebec to make its own decisions and choices. There are many reasons for that, historical and institutional reasons, but we also want to be efficient.

In Quebec, we are against duplication. We believe that doing the same work twice, once in Quebec City and once in Ottawa, is not a good thing. It is not a good use of resources. I can see my Conservative colleagues nodding. That is a good thing because today we are faced with the duplication of previous motions.

This is the fifth or sixth identical motion. This unnecessary duplication, this waste of energy, is something we have seen before in the House of Commons. It is the same thing every Conservative opposition day. Economists call this looking for economies of scale. An economy of scale means trying to always produce the same thing with less and less effort. Lucky for us, it takes less and less effort to give them the same answers. Obviously they get paid big money just to copy and paste, in other words, to hit "control c" and "control v". We already voted against a virtually identical motion last week. I would say that I am throwing their motion in the garbage bin, but even the garbage bin might vote against that.

We will talk about the motion for a few minutes. The diagnosis within the motion is not entirely false. It is true that there is inflation. It is true that Canadian families are facing a crisis. It is true that times are hard because many people are struggling. We have to think about those people. It is true that the inflation rate is at its highest since 1982. It was over 10% in 1982. It is roughly 6% today. The motion is a little overblown, but there we are.

However, what the Conservatives forgot to say is that if we do not consider energy and food, which are important components, the core inflation rate used by the Bank of Canada is 5.5%. The price of fossil fuel energy has increased by 28%.

Once again, the Conservatives think that attacking the carbon tax, which does not even apply in Quebec, is the solution to all our woes. Instead, we need to take measures to start an energy transition, so that the next time there is a crisis, we do not end up with a 22nd, 23rd and 24th identical motion. Surely it is clear why we are uncomfortable.

The reason the Conservatives can afford to keep tabling the same motion over and over is because the Liberals did little to help families during the crisis. True, there were some measures. They increased the Canada child benefit and so on. However, those measures were planned before the crisis. Very little was done. They did double the GST credit, something the Bloc had been asking for for months. We also asked that cheques be sent out more frequently, but that has not been done.

The Liberals are complacent. They spend too much time talking and not enough time helping people. That is why the Conservatives'

populism, as expressed in yet another of these motions, is unfortunately beginning to gain credence among groups of people who are not always well informed.

One good thing about the Conservatives' motion is that at least we get an opportunity to talk about the federal government's efficiency in delivering services. We get to talk about the efficiency of the machinery of government and McKinsey. We will discuss that later.

I just want to say that inefficiency, especially in the form of duplication, is rampant in Ottawa. I would like the government to explain to me why it costs two and a half times more to process an EI claim than it does to process a social assistance application in Quebec, and that is the truth. That is a 250% markup on processing.

Why does it cost four times more to handle and process a passport application in the federal bureaucracy than it does for the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec to deliver a driver's licence? Of course, a driver's licence is not a passport, but that is 400% more. These are not unreasonable comparisons. This is a major problem.

Members talked about duplication, and I want to talk about federal government costs that have doubled or even tripled.

● (1705)

We know that Ottawa duplicates some things that Quebec already does. That management could be decentralized. There will be further discussion on the single income tax statement and the duplication of taxation centres. That is one thing.

Yesterday, the procurement ombudsman appeared before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. Based on what we heard, ministers can indeed subcontract work, even if the public service is available and has the skills needed to do the work. The work can be subcontracted to companies such as McKinsey.

I asked him if, during his audits, he identified whether work that public servants could have done had been subcontracted. Quebecers and Canadians will not pay just once or twice, but three times. He responded that his work was rather to ensure that, when taxpayers get ripped off and pay twice, pre-established rules are followed. In other words, we will be ripped off in accordance with the rules. That is exactly how it works. I invite people to listen to the ombudsman's testimony yesterday.

There are ways to ensure that the machinery of government operates more efficiently. Are these solutions contained in the Conservative motion? I read it three times. It was quite painful but I did it, and I noted that it does not contain any solutions, so we will be voting against this motion.

There is another thing that is niggling at me. It bothers me, and I feel uncomfortable. The Conservatives and the Liberals both know that not all inflation is created equal. The Parliamentary Budget Officer, whom the Conservatives love to quote every 15 minutes, said and showed that the trajectory of the federal government's debt-to-GDP ratio would drop over the coming years. It could actually reach 10% of GDP, maybe even 0% of GDP, depending on the budget, in a few decades.

The federal government's long-term public finances are healthy, but the Parliamentary Budget Officer showed that the provinces' finances, which cover health, are going to be in bigger and bigger trouble. They are in trouble because the cost of the system, even before the inflationary crisis, was increasing at a rate of 5.5% to 6% per year. That is before any increase in the cost of nurses, orderlies and all the other inputs involved in health care systems.

Now there is a new agreement being imposed. I do not know of many marriages that are entered into legally and with mutual consent with this type of agreement. It is an agreement imposed by one side only. It is so stingy that the Conservatives have decided to support it. When inflation affects the sick people who are waiting in hospital corridors, people whose cancer diagnosis or treatment is pushed back a month, two months or three months, or families who will lose loved ones, inflation is the least of their concerns. All they want is to adopt austerity policies.

What will the Conservatives cut? Will they cut help for seniors, like the Liberals did for seniors aged 65 to 74? They will make cuts to the energy transition, obviously. As far as employment insurance is concerned, they are not proposing anything for people who have to deal with the spring gap. They are even proposing that pensions be reduced because they want to offer premium holidays. The Conservatives are going to force future retirees into poverty, and when they turn to Ottawa for help in 20 or 30 years' time, they will be told that the government needs to make cuts and will not help them. With the Conservatives, it is two layers of trouble, not one.

Workable solutions exist. The Bloc Québécois has put forward proposals. We have been doing so for a year and a half. We proposed GST and QST cheques. In cases such as the McKinsey affair, we are always there to ensure that we do not pay double or triple and that taxpayers get their money's worth. When it is time to defend the competence of our public service, the Bloc Québécois is always there.

When it is the Bloc opposition day, we are always accused of raising useless subjects. We are told that people are not interested in what we want to discuss.

In conclusion, I will explain why we are capable of talking about other things. It is because we do not move the same motion seven times. We understand things right away, and it gives us the time to think about other things. The Conservatives want to be in government. The people sitting in this place want to be ministers, but they are not even able to walk and chew gum at the same time. What will they do? Will there be 2,000 seats in the House and 22 parliamentary secretaries for each minister so they can think about two things at once? No, thank you.

### *Business of Supply*

• (1710)

For their next opposition day, I invite them to think about their motion, to speak to the other opposition parties and to ensure that the door is not slammed in their face for the eighth or ninth time. That way, they will stop crying and blaming the other parties.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have had Bloc and Conservative members and next we would get an NDP member. If I were in opposition, the kind of motion I would like to see is one on health care. I think all of us here and Canadians have a big interest in health care. It is more than just the cost factor in terms of how much money is going to Ottawa or how much money is raised at the provincial level. It is about managing change.

I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts on the issue of health care management of change and the importance of transparency and accountability.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon:** Mr. Speaker, I feel like I am in a Kafka novel. An important figure in the Liberal Party is telling me that if he had the chance to be in the opposition—and we hope he does, because perhaps he needs it—he would move such a motion. He tells me this after the Liberals refused to hear from the provinces and meet with the premiers for 28 months, and after they had the nerve to call something that will give all the provinces \$4.4 billion a year over 10 years, at a time of inflation, a “deal”.

The Liberals are not interested in health. In 2017, they began consulting on children's health and the marketing of foods that are unhealthy for children. They did the consultations and got the results, but they never introduced a bill. The Minister of Health never did a thing on that, and they even let two bills from their own MPs die on the Order Paper.

When my colleague is in opposition, I will be pleased to discuss the motions he brings forward.

[*English*]

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member talked at length. We have had a similar theme for our opposition day motions over and over again. After listening to the member's entire speech, we are going to have to continue to do motions on the same theme, because he mentioned nothing about the fact that after eight years we have seen that this country has fallen apart. We have been mentioning that over and over again and he did not mention it once in his speech.

The other thing the member never talked about in his speech was the tripling of the carbon tax. Therefore, we will have to continue to push this message out so that even the Bloc will get on board with some of these things. I just wonder if the member has heard those things said by the Conservatives before, and whether he will say that we have said them enough.

*Private Members' Business*

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague keeps doing the same thing while hoping for different results. He did not listen to my speech.

When we say that we need solutions to permanently increase the incomes of Quebecers and Canadians, and when we say that, during a crisis, we need to offer people temporary assistance to get through the crisis—

• (1715)

[English]

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am told that interpretation is not coming through online. It is working in the chamber, but not online.

[Translation]

We will try again.

The hon. member for Mirabel.

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon:** Mr. Speaker, I will start again because I was responding to my colleague and it is important that he hear the interpretation.

I was saying that if the Conservatives keep doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results—

**The Deputy Speaker:** There is no interpretation.

[English]

Let us just take a minute and a half to figure out what is going on.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Now that it is working, I will give the hon. member for Mirabel 30 seconds to finish his answer.

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon:** Mr. Speaker, if my colleague thinks he can keep doing the same thing over and over with different results, he is clearly not listening to our proposals to permanently increase the incomes of Quebecers and Canadians. We must give temporary help to those who are going through this crisis, and we must undertake an energy transition.

I wish the Conservatives good luck with the eighth, ninth and tenth motions. I will be happy to debate them.

[English]

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 5:22 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings to put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 15, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I suspect that, if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30 p.m.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES ACT

The House resumed from November 28, 2022, consideration of the motion that Bill S-222, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (use of wood), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise today to speak on Bill S-222, an act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act, use of wood.

I thank the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay for his sponsorship of this bill and his continued effort in championing this important industry in our province and, indeed, our country.

This legislation would require that the minister of public works, when considering maintenance and repair of public works or federal property, to “consider any potential reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and any other environmental benefits and may allow the use of wood or any other thing — including a material, product or sustainable resource — that achieves such benefits.”

Ultimately, this bill aims to encourage the use of more sustainable building materials, including Canada's numerous forestry products.

Colleagues will learn from my speech today that I am a little bullish about our provincial forestry industry. My home province of British Columbia is Canada's largest producer of softwood lumber. B.C.'s largest export is forest products.

Since 2010, over 50 communities across our province have adopted wood-first policies. Quesnel, under the leadership of my friend, former mayor Mary Sjostrom, was the first community in our province to adopt a wood-first policy.

Indeed, my communities of Prince George, Williams Lake, Quesnel and Vanderhoof all have incredible world-class, award-winning facilities, such as the Prince George Airport and the Prince George art gallery. At one time we had the tallest wood building in North America standing at eight storeys, the Wood Innovation and Design Centre, which I am proud to say our former Conservative government supported.



*Private Members' Business*

I would be remiss if I did not mention my hometown Williams Lake's incredible tourism information centre, built by my good friends at Pioneer log homes. Colleagues in this House will know them as the world-famous timber kings.

Forestry has been a cornerstone industry in our province for over 100 years and contributes approximately \$13 billion to B.C.'s economy. B.C.'s renewable forest products are in demand globally and are providing carbon-friendly building solutions in the U.S., Japan, China, South Korea, India and southeast Asia.

Wood is a renewable resource, which means that it can be replenished and grown over time. This is in contrast to other building materials, like steel or concrete, which are labour intensive and whose production create higher emissions. By building with wood, we can reduce our dependence on non-renewable resources, and in turn, reduce our carbon footprint. Carbon remains stored in wood products for the lifetime of the product. Is this not a prime example of a climate action plan rather than a carbon tax plan?

By building with wood, we can reduce our dependence on non-renewable resources and in turn, as I mentioned, reduce our carbon footprint. Fortunately, Canada is home to 9% of the world's forests, which have the ability to act as enormous carbon sinks by absorbing and storing carbon. Each year, our forest companies invest millions of dollars in new technology. In fact, between 2010 and 2019, B.C.'s forestry companies invested over \$14 billion in their operations and in developing new sustainable technology. They are leading the way in sustainable forest practices.

Annually, Canada harvests less than one-half of 1% of its forest land, allowing for the forest coverage to remain constant for the last century. In B.C., for every tree we harvest, we plant three to six trees. Since 2020, over 300 million trees have been planted.

Canada has some of the strictest forest management regulations in the world, requiring successful regeneration after public forests are harvested. Not only is wood a renewable resource, but it is also one of the few materials that is truly biodegradable. When a wood-framed home reaches the end of its useful life, it can be easily recycled or repurposed. In contrast, many other materials used in construction, such as plastics or vinyl, can take hundreds, if not thousands of years to decompose, filling up landfills and polluting our environment. Wood, lumber and other forest products are not only a sustainable construction option that cut our ecological footprint, but they are all vital economic contributors to my riding of Cariboo—Prince George.

The Cariboo region was at one time British Columbia's largest producer in the province. However, I am not sure we can say that anymore. In 2019, the Cariboo was home to 21 lumber mills; seven pulp and paper mills; six OSB plywood, veneer and panel plants; five chip mills; three pole and utility producers; three pellet producers—

• (1725)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Unfortunately, I have to stop the hon. member for a minute. There seems to be a problem with the headset. Either it is not plugged in properly or the wrong headset is selected on the computer. Can the hon. member maybe unhook his headset and plug it back in?

The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George can continue.

• (1730)

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Speaker, the Cariboo region was at one time British Columbia's largest lumber-producing region; however, I am not sure we can say that anymore. The forestry industry is a vital sector not only for Cariboo—Prince George but for the Canadian economy, supporting thousands of jobs in countless communities across our country and creating many positive spinoff effects in related industries and services. At one time, over 200,000 jobs in my province were directly and indirectly forestry-related.

My wife and I are both products of the forestry and farming industry. As a young man in the Cariboo Chilcotin, I actually drove a skidder and loader and tied chokers. I also ran a chainsaw as a buckerman. I know first-hand how important this industry is to our region and to our country.

However, Canada's forestry industry has been hindered by unfair trade policies and tariffs imposed on Canadian producers by the U.S. government, which has negatively impacted both Canadian and American businesses and consumers. Our industry has been negatively hit by wildfires and infestations of the pine and fir beetle, which have absolutely devastated our forests. Reductions in annual allowable cuts were necessary. Ongoing rail transportation challenges and our own governments' policies, both provincial and federal, have led to B.C. and Canada being increasingly uncompetitive and costly.

In recent years, British Columbia has been hit hard by mill closures. The shutdowns have caused significant economic disruption and job losses in small communities throughout our province. These closures are punching a hole in the fabric of rural B.C.

Just recently, the Canfor lumber plant in Houston closed, eliminating 300 jobs. The Canfor lumber plant in Chetwynd closed and eliminated 160 jobs. Production curtailments are all too numerous to count. Most recently, it was announced that the Canfor pulp mill in my community of Prince George will be permanently closing, eliminating 300 jobs, which will have a profound impact on families and the local economy. For the approximately 300 people losing their jobs, families will have to struggle to make ends meet.

*Private Members' Business*

This closure will also have a ripple effect on the wider community, with local businesses and service providers also feeling the pinch. I cannot even begin to tell members what a heartbreaking loss this is for our community, with 300 good-paying jobs lost, jobs that employed husbands and wives, multiple generations and young people just starting out their careers. Beyond the economic impact, let us remember that these are leaders in our community who volunteer to coach sports and lead groups such as Scouts, Cadets and Brownies, or who show up to volunteer for events like the Canadian Cancer Society 24-hour relay, which just last week announced that, after 30 years, it is not returning to Prince George.

This is just another devastating mill closure in my community in an industry that has faced a never-ending series of setbacks. In addition to permanent closures, there are some mills that close temporarily, like the Cariboo Pulp & Paper mill in Quesnel. The closures and curtailments have further compounded the economic challenges facing the region and have left many families and businesses struggling to cope.

Beyond the ongoing tariff pressures, the U.S. is doing everything it can to support its lumber producers. In the U.S., decarbonization tax credits and subsidies are available through the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act, and its buy American federal procurement policy ensures that Canadian softwood lumber is being left behind. How are we helping our lumber producers to compete with our American neighbours? Is it by tripling the carbon tax? I do not think so. We as a country need to do more to support our Canadian lumber industry.

It is important to note that Canadian softwood lumber is not just a cost-effective option, but also a high-quality product. The softwood lumber industry builds and supports our communities, and it can build our federal buildings.

In conclusion, I am so happy to support the legislation from my colleague from British Columbia. The benefits of using Canadian softwood lumber are definitely clear.

• (1735)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Madam Speaker, on this Valentine's Day, I would like to celebrate a little event. My precious daughter, Sarah, who already has one son with my son-in-law, Simon, is pregnant. I just found out it is a girl, and I am so happy. Congratulations to them. They are an amazing couple.

Also, on this Valentine's Day, as I am destined not to spend my evening in better company, I will declare my love for forests, a priceless resource for all Quebecers and Canadians to enjoy and benefit from.

The title of Bill S-222 is an act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act. This bill is about the use of wood, and it is sponsored by former senator Diane F. Griffin of PEI. It went through first reading in the Senate on November 24, 2021, and is now at second reading in the House. It amends section 7 of the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act by adding the following after subsection 1:

In developing requirements with respect to the construction, maintenance and repair of public works, federal real property and federal immovables, the Minister shall consider any potential reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and any other

environmental benefits and may allow the use of wood or any other thing — including a material, product or sustainable resource — that achieves such benefits.

In short, Bill S-222 encourages the federal government to support the forestry industry in reducing its carbon footprint. As a tireless advocate for the Quebec forestry industry, the Bloc Québécois will obviously be voting in favour of this bill.

In fact, the Bloc Québécois has proposed similar legislative measures in the past, although ours may have had more teeth. That was the case in 2010 with Bill C-429, sponsored by the former member for Manicouagan, Gérard Asselin. It was also the case in 2014 with Bill C-574, which was introduced by the member for Jonquière—Alma, Claude Patry. Unfortunately, each time, the Conservatives and the NDP voted down these bills.

If Quebec were a country—it is a nation, but a country in the making—our 900,000 square kilometres of forest would rank us sixth in the world in terms of total forested area. Economically, Quebec's forests represent 57,000 jobs, \$12 billion in exports and a contribution of \$6 billion per year to Quebec's GDP. Underestimating this wealth would obviously be a huge mistake.

With the decline of pulp and paper, modernizing the wood industry is obviously important and it is becoming increasingly so. The federal government has a huge opportunity right now to contribute to the revitalization of secondary and tertiary processing sectors in so-called weakened communities.

By secondary and tertiary processing, I am referring in particular to woodworking products and mass timber construction. Some of the world's leaders in the design and manufacture of wood buildings are located in Quebec. Chantiers Chibougamau and its Nordic Structures division come to mind. Although these businesses still do work in Quebec and Canada, their order books are largely filled by U.S. customers.

• (1740)

The Canadian government must stop dragging its feet. It needs to start encouraging the wood building industry in residential construction here.

On another note, I would remind the House that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC, has recommended increasing the use of wood in non-residential construction in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help fight climate change.

Wood products can easily replace synthetic materials from the petrochemical industry that have a huge carbon footprint. Transforming wood is a more energy-efficient process that lowers emissions by one tonne of carbon dioxide per cubic metre of wood.

Once processed, wood remains a living material. On average, every single cubic metre of wood captures an additional tonne of carbon dioxide. For example, a building constructed using 80 cubic metres of wood can store 80 tonnes of carbon dioxide during its lifetime, which is equivalent to the emissions released by driving a car for a decade. Imagine the savings for an entire building stock.

The forestry sector is probably the industry that is best positioned to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and capture carbon already in the atmosphere. Meanwhile, between 2017 and 2020, Canada's oil and gas sector received \$23 billion in taxpayer subsidies. For the same period, Canada's forestry sector received only \$952 million. I would also like to point out that, at their last convention, the Liberals rejected a resolution calling for an end to public funding for fossil fuels. That is pretty weak.

Luckily, the Bloc Québécois will continue to fight for a dynamic forestry sector that focuses on preserving biodiversity, encourages innovation and diversification, and generates wealth.

In this regard, I would like to congratulate my friends and colleagues from Jonquière and Lac-Saint-Jean for their exemplary work on this file. Since 2019, they have undertaken numerous initiatives to bring together all the stakeholders and propose meaningful solutions.

In 2021, the Bloc Québécois developed a four-part road map to maximize forests' potential. First, the federal government could “implement a public procurement policy that would encourage the use of wood products, including establishing the carbon footprint as a criterion for awarding contracts”.

Second, the Bloc Québécois recommends “increasing budgets for basic research and to develop a value chain for the secondary and tertiary transformation of forest resources”.

Third, we suggest protecting exports of lumber from Quebec to the United States, our principal trading partner.

Fourth, we want to find ways to boost productivity tied to annual growth.

That is why my colleagues and I will vote in favour of Bill S-222.

On this day, February 14, my wish is for the government to show the forestry sector a little love, to help keep jobs in our regions and to fight climate change. It has to stop ignoring that and instead be part of the solution.

Happy St. Valentine's day to everyone.

● (1745)

[English]

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, I rise for the last time today, on national Have a Heart Day.

Before I begin, I wish safe travels to all of the delegates who attended the Northern Lights trade show here in Ottawa last week. It is an important event that promotes the great work that Nunavummiut are doing to support Canada's economy. It is a great event to showcase the beauty and talent that artisans from the NWT, Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut have.

### *Private Members' Business*

I extend my congratulations to all the participants and winners of the Arctic Winter Games in Woodland, Alberta. I have heard great stories of triumph, heartache and celebration. I thank the volunteers who have devoted their time to the success of youth to achieve their best in such events.

I thank my NDP colleague, the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay for sponsoring Bill S-222 in this place. It is a step in the right direction to help eliminate greenhouse gas emissions. The government has the responsibility to do its part. We must all do our part to reduce emissions. We must all do our part to protect the environment. This bill, while short, has important implications. There must be a fine balance between keeping forests and reducing reliance on harmful materials.

Over the last 20 years, I have driven back and forth between Ottawa and New Brunswick to visit family. I have noticed major changes over those 20 years. Roads have improved. Communities have grown, and forests of trees have been decimated. Although I know that I cannot live in remote wooded areas for long periods of time, I know how important trees are. I know that we must find solutions to replacing harmful products, such as plastics and other materials known to accelerate climate change.

As Canadian businesses and organizations are shifting to more sustainable practices, this bill helps to ensure that the federal government will work toward those concerns. We are often asked to stretch the limits of our knowledge to learn about important issues that constituents are concerned about. In this speech, I stretch my limits in attempting to understand how mainstream society consumes resources.

The aim of this bill is to allow the federal government to use wood for improvements to infrastructure. By using wood in the repair and building of federal infrastructure projects, Canadian businesses can be better supported. In 2013, production in the forest sector contributed \$19.8 billion, or 1.25% to Canada's real gross domestic product. With the decline of the forestry industry in recent years, there is an opportunity to revitalize this sector while protecting the environment.

In my riding, although we are not manufacturing wood, families rely on wood for homes, heating and other projects. We rely very much on the import of wood from our neighbours to the south. I use this seat to make sure that concerns are brought forward, my constituents' questions are answered and their needs are met.

*Private Members' Business*

As the critic to Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, my job is to amplify the voices and the concerns that indigenous peoples have. I meet with indigenous communities, chiefs, elders and advocates who are asking the government to listen and take meaningful action to repair the damage it has done. This is important work, but the government must also stretch itself. It needs to be putting in the hard work to make sure Canadians are heard and this is acted upon.

In Budget 2017, the government provided Natural Resources Canada with \$39.8 million over four years, starting in 2018–19, to support projects and activities that increase the use of wood as a greener substitute material in infrastructure projects. We are calling on the government to make good on its promises and be true to its word.

• (1750)

This is important, especially in the context of the federal government's relationship with the indigenous peoples of Canada. The government has promised to protect indigenous people's lands, consult with indigenous communities and work toward reconciliation. Too often, this does not occur. The government must take the issues being raised by Canadians more seriously. The government has promised greener solutions to address climate change.

All too often, I have watched the government break promises it has made to indigenous peoples and to Canadians. All too often, the government has taken minimal or incremental steps that improve the lives of indigenous peoples. The Liberal government has said that there is no relationship more important than that with indigenous peoples. Protecting and upholding indigenous people's rights is a responsibility of the government.

The bill is silent on this important matter. How will indigenous people's rights be respected? How will this amendment increase tenure for first nations communities? How will first nations management be guaranteed?

It is my hope that amendments will be made to acknowledge that Canada is founded on indigenous people's lands, and provisions must account for that. As Canada continues to work toward a better future, indigenous people must be heard and their land rights must be upheld.

Indigenous governance and management must be included. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples must be included. No development of any kind should exclude the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous people.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill S-222 this afternoon. I think what would come as a surprise to a good number of people is the degree to which wood is being utilized as a building component, especially for people—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** There seem to be a lot of conversations happening and individuals making comments. I would ask members who are having conversations to take them outside. If anybody is looking to make comments, unfortunately there are no questions and comments during this period of Private Members' Business. I would ask people to listen intently instead.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate it. I know the member for Abbotsford, who has been looking forward to my speech on this issue today, really appreciates it too, because he wants to digest, no doubt, every word that I am sharing with him. After all, if we take a look at the environment of Abbotsford, I suspect we will find that the wood and timber industry is of critical importance. I know the member for Abbotsford knows full well the significance of the wood industry to the province of British Columbia. In fact, as a former minister of Stephen Harper, he can relate, I am sure, to the many different types of trade issues related to our softwood industry.

**Mr. Clifford Small:** A wonderful prime minister.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Well, whether he was a good prime minister is a debatable issue, but that is for another day.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I would ask the hon. parliamentary secretary to get to his speech, and I would ask other members to please keep their thoughts to themselves at this point in time.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, my apologies to the member for Abbotsford for getting a little off topic there, too.

My first experience in dealing with wood in a substantial way, which goes beyond the general framing of a house in Winnipeg, is when I had actually bought a home on Burrows Avenue. I went into the home. We had to replace some drywall. Instead of a concrete foundation, it was actually a wood foundation. It was a bit of an eye-opener for me. I am somewhat familiar with the construction industry. I have family members who have been doing it for many years.

A thought that crosses my mind right away when I touch a wood foundation versus a concrete foundation is there is a far better insulation value. If one is from a city like Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary or Regina, out in the Prairies, insulation value is quite important. If members were to do a Google search, which I have, they would find, to the surprise of many, how skyscrapers are actually now being made. Someone made reference to a wooden structure of eight floors. In Wisconsin, there is a 25-storey timber building. In Canada, if we look at British Columbia, by UBC, I believe it is called the Brock Commons. It is an 18-storey complex.

More and more, we are seeing wood being used in these taller buildings. I believe it is a vastly underestimated potential for Canada's wood industry. Like others, I have had the chance to travel abroad. Often in the countries I have visited, we do not see wood being utilized as we would here in North America. I believe that it speaks volumes to the potential markets out there if one could really get out there and communicate the advantages of wood over other products.

*Private Members' Business*

We have talked a great deal about the transition to a greener economy. When we think of that greener economy, a big part of it is within the construction industry itself. As we see our wood industry grow at least in part, recognizing the potential of that growth and talking about it would add even that much more value to it.

This is not the first time that we have had this type of legislation come to the floor of the House of Commons. Some have already made reference to, I believe, Bill C-354, which went through a while ago, passing in the House of Commons. It was the election in 2019 that killed the bill because it did not quite get through the Senate. It bodes well, in terms of where we are today, talking about Bill S-222. Within that legislation, given the very nature of the fact that it is originating from the Senate, and we have seen the wide support from a previous House, where members on all sides saw the value of supporting it, I suspect that Bill S-222 would in fact be able to pass the House, and ultimately receive royal assent. That is a very strong positive.

• (1755)

As I said, there is nothing new, from a government perspective, in dealing with the environment and having a greener transition, because I think it fits what we have been talking about. We have seen a number of legislative and budgetary measures to support a greener economy.

I am thinking of those magnificent timbers, beams, one-by-threes for sidings, two-by-fours and, nowadays, two-by-sixes that are being used in many of the construction codes for exterior walls, for example. We have seen far more opportunities in recent years. As building codes continue to evolve and give more strength, I believe we will see that the demand for wood will continue to increase.

At the end of the day we do want to see a reduction in greenhouse emissions, and the bill would support that in principle, because of the product itself, a product that is renewable. Someone made reference to the province of B.C., where one tree comes down and three are planted in its place. We have a commitment to plant two billion trees, coming from our government. Many of those trees are going to be planted within our cities to provide beautiful lush green canopies over our municipalities, cities and communities, but a good number of trees we see that are planted today are there so that we can ensure that we can continue to harvest.

We have heard a great deal about British Columbia, and we do not want to give the impression that it is the only place where there is an industry of that nature, because one could easily talk about hardwoods and others that go from Ontario to Quebec and a couple of the Atlantic provinces, where there is very much a healthy industry, and that is not to say my own home province of Manitoba does not have great potential in the development in that industry.

I think that, in looking at the bill, we see sustainable forest management. We see a government that is committed to greening federal buildings, whether it is by retrofitting, building new or just completing repairs, and what the legislation would do is allow the minister to recommend wood usage, not necessarily compel it, but recommend it.

• (1800)

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** Madam Speaker, as always, it is an honour to rise to debate important legislation in the House.

I hope, Madam Speaker, that you will give me a bit of latitude to start my intervention with an acknowledgement that it is Valentine's Day. I am not sure if she is watching, but to Danielle, I say that I love her and wish her a very happy Valentine's Day. Although we cannot be together in person, I so much appreciate her partnership, all the work that she does and what we are able to do as a family. I love my sweetheart. With that, I will get back to the subject at hand.

The topic of wood builds is certainly an interesting conversation, and one might ask how this prairie member of Parliament is speaking to it. Speaking of my wife, one of the things she commented on when she first came to visit me on my family farm shortly after we got together was that there was a lack of trees. Especially compared to northern Saskatchewan, where she hails from, there were very, very few trees in the area. However, it is certainly an interesting subject of conversation, when we look at the architecture and the advancement that has taken place in the space of what wood builds can mean for both architecture and city planning and also for the benefit of the environment.

Bill S-222 is intended to help level the playing field in procurement where traditionally wood construction would not have been a feasible part of the typical procurement process. Bill S-222 acknowledges an evolution that has taken place in the building codes and in a type of engineered construction. In fact, an architect or even a home builder would not even call them "wood builds". They would be called engineered builds because a significant amount of work goes into creating the products, wood-based in most cases, that go into these new buildings.

Therefore, what Bill S-222 endeavours to accomplish is to simply level the playing field. Certainly as Conservatives, we look forward to those. When going through the procurement process, one would pick the best, most cost effective and environmentally friendly procurement option. In this case, when it comes to the construction of public buildings, one wants to ensure that the procurement process is followed and that it is giving the best value to taxpayers. However, to include wood in the process is, I would suggest, a positive step in the right direction, which could very well provide that significant value to taxpayers.

Let me provide a couple of examples. Many people will look at the architecture that one associates with the Lower Mainland in B.C. I happened to go to university in Langley, B.C., at Trinity Western University. It is interesting, as I follow back to some of the developments that took place.

*Private Members' Business*

The City of Vancouver is now allowing up to 40-storey construction projects using engineered wood building. Previously, it was limited to 20 storeys, so that is a significant advancement compared to what was allowed before. We have seen the technology allowing for this, especially in a place like Vancouver, where they have to take into account seismic activity, high moisture levels and the various associated challenges that are involved with building in the Lower Mainland in what is essentially a rainforest. We are seeing that tremendous opportunity exists, and not only can it be good for the environment but it can also be very cost-effective. One of the potential benefits of wood construction is that it can be fast.

I would like to highlight my alma mater. A new dormitory was required, and it was built via wood frame construction in nine months to house a few hundred students. This new building, a modern facility to house students, was built in nine months using wood frame construction, which is something that simply would not be possible using more traditional methods.

● (1805)

This speaks to some of the incredible technologies being advanced in this space that allow for this conversation to take place. If we were to ask most engineers, they would share that many years ago, this would not have been possible in an engineering sense. The risk would have been too great to have a building built out of wood that went beyond what traditionally would have been a five-, six- or maybe 10-storey building. However, because of the advancements in technology, we have seen approval for a building of up to 40 storeys. It is a natural evolution of our technology and engineering capacity to allow public procurement and the construction of publicly owned buildings by the federal government to include wood construction as an option.

When it comes to the idea of using natural products, I will conclude my remarks by mentioning one of the bits of history associated with natural products being used for construction. It is the idea of sod houses. Many in this place will know about my affinity for the history of the area I represent, the history of the lands where my family has farmed for five generations. I think it is probably the most beautiful part of the country. There are beautiful prairies, coulees and wide open skies, and incredible geography, geology and history associated with that, from indigenous history to that of some of the early pioneers who set up in what was a very inhospitable place.

I would draw everyone's attention to one of the earliest examples of using natural products to build houses, and that is sod houses. For those who may not be aware, when early settlers came here and the west was opening up to pioneers, many who came from various parts of the world came to a place where there were no trees. They were poor farmers, workers and labourers who in many cases had escaped some very difficult circumstances. They were left with very limited supplies to build a home.

There are some examples of this. In fact, not far from where I farm, there is a pothole in the ground where there was a sod home. We can see a bit of what is left there. It speaks to some of the incredible history of the Prairies and how those who pioneered the way make up our country's history. In many cases, they learned from the indigenous folks who preceded them. There are incredible

stories about the architecture of sod houses built more than a century ago, and now we are discussing in Canada's Parliament the use of natural products, engineered wood products, for public construction.

I appreciate the opportunity to engage in debate on this bill. I encourage members to look into the history associated with sod houses and the neat little anecdotes it speaks to. It is a neat part of who we are as Canadians.

● (1810)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I will begin my speech by wishing my wife a happy Valentine's Day. As usual, we are debating an important bill. We never waste any time. We always do constructive things and get results in the House. Unfortunately, I am obligated to stay here and I cannot be with my wife, so I want to wish her a happy Valentine's Day.

It is the busiest time of day here in the House, a great time to speak because there are always so many people, so that is nice.

I used to work in theatre, where there is an unwritten rule. Obviously, I am not talking about Broadway, where the theatres are always full. I am talking about Montreal theatre. The unwritten rule is that there must always be more people in the audience than on stage. Otherwise, the show is cancelled. I can say that I once had to cancel a show when there were only two actors on stage, which might give my colleagues an idea of the situation. That time, it was a complete flop.

Obviously, I am pleased to speak to this subject because last week I rose to speak to the Conservative motion, which has come back today. It is always interesting with the Conservatives. They do one thing and then repeat the same thing the following week. The motion was on the carbon tax and I had the opportunity to say that it was not a good idea to cancel the carbon tax.

In Quebec, we have solutions and wood is part of the solution. Wood is very important. It is an integral part of our culture. It is omnipresent in our economy, in our recreation, in our concern for the environment, in our culture and even in our language. In Quebec, we talk about forest capital. It is important. We create infrastructure to be able to leverage the benefits of this forest and we work very hard for that.

My colleague was saying earlier that there are no trees in his riding. There are trees in Quebec. That is not a problem. The forest sector is even a big part of our conversations, because in Quebec we say that we heat with wood and eat Yule logs. It is important.

There is a Quebec expression that I do not know how my friends, the interpreters, are going to translate: *Swing la baccasse dans l'fond de la boîte à bois*, or swing your logs into the wood bin, which actually means leave your work behind and join the party. The forest is very important in Quebec. We even say that we walk in the woods. I do not know if this translates well in English, but when children resemble their parents, we say that the fruit does not fall far from the tree.

There is another important aspect. The first Quebeckers discovered this continent and travelled around it. What is the U.S. Midwest today was actually discovered by Quebeckers, the *coureurs de bois*.

Let us get back to Bill S-222.

The Bloc Québécois has long been committed to promoting the forestry sector and to upgrading forestry products. We have long been proposing that the federal government use its procurement policy to support the lumber industry, a key sector for Quebec. For years, we have been requesting that the Quebec forestry sector, and not just the oil industry, get its fair share of federal investments. Last year, the Liberals gave \$8.5 billion in direct and indirect aid to the oil industry. That is completely outrageous. The UN said it was time to put an end to fossil fuel investments, and the Liberals invest \$8.5 billion. That is more than the Conservatives invested back in the day.

We also believe that federal support should start with a public procurement policy that promotes the use of wood products. This industry needs to be promoted rather than the focus always going to the Ontario auto industry or the Alberta oil and gas industry.

The use of wood in construction is on the rise, and wood is recognized for its contribution to fighting climate change. The choice of wood as a construction material is significant. It is a local, sustainable and renewable resource. A life-cycle assessment of wood shows it has an exceptional environmental performance.

Quebec already has a strategy. We already have a national lumber strategy and a policy for integrating wood into construction. Now it is up to the Government of Canada to contribute.

In September 2020, the Bloc Québécois presented its green recovery plan, in which we talked a lot about wood. In April 2021, the Bloc Québécois even organized a forum in Trois-Rivières under the theme “forests and climate change”. That is important. Later, the Bloc Québécois announced a vast study on the economic and environmental optimization of the forestry sector.

• (1815)

That is important. We even made eight proposals to the federal government. We are not always criticizing. We have constructive proposals to maximize the potential of Quebec's forests. The Bloc Québécois has even proposed a road map—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Unfortunately, I have to interrupt the member to give right of reply.

[English]

The hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay has five minutes for his right of reply.

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it being Valentine's Day, I do want to send my love to my wife, Margaret, at home in Penticton. She texted me last week reminding me that it was our wedding anniversary, so I have some ground to make up when I get home next week.

I rise in reply to the debate on Bill S-222, a bill that comes to us from the Senate, but originated as my private member's bill, Bill C-354 in the 42nd Parliament, and has been mentioned before that.

### *Private Members' Business*

There was a version that was a Bloc Québécois bill earlier than that.

I would like to thank Senator Diane Griffin for introducing this bill in the other place and Senator Jim Quinn for carrying the torch after Senator Griffin retired last year.

This bill has been on a long journey to get here and it is gratifying to see the strong support it is getting from all sides of the House. I wanted to say I especially enjoyed the enthusiastic support that I was getting from the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert when he was unfortunately interrupted. I was enjoying that discourse.

This is truly a piece of legislation whose time and place has come. This is a bill that simply asks the minister of public works to consider the environmental benefits of building materials when creating federal infrastructure.

The built environment represents up to 40% of our greenhouse gas emissions, and one key component of those emissions, and the opportunity to reduce them, lies in the choice of building materials. Wood and especially the new technologies of creating mass timber or engineered wood are an excellent example.

Wood contains huge amounts of sequestered carbon. If it is harvested properly and sustainably, and used to create long-lasting building products, it can be a very valuable tool in our fight against climate change. I would like to acknowledge my colleague from Nunavut, who mentioned that this has to be developed and harvested considering the rights of indigenous peoples across the country.

I was inspired to bring this bill forward in 2016 by a company in my riding called Structurlam. Structurlam has been the leading manufacturer of mass timber in North America for many years. In Quebec, we have Chantiers Chibougamau, which has been leading that industry in eastern North America for the most part.

I see the member for Abbotsford is here and I have to mention StructureCraft, a company in his riding, that is producing similar materials. Just recently, we added another major supplier of mass timber with the Kalesnikoff family, who are building a very large modern facility in South Slokan in my riding.

These facilities are creating glulam timbers and cross-laminated timber panels that, in turn, are producing large, beautiful and safe buildings that are not only functional, but are also sequestering large amounts of carbon.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

They are also providing relief for the Canadian forestry industry, which has been struggling through firestorms, beetle epidemics, illegal tariffs and a shrinking available harvest. With mass timber, we will have more jobs and added value for each tree we cut. We need to support this sector in Canada.

This bill does not exclude other building materials. The cement industry is developing new technologies that sequester carbon. The steel industry is developing new technologies that make steel production greener.

When the minister looks at the life-cycle analyses for each of these products, and those analyses are already being developed by the federal government, this bill would make sure that government procurement creates a significant environmental benefit.

Government procurement could also ensure that Canada remains a leader in the mass timber sector. It would allow new facilities to grow and prosper, creating jobs and providing a new domestic market for lumber in a time when our major trading partner to the south is doubling down on protectionism. Government procurement, guided by this small bill, could spur innovation in the cement and steel sectors.

I want to thank everyone who spoke to this bill. This bill would be a simple but significantly important step in our fight against climate change. We would also have beautiful buildings that would last generations.

• (1820)

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** It being 6:30 p.m., the time provided for debate has expired.

[*English*]

Accordingly, the question is on the motion.

[*Translation*]

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division or wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[*English*]

**Mr. Richard Cannings:** Madam Speaker, I would ask for a recorded division.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Pursuant to an order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 15, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

### CARBON PRICING

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Madam Speaker, on November 25, I asked a question of the government in the House about the repeal of the carbon tax. It was based on what was happening around the world, as the world's economies became more stressed due to the economic insecurity brought about by higher energy prices around the world. I got a response from the associate minister of finance. I do not know why he has that title, but he is the member for Edmonton Centre. His song and dance in the House of Commons was a little bit of an embarrassment, which I have been told many times by Canadians who have watched the actual exchange. I apologize to them, but that is what question period has become at this point in time, where people do not actually get answers to real questions that are asked. However, let us be serious. I am going to ask the parliamentary secretary to respond to my question tonight.

The world is facing an energy problem based on CO<sub>2</sub>. Countries are withdrawing their CO<sub>2</sub> taxes and actually giving money to their citizens and industries to deal with the energy insecurity that is happening around the world, because they are short of energy, and this started for a number of reasons. However, the costs have gone up, and total subsidization in Europe at this point in time, over the last year, has amounted to over 800 billion euros. This is not what was collected from carbon taxes; this is subsidizing citizens for their energy expenses at this point in time, because the energy costs have gone so high.

So, Europe is withdrawing taxes and actually subsidizing its citizens. Canada is on a different course, where we are actually going to increase energy taxes on Canadians.

This is exemplified probably the most by Germany. It had a policy called *Energiewende*, which was a dramatic failure. It was a dramatic failure because the whole thing about renewable energy is that, at times, it was producing only about 2% of the electricity required in Germany, and the rest was coming from fossil fuels, primarily coal, a tiny bit of nuclear and a lot of gas. It was doubling down on gas, and 80% of it was going to come from the Nord Stream pipelines from Russia. Of course, when the war happened, that supply disappeared.

So, cap in hand, Germany comes to Canada this past summer and asks Canada to fill its needs. What did our Prime Minister say? He said there was no business case for natural gas delivery from Canada. Well, he was immediately contradicted by every business leader in Canada. The end result, of course, is that Germany goes and buys its long-term natural gas from Qatar, which is one of the world leaders in this and one of the countries that have actually out-paced Canada in developing this energy source greener than coal. I will note that many countries are going back to coal now, which is much more punishing to the environment than natural gas.



*Adjournment Proceedings*

Japan arrived here, just last month, and said, “Can you please get us some more natural gas, because we need it in our energy mix? We’re trying to decarbonize with more natural gas.” It was the same answer from this country’s Prime Minister: “We cannot help you.” Well, that is an embarrassment.

Our allies are asking for our help to deal with their energy insecurity, and we Canadians are ignoring them because the government will not accept the reality. It interrupts the government’s domestic agenda to shed energy-intensive jobs, not just oil and gas, but fertilizer, agriculture, steel, cement, mining and materials, and manufacturing. These are all being done offshore now. We are pushing them offshore because of bad economic policies in this country. We are failing Canadians. The end result is clear: We are going to fail them further.

Will somebody on the government side of the House, and I do not know who it is at this point in time, stand up and address what the real answer is, and please be transparent with Canadians about the cost that is being thrust upon them as they lose their jobs?

• (1825)

**Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to take a brief moment to wish my wife Ravi and my two daughters Nova and Solar a very happy Valentine’s Day.

As a Valentine’s Day gift to my friend from Calgary Centre, I have prepared a record of speeches I have given on the subject of global inflation and carbon pricing in the last five months. Starting in 2022, we have September 20, September 27, October 25 and 26, November 14, November 29 and December 5. I would also reference January 31, which was just over two weeks ago. If he is interested in reviewing those 16 speeches, I would be happy to answer any further questions he might have.

I also think it is important for my friend’s constituents to know that even though his Conservative Party refused to pass a resolution acknowledging that climate change is real, he in fact campaigned for a price on pollution just in the last election. Unlike our government’s plan, which is revenue-neutral, fights climate change and makes life more affordable for eight out of 10 Canadian families, his plan actually cost more, did less and forced all Canadians to adopt a government-controlled bank account where his Conservative Party would dictate what they could or could not spend their money on. I know that all sounds outrageous, but it is also very real and I encourage all residents of Calgary Centre to look it up.

Inflation is also real and it is important that we take action to reduce it. My friend probably wants us to think that the main cause is our revenue-neutral price on pollution, but that does not really pass the smell test.

In British Columbia, we have had a price on pollution since 2008. It has been provincially administered. Where was the record inflation in 2009 to 2020, etc.? In fact, if we look at B.C. generally, we were not only the first province to implement a price on pollution, we had the fastest-growing economy in the country at the same time. Part of that story is that clean-tech companies are disproportionately located in British Columbia. This has created thousands of good, high-paying, sustainable jobs and generates billions

of dollars in annual revenue. I think those same sustainable jobs can grow just as quickly in Alberta as well.

In 2019, more than three years ago, the price on pollution added 9¢ to a litre of gas in British Columbia. Today it is 11¢. That is an increase of 2¢ per litre over the last three years. Of course, gas prices have surged more than a dollar per litre at the same time. My friend wants us to believe that increase is tied to pricing pollution, but he ignores 98% of the real problem. He ignores the effects of the pandemic and Putin’s illegal war in Ukraine.

I understand the desire of Conservatives to ignore what is happening in the world of global inflation, but the truth is that Canada’s inflation rate is 6.3%, which is lower than the U.S., Europe and the OECD countries. It is still too high of course. That is why we are putting in place programs that help make life more affordable for Canadians. Our affordability program has already provided supports to seniors, students and families who need it the most. Sadly, Conservatives are trying to take those supports away. In fact, they are putting pressure on the government to take pension money away from seniors, to take child care away from parents, to take the CBC away from Canadians and to take dental care away from poor children under the age of 12.

The problem with ignoring the facts or making improper assumptions is that it usually forces us to make bad policy decisions. I suspect that is what is happening within the caucus of the official opposition and the reason why contemporary Conservative policy is so reckless.

• (1830)

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the narrative, although I do not think there was a response at all to my question.

In fact, with respect to the narrative about the Parliamentary Budget Office and how much Canadians are paying, I think he should read that report, because it shows that in my province alone the net fiscal economic effects are over \$2,000 on average per family. I encourage him to read it, and to actually read it on the floor of the House of Commons, but I know he will not do that.

I know the narrative here. It is that we are doing better, that we are charging Canadians more, that they are paying more for everything, but that we should not worry about it because it is not the government’s fault, but the fault lies somewhere else in the world.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

We are moving jobs offshore consistently in this country. The reality that the current government seems to try to skid over here is that carbon taxes, if applied on their own, are designed to be inflationary. They make everything cost more. That is their effect. If the member would like to address how this is the reality versus what the intended outcome is, I would be happy to hear it, but right now the end is meeting exactly what it is supposed to be doing.

**Mr. Terry Beech:** Madam Speaker, Canadians can count on our government to continue supporting those who need it the most while carefully managing our finances and protecting our environment. We have a responsible fiscal plan, the lowest net debt and deficit in the G7, and an AAA credit rating. We have created more than 800,000 jobs since the pandemic.

As we prepare for the federal budget, Canadians can rest assured that we will continue to position Canada for success while ensuring that our most vulnerable get the support they need and keeping our finances on a sustainable, long-term fiscal track.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am here tonight to re-address a question that I asked last week in the House on Afghans and Afghan interpreters, those Afghans who helped Canada during our mission there, and what the current Liberal government is doing to help them out.

In particular, I was asking on behalf of Abdullah, who has actually been here, about what they were doing to help his family, who were approved eight months or so ago to come to Canada, yet nothing has happened.

His brother is now feared missing and presumed dead. My question to the government then was as follows: How many more Afghans such as Abdullah's brother need to die before the government will take urgent action?

I want to emphasize why this is so important. I spent over a year of my life in Afghanistan. I have seen, first-hand, the horrific actions of the Taliban. I apologize, in advance, to anybody listening about some of the graphic details I am going to share, such as a father and son beheaded and hung because they helped the local Afghan police during my time there in 2007, and young girls with acid thrown in their face because they dared go to school.

We have seen now, since the Taliban has retaken the country, that it is not allowing women and girls to go to university and, just in the last couple of months, any school at all. It has taken away those rights. It is persecuting religious minorities, ethnic minorities, women, 2SLGBTQ+ groups and, in particular, it is targeting women members of parliament from the former Afghanistan government, former Afghan judges and those Afghans who chose to help us help them during our decade-plus in that country.

Why is this so important? If we are unwilling, as a nation, to help these Afghans, or those from any country we travel to and where we depend upon them to achieve our missions, whether it be military, whether it be diplomatic or whether it be Canadian NGOs working in those nations, and then we leave them behind when things go sideways, that speaks to who we are as a nation and what we think of those people we are supposedly trying to help.

I will predict what I am going to hear from the parliamentary secretary here shortly. She will talk about how they have accepted 27,000 Afghans here into Canada. My question is this: Out of the 27,000, how many of them were already outside of Afghanistan, already in relative safety? I am not saying that we should not be helping them out, those who were able to flee the country, but my primary concern is about those Afghans still in Afghanistan.

We are going to hear about the challenges, logistical and security challenges. I will continue to call BS on that. I talk on a daily basis, or a weekly basis, with former colleagues and NGOs that are moving Afghans and Ukrainians out of these respective countries, out of war zones, and they can get it done very, very quickly.

I will close with two simple questions. How many more Afghans need to die before the government takes action? When can Parliament expect an update from the government on the 37 recommendations, and the progress that the Liberal government has made them, that came out of the Special Committee on Afghanistan?

● (1835)

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his passion and service. He is very engaged and, as I understand, has a very personal commitment to vulnerable Afghans. We do not always align in our ideology, but I think it is important for Canadians everywhere to see that when it comes to unwavering support for Afghanistan, we are on the same side.

Canada's commitment to Afghanistan represents one of the most difficult and the largest resettlement initiatives in Canadian history. We are steadfast in our promise to support those who served alongside Canada during the military operation in Afghanistan, as well as those who were working with our diplomatic missions. I am proud that Canada has one of the largest Afghan resettlement programs in the world and was among the first countries in the world to launch a special humanitarian resettlement program for vulnerable Afghans, including women leaders, human rights defenders, persecuted and religious minorities, 2SLGBTQI+ individuals and journalists.

I can confidently tell this House that we are exploring all avenues to support their safe passage and are maximizing every opportunity to help Afghans leave Afghanistan and travel onward to Canada. A key challenge is that many Afghans who are still in need of protection remain in Afghanistan, and movement out of the country by air or land continues to be very difficult and dangerous. As all members here well know, the Government of Canada has no military or diplomatic presence in Afghanistan.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Afghans seeking to leave Afghanistan face multiple challenges, including the Taliban exit requirements, notably a passport. They must also navigate third country entry and exit requirements.

We are doing everything we can to help vulnerable Afghans get to safety as quickly as possible. IRCC has added more employees and resources in our mission abroad, including in Islamabad. IRCC has also mobilized its global network, and applications continue to be processed day and night on a priority basis through our integrated network of visa officers across the globe. Furthermore, IRCC has adopted a facilitative approach to expedite certain processes given the unique circumstances in Afghanistan.

We are working with a wide range of partners, including regional and like-minded governments, NGOs and referral organizations, to secure safe passage for Afghans who are eligible for one of Canada's immigration programs. With the help of these trusted partners, we are enabling the movement of Afghans in neighbouring countries, where we have bolstered biometrics collection and medical and security screening capacity.

I just want to point out that we have had 22 flights from Pakistan and 16 from Tajikistan so far. As the member alluded to, even with all of these difficulties, more than 28,000 Afghans can now call Canada home. We are proud of what we have accomplished, but we also know that there is more to do.

• (1840)

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary did not address my questions.

My first question was, when can we expect the Afghans still stuck in Afghanistan to get here? There were lots of excuses and lots of reasons why there are challenges. Again, I talked to the people on the ground directly involved with moving these Afghans. It is the bureaucracy. It is the lack of paperwork. We can move people within days if we just get the bureaucracy and paperwork resolved.

I will go back to the other question I asked. I am looking for an update on when this House of Commons can expect a progress report on the 37 recommendations made by the Special Committee on Afghanistan to the government.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** Madam Speaker, again I want to thank the hon. member for his service to Canada. I represent the community of Orléans, where we have a lot of active military members and veterans. It is always extraordinary for me to be a part of that.

As I have said on a few occasions, if it was a matter of will, there would be 40,000 Afghans here in Canada. The current situation in Afghanistan is complex, and the challenges are extraordinary. We are constantly navigating an evolving situation with the government, and we have no military or diplomatic presence on the ground.

We continue to explore all avenues to support the safe movement of Canada-bound Afghans out of Afghanistan to a third country and to maximize every opportunity to help them travel. I want to be clear. This effort is ongoing, and we are using all options at our disposal.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, four and a half years ago, I put forward a motion in this House calling on the Government of Canada to list the IRGC, the Iranian government's weapon of terror against its own people and people throughout the world, as a terrorist organization within the Criminal Code. That motion passed this House. All Conservatives and every present member of the Liberal caucus, including the Prime Minister, voted in favour of that motion.

The government voted four and a half years ago, nearly five years ago, to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization. At the time, in 2018, the case was already clear that this organization existed for the purpose of terrorizing its own population and those throughout the region and around the world, and of asserting its control over those people by any possible means.

Since 2018, we have had the shooting down of flight PS752 and the killing of dozens of Canadians and many more people with connections to Canada. We have had the emergence of the Woman Life Freedom movement and the arbitrary execution of protesters by the Iranian regime. For most of that period, the Canadian government did not even impose sanctions against that regime. It merely trumpeted the continuation of restrictions that were put in place by Conservatives.

Since the issue of the violence being inflicted by the Iranian regime has gotten more public attention, since the opposition has been pushing the government aggressively under the leadership of the member for Carleton in the last six months, the government has imposed some additional sanctions. It is too little, too late, though, and the government persists in refusing to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization. It is particularly ironic, because the Deputy Prime Minister has called it a terrorist organization.

We have a member of the government saying she recognizes the IRGC is a terrorist organization, but then refusing to list it as a terrorist organization in the Criminal Code. It does not make any sense. She said, in that press conference, that they recognize that the IRGC is a terrorist organization, so they were going to list it in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, but not in the Criminal Code.

I keep asking this question. I have been asking this question persistently for the last five years. If the government voted for this and if the government is now saying this is a terrorist organization, why can it not use the Criminal Code to list it as a terrorist organization?

*Adjournment Proceedings*

This is important, because listing the IRGC as a terrorist organization would decisively shut down the operations of that organization in Canada. The government has responded, and will no doubt respond again, that it has listed specific individuals within these organizations. However, when we list specific individuals within the organization, then other people who are part of that same organization, or new people who end up taking on the same positions others previously held, are still able to operate. We would still have the IRGC active here in Canada, intimidating and threatening Canadians.

I spoke to someone. A member of their family was killed when flight PS752 was shot down by the IRGC, and this individual has faced threats here on Canadian soil from the IRGC. We have evidence of violence being planned against Canadians by the IRGC, yet the government refuses to list it.

Why, after voting for this, and after five years, has the government still refused to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization?

• (1845)

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, our government is committed to holding Iran accountable for its shameless disregard for human rights and the regime's support for terrorism.

I would like to emphasize the robust measures that Canada has in place against Iran and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. These measures were undertaken in response to recent incidents, as well as Iran's long-term systemic human rights violations and ongoing behaviour that destabilizes regional security.

Canada has designated the Islamic Republic of Iran under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, or IRPA, for the regime's engagement in terrorism and continuous and gross human rights violations. As a result, tens of thousands of prominent Iranian government officials, including IRGC senior officials, are now permanently inadmissible to Canada. In addition to being banned from entering Canada, current and former senior officials who are presently in the country may be investigated and deported.

Furthermore, Canada has imposed vigorous sanctions against the Iranian regime and its leadership under the Special Economic Measures Act, which explicitly targets the IRGC and several sub-organizations. These measures ensure that all of designated individuals' assets in Canada are effectively frozen.

Once Bill S-8, an act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, becomes law, it would also align IRPA with the SEMA to ensure that all foreign nationals subject to sanctions will also be inadmissible to Canada.

Yesterday, the House unanimously voted to send Bill S-8 to committee, and I trust that the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development will review this bill expeditiously.

Additionally, Canada lists Iran as a state supporter of terrorism under the State Immunity Act. The listing, together with the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act, allows victims to bring civil actions against Iran for losses or damages relating to terrorism.

The Criminal Code also sets out a terrorist listing regime to help prevent the use of Canada's financial system to further terrorist ac-

tivity and to assist in the investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences. Several of Iran's key proxy actors are captured by this scheme.

For example, Canada has listed the IRGC Qods Force as a terrorist entity since 2012. It is a group recognized as responsible for terrorist operations and providing arms, funding and training to other terrorist groups.

The Government of Canada has also listed terrorist entities that have benefited from Qods Force patronage, including Hizballah, Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Taliban, and three Iran-backed regional militias that were added to the Criminal Code in 2019.

We are committed to holding the Iranian regime accountable for their crimes, human rights violations and threats against regional peace and security.

• (1850)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, there are no surprises in that non-answer, unfortunately.

The parliamentary secretary, ironically, cites a number of instances of groups that were listed by the previous Conservative government, and then expects to be congratulated, I suppose, for the fact that the government has allowed these terrorist organizations listed by Conservatives to remain on the list, but has not listed additional organizations.

A while back the House passed a motion on the listing of the Proud Boys as a terrorist organization, and the government got that done within two months, yet it has been five years, and the parliamentary secretary will not list the IRGC as a terrorist organization.

She cites various individuals. Again, as I already pointed out, when individuals are sanctioned and not the organization, the organization is allowed to continue to operate here in Canada. The parliamentary secretary will not answer the basic question. Why is the government intent on allowing the IRGC to continue their operations in Canada?

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Madam Speaker, I would like to correct something the hon. member said. The government did not list the Proud Boys. It was the security agencies that actually listed the Proud Boys as a terrorist entity.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Listings under the Criminal Code provide the legal and institutional framework to implement measures to freeze and forfeit terrorist property, and to help investigate and potentially prosecute someone for certain offences. Listing is just one instrument in Canada's international and domestic counter terrorism strategy tool box for ensuring the safety of Canadians.

Canadians can have confidence in the continuing efforts of the government to further constrain the actions of Iran that threaten public safety and violate basic human rights.

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:52 p.m.)

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