



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

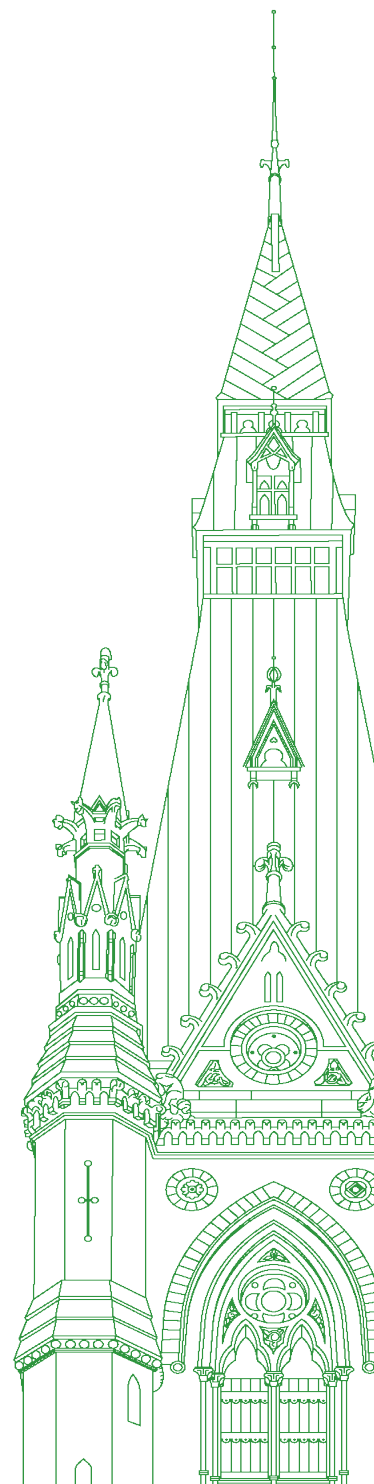
# House of Commons Debates

Official Report  
(Hansard)

**Volume 151 No. 189**

Tuesday, May 2, 2023

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 2, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

### CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE ACT

**Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-331, An Act to amend the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act (duty of candour).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table my private member's bill, Bill C-331, an act to amend the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act on duty of candour. It is the result of widespread public consultations across Canada, including with racialized Canadians, who are more likely to have negative interactions with security officials.

The bill seeks to amend the CSIS Act in the following ways: by including information about the number of breaches of the duty of candour in the annual classified report by the CSIS director to the Minister of Public Safety and the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, along with a brief description of each and any remedial action; by requiring that the same information be tabled annually in the House by the minister in an unclassified form; and by amending the oath of office sworn by CSIS officials to include a duty of candour oath to the courts.

Our security agencies cannot be effective without the confidence of Canadians, and they have a lot of work to do to earn their trust. Trust needs transparency, and this bill is an important step to bringing transparency to our security agencies.

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

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### PETITIONS

#### HONG KONG

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present today.

The first petition comes from a group of Canadians who want the Canadian government to recognize the politicization of the judiciary

of Hong Kong and its impacts on the legitimacy and validity of criminal convictions. These Canadians want the Canadian government to affirm its commitment to render all national security law charges and convictions irrelevant and invalid in relation to paragraph 36(1)(c) of the IRPA. As we know, there are many Hong Kongers who have made Canada their place of refuge, fleeing Communist oppression in mainland China, as my family did many years ago from a different Communist country, that of Poland.

#### HAZARAS

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am also presenting a petition on behalf of my constituents, as I have done many times in the House, on the continuing, ongoing genocide by the Taliban regime of ethnic Hazaras, a minority Shia community in Afghanistan.

Again, the petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to recognize the ongoing genocide and the persecution of Hazaras, as well as to include Shia Hazaras in the 40,000 refugees to be resettled in Canada by the end of this year.

#### ETHIOPIA

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with everything happening now happening in Sudan, my third and last petition is drawing the attention of the House to the ongoing violent conflict in the Tigray region in Ethiopia and the egregious human rights violations, particularly with the humanitarian crisis. They are calling for the following five things: to immediately call for an end to violence and for restraint from all sides; to immediately call for humanitarian access to the region for independent monitoring; to immediately call for international investigations into credible reports of war crimes and gross violations of human rights; to engage directly and consistently with the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments on this conflict; and to promote short-, medium- and long-term elections monitoring in Ethiopia.

*Routine Proceedings*

● (1005)

FALUN GONG

## PESTICIDES

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of 18,385 Canadians to present a petition calling on the government to ban the sale and use of glyphosate and to protect human health and the environment. The petitioners note that the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer classified glyphosate as a probable carcinogen to humans.

Glyphosate is Canada's most widely sold pesticide. Canadians are consuming glyphosate residues in their food and water every day. The use of glyphosate also harms aquatic and terrestrial species and causes a loss of biodiversity.

The petitioners are calling for action and for the government to develop a comprehensive plan to reduce overall pesticide use in Canada.

## JUSTICE

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by Canadians. The petitioners are concerned about the government's failure to stand up for the rights of victims. This is in the face of the Supreme Court of Canada's unjust decision to strike down a law passed by the previous Harper Conservative government that gave judges the discretion to apply consecutive parole ineligibility periods for mass murderers. As a result of this decision, some of Canada's worst killers have seen their sentences significantly reduced.

The petitioners are calling on the government to use all tools available, including invoking the notwithstanding clause, to override this decision.

## PESTICIDES

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this place today to raise the concerns of many Canadians and petitioners related to the pesticide glyphosate. This herbicide is commonly used in Canada under the trade name Roundup. The herbicide glyphosate has been judged by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, within the World Health Organization, as a probable human carcinogen.

The petitioners note that the increased use of glyphosate has been tracked along with the increased use of genetically modified plants to be so-called Roundup-ready. The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to act on these facts and protect health.

## AIR TRANSPORTATION

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a very popular petition in Winnipeg relates to the growing Indo-Canadian community and, with that growth, a large demand for more international flights. In particular, this petition calls for flights that fly out of the Winnipeg international airport into Europe and such countries as India, specifically Amritsar.

It is with pleasure that I present this petition, recognizing the exceptional growth and the need for more international flights. The petitioners call upon international airlines and government MPs to do what they can to get those flights.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise once again to present a petition regarding the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners. The petitioners wish to bring to the attention of the House the fact that the Chinese government has waged a nationwide persecution campaign against Falun Gong practitioners. This has resulted in arrests, with many being imprisoned for up to 20 years. They add that this includes torture and abuse. As they also indicate, investigators have concluded that tens of thousands of Falun Gong prisoners of conscience have been put to death and that their organs have been seized involuntarily for sale at high prices.

The petitioners call on this Parliament to pass a resolution to establish measures to stop the Chinese Communist regime's crime of systemically murdering Falun Gong practitioners for their organs, amend Canadian legislation to combat forced organ harvesting and publicly call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

● (1010)

## CARBON PRICING

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the petition I am presenting today relates to the carbon tax. The petitioners are concerned about how the government's carbon tax is continuing to drive up the cost of home heating and the cost of living for Canadians. They note that heating one's home in the winter in Canada is not a luxury; it is a necessity. Nevertheless, as the petitioners point out, the government is planning to triple the carbon tax.

Therefore, the petitioners call on the House of Commons to cancel the tripling of the carbon tax on home heating, to ensure no new taxes are imposed on Canadians and to ensure that Canadians are being put first, including their families, their paycheques, their homes and their futures.

\* \* \*

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

## FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

**The Speaker:** I wish to inform the House that I have received a notice of a request for an emergency debate. I invite the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle to rise and make a brief intervention.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am rising to request an emergency debate on the issue of foreign interference by the Communist regime in Beijing. The Globe and Mail published a report yesterday morning indicating that families of members of Parliament have been subjected to an intimidation campaign orchestrated by PRC officials working out of Beijing's consulate in Toronto. In at least one case, this intimidation was in direct retaliation for a member's vote on a motion that the House adopted recognizing the PRC's treatment of Uyghurs as a genocide.

The reports are informed by top secret information from Canadian intelligence services. Beijing's intimidation tactics are not limited to members of Parliament but are being deployed against many Canadians of Chinese descent in diaspora communities across the country. These allegations are widely reported and well established through House of Commons committee testimony and reports by Canada's security establishment. They report it as a matter of fact that Beijing has sought and continues to seek to influence and intimidate Canadian citizens.

The facts that this retaliation was in direct response to a vote in the House, that we just learned about this yesterday and that the Prime Minister did not answer multiple questions in the House yesterday, I believe, add weight to my request for an emergency debate. I note that there is a take-note debate this evening, Mr. Speaker, so I would encourage you to consider granting it either after that take-note debate expires or tomorrow evening at the end of Government Orders.

## SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle for his intervention. However, I am not satisfied that the request meets the requirements of the Standing Orders at this time.

Order, please. Does the Leader of the Opposition have something to say to the Chair?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Actually, he does have something to say. You asked me if I had something to say; I do have something to say. I think it is outrageous. We stand in this Parliament to represent our constituents, and we need the ability—

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

**The Speaker:** If he continues, he will be ejected from the House.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** You asked me—

**The Speaker:** I am cutting you off; please sit.

*Business of Supply*  
GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1015)

[English]

## BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

## OPPOSITION MOTION—HOME OWNERSHIP AND RENTING AFFORDABILITY

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC)** moved:

That, given that, after eight years of this Liberal Prime Minister's inflationary policies,

- (i) inflation has reached a 40-year high and is forcing Canadians to cut back on the basic necessities of eating, and heating their homes,
- (ii) monthly mortgage costs have more than doubled since 2015 and now cost Canadians an average of \$3,000 per month,
- (iii) Statistics Canada reports that "mortgage interest cost rose at a faster rate in March (+26.4%) [...] this was the largest yearly increase on record as Canadians continued to renew and initiate mortgages at higher interest rates",
- (iv) government fees, taxes and delays now add on average \$200,000 to the cost of every new home in Canada,
- (v) nine out of 10 young people who do not own a home believe they never will,
- (vi) nine out of 10 young people who do not own a home believe they never will,
- (vii) recent reports state that a couple is paying \$2,450 to rent a single room in a Toronto townhouse, that they have two other roommates, and they consider this an "excellent deal",

the House call on the government to make renting affordable and home ownership a reality for more Canadians by enacting policies that will remove big city gatekeepers, NIMBY local politicians who block construction of new housing, and unnecessary red tape by:

- (a) tying federal infrastructure dollars for municipalities to the number of new homes built, and imposing clawbacks on municipalities who delay new home construction;
- (b) tying federal funding for major transit projects to cities that pre-emptively "up-zone" lands around transit infrastructure for high-density housing so that young and middleclass people don't need to use cars; and
- (c) making available 15% of under-utilized federal properties across Canada for new housing while guaranteeing an appropriate ratio of affordable units in the developments.

He said: Mr. Speaker, let me say at the outset that I find your ruling baffling. We have a member of Parliament who was threatened—

**The Speaker:** The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, there is a tradition of the House, whether here in Canada or in the United Kingdom, which is that we respect the Speaker. I was patient as the leader of the official opposition stood in his place as you read the motion. When you made your ruling, the leader of Canada's Conservative Party yelled across—

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

**The Speaker:** We will look at that before we go any further.

Please, it is not often that the Speaker explains himself, but this is an urgent matter that was brought up, and it was seriously looked at.

*Business of Supply*

One thing that comes up when making a decision about whether we actually have an emergency debate is whether we have an opportunity to debate this in the near future, immediately. The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle asked for tomorrow night, which is late tomorrow night, which is fine if there is no other time. However, if the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle and the Leader of the Opposition find it so important, they would use their opposition day on Thursday to debate it because it is that important to them. That is the reasoning behind it.

The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle is rising on a point of order.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Mr. Speaker, it is just that this issue is so pressing. We have members of Parliament who are being asked to debate and vote—

**The Speaker:** I am sorry, but that is not acceptable.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, this is profound disrespect for your role as Speaker of the House. We know that, for an emergency debate, you make a ruling. You have made it and I would ask that if we continue to get disruption—

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

**The Speaker:** I cannot hear the hon. member who has the floor.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Conservative Party is, right now, showing profound disrespect to your office as Speaker, and it needs to stop doing that and start the debate on its motion.

• (1020)

**The Speaker:** We have a debate about to start. I would remind the hon. members about relevance, how it should be enforced in the chamber and how it hopefully will be enforced over this debate, so that we all stay in line.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition is rising on a point of order.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** I will remind the Speaker that we will decide what is relevant to our speeches and that he should not shut us down.

We think it is an emergency when any member of Parliament faces threats against his family related to the votes conducted on the floor of the House of Commons. Nothing is more basic to our democracy than the ability of members to vote for their constituents' interests and to not have to vote in order to protect their family members from threats and violence.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Winnipeg North is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the member knows that we are not supposed to be challenging the Speaker and he continuously challenges you, as the Speaker, by not sitting down—

**The Speaker:** We are fine; we are good.

Resuming debate, the Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

What we have today, with the Prime Minister's housing crisis, is double trouble. Since the Prime Minister took office and since he promised to make housing affordable, the average cost of a mortgage payment has doubled, from \$1,400 a month to over \$3,000 a month. The average cost of rent in Canada's 10 biggest cities has doubled, from about \$1,100 to over \$2,000 every single month. The average required minimum down payment for a house in Canada has doubled, from \$22,000 to \$45,000. This is all since the Prime Minister became Prime Minister and promised that he was going to make housing affordable.

This is not just an inconvenience. This is not just a case where politicians stand up and say that Canadians are having trouble making ends meet or putting food on the table, as politicians always like to say. This is becoming possibly the single biggest socio-economic crisis in my lifetime, as an entire generation of young people have come to accept, for the first time in Canadian history, that they will not be able to afford a home.

Let me share with members the mathematics of hopelessness. I was speaking to a young lady who is 28 years old and is a CATSA screener at Toronto Pearson Airport. She calculates that, at her current rate of savings, about \$5,000 a year, it will take her somewhere in the neighbourhood of 20 years to save for a down payment in Toronto. That means she will be well over 40 and unable to have kids. The hopelessness is not that she cannot afford a home; it is that her calculator tells her she will never be able to afford a home.

It would be nice and comforting for the Prime Minister if he could claim that this problem is out of his hands and that it is the result of some crazy global phenomenon that is not in his grasp, and therefore that he is once again just a passive observer in the misery that the Canadian people are living, as he so often tries to portray himself. The stats prove otherwise. This problem does not exist in the vast majority of countries in our peer group around the world. For example, last year, Fortune magazine concluded that the standard home in Canada now costs twice as much as it does in the U.S. Can the Prime Minister explain this? Prices are determined by supply and demand. The U.S. has 10 times the demand because it has 10 times the population. It has a smaller supply because its land mass is more confined and less than ours. It has 10 times the demand and less supply, yet, according to Fortune magazine, the prices in the U.S. are half what they are here in Canada.

Around the world, we see other examples. Vancouver, in NDP British Columbia, is now the third most overpriced housing market in the world according to Demographia. Toronto is the 10th. Both are more unaffordable than Manhattan, Los Angeles, London and even Singapore, an island where there is literally nowhere left to build. All these are places with more money, more people and less land, yet their real estate is more affordable than ours.

The practical consequences of this are that, for example, almost one-third of homeowners with a mortgage will pay off that debt over more than a 30-year period, due to higher interest rates, a significant increase over the once-standard 25-year amortization. The average rent for a spare bedroom, just the bedroom and not the overall housing unit, in a home, condo or apartment in Vancouver was \$1,410. Let us put this into perspective. There are now couples who consider it a bargain to move into a townhouse with two other couples, each couple renting a single room, often sharing a bathroom, always sharing a kitchen, and paying \$1,500 a month just for that room. Here in Canada, this is true housing poverty, and it has happened after eight years of the Prime Minister's policies.

• (1025)

Why is housing so unaffordable? First, government deficits are driving up interest, which increases the mortgage rates for people with debt. Second, we have the fewest houses per capita in the G7 even though we have the most land to build on. Why is that? The answer is that government gatekeepers block housing construction. It takes up to 10 years to get a building permit. We rank 64th in the world for building permit delays. We rank second-last for the speed at which we approve building permits within the OECD. Every other country but one in that group is faster to deliver permits and allow houses to be built. This blocks construction and prevents Canadians from owning a house. We know this problem is worse in NDP-controlled British Columbia, where hard-left, woke mayors who stand up for the wealthy mansion owners in leafy, ritzy neighbourhoods block the poor, the immigrants and the working class from ever owning homes. Therefore, we do not have enough homes, and that is why Canadians do not have a place to live.

The government wants to bring in half a million people per year, which is a million people over the next two years, and it has no plan to build the houses to go along with that. In fact, since the current Prime Minister took office, we have fewer houses per capita than we did eight years ago. In other words, this problem is metastasizing and worsening every single day. The only party with a common-sense plan to fix it is the Conservative Party, and this is the plan.

The government has put \$89 billion into housing programs. Government housing is not the solution. It is not working because, if there is a confined space of permitted land to build on, we could pour as much money as we want into it and we are not going to get more housing; we are going to get more expensive housing. Worse still, the Prime Minister has announced \$4 billion more, not for housing, but for the gatekeepers. The money is literally going to go to the zoning and permitting departments of the big cities that are blocking the construction in the first place. In other words, it is a big, fat reward for those same bureaucrats who are blocking our youth from having homes, and that will build out the bureaucracy and slow down the construction.

Here is my common-sense plan. We will link the number of dollars big cities get for infrastructure to the number of houses that actually get built. Those who block construction will be fined. I will cut back their infrastructure. Those who speed up and lower the cost of permits to build more will get a building bonus from my government because incentives work. I will require every federally funded transit station to have high-density housing on all the avail-

able land around and even on top of the station. We will sell off 6,000 federal buildings to convert them into affordable housing for our young people to live in. We will speed up immigration for building trades. We will shift more of our education dollars over to the trades, rather than just to the white-collar professions.

We have seen the way. We can look at what the Squamish people have done in the city of Vancouver. They have their own land and do not have to follow the rules of the gatekeepers. They are building 6,000 units of housing on 10 acres of land. The Squamish have shown what can happen when we get the gatekeepers out of the way. That is exactly what we are going to do right across the country. We will clear the gatekeepers. We will remove the privileged class inside the castle walls and open the gates of opportunity up to anyone who is prepared to work hard. If people work hard in this country, the rules should allow that they have a decent home where they can start a family and raise kids. It is common sense, the common sense of the common people united for our common home, their home, my home, our home. Let us bring it home.

• (1030)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, when the leader of the Conservative Party sat around the cabinet table, the Harper government did absolutely nothing when it came to housing. If we contrast that with the current government, we have invested literally billions of dollars into housing, developed a housing strategy, and worked with the different provinces and the many different for-profit and non-profit stakeholders.

My question for the leader of the official opposition is this. Will he not recognize that, although Ottawa has stepped up to the plate and contributed in virtually every way, even though the Conservative Party has opposed many of those measures, the provinces, municipalities and other stakeholders also need to step up in order to resolve Canada's housing issues?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I want to remind members that I know the Leader of the Opposition is very capable of answering the question, and he does not need his MPs to help him on this.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Madam Speaker, first, it would have been better if that government had done nothing. Nothing would have been better than what it did in reality.

*Business of Supply*

If the member wants to compare records, when I was the responsible housing minister, housing costs were half of what they are today. The average mortgage payment required on the average house was \$1,400, and now it is \$3,000. The required amount of a person's paycheque to make monthly payments on a house was 39%, and now it is 70%. The average rent was \$1,100, and now it is \$2,200. The average down payment was a modest \$22,000, and now it is \$45,000. These are just the results.

It is true that the Liberals have far more expensive housing programs, but that is a double loss. It means that not only are homebuyers paying more; now taxpayers are paying more. Under the Conservatives, both of them would pay less.

[Translation]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I closed my eyes at times during the Leader of the Opposition's speech, and it felt like I was listening to an NDP member. It shocked me to hear such words coming out of the mouth of the leader of the official opposition. It is no secret that housing is an area of provincial jurisdiction. Who could manage housing needs better than the municipalities themselves?

Let me double-check something. I hear the Conservatives talking about penalizing municipalities that do not build enough new properties, new houses or new housing units. Does that not seem centralizing? Is it not the opposite of what the Conservatives usually preach? Can the Leader of the Opposition tell me if he agrees that no one knows housing needs better than the municipalities? Would he agree that what they need most from the federal government are adequate funds?

• (1035)

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Madam Speaker, what an ironic question from the centralist Bloc. BQ members say they want to be independent, but what they really want is to be dependent. Every day, they rise in the House to call for a bigger, stronger federal government. We do the exact opposite of that.

The member asked whether the federal government should give the municipalities money. At the federal level, we are responsible for the money we spend. Yes, I will make sure the money we spend is used to build affordable housing for Canadians, not the overpriced new builds we are seeing now.

Are municipalities actually in the best position to handle this? Unfortunately, big cities like Toronto and Vancouver have done a very bad job. We are done saying yes to everything these incompetent mayors and local politicians ask for. They are the ones causing this housing crisis. The Conservative government will demand affordable housing. We will get rid of the guardians of privilege and get more houses built. That is plain old common sense, and that is what we are going to do.

[English]

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank the opposition for raising the motion today. I hope the member actually apologizes. I saw him become unhinged in this chamber before and call the Speaker a damn disgrace. He actually apologized to me in the past—

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

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** This was dealt with a while ago. I would ask the hon. member to ask his question, because we are running out of time. It should be reflective of the motion before the House.

The hon. member for Windsor West.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Madam Speaker, I do think it is relevant; it sets the tone in this chamber. At the same time, I will ask, quite quickly—

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

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Order, please. I would ask members to allow the hon. member to ask his question.

The hon. member for Windsor West.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Madam Speaker, I will go directly to the question. I will simply ask this. When he closed veterans' offices in my riding, was that a benefit to them getting housing or was it a distraction? I would like to know what he says about that.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Madam Speaker, the average veteran could buy a house for half of what he or she pays right now. Housing was actually affordable when we were in government.

When I was the responsible minister, people could get a house with half the mortgage payment, or rent an apartment with half the rent, or make half the down payment or spend a third less of their paycheque on monthly payments. That was the reality.

What we have now is a costly coalition of the Liberals and the NDP that protect the privileged by blocking housing construction. That is why the working class, the good, decent working class people who used to support the NDP, are abandoning that party as it has joined with the elitists over in the Liberal Party, and they are now standing for the common-sense Conservatives.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** There is no doubt that there are differing views, but I would ask everybody to be respectful during the debate, especially when someone has the floor.

The hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

**Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC):** Madam Speaker, having a place to call home should not be merely a dream in Canada. It should not be a distant memory from generations past. It must be an achievable reality for all Canadian families. Canada cannot reach its full potential until everyone has a safe bed to sleep in and a welcoming place to come home to at the end of the day.



*Business of Supply*

I have had the privilege of visiting many communities in Canada, and there is a despair that too many Canadians are feeling, an emptiness that many of our fellow citizens are dealing with as the dream of having a home of their own slips further and further away from their grasp. Canada needs leaders who will turn rhetoric and words into real tangible action to get shovels in the ground now.

The housing situation in Canada is in crisis, and times of crisis require bold action and real leadership.

I have spoken in the House before about Kim Doughty. She was the catalyst who motivated her husband Claude and me to get an emergency shelter in Huntsville, six beds of emergency shelter and 10 units of transitional housing. The community rallied to the cause and we got the project built. We were justly proud of the accomplishment. We also knew it was just one step, that much more to be done.

After I was elected as mayor, I met with Kim again, and some of her housing colleagues, and she told me some heartbreaking stories about suffering and struggle. Most of it was in hiding right in our picturesque Muskoka.

What Kim told me that day years ago is the same thing we hear today in our communities all across the country. Housing is more than economics. It is more than shovels, dirt and wood. For too many, it is literally life and death. If the leaders of all levels of government took up the cause of combatting this crisis, we would do more than just make our communities more affordable; we would literally save lives.

At that time, our council and administration set to work to change policies. We made land available to developers to build, and so did the community take up the cause.

The Table Soup Kitchen was working hard at the time to open a shelter for men in Huntsville. It was very near completion when an issue arose over the fire code and access and entry points, so we were not quite ready to open it. In the midst of all of this was a young man named Paul.

Paul had his struggles, but he was a joyful fellow and well-liked in the community. He requested to stay in the shelter one night, but he was turned away because it did not have its occupancy permit yet. Therefore, he stayed in his old beat up Volkswagen van that night. When police later found Paul's van, their investigation concluded that the candle he lit, presumably to create a bit of warmth on that cold November night, had tipped over as he slept.

Huntsville lost Paul that night, and our community was devastated, as was I. I received emails from residents who were shocked and angry, some charging that Paul's blood was on my hands. Paul's father later wrote a letter to our community to thank us for welcoming his son and for making Huntsville the place Paul called home, quite proudly. He assured us that Paul's death was not anyone's fault, that Paul made his own choices and that no one was to blame. Yet, were we not? Was I not, just a little?

What more could I have done to resolve the occupancy dispute? What mental health supports were not there that should have been there? Are any of us in leadership doing enough right now?

Tragically, Paul's story is not unique. It is one that is repeated in every corner of our country.

On average, in Toronto, three homeless people die a week. The vacancy rate for rentals in Canada is 1.9%. That means there is nothing to rent. Rental rates have doubled in the last eight years of the current government. Home prices have doubled in the last eight years under the government. For the 35-year-old living in their parents' basement unable to start a family, the entrepreneur thinking of moving to another country or the company passing off the opportunity to grow in Canada because it simply cannot find a place for their workers to live, the problem is getting worse.

It is a crisis. It holds our country back from economic opportunity and prosperity. It holds Canadians back from being able to achieve their dreams. It stops us from building communities. In many cases, it is life and death.

The problem is that we do not have enough supply. Years of bad policy have left our country without enough homes for Canadians. We are not building fast enough to keep up with the rising levels of immigration. The result is that too many of the homes we have today are too expensive for too many of the Canadians who live here.

The solution is to get more shovels in the ground and build more homes faster. We must make it easier to build, easier to get permits, easier to source the skilled labour and building materials needed to get the job done. We must make it harder for the NIMBY activists and politicians who hold development up to stop them from doing that.

● (1040)

Unfortunately, what we get from the government is a lot of talk and no real results. We see a Minister of Housing who attends a lot of announcements, but not a lot of ribbon-cuttings, groundbreakings or grand openings. In fact, a few weeks ago, I asked the Minister of Housing if Canada was in a crisis, something his provincial counterparts, economists, housing experts and his own officials agree upon. He rambled on about political talking points and spoke about his government increasing their ambition.

In a crisis, we devote every possible resource to addressing an issue. It means bringing every single partner to the table and taking an all-hands-on-deck approach to face the challenge head on. Not surprisingly, the minister has not done this, because he does not seem to be aware of the magnitude of the problem.

### *Business of Supply*

Canadians deserve better than that. They deserve a country where if they work hard and play by the rules, the dream of owning a home will always be in reach. Our country deserves a government that will work hard to get shovels in the ground, as those Canadians who work hard every single day, saving and sacrificing, do their part to build a brighter future for them and their families.

This crisis is real, and the solutions we put forward must be bold. The old way of doing things simply does not work anymore. For years, housing providers from social housing, co-op housing, community groups and market-based developers have found it nearly impossible to access CMHC programs. Its procedures are convoluted, its decisions often do not even make any sense. The Auditor General's has reported that they are not entirely sure if what it is doing is having any impact. Canadians do not need the Auditor General to tell the truth. The fact of the matter is that it is not working.

Just last week, the CMHC raised insurance rates on multi-unit purpose-built rentals. It raised those premiums by almost 200%. The government's out-of-touch housing policies will continue to drive up the rent on the most vulnerable Canadians and further stall the construction of new units.

However, there is good news. The Conservatives are ready to clean up the government's mess. We are going to get the big government inaction out of the way and ensure that the federal government is no longer a barrier to getting more homes built. We are going to make available a minimum of 15% of underutilized government properties and clear the way for homes of all kinds to build on land that the government has not been using.

While we are at it, we will stand up to the NIMBY activists and cowardly politicians who plague our system, the folks who fight tooth and nail against new homes being built in our communities. The Conservatives understand that if we are ever going to ensure that the next generation, that new Canadians and that young families have the same opportunities that every person in the House has had, then we cannot allow the NIMBYs, the naysayers and the critics to stand in the way anymore.

That is why we are going to tie federal funding on all infrastructure projects for municipalities to how quickly they can clean up their act and get homes built faster. We will require that any major transit project to receive federal funding must have the land around that transit ready to go for high-density housing immediately.

Let me be clear that the Conservatives are loudly and proudly saying yes to building more homes in Canada's backyard. The days of municipal councillors being able to hold up projects and vilify homebuilders must come to an end. The days of talk, delays and deferrals must be a thing of the past.

Come the next federal election, the days of having a Minister of Housing who does not even have the courage to admit that Canada is in a housing crisis, let alone take the actions to fix it, will be done too.

As a former mayor, I can tell members that homes do not get built without leaders who have the courage, the fortitude and the conviction to make the tough decisions, some decisions that are not popular but must be made.

From coast to coast to coast, the housing crisis is claiming lives and shattering dreams. Canadians are living out of trailer parks and taking on crippling levels of debt. Sadly, too many are dying in the streets of our communities, big and small. It is time for bold action and tangible results. Working with all levels of government, trade unions, the private sector and community organizations, we will get things built.

I ask every Canadian who has ever dreamed of having a place to call his or her own, the single mom working relentlessly to build a better future for her children, the entrepreneur thinking of leaving Canada, the new immigrant dreaming of coming to Canada, the young people locked out of the housing market, the parents with young people still living in their basements, to not lose hope because we hear them loud and clear and help is on the way.

After the next federal election, the Conservative government will hit the ground running and work on day one to ensure that having a place to call home at the end of the day is not just the privilege of a few, but the reality of every single Canadian from every walk of life. A home of one's own in this magnificent Canada must no longer be just a dream; it must be a reality. The Conservatives will get our country building again. The Conservatives will bring it home.

● (1045)

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I come from metro Vancouver, and we have had use planning there for a long time that respects and maintains agricultural land, which of course then constricts the amount of land available for housing.

I would like the hon. member's thoughts on something we saw in our home community of Surrey, where the city rezoned land for multiple-dwelling units instead of single family. The neighbourhood rose up because it was concerned about having adequate space, the schools, the rec centres and the traffic management problems of putting that much more density into what was a single-family neighbourhood. What is the member's thought on that and on how to best resolve that kind of issue.

**Mr. Scott Aitchison:** Madam Speaker, I am a former mayor, and I was a chair of planning for many years before that. I guarantee the vast majority of these complaints come from people who just do not want change. Many, many times in planning committees we would have people come to say they did not like something, it would negatively affect the value of their property or there would be too many people.

The fact of the matter is that municipalities have official plans, governing documents that say how the municipality should grow. There is professional planning staff who recommend in favour of things because it makes sense and is good planning. Then there are the cowardly local politicians, and trust me because I dealt with lots of them, and I chastised many of them many times, would say that the people of the community do not like it. They are worried about getting re-elected.

We need to do what is right, and we need to challenge municipalities that are not doing what is right to get the job done because they are holding things up. They are making it more expensive, and it is harder and harder for young people to get into a home of their own because of their delays and tactics to stall these projects.

• (1050)

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, who said in his speech that he was once the mayor of a municipality. I will build on that.

In today's motion, it is surprising to see the Conservative Party claiming that the federal government knows more about the housing needs and priorities of Quebec and the provinces than the Quebec government and the municipalities do themselves.

As a former mayor, he is aware of the importance of the municipal level and municipal politicians and how close they are to the people. Would it not be better, rather than cutting ribbons left and right, to trust those who know their citizens' needs?

[English]

**Mr. Scott Aitchison:** Madam Speaker, I will use a line from President Reagan: "trust, but verify." If they are not getting the job done, they cannot be trusted. That is all there is to it.

The federal government ties strings to funding all the time. This is a crisis. People say to just trust the municipalities, to not worry about it and that one should not invade in anybody else's space. In a crisis, it is all hands on deck. People who make comments like that do not realize it. One needs to go out in the communities and meet the people who are just desperate for a place to call home.

This is a crisis, and dancing around on the head of a pin worrying about jurisdiction is not what one does in a crisis. We all need to come together to make it happen.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member just made the comment of having "all hands on deck" in a crisis. What is missing, of course, over all these years with the housing crisis is the fact that both Liberal and Conservative governments have given a free pass to corporate landlords.

Real estate investment trusts walked away without paying their fair share of taxes to the tune of \$1.7 billion for the seven largest REITs in Canada. Over the next four years, they will walk away with another \$300 million. That is almost \$2 billion that could be invested into housing, so why did the Conservatives give corporate landlords a free pass? Why did they not put people before profits?

**Mr. Scott Aitchison:** Madam Speaker, I am a big fan of my colleague who asked the question, and I admire her passion for housing. REITs were a tool used by the previous government with tax

### *Business of Supply*

treatment to create investment in an aging housing stock. Part of the problem we have in this country is that we stopped building purpose-built rental in the 1970s because the Trudeau government of the time decided it was unfair and was worried about helping private landlords.

The fact of the matter is that, once we stopped that, there was little investment in those purpose-built rentals. We are desperate for more purpose-built rentals, and we are also desperate for the purpose-built rentals to be revitalized. They are tired, and they are old. They need more investments, and REITs have actually done that.

Trying to demonize the private sector is not going to help us in this situation. We need trillions of dollars of investment in housing, and the government cannot get it done, no matter how much it thinks it can.

[Translation]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka for his motion. It gives me the opportunity to talk about something that is extremely important, not only to me, but to our government. It also gives me the opportunity to point out that we are already taking the measures proposed in the opposition's motion. However, the party across the aisle has often, if not always, voted against all these measures.

Like my colleague who is a former mayor, I am a former city councillor. I was astonished and shocked by the comments made by the House leader of the official opposition earlier today. He said that he thinks municipalities are incompetent. I invite him to repeat that publicly so we can see the reaction of municipalities across the country. I think that we are all here to work together to provide municipalities with the necessary measures and support in the current housing shortage.

We can see how difficult things are for Canadians across the country. Families are feeling the impact of the rising cost of living, and the high interest rates are hitting them hard. Housing costs are taking a heavy toll. As a result, housing affordability is becoming one of Canadians' major concerns. It is also one of the concerns we have as a government. As you know, we have made major investments in our recent budgets.

### *Business of Supply*

Housing is a basic human need. We have to make sure that all Canadians have a roof over their heads that meets their needs and helps preserve their dignity. This is also an economic development issue. The housing shortage can be felt across the country, not just in the major urban centres. In many regions of Canada, the vacancy rate is as low as 0.1%. That is unprecedented.

It is therefore crucial that we build more housing units, create more supply and make housing more affordable for both homeowners and tenants. That is why we have implemented concrete and ambitious measures to double the construction of new housing units and to meet Canadians' needs over the next decade.

As we often say, our government adopted the very first national housing strategy. This strategy works across the whole housing supply continuum and seeks to help everyone, from the most vulnerable to those who want to purchase a property. Everyone has a role to play, including provincial governments, private businesses, community organizations and municipalities. Everyone needs to co-operate to accelerate housing construction.

This comprehensive 10-year strategy already includes investments of over \$82 billion to give as many Canadians as possible a place to call home. Our government is committed to adopting a housing approach based on increased supply and the protection of human rights. Unfortunately, the Conservatives voted against every measure we presented. According to many of my opposition colleagues, we should do less.

There are no small measures or small projects; every unit we build is necessary to make the right to affordable, safe housing a reality each and every time.

• (1055)

[English]

I want to remind the chamber of the different measures we have put in place in the national housing strategy. I think the opposition needs a recap. This strategy is a tool kit that addresses the challenges along the spectrum of housing needs. These initiatives will help build new affordable housing, fund non-profit organizations and provide build capacity to communities. Right now, it is simply too hard to get the housing we need to build, particularly affordable housing.

The system is not working, and we need to accelerate change at the local level. That is why we recently launched the housing accelerator fund, a \$4-billion initiative that will provide funding for local governments to fast-track the creation of 100,000 additional homes across the country. This fund will help cities, towns and indigenous governments unlock new housing supply by speeding up the development and approval of housing projects and incenting the development of community housing action plans.

This is a significant step in our plan to double housing construction over the next decade and make housing more affordable for Canadians. I think my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka will find that it directly addresses his desire to tackle municipal barriers to allow housing to be built faster.

In addition to this new fund, we are also making historic investments in proven programs that are already benefiting those vulnera-

ble populations who need affordable housing. One such program is the rapid housing initiative. This program was created in the early stages of the pandemic to respond to urgent housing needs of our most vulnerable populations. It has exceeded all expectations. It is quickly creating more than 10,200 new permanent units of affordable housing.

Now we are investing another \$1.5 billion over two years to extend this initiative. The new funding is expected to create an additional 4,500 new affordable housing units, with at least 25% of funding going towards women-focused housing projects.

Every Canadian has a right to a safe and affordable place to call home, and it is unacceptable that any Canadian experiences homelessness. That is why we are investing over half a billion dollars to continue doubling annual funding for Reaching Home, Canada's homelessness strategy.

Our historic investments in tackling chronic homelessness are already paying off. We have prevented over 62,000 from experiencing homelessness and placed 32,000 people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing. We will continue to work with all levels of government and community partners to put an end to chronic homelessness across the country once and for all.

We know that it is getting harder for many Canadians to afford increased rent or to even find housing they can afford. That is why we are making investments to rapidly increase the supply of affordable rental housing. We are also providing direct financial assistance with the cost of rent to tens of thousands of Canadians across the country through the ongoing Canada housing benefit, which is delivered by the provinces and territories, and the federal Canada housing benefit top-up of \$500.

• (1100)

[Translation]

The national housing co-investment fund is another program that has helped us build or renovate more than 300,000 rental units for the most vulnerable Canadians. Our government advanced \$2.9 billion under this fund for this purpose. We also want to make the fund more flexible and more easily accessible. We could then accelerate the creation and renovation of some 21,000 rental units for Canadians who need them the most.

Our government is also determined to protect and develop high-quality, affordable co-operative housing units. I myself lived for several years in a co-op, and I helped create three co-ops. With my mother and my brother in a wheelchair on the third floor, we could plainly see that the housing supply was almost non-existent, especially for persons with reduced mobility.

That is why our government made a major, historic investment in co-op housing. We have not seen an investment of that magnitude for 30 years. It includes \$500 million to launch a new co-op housing development program to increase the number of co-op housing units in Canada, and \$1 billion in loans that will be reallocated to the rental construction financing initiative to support co-op housing projects.

These measures are in addition to our \$4.3-billion federal community housing initiative, which is already helping protect and build community housing for some 330,000 households in Canada.

So far, the measures I mentioned focus solely on the challenge of increasing the housing supply. Of course, as we have seen, and as we know, it is currently very difficult for Canadians to fulfill their dream of buying a house.

That is why we launched a tax-free first home savings account, where Canadians can save up to \$40,000. As with an RRSP, contributions will be tax-deductible and withdrawals to purchase a first home will be non-taxable, as is the case with a TFSA. It will be tax-free in, tax-free out.

We will also continue to improve the first-time home buyer incentive so that even more Canadians can have access to it, since we need to narrow the intergenerational gap.

[English]

We have relaunched the successful affordable housing innovation fund, with a new five-year rent-to-own funding stream. This will help housing providers develop and test rent-to-own models and projects to help Canadian families across the country find a new way to transition from renting to owning a home.

We are also moving forward on a homebuyers' bill of rights, which would protect homeowners from unfair practices like blind bidding or asking them to waive their right to a home inspection.

Our new legislation to ensure housing is owned by Canadians recently came into effect. The Prohibition on the Purchase of Residential Property by Non-Canadians Act, better known as the foreign buyers act, prohibits foreign commercial enterprises and people who are not Canadian citizens or permanent residents from purchasing homes in Canada for a period of two years.

[Translation]

Lastly, I think that every member in the House can agree that one of our society's greatest failures is the housing situation of indigenous peoples. They live in overcrowded houses that are ill adapted to the climate and their communities' culture.

Our government is working in close collaboration with first nations, Inuit and Métis organizations to jointly develop a distinction-based housing strategy. We must do more, and that is exactly what we are doing with our indigenous partners.

### *Business of Supply*

In the 2023 budget, our government introduced a series of measures representing \$6.3 billion in funding over seven years. This includes a \$300-million investment for developing, together with our indigenous partners, an urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy built and drafted by and for indigenous peoples.

In the 2023 budget, we committed to paying \$4 billion over seven years to roll out this strategy. Indigenous peoples are conducting and leading a national engagement campaign to inform the strategy, which will complement the three distinctions-based housing strategies already developed jointly with first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

● (1105)

[English]

All the initiatives I have mentioned build on Canada's first-ever national housing strategy, our 10-year plan to give more Canadians a place to call home. I can say that we are nearly halfway through the strategy's 10-year timeline, and we are on track to meet very ambitious goals.

We have committed nearly 50% of the strategy's funding. With that funding, we have supported the repair of over 298,000 homes, just shy of the target of 300,000. We have maintained the affordability status of 234,000 community housing units, which represents 60% of the target so far. We have supported the creation of nearly 120,000 new housing units out of the targeted 160,000. Those are big numbers, and there is no small project and no small unit.

I want to give a couple of examples. This morning, my colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, talked about the Squamish Nation. It was the biggest investment of the national housing strategy, with \$1.4 billion for 3,000 homes and units. When he criticizes the national housing strategy, would he have said not to invest in this project?

[Translation]

La Résidence des Ateliers provides 200 housing units for seniors. At Chez Doris, 19 women found a place to stay, as well as support to get them off the streets.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Toronto Community Housing repaired 58,000 units for the most vulnerable people. Thunderbird House got 22 tiny houses. Saint John's Rose House got 12 units.

Every project counts, because there are people behind it. These are a lot of numbers, but they mean nothing if we are not helping people like Neela, a young Métis woman living in Kamloops.

When she aged out of the child welfare system, culturally specific co-housing with elders helped her gain a support network. Her new home, made possible with federal funding, gave her more than just a roof and four walls. It helped her to connect with her culture and develop her spirituality, sense of purpose and self-confidence.

There are people like Ken, from Sudbury. He is now on the road to recovery after suffering a catastrophic brain injury. His mother credits his incredible turnaround to the support he received at Wade Hampton House, an affordable assisted living community for people with an acquired brain injury. Again, this was made possible through the national housing strategy.

Here is the last of many examples: I could talk about Molly from Toronto. Over several years, Molly saw her community of Milliken Co-op start to deteriorate. New renovations and upgrades have made the co-op more accessible and climate-friendly. Just as important, they have restored community pride.

Unfortunately, this motion makes it very clear that the Conservatives are simply not serious when it comes to housing. If they were, they would know that we are already taking unprecedented action to speed up municipal housing approvals, tie infrastructure investments to housing, and convert federal lands to affordable housing. All of the measures in my colleague's motion, we are already doing those things. There is not a serious plan from the Conservatives. There are buzzwords and gimmicks.

I am going to be honest with members. When the Leader of the Opposition was minister of housing, I was actually working on a whole project. If the Leader of the Opposition, the minister of housing at that time, had just done a little bit more, maybe we would not be in this situation right now. It is easy for him to criticize, but he was minister of housing. Maybe 5% of our budget right now is what he actually managed as the minister of housing. He has no lesson to give to anybody.

The only reason we made a co-op possible when I was, at that time, a city councillor, is that provinces stepped up. We, as a federal government, came back to housing with a national housing strategy. We have no lessons to take from opposition Conservatives. They have a leader who, when he was in government, had every means to do more for every single vulnerable Canadian of this country and for indigenous communities, and he did nothing.

• (1110)

**Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was very disappointed to hear the hon. member spend most of her time attacking the previous Conservative government. She did not mention that her government, her Liberal government, has been in power for eight years and has spent and spent and spent. In fact, it has spent somewhere in the order of half a trillion dollars. She talked about

how much money her government has spent on housing, affordable housing. The problem is that it is not about how much one spends. In fact, spending has driven much of the inflation in the housing market that we see today.

I would like to ask her to explain how it is that her government has been in place for eight years and has spent a historic amount, not only on affordable housing but on many other things, yet housing in Canada has not become more affordable. It has become more and more expensive. It has doubled in price. Rents have gone up. Down payments have gone up—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Madam Speaker, that is the difference between the opposition and this government. The member talks about spending. We talk about investments in people and in their homes, and making sure that we are supporting the increase of supply of units of housing in the country, for the most vulnerable people and for the ones who want to buy a home. Contrary to my colleague here, we actually invest in people. We do not just spend money. It is easy for them to talk about spending.

*[Translation]*

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned the importance of municipalities several times.

I know that she worked at the municipal level. The government says that municipalities are very important, that they are close to the people and that we need to encourage them to build social housing units, for example. How is it then that the current Liberal government is dipping into property taxes, especially with its tax on new housing under foreign ownership?

Why is the Liberal government dipping into funds that should be used to build social housing? Is that not counterproductive?

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Madam Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that the federal government, which introduced the first national housing strategy, is putting municipalities at the heart of the solution. The housing accelerator that we want to implement will enable us to support the structures of municipalities so that they can build more housing.

Municipalities receive far more money from us than they currently give. That is what we want to do. They need to be true partners, and we need to give them the means to do that.

*Business of Supply*

• (1115)

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I liked my colleague's speech, but I do not like the Liberal Party's record on affordable housing. The national housing plan was slashed by the Martin government several years ago.

The Liberals have been very slow to make the investments, which are so important. Of course, core funding is absolutely critical to building housing. The Liberals said they were serious about starting to provide adequate funding to indigenous communities in a few years. Given the crisis and the many communities that lack affordable housing, the delay is unacceptable.

My question is quite simple. Why have the Liberals not made the investments that are needed now to address this crisis and to ensure that everyone in Canada can have a roof over their head?

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Madam Speaker, one thing my colleague and I agree on is that there is much more to do. Although the investments we are making right now are huge and historic, it is quite obvious that we have a lot more to do to address this shortage of affordable housing and to ensure that all Canadians across the country have a roof over their heads.

[English]

**Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would ask my colleague to tell Canadians and particularly our friends on the other side about the important projects that this government has achieved for Canadians, particularly with day care, helping the middle class, fighting climate change, infrastructure projects and helping refugees. Those are things that Canadians must know this government has done for Canadians in general.

[Translation]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Madam Speaker, it is important to remember two things. The first is that we have lifted over 2.7 million people out of poverty. Unlike my colleagues in the opposition, this government does not view spending as a burden when it helps the most vulnerable and the families who need it most.

This government is investing in people and those who need it most. That is exactly what we are doing.

[English]

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Madam Speaker, it is disappointing to me that today's motion speaks nothing of one of the largest root causes of the housing crisis we are in, and that is the financialization of housing. As I mentioned to the parliamentary secretary last night, and she knows it well, for every one new affordable unit being added to the market, we are losing 15 affordable units in the private sector. I would like to hear more from her on what she and her party are going to do to move urgently to address the financialization of housing.

[Translation]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Madam Speaker, my colleague did ask me about this yesterday evening.

What I can tell him is that we all have a responsibility to ensure that more housing and more affordable housing is built. His question also relates to the whole issue of housing rights. There is also the question of the registry of owners, which is needed to curb

speculation in the market in order to protect tenants' right to have reasonable rent and a decent, safe and, above all, affordable place to live.

[English]

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will bring the member to a question that I asked the Minister of Northern Affairs in committee several months ago, about how many houses were built with the rapid housing initiative and all the bluster from the Liberals about all the houses that are supposedly getting built.

A lot of money has been spent, as my colleague for Abbotsford has said, but guess how many houses were built in Yukon last year? Zero. When I asked the minister if he knew how many houses, he said he did not know. We officially asked the ministry, and their answer back to us was that they did not know either because they do not track the information.

How can we trust the government that is spending billions of dollars on housing when it does not even track the information?

• (1120)

[Translation]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague on the issue of homelessness. We need to ensure that we are tracking the information and that the programs we put in place are exactly what is needed.

My colleague asked a question about Yukon. I would be pleased to sit down with him and look at that. It is important to remember that the federal government is not a project proponent. We are there to support communities with their project needs. If the territory in question did not submit a project, then I would be happy to go and do a round table to tell people that they have access to programs and that they have to apply to get the funding they need.

**Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary has good reason to criticize the Conservatives' policies, but I think that she needs to remove her rose-coloured glasses when it comes to the Liberal government's national housing strategy, and particularly the urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy.

Even though there is currently a policy in place, we know that the results have not been at all compelling. I would like to know what the government intends to do. This strategy was studied extensively by the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, but it is not working.

What—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I must interrupt the hon. member because we do not have much time left.

*Business of Supply*

The hon. parliamentary secretary for a brief response.

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Madam Speaker, what I would say to my colleague is that a strategy for indigenous housing has to be developed with indigenous peoples. What is important is not how quickly we create it but how they want to create it. What is important is how they themselves want to implement this strategy, and that is exactly what we are doing with them.

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou, who is here in the House.

Yesterday, I was totally amazed, dumbfounded and impressed. I was almost moved. I was almost overcome by emotion when I learned that the Conservatives would be moving a motion on the housing crisis. I had a strange feeling that I will not name in the House but that was very, very special.

I wondered what was happening for the Conservatives to take an interest in the most vulnerable, in single mothers, in the homeless and in women who are victims of domestic violence, and what made them want to talk about the housing crisis. I could not believe it. I thought that we were finally going to have an opportunity to really talk about it and to find solutions.

Since I have been in the House, people have heard me talk about the housing crisis hundreds, if not thousands, of times. This is one of my major concerns. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing mentioned, and as everyone will mention today, the right to housing in this country is a fundamental issue, a pressing need.

I have never heard the Conservatives propose even a hint of a solution and tell us what we should do to help the less fortunate in our society. I have never heard them say what sort of investment we should make or what sort of area we should target to achieve this goal.

Let us look at where we are. What is our starting point? What is the target? What is the challenge? Where do things stand, what is the bar? According to the CIBC and the CMHC, we need 3.5 million housing units in this country over the next decade. That is the challenge, that is what we need to do.

I expected that the Conservatives would come here today with solutions, that it would be an intense debate, that we could discuss the issues. However, the only thing they are doing with this motion, and we heard it from the leader of the Conservative Party earlier, is calling other levels of government incompetent.

All the Conservatives are doing is telling the provinces and municipalities to get out of the way. They are saying that, from their office towers in Ottawa with their ties and computers, they know how many social housing units need to be built in Victoriaville, and how many people experiencing homelessness there are in Victoriaville's different neighbourhoods, and if we give them the power to act, they will be so effective, good and wonderful.

I would like to remind my Conservative colleagues that, if we do not build more social housing in Canada, if we needed the national

housing strategy rolled out by the Liberals in 2017, it is because of the Conservatives.

Let us not forget that, for years, the federal government built social housing for the poorest Canadians. After the Second World War, the federal government understood that it had to become involved in one way or another in building housing units. It understood that housing could not be left to market forces alone. For 50 or 60 years, the government built housing units. It did so by sending money to the provinces to be distributed to the municipalities to build housing units. It worked, as 60% of our low-income housing in Quebec right now was provided by the federal government. At the time, we understood that we had to invest to help the poorest Canadians, and that we could not allow market forces to control something as fundamental as housing.

In the 1993 election campaign, Mrs. Campbell, who was leader of the Conservative Party at the time, said that that was over. There would be no more investments in housing. Jean Chrétien, based solely on his courage and his ignorance of the issue, said that the Liberals would continue to invest in social housing, that it was too important and basic a need. That is one of the reasons he was elected, because people understood that there was still a housing problem. Unfortunately, it did not happen. He reneged on his promise.

● (1125)

Are my colleagues aware of how many social housing units would have been built in Quebec if we had continued to invest as we did between 1950 and 1993? There would be 60,000 more social housing units in Quebec. Right now, it is estimated that 45,000 people are on the waiting list for low-income housing. Let us imagine if we had continued to invest. In the meantime, the Conservatives were in power. They did not reinvest either, so we lost 60,000 social housing units, and there are 45,000 people waiting for low-income housing in Quebec.

In other words, housing is under provincial jurisdiction. The federal government has money. I will not get into the details of the fiscal imbalance, but the money is in Ottawa, and the needs are in the provinces. It is not hard to understand.

A few days ago, I was in Quebec City to discuss housing with my hon. colleagues from Beauport—Limoilou and Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix. I spoke with the people from Quebec City, those who my Conservative friends call incompetent, those they are telling to get out of the way so they can get the job done instead. They told me that, if the money were to arrive tomorrow morning, they could break ground immediately, right now, to build 700 units. I do not know who calls them incompetent, but the people I spoke to understood the situation on the ground; they knew what they were saying, knew what they were talking about. We had constructive discussions about what needed to be done. I thought to myself that, while the money may flow from Ottawa, no one understands the needs of the local population better than them. They are the ones who can meet those needs.



Unfortunately, that is all there is. In fact, I was disappointed. I would have hoped for progress, for there to be a motion. Not only that, the Conservatives are like my friends in the NDP. It is interesting. The Conservatives are adopting NDP techniques. They are using blackmail for funding. They say that, unless certain actions are taken, then funding will come with certain conditions. It is always the same thing with the federal government. It is the same thing in health. It is the same thing in all areas.

The New Democrats say they want to link social housing to immigration. We need to accept a certain number of immigrants or we will not get a single penny for housing. It is completely absurd reasoning. If we accept more immigrants, we will need housing, among other things, so they promise a certain amount if we meet a certain target. It is the same thing with the Conservatives. The cheque they are promising us comes with strings attached.

The problem, however, is the underfunding from the federal government. The problem is that the existing programs do not work. The programs are poorly put together; the co-investment program and the rental housing accelerator program make affordable housing at \$2,000 in Montreal. Essentially, they provide loans to private entrepreneurs. They do not create affordable housing. They do not create social housing. They have nothing to do with it. They want to see a return.

Now, they want to impose conditions when what is needed is for funding to come primarily and massively from Ottawa.

I think it is fascinating that we cannot seem to find solutions. The money is here, but the needs are there. How many people are in core housing need in Quebec alone? There are 250,000 households in Quebec in core housing need.

There is a solution. We could spend the rest of the day trying to find solutions, but organizations in this field, such as the Réseau québécois des OSBL d'habitation and the Canada-wide network, already have a solution. What we need is a dedicated fund to buy privately owned housing and take it off the market to ensure accessibility and affordability. That is the solution everyone agrees on. British Columbia just did this. It invested \$500 million. That is one of the things we have to do.

True, construction is tough. It is hard to get projects off the ground. Construction costs and labour shortages complicate things. That is why we have to take existing housing off the market and make it affordable for the lowest-income households for a long period of time. That is one of the solutions the Bloc put forward.

I hope my Conservative and Liberal friends will open their eyes to the severity of this crisis and bring real solutions to the table. This is a huge problem.

• (1130)

[English]

**Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed the member's speech and I endorse his call for an acquisition fund as part of the national housing strategy. He talked about vulnerable Canadians and supporting vulnerable Canadians through a national housing strategy. That includes seniors, homeless youth and victims of domestic violence.

### *Business of Supply*

Could he talk about the importance of having programs, as we have under the national housing strategy, that help those vulnerable communities as they relate to providing affordable social units to those in all provinces and municipalities across the country?

[Translation]

**Mr. Denis Trudel:** Madam Speaker, during the pandemic, I read a statistic that said every day in Quebec, a woman fleeing domestic violence knocked at the door of a women's shelter and was turned away. Imagine being turned away from a shelter with two children in the middle of winter because of insufficient resources.

Last week, I visited Trois-Rivières as part of my housing crisis tour. I met a woman from Trois-Rivières who is a victim of domestic violence, and she was living in her car with her two children. I utterly fail to comprehend how a G7 nation is willing to put up with this situation.

[English]

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely correct in saying we have a housing crisis from coast to coast to coast, and that no matter what community one is part of, big or small, this crisis is significant.

The federal Liberal government cancelled the national affordable housing program back in 1993. As a result, Quebec and British Columbia are the only two provinces continuing to try to address the housing crisis. With that being said, the Liberals and Conservatives did nothing to address the crisis in tackling the profiteering of housing. We are now seeing escalating costs in housing for renters and home owners.

To the member's point about an acquisition fund, which is absolutely needed to support non-profits to get into the housing market, to buy up housing stock that comes onto the market, my question is this. Would he also support calling on the government to end the special tax treatment for corporate landlords so that they have to pay their fair share of taxes? We could take that money to invest it in housing.

• (1135)

[Translation]

**Mr. Denis Trudel:** Madam Speaker, I feel like talking about Vienna. I know that there are some Quebec mayors currently in Vienna, where 60% of the rental housing stock is social housing or community housing. This program did not start yesterday; it has been funded for 100 years.

This is a major program. The broad strokes are that new housing is built and old housing is renovated using a special tax imposed on owners of the remaining stock. In Vienna, they understand the principle of the right to housing, which we adopted in the House. They have understood it for a long time and have taken steps to implement it.

*Business of Supply*

It is important to mention that in Vienna, it is not only low-income people who live in social housing. There are doctors, lawyers, and engineers who live in these residences. In Vienna, they understand the need build a rental housing stock that belongs to the community and is maintained by the community. This is a truth that we should strive to apply here on a larger scale.

[English]

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about social housing and the problems of Quebec. British Columbia has similar problems.

Despite massive, historic amounts of spending by the Liberal government, the problem seems to be getting worse. Could he comment on that and compare Quebec's problems to British Columbia's problems?

[Translation]

**Mr. Denis Trudel:** Madam Speaker, I spoke earlier about the \$500-million acquisition fund in British Columbia. We should have such a fund at the federal level, with no strings attached. All they need to do is agree with the idea, believe that it can happen, and just write a cheque. It is the cities' job and we have nothing to do with it, but they still need funding to make things happen. We need to find a way to support the cities.

In Montreal, there is what is called the 20-20-20 bylaw, which requires that private real estate developers who build, for example, more than 60 or 80 units—I do not know the exact figure—build 20% social housing, 20% affordable housing and 20% family housing. It is not a perfect solution, because often developers choose to pay the penalty for non-compliance rather than build this kind of housing. Even still, it is not a bad solution. If we could, on a large scale, require private developers to build real affordable housing for the most disadvantaged, that would be a solution.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limouilou, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I will begin my speech by talking briefly about Maslow's hierarchy of needs. As you may recall, Maslow's hierarchy involves which needs are most important. At its foundation, there are the basic needs like food, clothing and shelter. If one or another of these needs is not met, it is impossible for a person to fulfill oneself or even to create strong ties with other people. It is even impossible for this person to feel safe, feel valued, have self-esteem and to trust oneself.

The current housing crisis is much broader than simply “having a roof over one's head”. It directly affects our residents and their ability to be well and fulfill themselves as human beings personally, socially and economically. This is a crisis that, in the medium term, will harm all aspects of our society. We need to be aware of that.

Yesterday, when I saw that the Conservative Party would be dedicating its opposition day to the housing crisis, I had the same reaction as my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert. I was amazed, surprised, happy, and then I read the motion. Oops. What a disappointment. The message I see there is that they do not trust those who know this issue well.

They want to reimpose conditions to ensure that the tax money collected from taxpayers living in the provinces and Quebec stays

in Ottawa's coffers. That is what I understand from this opposition motion.

In short, it is as though the Conservative Party is suddenly siding with the Liberals and the NDP. I was a bit disappointed when I read the motion in its entirety, so much so, that I wondered whether we should not open up the Constitution, given that apparently no one wants to respect the Constitution and the rights and powers it sets out for each level of government. We could talk about it openly and renegotiate everything. Why not? If everyone wants to interfere in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the Canadian provinces—and even those of the municipalities—what good is a Constitution that sets out these jurisdictions? It would be better to renegotiate it properly. Then again, that is a different topic altogether.

To continue and to come back to housing, I would like to make the distinction between affordable housing, according to the Liberals' definition, and social and community housing. Affordable housing is housing that costs 10% less than market value. If market value is \$2,500, there is a \$250 discount, meaning rent is \$2,250 a month. That is far from affordable for the vast majority of Canadians and particularly Quebecers. Social and community housing is housing that costs a maximum of 25% to 30% of a person's total income. There are also community support, counselling and integration services near these housing units, sometimes on the same block. That is what is meant by social and community housing.

In Quebec right now, 14,000 people have core housing needs. That means that these 14,000 people have practically no housing or are living in housing that is far too small. In some cases there are nine people living in a two-bedroom apartment. Sometimes there are 15 people sharing a three-bedroom, and they are lucky they managed to get a three-bedroom because that type of housing is rare. I will leave it at that, but that type of housing is truly very rare.

Housing is far too expensive. Even with the new builds, there is a 7% vacancy rate in Quebec City. That does not seem so bad, but the reason for that rate is that the housing is unaffordable. Rent is \$1,500 for a one-bedroom, not including heat, power and utilities. It is outrageous.

● (1140)

Looking at the social and community housing situation, the reality is that the vacancy rate is currently between 0.3% and 0.5%. This is very unhealthy. There is substandard housing in Quebec, like everywhere else in Canada, because funding to renovate those housing units was never delivered. Funding was allocated for new builds, but they were built quickly and sometimes shoddily. Absolutely no funding has been delivered to renovate them, so Quebec is left to fend for itself.

Not all housing is suited to people's needs. I am talking about individuals with reduced mobility and seniors who need adapted housing. There is none at this time. In Quebec City alone, 2,000 people are waiting for low-income housing. That is a huge number.

Renovictions are part of the problem. Private investors are buying buildings and then evicting people so they can rent out the units at staggering prices. There is also Airbnb. I am not talking about single mothers who keep one room for their child and rent it out when their child is not there. I am talking about people who use Airbnb as a business. Those people buy houses and rent them to travellers. That is problematic.

Newcomers need help to get settled. Our organizations are overwhelmed. Our community organizations themselves are looking for space. They are at that point. If they cannot find it, they are forced to close or to limit their services to those in need. That is unacceptable. The federal government in Ottawa may not be aware of this whole situation, but community organizations and municipalities certainly are.

It is therefore indecent for the government to impose all sorts of conditions on the funding so that taxpayers' money is not used to help taxpayers who really need it. It is shameful and nonsensical at best. Then members say that the Bloc Québécois is a centralizing party and that it is turning into something else. We are not a centralizing party, quite the contrary. We want the money to get to the right place, to those who know what the needs are. We are the exact opposite of a centralizing party. We are separatists. How much less centralizing can a party get?

Right now, in Quebec City, there is woman who is letting eight homeless people live in her shed. Yes, I said eight people. She would let them stay in her home, but it is barely big enough for her and her family. That is what things have come to. How did we get to this point?

We have 700 projects that are ready to go but are still awaiting funding. The funding is not there, or the project cannot be completed on budget because there is a labour shortage and the cost of labour has increased astronomically. That is not even to mention the skyrocketing costs of materials. It does not make any sense.

There are no start-up funding programs for social housing projects. There is no money for renovating existing social housing, as I mentioned before. There are no programs that would allow a private seniors' residence that is about to close down to be converted into a community seniors' residence, so residents do not have to be evicted. There is no predictable, recurrent funding for resources, for programs. These are just a few of the problems that are out there, and they all have a solution.

The reality in Quebec is not the reality in Vancouver, Fort McMurray, Iqaluit or Toronto. In fact, the realities are different within Quebec itself, which is why it is important that the municipalities do the work, not the paternalistic federal government.

In short, Quebecers know what they need, and they do not need federal control in order to have their needs met. Independence is the only way to free ourselves completely from this control and to finally be masters in our own house and able to meet our own needs. Today's Conservative motion demonstrates exactly that.

### *Business of Supply*

• (1145)

[English]

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the member said that the ratio of housing costs to income should be roughly 25% to 30%. Unfortunately, it is about twice that much in Canada, despite the best intentions of the current government and all its spending. Does she have any comments on what ideal housing affordability is and what has gone wrong with the government's plans, which have obviously failed the mark?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Madam Speaker, I have gone through some tough times in my life, times when I had a dependent child who was in school and my husband and I were both in school and I was spending over 80% of my income on rent, so I know exactly what it is like and how difficult it can be to make ends meet at the end of the month.

A household should be spending no more than 25% to 30% of their income on rent. The problem with the existing funds and programs is that they do not cover all the blind spots. One of those blind spots involves giving subsidies to private contractors whose only objective is to make their apartment building profitable in less than five years.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I think, at least in the province of Manitoba, non-profit housing units have been in that range of 25% to 30% since 1988, but closer to 30% nowadays. The federal government, through the years, continues to contribute a majority, from what I understand, of those operating costs. I could be a little off on that, but I believe that to be somewhat accurate.

It is really important for us to recognize the need to increase the size of Canada's housing stock, and it is not going to be one government alone, nor should it be just Ottawa giving a pile of cash. We do need to see provinces, municipalities and other stakeholders step up to the same degree that Ottawa has been for the last number of years.

I am wondering if the member could provide her thoughts on other jurisdictions also playing a critical role in dealing with the housing crisis.

• (1150)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Madam Speaker, I want to remind the House about jurisdictions. It is Quebec and the provinces that have jurisdiction over housing, not Ottawa. The funds in Ottawa's coffers come from Quebec and the provinces. Ottawa itself is not a province.

Yes, there are programs, but as I was saying, they do not cover all the blind spots. Then, there are projects that are ready to go but that cannot move forward because of a lack of funding. Quebec has 700 such projects.

*Business of Supply*

The problem is that the funds ought to be transferred directly to the municipalities, to Quebec and to the provinces, to those that know how to manage them.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

[English]

When we are talking about affordable housing, I think about constituents in my riding, Robin in particular. She is a senior constituent in my riding, living off a fixed income, who is currently paying 75% of her income on housing. So many others across Canada and in my riding are also in this same situation.

I am wondering if the member could clarify whether she agrees that simply adding more affordable housing supply without affordability criteria would do nothing to address the housing affordability crisis for Quebeckers trying to find an affordable home.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned several issues in her question that need to be addressed.

For starters, seniors' pensions need to be increased. Right now, they are fixed, which is a good thing, but the fixed amount is too low.

Next, simply increasing the number of housing units might have a positive impact on rents, if all needs are met. However, if companies are the only ones building housing, we end up with a situation where these companies want their housing or apartment building paid off in five or six years, so prices will keep climbing. This is unacceptable.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to inform you at the outset that I am proud to be splitting my time with the biggest and strongest proponent of affordable housing across the country. I am of course referring to the member for Vancouver East.

We are in a crisis, which has been brewing for many years. I will come back to that. The reality is that even though the Conservatives moved this motion today, they do not put forward much in the way of solutions. For example, they blame the municipalities. However, I know that many municipalities are doing everything they can to ensure they have affordable housing. What is often lacking is the federal contribution. The Conservatives also say that municipalities should plan. Back home, in the greater Vancouver area, municipalities are already doing that.

The Conservatives are also proposing that federal buildings be converted to housing. I would just like to mention that, during the Harper regime, the Conservatives sold off federal government assets. It is a bit rich to hear them say today that they made a mistake during their 10 years in power, that they really ripped Canada's social fabric, but that they now want to make amends and turn the federal government's assets into something useful.

What is missing from their motion? There is no mention of cooperative housing, which has been a long-standing solution in Canada. There is no mention of community housing, which is foundational in helping people access affordable housing.

There is also no mention of the role that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC, has played over the years. The fact is, it has been very slow to provide adequate funding, and instead, it has often served to increase banks' profits. During the financial crisis, the Harper government made sure that tens of billions of dollars went to maintaining bank profits, rather than building affordable housing. We saw the same thing more recently from the Liberals during the COVID-19 crisis. Some \$150 billion from the CMHC was used to prop up our big Canadian banks, rather than invest in affordable housing.

These are not solutions. One solution would be to change the aspect of our tax system that encourages investors to buy up affordable housing and convert it into housing units for the rich and wealthy. This is a terrible aspect of our tax system, one that has to change. We need to prioritize and fund affordable housing, ensuring that at least one-third of the new units built are affordable. All the things I just mentioned could improve this motion and ensure that we have a policy based on common sense. I know my colleague from Vancouver East will speak to that later.

• (1155)

[English]

We are in a crisis. There are hundreds of thousands of Canadians who cannot find affordable housing, and we have had a federal government that has been very slow in the pickup. The NDP has been pushing, in this minority Parliament, as we did in the last, to force the government to make these investments. We are making some progress, but it is not at all on the scale that is required.

For a time in my life, like so many other Canadians, I simply could not afford housing. I had to couch surf. I fortunately had a second-hand car that I was able to sleep in. These are the kinds of things that Canadians should not have to struggle with. There should be that right to housing, and this is something the NDP has brought forward repeatedly over the course of the last few years, which is to put in place housing policies that actually make sense.

The Conservatives are bringing forward a different motion today, and this is something that we are all rejoicing in. They normally do the carbon tax for every one of their opposition days. Today, they are finally tackling housing. However, what I was hoping to see was the member for Carleton standing up to say, "We are sorry, Canadians. We are sorry about our contribution to the housing crisis. We are sorry that we almost doubled housing prices during the Harper regime."

Yes, the Conservatives can point to the Liberals for doing the same thing, but this tit-for-tat does not provide the affordable housing that Canadians need. I thought that the member for Carleton would stand up to say that they were so sorry that, in the last five years of the Harper regime, they lost 322,000 affordable rental units. I thought he would say that they are sorry they did that to Canadians, that they contributed, over the course of the 10 years of the Harper regime, to stripping apart the social safety net and allowing the destruction of affordable housing, with so many housing units converted to higher-priced units, so people could not afford them.

I was hoping the member for Carleton would do that, but we have not had any apologies from the Conservatives for their absolutely lamentable record over the course of that dismal decade of the Harper regime, where they stripped apart all of the protections that Canadians needed. The Conservatives basically amplified a despicable decision made by Paul Martin to end the national housing program and, instead of saying it was developing as a crisis and that they needed to address it, we saw the results.

We saw that the Conservatives did not protect those affordable housing units and did not make the investments in social housing, co-operative housing or community housing, which Canadians, seniors, students, families and people with disabilities need. The Conservatives did not do any of that. They had an appallingly bad record.

The first step the Conservatives need to take, as a party, is to recognize what a deplorable, appalling record they have. They nearly doubled housing prices with respect to market housing, and they basically did not protect hundreds of thousands of rental units that were affordable, and those that were lost to higher-priced units in conversions. These are things that Conservatives should acknowledge. These are things for which Conservatives should step up to say that they are sorry, to Canadians, for their very large part in provoking the housing crisis that exists today.

However, not a single Conservative has done that. No Conservative has stepped up to say that they were wrong to do what they did during that dismal decade and to acknowledge their contribution to this housing crisis. Yes, the Liberals are culpable as well, but the Conservatives played a significant, major and disappointing role in the housing crisis that we know today.

After the Conservatives allowed those rental units to be converted, and people with disabilities, seniors, students and families lost their affordable housing, the most reasonable person in this country would say that, really, when the Conservatives are raising in the House on the issue of housing for the first time ever for their opposition day, they should have started off by saying that they are sorry for all the neglect and everything they did that has contributed to so many people being homeless today.

• (1200)

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am going to rise to apologize. I am going to apologize to say sorry to the Canadians who voted in 2021 for a minority Liberal government. I am sorry the NDP signed a deal with the Liberals, with their coalition agreement, that effectively gave the Liberals a majority.

### *Business of Supply*

I am sorry that the NDP is complicit to many of the failed policies, including housing, which we are now debating in this House. I am sorry that the House leader of the NDP feels like somehow he needs to support the government when, in fact, he was voted for as a fourth party. Therefore, I will say to Canadians that I am sorry they did not get the government and the opposition they elected. Will this member do the same?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, I do not even know where to start. That was such a strange intervention. It shows that Conservatives are still struggling with the housing issue. They know a talking point, which is that the price of housing has doubled. That is true, except that the price of housing almost doubled on their watch. When that is pointed out to them, they get very sensitive and react. They like to accuse, but they do not like to resolve.

In this corner of the House, New Democrats pushed the Harper Conservatives during that regime. As we know, it was a majority government; unfortunately, a Conservative majority has absolutely appalling results for Canadians. When they basically allowed seniors, people with disabilities and families to have their affordable housing stripped away from them, we fought back.

Of course, in this Parliament, we have been fighting for affordable housing. We make sure that we push the Liberal government to do the right thing and make the investments; in this way, we can hopefully catch up on the years of neglect.

The reality is that this housing crisis is a product of Paul Martin, the Harper regime and the current government. New Democrats are going to continue to speak up for Canadians from coast to coast to coast to make sure that housing is built. Canadians have a right to a roof over their heads at night, and we are going to continue to fight for just that thing.

• (1205)

[Translation]

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I somewhat disagree with what my colleague just said about the NDP always being prepared to support housing measures.

Before Christmas, we voted on Bill C-31, which sought to send a \$500 cheque to everyone who earns less than \$20,000 a year and puts more than 30% of their income toward housing. Most tenant advocacy organizations in Quebec criticized this measure, saying that it was the kind of thing a right-wing government would do. The government was just sending out cheques so that it could say that it was helping people.

That does not build housing. The government spent a lot of money sending out those one-time cheques. Obviously, they were good for people who need housing and who do not have a lot of money. However, the government could have taken that money and built housing units so that, in a few years' time, more disadvantaged people could have a roof over their heads and a place to call home.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what I am saying and that is exactly what the NDP is doing.

*Business of Supply*

The member is well aware that, for years, the NDP has done more than any other party, and even all of the other parties combined, to promote and push for the right to housing and the right to affordable housing.

We are working and fighting for funding to be granted. That is part of our role and our mission here in the House. We will not stop until everyone in Canada has affordable housing and a roof over their head every night.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my friend can provide his comments regarding the important non-profit sector. I think of Habitat for Humanity, which has built brand new homes and made them accessible to people who would never have the opportunity otherwise. It is a group we have invested in and supported.

Could the member provide his thoughts on both the need for additional housing and the growth of the housing co-op industry?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, New Democrats have been saying all along that we need to put in place a non-profit acquisition fund. The federal government needs to step up with core funding to ensure that we build and acquire not just non-profit housing but also co-operative housing, social housing and community housing. This is the housing mix that Canadians are looking for and that we had in this country before Paul Martin decided to rip up the national housing program and give that money to big corporations instead.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise to engage in this debate today about housing. In fact, I could talk about housing all day long.

The motion before us today is indeed an interesting one. In the Conservatives' approach, per usual, they focus only on issues where they could actually put out buzzwords to rev up the community about a situation. The solutions they provide often have tremendous gaps and, interestingly, they always miss when it comes to targeting the corporate sector. I wonder why the Conservatives always think the corporate sector will take care of things, that somehow things will magically be okay, including the situation with housing. If the market were going to take care of the housing crisis, or, in fact, if the market were not going to escalate the crisis, then we would not be in this situation today.

The reality is this: When we look at the housing crisis from coast to coast to coast, we do need government intervention. I am a strong proponent of that, saying that the federal government needs to show leadership. It does not matter who is in government. Whether it is the Liberals or the Conservatives, government needs to be there for people to ensure housing as a basic human right.

The reality is that the government has not been there. That is why we have the housing crisis we face today. The Liberals cancelled the national affordable housing program back in 1993. Our country lost more than half a million units of social and co-op housing that would otherwise have been built had the Liberals not cancelled the program.

Now, I have to say that the Conservatives also did not do their part. They were in government as well. They did not invest in hous-

ing as they needed to do. More to the point, neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives invested in housing to meet the needs on the basis of housing being a basic human right. Not only that, but they allowed the market to go rampant in taking advantage of Canadians who need housing.

What happened after the federal Liberals cancelled the national affordable housing program? We started to see real estate investment trusts come into the market. They started to buy up housing stock in the community. Not only did they start to buy up the housing stock, but the government of the day also allowed them to walk away with a free pass to boot. They did not have to pay the corporate tax rate, even though, for all intents and purposes, they operate like a corporation.

As a result, the seven largest real estate investment trusts did not have to pay taxes at the corporate rate to the general revenues, to the tune of \$1.2 billion. This tax should have been collected, and then the government could have reinvested that money into housing by creating an acquisition fund for non-profits, which the Liberals say they support. They should have funded it so that we could hold the housing stock. However, the Liberals did not do that.

It was not just the Liberals; the Conservatives did not do that either. They allowed this to go on and on. Now, the Auditor General and the Parliamentary Budget Officer just issued a report indicating that Canada will lose another \$300 million over the next four years if we do not change the tax policy. The NDP has said on the public record that we need to stop fuelling the housing crisis. Corporate landlords need to pay their fair share, and real estate investment trusts need to pay the corporate tax rate. The money that we collect should be reinvested back into housing.

However, we do not see any of that language in this motion today. The Conservatives are saying that local governments should pre-emptively upzone a parcel of land for the development of housing. Now let us be clear: When they do that, what is happening is that the Conservatives are saying to the local government to just write developers a blank cheque. Every time a parcel of land is upzoned, that land value increases exponentially.

• (1210)

I am not saying we should not upzone land for further housing development, but my question is this: Why did the Conservatives not put in language to say that there needs to be a return back to the community? When we give value in land to the developers, there has to be a return back to the community to ensure that the increased value in land that they receive from the upzoning is actually going to the community in the form of community contributions, more social housing, day care spaces and green spaces, as examples. The Conservatives consistently and persistently give a free pass to the private sector; according to the New Democrats, that is wrong.

We also want to see “affordability” defined. What has happened over the years is that both the Liberals and the Conservatives have eroded the term “affordability” to the point where it is meaningless. In fact, if we talk to people in the non-profit sector, they think that when the government says, “affordable housing”, it is a four-letter word. It does not actually amount to being affordable by any stretch of the imagination.

Once upon a time, core-need housing was deemed to be affordable when rent was geared to income. That has now disappeared. It no longer exists. It exists only in theory, and that should stop. This motion should have incorporated language on affordability and defined it better.

We want to tie federal infrastructure dollars for municipalities to the number of new homes built, impose clawbacks on municipalities that delay new home construction, and ensure that there is federal funding for major transit projects to cities that pre-emptively upzone lands around transit infrastructure for higher-density housing.

The NDP is calling for amendments to this motion. We are calling for the Conservatives to accept three amendments. Specifically, we want to ensure that at least one-third of the new homes built meet core affordability needs and that at least one-third of the new homes are set, at a minimum, at 20% below market housing rent. We need to ensure that upzoning provides tangible benefits to local communities, including additional affordable housing, additional green spaces and child care spaces. We also need to ensure that the underutilized federal properties made available for housing to create new social co-ops and community housing guarantee the affordability of those units and that the value of the upzoning goes back to the community and not into the hands of the developers. That is what we need to do.

I hope that the Conservatives will support these amendments and that the language of the amendments fits what is required in this House.

I move that the motion be amended as follows: “(a) in paragraph (a) by adding after the words ‘new homes built’ the words ‘to ensure at least 1/3 of the new homes built meet core affordability needs of Canadians, that at least 1/3 is set at minimum 20% below market housing rent’; (b) by adding the following paragraph after paragraph (b): ‘ensuring that this “up-zoning” provides tangible benefits to local communities, including in the form of additional affordable housing, additional green spaces, and child care spaces, so that “up-zoning” does not just benefit developers’; and (c) in paragraph (c) by replacing the words ‘housing while guaranteeing’ with the words ‘social, co-operative, or community housing to guarantee.’”

That is the motion that I would like to move in order to amend the Conservative motion; it can ensure that we are clear in what we are talking about, that “affordability” is clearly defined and that there is a return back to the community when we upzone land so that the benefit is not just a blank cheque for the developer; rather, it is a community benefit going back to the people.

### *Business of Supply*

• (1215)

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is my duty to inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion, or in the case that he or she is not present, consent may be given or denied by the House leader, the deputy House leader, the whip or the deputy whip of the sponsor's party.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Vancouver East shared with the Conservatives a copy of this motion a number of hours ago, and so I am sure there will be somebody provided from the Conservatives. They do have a number of House officers, all paid by taxpayers, and so I am sure one of them will step up in just a moment. They have been given plenty of notice. Hopefully they will have their tie on. They should not be taking their tie off, quite frankly, but that is up to them; it is a free country.

I am sure the Speaker will get a response given the notice the NDP provided several hours ago on this amendment.

• (1220)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I will read it again.

It is my duty to inform hon. members an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion, or in the case he or she is not present, consent may be given or denied by the House leader, the deputy House leader, the whip or the deputy whip from the sponsor's party.

Since the sponsor is not present in the chamber, I will ask the deputy whip if he consents to the amendment being moved.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we do not consent.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There is no consent. Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 85, the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Fleetwood—Port Kells.

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary gymnastics demonstration was very good.

As a fellow resident of Metro Vancouver, we have also seen a lot of pressure on industrial land. In fact, Vancouver is almost out of it. Does the member see the motion by the Conservative Party as further complicating or disrupting the balance we need between industrial land and residential land?

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Mr. Speaker, the motion talks about housing and not industrial land. There is another whole debate I would love to get into about industrial land, but for the purpose of this discussion, what we need to focus on is the housing crisis.

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I call on the Liberal government to do the right thing and show leadership by investing in social housing back to the level when the government was doing it in the seventies and the eighties. The other thing I say to the government is to stop the corporate sector from fuelling the housing crisis, stop the special treatment that real estate investment trusts get and make them pay their fair share. The government should make them pay the corporate tax rate and reinvest that money to non-profits into an acquisition fund.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am a fellow B.C. member, but I need to contest some of the rationalization the NDP has, the virulent hatred of real investment trusts. In places like Westbank First Nation, real estate investment trusts have offered some of the most dense purpose-built rentals that allow for workers to stay in our communities so we can have places for nurses and long-term care aides, and it is all very affordable.

It seems like the NDP is somehow saying that Westbank First Nation should not be able to put on this stock. DCCs, or development cost charges, rising taxes and CMHC raising the cost of insurance only make housing more expensive. Why does she want to stop real estate investment trusts in places like Westbank First Nation, or does she somehow believe she knows better than Westbank First Nation does?

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Mr. Speaker, what I am saying, and the member knows this, is that real estate investment trusts should pay their fair share of taxes. They should not be given special tax treatment and not pay the corporate tax rate. They should be paying the corporate tax rate. Canadians are losing close to \$2 billion in taxes that should have been collected and could have been invested into housing.

No wonder the Conservatives would oppose my amendment, because they always want to benefit the corporate sector and not make them pay their fair share. When I say to make them pay their fair share, in what terms? It is for that investment to go back into the community. By saying no to my amendment, the Conservatives are saying that they do not want to ensure, by giving land value with the upzoning, the return is returned to the community in the form of more social housing, green space, child care and other community benefits. That is wrong.

• (1225)

[Translation]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there is not much point to this debate if we do not address the real problem. I am not a great economist in life, but to me, it boils down to supply and demand. According to 2016 numbers, we should be building 100,000 more housing units and, in this area too, Canada is the worst in the G7.

We are going to need to invest in housing, especially social and affordable housing, including in rural areas. That should be the real priority. The vacancy rate in Rouyn-Noranda is around 1%. The same goes for other towns in Abitibi—Témiscamingue. This inflates prices significantly. There is nothing in the recent budget for building housing in rural areas. There is funding for indigenous housing, and I applaud that, but there is no construction planned for rural areas.

How can we address the issue of building housing in a generous and clear manner as a government policy? I would like my colleague's thoughts on that.

[English]

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree with the member that we need the federal government's leadership in investing in housing.

That is why the NDP calls for the government to build at least 500,000 units of social housing, co-op housing or community housing, because the community deserves housing and housing is a basic human right.

As long as the approach by the Liberal government or the Conservatives is being taken, we will always have a housing crisis.

Real investment needs to be made and it needs to be done now.

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, off the top, I want to note that I will be splitting my time with the member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

We have heard today that adequate, suitable and affordable housing provides stability and security, and contributes to the well-being of a person, yet that sense of security that comes with appropriate and stable housing is becoming further out of reach for many Canadians. This is particularly true when it comes to young Canadians.

Eight years into the Liberal government and its inflationary policies, we find ourselves in a genuine housing crisis. We just have to look at the facts to see how broken housing is here in Canada. The motion we are debating today clearly lays out how desperate housing has become under the Liberal government's leadership. The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in the 10 biggest cities has almost doubled since it has taken office. Monthly mortgage costs have also doubled in that time. The cost of owning a home is, on average, 60% of a person's income, making home ownership out of reach for even more Canadians. In fact, nine out of 10 young Canadians have given up on the dream of home ownership entirely.

With inflation soaring at a 40-year high, it is cutting into the paycheques of Canadians, driving up costs and limiting purchasing power. Let us not forget the Liberal government's inflationary carbon tax, which is also driving up the cost on everything and constraining household budgets. Of course, the government's deficits are driving up mortgage rates. With higher interest rates, many families are struggling to make their mortgage payments. The current reality is that, under the Liberal government's leadership, rent has become ever more unaffordable and home ownership ever less attainable.



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The critical need for housing exists across the continuum of housing. Because this shortage exists in every stage of housing, there are Canadians living in housing that is not suitable to their circumstances, but they are unable to transition. Supply is simply not meeting demand, and existing programs have not closed the gap.

When it comes to chronic homelessness, the Auditor General's report from last fall portrayed a very bleak assessment of the effectiveness of the Liberal government's policies and leadership on the housing file. The Auditor General found that CMHC could not determine whether or not its programs were improving housing outcomes for vulnerable Canadians and preventing chronic homelessness. The reason for that was it did not know who was benefiting from the initiatives.

In that same AG report we found that Infrastructure Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada could not assess the success of their programs either. These departments were not using up-to-date data on homelessness to assess their effectiveness. The report makes clear there is minimal federal accountability on the goals set out by the Liberal government in its national housing strategy, and it is not clear who the lead is on these files. ESDC and CMHC are not coordinated, and the disconnect between these two entities is a recipe for failure.

We know the Liberal government loves a good photo op and a big announcement. Of course, big targets and ambitious goals sound great, but all the targets in the world will not achieve results without a plan and real leadership as a driving force to bring them home. The Parliamentary Budget Officer reported that six of the main national housing strategy programs have barely spent 50% of their budgeted amount. If the funding envelope exists but is not being utilized, that gap points to a problem in the structure and delivery of these programs. We hear about how long it takes for applications to be processed. A lengthy processing time can negatively impact the viability of a project. Inflation is soaring, costs are going up, taxes are going up and labour is limited.

• (1230)

All of those factors have a direct impact on project costs and their timelines. When we delay getting shovels in the ground, costs go up and, at some point, projects are no longer viable.

We also often hear about unnecessary red tape and the bureaucratic hoops that are required to access CMHC programs. There is certainly a red tape problem when applicants need to hire high-priced consultants to successfully navigate the application process, and that is an issue. It means smaller communities and community groups are at a major disadvantage because they do not have the resources needed to navigate the bureaucracy that is CMHC. In practice, this is yet another obstacle in increasing the supply of housing in Canada. The lack of housing supply is driving up prices and directly contributing to the lack of affordable housing options.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has said that Canada needs 5.8 million new homes by 2030 to restore affordability. To build those new homes, we need to have skilled tradespeople to do the work. Unfortunately, there are significant labour shortages across industries and sectors. Whether it is health care workers, child care workers or tradespeople, workforce shortages are a recur-

ring priority that comes up in just about every single meeting that I have in my office.

With the shortage of skilled tradespeople, the construction industry is not immune. A targeted workforce strategy that has immediate and also long-term solutions is critical. There needs to be a comprehensive plan in place to ensure we have the necessary skilled tradespeople to build new houses. That strategy should include a plan to work with provinces to ensure that our federal immigration system is attracting immigrants with skills in the trades. However, it also needs to include a plan to work with the provinces to speed up the credential recognition process so they can fill those immediate needs in our economy and relocate as needed.

Every level of government has a role to play in addressing the current housing crisis in our country. Certainly, all levels of government need to work in co-operation to achieve meaningful results. That requires strong leadership at the federal level. It is time for a federal government that is less focused on announcements and more focused on results. We need to remove government gatekeepers who are blocking home building.

Municipal governments are on the front lines of housing and have direct impact on the construction of new homes. The federal government can help remove municipal gatekeepers by creating greater incentives for municipalities to build houses.

The federal government is providing billions of dollars annually to municipal governments. Those federal infrastructure dollars should mean a result of the new construction of homes. A system that rewards construction and disincentivizes delays will ensure progress.

The federal government also has thousands of buildings that are being underutilized, buildings that could be better used to meet today's housing demands. The Conservatives have proposed selling off 15% of underutilized federal buildings to increase the supply of affordable housing. These Conservative solutions will help make real progress and close the gap between the growing demand and the shortage in supply.

As the housing crisis grows, we need to see focused and effective leadership at the federal level. The housing minister is always quick to stand in the House and talk about the Liberals' big announcements, but the facts speak for themselves. The demand for housing is growing and the supply is not keeping pace. Rent and mortgages are becoming more and more expensive and the Liberal government has failed to deliver efficient and effective programs.

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The Conservatives have a plan. We have proposed practical solutions to address the growing housing crisis. It is time for effective federal leadership that will remove gatekeepers and cut unnecessary red tape so we can get houses built.

● (1235)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I find it somewhat interesting how the Conservatives have brought forward a motion today that, for the most part, the government is already doing. It is almost as if the Conservatives are looking for some policy ideas, reviewing what is happening and is now trying to amplify them.

I wonder if the member can give a clear indication of something that is truly unique, something the Conservatives are saying that is not a bumper sticker saying.

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk:** Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives were in government, nine out of 10 young Canadians did not give up on the dream of home ownership.

CMHC has come plenty of times to the committee on which I sit. The data is not being collected. If the member listened to my speech, I asked who was in charge. Is it ESDC or CMHC? There is no federal leadership from the government.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague dwelt at length on how difficult it is for small municipalities and organizations to deal with red tape so they can access various housing funding programs.

Today's motion adds more conditions for gaining access to these programs in order to get the necessary funding to move forward with plans that are already on the starting line and just need money to get going.

How can the Conservatives say that there is too much red tape and then impose conditions that create even more red tape? Would it not be better to give the municipalities and the provinces free rein in their own jurisdiction and release the money?

[English]

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk:** Mr. Speaker, I have been listening throughout today's debate and it seems like the Bloc wants to be dependent on Ottawa. What the Conservatives have proposed is to empower municipalities and the provinces. This would give them the opportunity to just get it done. The Conservatives will stop the privileged gatekeepers who are preventing houses from being built and empower municipalities and provinces to get it done, so Canadians have a place to call home.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy hearing the member speak, but we cannot neglect the deplorable Harper regime record where we lost over 300,000 affordable housing units. These were units to which seniors, people with disabilities, families and youth all had access.

The Conservatives today have presented a motion that would not give one blue cent to housing, and they have just rejected the NDP amendment that would ensure there would be a role for co-operative housing, social housing and community housing.

My question for my colleague is simply this. Is this just the performative arts by the Conservatives, that they are not actually seeking to find the solutions and to put in place the funding that is so critical to ensure that every Canadian has a roof over his or her head at night?

● (1240)

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk:** Mr. Speaker, there is something fundamentally different between me and my colleague: I do not believe that government has all the answers. I do not want Canadians to feel that they have to knock on the door of whatever elected official at whatever government level to answer, help and give them what they need. Canadians are resilient and they are strong. We need to cut the bureaucratic red tape that is preventing Canadians from achieving their dream.

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I posed a question in the chamber earlier, and it has been talked about. The government likes to throw a lot of money at programs, but it does not measure outcomes. As I have said already, when I asked the Minister of Northern Affairs, he said that the department did not follow incomes; it did not track the data.

However, the member knows all too well that the NDP could do a great thing and bring down the government at the earliest opportunity to see a good government take over. What can the NDP do to really cause positive change in Canada today?

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk:** Mr. Speaker, frankly, the NDP could have some principle and a backbone, withdraw from its confidence-and-supply agreement and stand up for the Canadians who elected those members as opposition to the House.

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, since the government came into power, the cost of housing has doubled. Nine out of 10 young Canadians believe they will never have home ownership. Families from coast to coast cannot even afford the interest on their mortgages. Numerous rankings regularly list Vancouver and Toronto as among the most unaffordable cities in the world. To put that into context, they are worse than those notorious for their high cost of living like New York. Perhaps the most illustrative comparison is that with our neighbour down south.

The United States has just shy of 332 million people living on 9.8 million square kilometres. In contrast, Canada has 38 million people living on 10 million square kilometres. In no world does it make sense that housing should cost twice as much here than in the U.S. despite its density being nearly 10 times our own.

The simple reality is that the government's mismanagement coupled with local NIMBY gatekeepers block development and drive up mortgages and housing costs. This is the only explanation of the fact that we have the fewest homes in the G7 per capita despite having the most space.

The Prime Minister has enabled municipalities that block development and rob our future generations of a chance of home ownership. A Conservative government would put an end to that. We would remove the bureaucratic gatekeepers from the equation, free up land and speed up the accreditation and permit process to get more shovels in the ground as soon as possible. This is a dire necessity that needed action yesterday, not tomorrow.

In eastern Ontario, a recent report stated that our region needed to build upward of 14,000 rental units just to meet demand. This does not include any actual growth, but solely takes into account what we need to build to meet the demand. This is ludicrous and a direct result of the failure of governments at all levels that acquiesce to activists.

This crisis is not just limited to housing. Just last week, I received an email from the Food Sharing Project, which serves Hastings—Lennox and Addington and the Kingston area by providing food and equipment to schools. It said:

The 2022-2023 school year has been unprecedented for The Food Sharing Project. Due to increasing demand and the skyrocketing costs of food, we are facing a significant budget shortfall as we are now sending out over \$25,000 in food every week. We need your help to ensure that students do not go through the school day hungry.

This is the reality of the Prime Minister's Canada: kids who cannot eat and parents who cannot afford shelter.

Inflation is at a 40-year high. Canadians are sacrificing on food for shelter. Mortgages have doubled since 2015, averaging approximately \$3,000 a month. Mortgage interest costs rocketed up to 26% in March alone. Red tape is costing an additional \$200,000 on new homes. Average rent has nearly doubled for a two-bedroom apartment since 2015, increasing to \$2,200 from \$1,171 a month. Our youth have lost their dream of home ownership.

The current housing crisis is affecting every single riding across Canada. Each and every one of us in the House is elected to this place to represent our constituents. We have all been contacted by our constituents. On this side of the House, we have a plan to fix the housing crisis, with six simple solutions for Canada.

Canada's Conservatives would require large urban centres where the cost of living is particularly egregious, like Vancouver, to substantially increase home building in their borders. Those that cannot comply would face penalties in the vein of withheld federal funds. This is completely in line with existing legislation regarding provincial governments under the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act.

We would crack down on everyone's most annoying neighbours, the NIMBYs. We would implement a system for residents to raise concerns about the pedantic obstructionism. Should the decision body decide the complaint is well founded, we would supply infrastructure dollars to get those housing units built. In short, we would out-NIMBY the NIMBYs.

• (1245)

We would incentivize municipalities to increase their housing capacities by rewarding those that take the necessary steps to build homes in the form of a building bonus. This would give the latitude to municipalities to decide how to best address their individual

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needs instead of a cookie-cutter approach, which so often fails in a nation as large and diverse as Canada.

Further, we would require any municipality that seeks federal funds to pre-approve high-density and employment applications on available lands surrounding areas such as bus and subway stops. This would allow common sense residential zones to be built around accessible, walkable areas so residents will not need to choose between living downtown so they can walk to work and living in the suburbs but requiring a car. This is good policy, not only for the pocketbook, but also for the environment.

We would take advantage of the recent remote work paradigm by selling off 15% of federal buildings and have them turned into affordable housing. These buildings are generally already located in urban centres and are already built. The only construction would be converting them and rezoning them to be residential. We expect this would result in 5,500 new residential buildings capable of housing dozens, if not hundreds, of units each.

However, perhaps most importantly, we would stop printing money. Taking inspiration from the Harper era's one-for-one rule regarding red tape, we will require every dollar that we spend to be matched by a dollar saved. This would end the constant cycle of inflationary bubbles caused by out-of-touch central bankers who, on occasion, have helped created the current housing and market crisis.

I would also like to take a moment to address a somewhat different housing crisis affecting some Canadians, our armed forces. The federal government recently implemented changes to the post living differential. This is essentially a top-up for CAF members based on where they live. The government rightly sought to update the formula to better address the current economic climate of the posting areas, as the initial computation was done years ago.

While the formula was due for an update, the government completely revamped the benefit in a manner that has massive financial implications for longer-serving members. They get penalized for being promoted, changing bases, being married to CAF members and succeeding. They are, quite literally, being more penalized the longer they serve. This is having massive consequences for troop morale in a time when retention is quite literally an institutional crisis that cannot be understated. This will add to the already ongoing dearth of long-serving members, as they are looking to transition out of the armed forces. This is unacceptable, and it needs to be addressed. Those men and women who are serving, or who are thinking of serving, should know that a Conservative government would have their backs.

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Canada's Conservatives will build and bring it home.

• (1250)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could tell us why, when the government, in an attempt to help Canadians, brought forward the housing support program, the one-time payment, which ultimately helped over half a million Canadian renters, the Conservatives voted against it.

I look at the resolution today, and it seems to be more about trying to convince Canadians that the Conservatives genuinely care about housing. The member spoke of “taking inspiration from the Harper era”, which did nothing for housing. That was the reality of it. Harper did nothing to expand Canada's housing market.

I wonder if the member could provide her thoughts on those two points.

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman:** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, in the Harper years, there was half the rent, half the mortgage and half the down payment to pay. Right now, we have a costly coalition that is continuously making it more difficult for Canadians. Houses are built of beams. Right now, the government is cancelling any dreams of home ownership.

The member opposite is suggesting that the Harper government was not putting Canadians ahead. The numbers talk. Facts talk. The continuous lacklustre announcements from the government are failing Canadians, and Canadians have caught on.

[Translation]

**Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is going to be simple.

With all of the solutions it is proposing, I think the Conservative Party motion is suggesting that we keep doing things that are not working. It is not a question of construction. Housing is being built, but the problem is access to social and affordable housing. That requires specific strategies, not a construction strategy. Construction is happening in both urban and rural areas. These units are offered up to market forces, but the market will never succeed in making housing affordable, because that is not its mission. Meeting long-term needs is not part of its mission either. If we want affordable housing, we need a paradigm shift. We need to redirect that money out of the market.

Does my colleague agree with this analysis?

[English]

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman:** Mr. Speaker, the paradigm shift that we need in this place is to have people in government who are fighting for the Canada that we once loved.

I got an email from an individual in my riding who is concerned with the price of the variable interest rates. She wrote that she is listing her home because her variable payment has gone from \$2,000 to \$4,000 a month. She has to sell because she cannot afford it. This is a couple in my riding who saved and saved. They finally got a home that they love. They renovated it beyond their expectations, and now they have to sell it.

This government is failing Canadians, and it needs to step up.

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, I would like to ask about affordability, which the member started talking about but did not really discuss in the rest of her intervention.

The NDP feels that there needs to be assurances that projects are meeting the core housing needs of Canadians. Does the member agree that infrastructure funding should be tied to specific affordability criteria?

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman:** Mr. Speaker, after serving on a municipal council for 15 years, I completely understand where the member is coming from, but what we need to recognize is that the indication of our housing situation is getting worse. It is not getting better.

The government is extremely crafty at announcements and reannouncing an announcement. It is not working.

• (1255)

**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 Vaughan—Woodbridge.

I want to take a bit of a different approach to the issue because people who are following the debate should get a bit of a history and an understanding of why we are where we are today, who is responsible for what, and what the current government has done. I believe that the government, in a real and tangible way, has stepped up to the plate. Let me expand by commenting on what I talked about at the beginning.

When I was first elected to the Manitoba legislature back in 1988, I was appointed as the housing critic for the Province of Manitoba. Therefore, virtually from day one, I have had an interest in housing. With respect to public, subsidized housing, the cost was always somewhere in the range of 25% or closer to 30% of an individual's salary, and they would be subsidized in the tens of thousands of non-profit housing units in the province of Manitoba alone.

With respect to federal contributions, one of the biggest ongoing contributions that Ottawa provides across the country is for non-profit, low-income housing, which is there for people with disabilities, seniors, individuals on fixed incomes and individuals who have low income or virtually no income at all. We tie in literally hundreds of millions of dollars every year, and that is how Ottawa, in essence, has that ongoing support.

I want to go to 1991 or 1992. It was during the Charlottetown accord debate. I was in the north end of Winnipeg, and I was debating Bill Blaikie, an NDP member of Parliament at the time. Bill Blaikie was defending why Ottawa does not have a role in housing and why provinces and municipalities should be responsible for housing. I disagreed with that back in 1991. Every political party supported divesting of Ottawa's authority in housing back in 1991-92. That is why I was not surprised when we saw cutbacks in housing in the following years.

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I opposed it then, and I would oppose it today, but the difference today is that we finally have a Prime Minister who understands the important role that Ottawa plays in housing. Therefore, I am hoping that members of all political parties will recognize that, whenever there is a constitutional debate, hopefully sometime in the distant future, never again will we see federal politicians not recognizing the importance of housing to Canadians. It is important that Canada, as a national government, does play a role.

Let us go back over the last number of years since we have replaced the Harper regime. We have seen not only hundreds of millions of dollars but also multiple billions of dollars being invested in a national housing strategy, which includes things that are being proposed by the Conservative Party today in its motion. The Conservatives know that. Do we think they would come up with an original idea? What they are doing, in many ways, is taking some Liberal ideas and amplifying them.

We could talk about the accelerator fund to speed up the construction. In the budget, the Minister of Finance and the government have been very clear that we want to double construction over the next decade over what we are seeing today. The accelerator fund is an investment of billions of dollars to speed up the process while working with municipalities.

I would hope that people who are following the debate today would have an appreciation that there are limitations on what Ottawa can actually do. We can use financial incentives, which we are doing. Like no other government in the history of Canada has ever done, this government has stepped up to provide the financial incentives to see more construction and more homes built in Canada.

● (1300)

However, we are only one of several players. I would argue that our municipalities, both rural and urban, need to come to the table in a larger capacity. The zoning issue, the bureaucracy of red tape in construction, is of critical importance. If anyone wants to try to buy a lot in the city of Winnipeg, I wish them good luck. No one can buy an individual lot. If, by chance, someone might discover something, we are talking about huge amounts of money. Around 1990, I purchased a lot for \$30,000 or \$32,000. A few years later, the lot prices skyrocketed. Now, people cannot get lots. However, in some of the rural communities in Manitoba, people can find those \$30,000 lots.

Let us ask the questions. Why? Where is the money being invested? How can we ensure that housing remains more affordable, that there are larger quantities of space for the building of homes, and that there is more construction? In order to do that, as the seconder of the motion, a former mayor, made reference to, cities must play an absolutely critical role and step up. In our case, we are encouraging that. Provinces also play a critical role. When I was the housing critic at the provincial level in the late 1980s, infill housing was really important. We needed to look at ways to build homes on vacant lots, particularly in areas that were in need.

Housing co-ops are another form of housing that Canadians could truly benefit from. There is a difference between a housing co-op and an apartment block. I like to say that people in an apartment block are tenants, and that, in a housing co-op, they are residents. There is a big difference. Being in a housing co-op is similar

to being a condo owner of sorts. There are opportunities for us to be able to expand. That is why, when the Minister of Housing indicated that we wanted to see the expansion and supported that expansion of housing co-ops, I saw that as a good thing.

There are organizations, third parties out there, that have done phenomenal work. I am thinking in particular about Habitat for Humanity in the city of Winnipeg and in the province of Manitoba. Habitat for Humanity has built 500 new houses over the years. One of the biggest benefactors has been the community of Winnipeg North, whether it is in The Maples, the traditional north end, Point Douglas, or all over Winnipeg North. Habitat has been there to support people who would otherwise not have had the opportunity, in all likelihood, to become home owners. Habitat is not unique to the province of Manitoba; it is across Canada. The federal government has supported that.

The federal government continues to work with willing provinces wherever it can. The point I am trying to emphasize is that the federal government, like no other government in the history of Canada, with the possible exception of when the World War II war homes were being built, has come to the plate and has been there in a very real and tangible way, with more than just dollars. Our commitment to support Canadians and the housing industry is second to no other in the history of Canada. We do want, and we are prepared to continue, to work with the stakeholders, whether those are private, non-profit, provincial governments, territorial governments or indigenous governments.

The former Kapyong Barracks is a wonderful parcel of land that is being developed today. It was formerly federal lands. There is so much more to say, but I will leave it at that.

● (1305)

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, one of the troubling aspects of the motion I am looking at is that there is talk about the free market just taking care of itself and getting out of the way. Meanwhile, the Conservatives want to use government, through a motion in the House of Commons, to actually tell the market what to do. Where I struggle with this motion is that, in the past in Windsor West, when we had a high unemployment rate, we were recruited by the military to serve in Afghanistan and in other types of overseas operations because of our high unemployment. There were billboards and a series of other things. Then the government at the time, under Harper, closed my veterans office, so when we had returning soldiers coming back with mental illness, stress and a whole series of issues, we did not have supports there anymore. We actually had people having to go to London, Ontario, 200 kilometres away, even to get counselling.

My question for the member is this. When we have government policy dictating that our citizens must take extreme types of measures for all of us, is there not a role and responsibility for the House to also make things right at the end of the day?

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**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, that was an interesting question. The office closures mentioned by the member actually happened in Brandon, Manitoba as well. I think there were nine veterans offices that were closed down coast to coast to coast. I know that my colleagues in Atlantic Canada remember this quite well because of the impact it had there.

What I find interesting is the statement that the current leader of the Conservative Party made when I posed a question to him regarding the investments we put into housing. In essence, his response was that we would have been better off not to have spent the money. I believe that the Conservative Party, if ever given the opportunity, would cut back all expenditures in regard to national housing. Even the member who spoke before me said we should take inspiration from Stephen Harper. The leader of the Conservative Party was one of his ministers. He is a former minister of housing, who took inspiration from Harper, who did absolutely nothing, zero, on housing. Now we have the leader of the Conservative Party saying we do not need to provide money. It should concern all of us.

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, so far this morning, all I have heard is people saying it is not their fault, it is someone else's. That is what we are seeing in the House of Commons in terms of this motion.

On the one side, the Liberal Party says it is doing a lot for Canadians, but it is not actually doing much. On the other side, the Conservatives dive straight into meddling, taking a page out of the NDP-Liberal coalition's playbook.

What is affordable housing? How can we really help people who need it?

I have been here all morning, and I have not heard anything about that. There have been no answers to these questions.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I indicated a number of things in my comments as to how we could improve our current conditions, but it involves bringing all the different players to the table. The primary difference between, let us say, myself and the Bloc, or the government and the Bloc, is that the Bloc believes that Ottawa is nothing more than a cash ATM machine, with the answer being we should just give the provinces the money and let the provinces do everything. That goes against what I believe Canadians from coast to coast to coast expect of the national government. That has been clearly demonstrated by a lot of the discussions that have been taking place today in the House. The national government does have a role, a responsibility to ensure that there is housing for Canadians, no matter where they live, and to put in the resources, supports and encouragement wherever possible.

**Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there have been a lot of speeches from the other side of the House today that have been trying to rewrite history. I was a municipal councillor during the years Harper was in government and, as the member pointed out, there were no programs for municipalities. There were no housing programs for not-for-profits. I wonder if the hon. member could reiterate parts of his speech that

talked about policy support, the national housing strategy and what that means for not-for-profits and housing providers across the country, versus what we experienced during the Harper years.

● (1310)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party actually captured the answer to that today, in terms of the contrast. One member spoke of taking inspiration from the Harper era. The member who is a former councillor understands that the former era had absolutely nothing, zero, for housing. Then, the leader of the Conservative Party, today in the House, in his introduction, said that money is not the issue. He feels that we should not have invested hundreds of millions, going into billions, of dollars. I think that is the contrast.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is great to rise any day in the honourable House to see my esteemed colleagues debate a very important topic for our constituents from coast to coast to coast.

Before I get into my formal remarks, I first want to thank those Canadians who are out there today, in the communities we all call home, building the homes that newcomers and Canadians who are purchasing their first home will move into, whether they are in the mid-rise, low-rise or high-rise categories of the housing sector, and whether they are in Ontario, B.C., or out on the east coast. I want to thank all of the union members from my riding's own LiUNA Local 183. Its training facility and future headquarters will open in a few months. I also want to thank the carpenters' union Local 27, the individuals who build the homes, and those in the subtrades, such as electricians, the people who do the forming, and the roofers. I wish to thank all of the folks who participate in building homes across Canada for what they do day in and day out. Whether it is raining, cold, snowing or hot, they are there doing that great work.

The housing builders and developers, many of whom reside in the city of Vaughan and are good friends, do a phenomenal job building homes for Canadians. They take risks, and they have done it for decades. Some of these developers and builders came to Canada as immigrants, especially those in the Italian Canadian community. For the last 50 or 60 years, they have built literally thousands of homes for Canadians. It is great to see the next generation, their kids, taking over their businesses and continuing that entrepreneurial spirit that personifies the country that my parents, who now get to call Canada home, came from.

[Translation]

I am pleased to have this opportunity to talk about an issue that really matters to me: housing affordability for Canadians.

Everyone in Canada deserves to have a safe, affordable home, but we know that is getting harder and harder for Canadian families across the country. Housing is a key socio-economic determinant essential to building communities, supporting our families and creating opportunities for young people.

In the wake of the pandemic, we are experiencing a period of high inflation and rising interest rates. Canadians are extremely concerned about the housing crisis and are getting more and more worried.

The Canadian housing system is complex, with many factors contributing to significant and ongoing price increases. We know one of the main reasons for the crisis is that housing supply is not keeping up with demand and has not been for years. Canada's population is growing faster than that of any other G7 country, but our housing supply has not been able to keep up with demand.

[English]

Supply and demand are out of balance.

[Translation]

There is no simple solution. However, in the medium and long term, a big part of the solution lies on the supply side. In other words, to make housing more affordable, we need to build more housing. That is what our government is doing with the national housing strategy, which includes many supply-side programs supported by more than \$82 billion over 10 years.

The strategy was developed before the pandemic. That is why the 2022 federal budget, which focused on housing, introduced new tools to address the new housing reality and the new challenges in the wake of the pandemic.

In budget 2022 we made new investments to expand existing programs. Steps were also taken to accelerate the rollout of certain programs. We have also introduced new initiatives to tackle the issue of housing affordability from all angles. More recently, the government proposed new measures in budget 2023 to continue these efforts.

I would like to use my time today to talk about a new initiative that will be launched this summer, the housing accelerator fund. This \$4-billion fund will provide money to local governments to encourage them to improve their housing approval and construction processes. This will make it possible to build more housing faster.

• (1315)

Our government has had discussions with mayors and local leaders across the country. They told us that they face obstacles that they still do not have the financial capacity to overcome. Whether it is housing-related infrastructure, outdated permitting systems, the introduction of inclusive zoning or the promotion of public transit-oriented housing projects, the obstacles they face are real.

Projects to create new housing are often delayed at the municipal level. That is a very significant problem. For that reason, our government worked with all levels of government and the housing sector to find a real solution. The housing accelerator fund will help local governments resolve these problems by supporting measures to reduce red tape, delays and other obstacles to the construction of

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new housing. The fund will help expedite the supply of housing across Canada. We anticipate the creation of 100,000 net new housing units by the time the initiative ends in 2026-27.

Even better, the positive impact of the measures being put in place will be felt for many years to come. Because we are investing in systemic changes, the impact of the activities that this fund will support will be felt beyond the duration of the fund itself. These activities will continue to promote the construction of more new housing, including affordable housing, in the long term.

The goal is not just to build more housing. This new initiative seeks to build a more effective housing system. It will encourage the creation of inclusive and equitable communities that are resilient to climate change and favour diversity.

A lot of work has been done across the country since we launched the national housing strategy in 2017. Our government's investments are making a difference. They are creating much-needed housing and giving vulnerable people the support they need to remain housed and build a better future for themselves. Through the housing accelerator fund, our government is pleased to expand these efforts even further. By investing in promoting affordable housing, the government is contributing to establishing stronger communities, creating jobs and growing the middle class, all while aiming to end chronic homelessness and offering help to the most vulnerable among us.

There is still a lot more work to be done to make housing more affordable in Canada, and we cannot do it alone. That is why we plan to continue working with our partners, meaning the provinces, territories, municipalities, indigenous communities, non-profit organizations and the private sector, to build the housing that Canadians need. By working together, we can ensure that everyone in Canada has a safe, affordable home.

In conclusion, I hope my remarks have helped make the circumstances surrounding this new initiative and its general parameters clearer for everyone. More details about the housing accelerator fund are available on the CMHC website.

• (1320)

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague the following question.

These assumptions will sound somewhat farfetched, but let us say that the Liberal government is sincere about its objective of providing affordable housing as part of a real housing strategy. That is the first assumption. The second has to do with the single page we keep mentioning, the one tiny page in the budget that deals with a real housing strategy. Let us say that the Liberals really want to do something with that.

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Will they walk the talk? How is it that the Liberal government's biggest investments in housing are never spent? We do not know. The reasons are unclear. Can our colleague finally enlighten us on this serious issue? In the end, the money never gets spent.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very important question.

[English]

We need to build houses and get them completed.

What I will say to the hon. member's question is that the \$4-billion accelerator fund will help municipalities. Municipalities can submit their applications now. One can go to the CMHC website, I believe. It is from coast to coast to coast, to help them put in place the infrastructure so that we can build housing faster here in Canada and meet the needs that Canadians have for housing, whether it is a condo, townhouse or detached house, here in this beautiful country.

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, the Liberal government has been, for years, saying that there is no relationship more important than that with the first nations, Métis and Inuit. The member talked about how much more work they still need to do regarding housing, including indigenous housing, showing how indigenous peoples are at the bottom of the priority list.

Can the member explain why it is that the government chose to make sure that indigenous housing does not start until 2024 and is spread out wide over Canada when there are so many indigenous peoples that are in dire need of homes?

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is correct. There is no more important relationship for the government than a nation-to-nation relationship.

With regard to the specific question on housing for indigenous communities, in the budget there is a \$4-billion commitment for rural and northern communities and indigenous communities, for housing. We have much work to do.

I think that everyone can acknowledge that and we will continue the good work that we have started since 2015, in partnering on a nation-to-nation basis.

**Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as a former Hamilton councillor, I know that my former colleagues and municipal staff are doing everything they can to increase housing supply, as well as provide support for affordable housing.

What I do not understand is the motion that has been put today by members on the opposite side of the House, which seeks to blame their former municipalities or the municipalities where they are from and the municipalities that they represented.

The member opposite was from Centre Hastings, a former municipal councillor who is blaming her municipal staff for standing in the way, the gatekeepers, in terms of preventing supply and affordable investment.

We have heard from the former mayor of Collingwood, whose motion here today speaks to that same issue, in terms of blaming municipalities.

I wonder if my colleague sees fit, in terms of supporting municipalities, and sees how our national housing strategy is providing support to municipalities instead of laying blame at their feet.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek has become a great friend and he is a great addition to our team and our caucus. He is very knowledgeable on how we build more housing by working with all levels of government.

That is one facet of our government since we have come into power in 2015. It has been our collaboration with the provincial government, with the regional government, where that pertains, with working with cities. They have had no better friend than this government for the last several years. They will have no better friend going forward, as we move toward building more housing for Canadians, providing them the services they need and making sure that every Canadian can live in the community they like and can move into that home, so that they can create that future and those memories that we all do here as parliamentarians when we go back to see our loved ones.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am going to split my time with my friend and colleague, the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

I want to take a step back, because I think this debate is about much more than housing.

The central promise of Canada has always been that it does not matter where a person has been but rather where a person is going, and it does not matter who a person is but what a person can do, and that a person can be better off than the people who came before them if they worked hard and dreamt big. This is the reason millions of immigrants have chosen to come to our nation's shore from places all around the world. It is the reason Canada is a place of inspiration for people from all over the globe. It is the reason our young people have always looked ahead to a future of hope instead of fear. They knew that Canada was a place of endless opportunity where the only limit on a person's success was how high they could set their aspirations.

That was certainly true for my own parents who came here from the Soviet Union in the 1970s and worked hard for a better life for their children. It is a testament to the power of our country that, in one generation, someone like me from my family can go from a front seat of a taxi to the front row of Parliament.

Young people, immigrants, people from all walks of life are doing exactly the same thing today. Their work ethic, passion and drive remain the same, but something has changed. Despite doing everything right, despite doing everything we have asked of them, saving money, going to school, getting a job, they are falling further and further behind, and that dream is slipping away. All we have to do is go back to any one of the 338 ridings represented by members of Parliament in this place to know that is true.



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When the promise of a better life, new opportunities and bright horizons is no longer a guarantee, then something is broken in Canada, and now everybody knows it. There are many reasons why Conservatives and people from all over the country feel that way: from our broken ethics laws from the other side, to our bail system, to our eye-popping national debt. However, the embarrassing failure of this government to act to ensure housing affordability and availability for Canadians is one of the biggest failures of this generation.

To afford the average home in Toronto, a person needs to make over \$207,000 a year. However, the median income in Toronto is not that. It means that home ownership is nearly impossible for anybody to attain, not to mention recently arrived immigrants who cannot work in their professions because of government gatekeeping and red tape, students working part-time trying to complete their studies or single parents just trying to make ends meet. For the lucky few who can afford a down payment on a home, the people who thought they would make it out of the woods, well, they are no better off either, because all across the country interest rate hikes caused by this Prime Minister's reckless spending are sending mortgage bills through the roof.

In 2015, when the Liberals first formed government, the average monthly mortgage payment in Canada was \$1,268. After eight years, it is nearly \$3,000. It has more than doubled, but our wages and our productivity have stagnated.

The Royal Bank now estimates that 62.7% of household income is needed to cover home ownership costs. That is the worst on record. It is unattainable. What does that mean? Well, we only need to look around to see that 1.5 million Canadians are at a food bank in a single month in this country. People are cutting back and skipping meals, because they need to save more money just to keep their homes. There is unprecedented financial anxiety and strain. In fact, 45% of variable mortgage rate holders have already said that they would have to sell their homes in nine months or less. That is not to mention, of course, nine out of 10 young Canadians who do not believe that they will ever own a home in this country.

I was always told that if I could not afford a home, I should rent a property until I could afford to buy something on my own. I am sure many people were told the same thing. However, even rentals are out of reach. In just one year, the average rent in Canada's three largest cities went up by 20% and, on average, grew by 10%.

• (1325)

In 2015, a one-bedroom apartment in Toronto cost just over \$1,100. It is now over \$2,300. It has more than double. The Liberals have doubled housing prices, doubled mortgage payments and doubled the cost of rent. If people cannot afford to buy a home, if they cannot afford to pay rent or do anything else, what the hell are they supposed to do? Where are they going to live?

The Liberals say that they care. They want to talk about their famous quote "the middle class and those working hard to join it", but we have to ask if these are the results of a government that is looking out for people in need. Who is benefiting from the cost of living crisis? Is it ordinary people who cannot even find a place to live or is it those who already have properties, investments and as-

sets in our biggest cities? This is Canada. It is a G7 country. This is unacceptable and everybody here should agree.

Is this really the best we can do? That is the question for this debate. The Liberals say yes. They say that Canadians should be grateful, that Canadians have never had it so good. They say that making do with less, like cancelling a Disney+ subscription or cutting back a little, is the only thing they have to do to solve all their problems, and thank goodness they are here taking care of Canadians. The problem is that Canadians who are facing the crisis do not exactly agree. In fact, many of them do not agree. It will soon be a majority of them who do not agree.

The Conservatives say no. We understand that people across the country understand this too, because it is obvious now. The jig is up. Things are not okay in our country and it is time we did better. We can do more to help families achieve the dream of home ownership. We can do more to help young people achieve the dream of home ownership. We can do more to help new Canadians, students and people with lower incomes get by. We can do more to make Canada once again a place where there is hope for the future, where people are optimistic that they will do better than the generation that came before them.

How do we do that? We do that by fixing what the Liberals broke. We do that by removing the big-city gatekeepers, the bureaucrats and those who are keeping housing from being developed. They are keeping Canadians away from their dream of home ownership. We do it by using the power of the federal government, not to obstruct but to empower. We need to empower and incentivize municipalities to build better places for people to live, like high-density housing near transit so they can take the train or bus to work or school.

In British Columbia, people can get a permit to sell cocaine faster than they can get a permit to build a home. That is the reality in Canada today and that is shameful.

We do this by also supporting towns and cities that actually get things done, not those who talk, or study, or plan like the government does right now or make Instagram announcements of more money. In fact, the government has spent the most money to fail, and failed expensively.

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This is for those who actually put shovels in the ground and build for the next generation. We do that by doing our part too, by selling the underutilized government buildings that can be turned into affordable housing. The Liberals even agree with this, because a resolution at their upcoming policy convention this week says that they should sell 30% of its building and turn them into housing. Even their supporters get it. Their most die-hard supporters have put that idea forward. When will the Liberals listen?

We do it by addressing the other issues that impact housing affordability, like the cost of essentials such as the cost of gas, groceries and home heating. They have all gone up under the government. We do it by working to bring back well-paying jobs to Canada, by making a government that actually works. In today's Canada, it often feels like hope is lost, like our best days are behind us.

We know the Liberals do not have a plan. We know that the Prime Minister has spent more money to achieve less than all of his predecessors combined. It is even worse. The Liberals tell us just to accept it as it is.

We do know better is possible. That is the Liberal slogan, but it will be our action. We know that Canadians are strong, we know that they are resilient and we know that this is the best country on earth. It is time for a government that also knows that too. It is time for a Conservative government and Canadians will be better for it.

• (1330)

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member opposite represents another community in York Region not far from me. Why are the Conservatives putting forward something that talks about municipalities and regions needing us to tell them what to do?

We have been working with regions and municipalities through a number of different initiatives to help them and to provide incentives. The member refers to gatekeepers. Are those the fire codes, the environmental regulations or the need for proper water and sewage? What is the member talking about when she talks about removing these gatekeepers? I feel that our municipalities and regions are doing a good job. They know their communities best.

• (1335)

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite lives in a community that looks a lot like mine, and I am sure she hears from young people who will never afford to live where they actually grew up. Under the government, rents have doubled, mortgages have doubled and the price of a house has doubled, and it has not incentivized municipalities to build the density that is needed for young people to afford a home.

I am not sure how the member can defend that to her constituents, to York Region or, frankly, to the benches of her own government.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the current housing situation is typical of the government's management in recent decades.

First, the federal government lets a situation completely deteriorate. Second, it places the blame on Quebec, the Canadian provinces and the municipalities. Third, the federal government imposes conditions on the use of the money that comes from those same provinces and municipalities in order to play the hero in a situation of its own making. Today's Conservative motion is just one example of this. How is the Conservative-Liberal-NDP coalition going?

[English]

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what coalition the member is talking about, but the opposition has put forward this motion because we hear from constituents and Canadians right across the board that housing has become out of reach, that the dream of home ownership has become out of reach, that nine out of 10 young Canadians do not believe they will ever own a home. If people looked at the 2023 budget, the one that was just deposited by the Minister of Finance, they would not know if the government is even concerned about building a single house in our country.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could clarify how she defines "affordable housing". We have all seen the ways in which affordable housing has been poorly defined, by defining housing that is nowhere near affordable in the past. Also, has she consulted with local organizations like the Federation of Canadian Municipalities on the issues they are defining as NIMBY-ism as well as zoning development as found in this motion?

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Speaker, I actually agree with the member opposite on her concern about affordable housing, but we do not have any affordable housing in our country. We do not have enough housing for the population that is becoming new Canadians, the 500,000 people a year who will come into this country and have nowhere to live. We are building four for every 10 people coming in.

I am happy to let her know that I will be speaking at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities later this month. I consistently consult with it on its ideas, and many of those ideas are found within this motion.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Thornhill talked about the evaporation of the dream of home ownership for so many young people, but I have talked to businesspeople. One of their challenges is getting workers, and that is tied to the lack of available housing close to where the jobs are. This goes right to the very heart of our economy.

Could the member comment on that?

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**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite brings up a good point. The government has talked a lot about a housing accelerator fund. One of the biggest criticisms of that fund is that it is not actually building housing, as one cannot live in an accelerator. However, small cities do not have the manpower to staff and develop the plan. Again, that is another Instagram announcement from the government with absolutely no follow through.

• (1340)

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to discuss the motion we are moving today to call on the government to make renting more affordable and make access to first-time home ownership easier. This is something that the government does not seem to be too concerned about. Who pays the price at the end of the day? It is Canadians yet again.

After eight years of this Prime Minister, things are not looking very rosy for Canada. We are experiencing the worst inflation in 40 years. Grocery prices are spiking, and so is the cost of housing and homes. Canadians are struggling to make ends meet. They have to choose between food, clothing and shelter. Workers are bringing home a paycheque that is worth less because everything goes to taxes. With the little that is left, they have to pay for groceries that keep going up in price. They have to pay for their car, and gas prices keep climbing. They have to pay for clothing and housing as well. It should come as no surprise that people are at the end of their rope.

I want to remind the House what constitute basic needs: food, clothing and shelter. Having a roof over one's head should not be a luxury. It is a basic and fundamental need. In an industrialized country like ours, no one should have to worry about not having access to affordable housing or a home. It is unacceptable and inconceivable that people have to sleep in their parents' basement because they have no money.

We are talking about hard-working, dedicated people who have done everything they have been told to do, but still find themselves having to live with their parents because mortgages and housing prices have skyrocketed under this Prime Minister. In fact, mortgage and rent prices have doubled since this Prime Minister has been in office.

When the Liberals took office, the average monthly payment for a new home was \$1,400. Today, it is over \$3,000. Renting is no better. In 2015, the average rent in Canada for a one-bedroom apartment was \$973. Today, the average price is \$1,760. Finding a place to live in Canada has become very difficult for both renters and owners.

Canadians can simply no longer afford to keep this Prime Minister with his inflationary spending in office. The Prime Minister does not like taking responsibility. We have seen that in the past. This is not the first time he has blamed everyone else for his incompetence and bad policies, as well as his bad decisions. Sometimes we wonder what the Prime Minister's real role is because, to hear him speak, he controls very little in this country.

That is the case with the current housing crisis. He blames the rising rents on a global phenomenon, but it is not true. Statistics show the opposite. The vast majority of countries do not have a housing crisis like we do in Canada. The average house in Canada now costs twice as much as in the United States. How can that be? Despite having a population 10 times that of Canada and less land, the United States does not have the same housing crisis as Canada.

Let us compare Toronto and Vancouver. We have always known that rent is expensive in those two major cities. That is not new, except that the situation is going from bad to worse. In a new ranking of the most unaffordable cities in the world, Vancouver is third and Toronto is 10th. New York and London are ranked lower. That is incredible.

• (1345)

Once again, the Liberals refuse to take responsibility for the current housing crisis in Canada. We are in a real crisis. Nine out of 10 Canadians have given up on the idea of buying their first home. We are talking about an entire generation that cannot imagine being able to buy a home to raise a family, all because of this government's inflationary spending and taxing.

Years of bad policies have left us with a housing shortage. We have land to build housing, but it is taking too long to get the buildings built. The Liberals have pumped billions of dollars in federal subsidies into the big cities, but this has not resulted in more new builds or enough affordable housing. It appears to be a pattern with these Liberals. They turn on the money tap, but nothing gets any better. In fact, the financial situation of Canadians is getting worse.

Another point that I would like to make involves the down payment needed to buy a property. As members know, it was already taking people many months or even years to save up for the dreaded down payment. After eight years under a Liberal government, that down payment has doubled. The minimum down payment for an average house in Canada went from \$22,000 to \$45,000. The cost of housing has doubled, so of course the down payment has also doubled.

In short, Canadians have less money in their pockets to meet their basic needs. They do not have any wiggle room, but now they have to save twice as much for a down payment. That clearly does not make any sense.

When I talk about affordable housing, I think about a woman in my riding named Martine. She came to see me last week. Martine works as a cashier in a pharmacy. She lives in a decent home with her 12-year-old daughter. She has always lived modestly, but she and her daughter have always had everything they needed. Now, with inflation, that is no longer the case. She came to see me in tears saying that she could no longer make ends meet. Groceries and gas cost too much, and her rent just went up. Because she is unable to afford her rent, she is going to have to move into subsidized housing if she meets the criteria, but even that will be difficult because of a lack of availability.

*Business of Supply*

I hear stories like Martine's every week. I see my constituents going into debt to cover their basic needs while the Liberals are off spending taxpayers' money. Go tell Martine, who has to choose between food and clothing, that her money is being thrown out the window, that the Liberals are spending to excess without even making Canadians' lives better.

This opposition day allows me to highlight a real problem in this country. The housing shortage and every problem that stems from it deserves a day of debate, a day of sharing ideas to force the Liberals to change their policies, which are not helping Canadians in any way whatsoever. After eight years, it is obvious.

This day also allows us to give Canadians a sense of what Canada would look like under the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition. A Conservative government will bring back common sense, in other words, homes and housing that Canadians can afford, by removing the gatekeepers to free up land and speed up building permits. We will stop the flow of infrastructure funding to municipalities that block new home construction, and we will give construction bonuses to cities that quickly give the green light to builders so that they can provide affordable housing. It is time Canadians got to enjoy a standard of living befitting a country such as ours. It is common sense.

[English]

**Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it has been an odd debate to follow today because we have consistently heard the message from the party opposite blaming municipalities for a lack of supply and lack of affordable housing support, and many of them are former mayors and councillors.

What I have not heard today is any one member of the Conservatives single out a municipality or tell the government which municipalities are the gatekeepers, which ones have the red tape and are blocking supply. Not one of the Conservative members have referenced that, and I hope the member opposite can assist right now in identifying a geography in Canada that is not playing its part.

• (1350)

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Martel:** Mr. Speaker, I blame the government for its inflationary spending since it came to power in 2015. Every year, it told us that it would have small deficits, but instead it posted very large deficits.

Inflation is hard on everyone. Mortgage rates have soared. That is why people are having a hard time finding housing today. The cost of groceries and electricity, among other things, has increased because of the government's spending since coming to power.

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I admit that I am very surprised to hear Conservatives proposing measures straight out of the NDP platform.

I am wondering if the tie worn by my colleague from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord is a little to the left today because he shifted his political opinions a little to the left. Again, he should opt for an orange tie to be consistent.

I also wanted to remind my Conservative colleagues that housing is a provincial jurisdiction. They should know the Constitution bet-

ter than I do as a Bloc member. Subsections 92(13) and 92(16) of the Constitution stipulate that housing falls under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces.

I will reiterate that I am very surprised to see the Conservatives, and especially my friend from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, promote the centralization of power, which is usually the hallmark of the NDP.

Let us come back to the main issue. In Drummond, we need approximately 600 housing units at present.

Can my colleague tell me how much social housing and affordable housing units are needed in his region of Chicoutimi—Le Fjord?

**Mr. Richard Martel:** Mr. Speaker, I am extremely surprised by my colleague's comments. He had a lot to say there, and my answer will probably be shorter than his question.

One thing I have noticed is that, although this government has been in power for eight years, nothing is getting done. It almost feels like the Bloc Québécois is supporting the NDP-Liberal coalition. Nothing is happening, and the Bloc seems to be supporting whatever the Liberal government does. It is spending like crazy, and yet absolutely nothing is happening.

We need to try new things. We need to talk to each other. We need to change course. Fiscal arrangements could be made with the municipalities. Incentives could be paid when costs and delivery times are reduced.

There are many things we can do together.

[English]

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I respect the compassion and understanding the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord has shown for those constituents who are facing a housing crisis because of the affordability question.

What I do not really understand is when I look at the Conservative motion, it looks like a bonanza for developers. It talks about upzoning, where developers will benefit, and about selling off federal properties so developers can redevelop them. Where is the mention of affordable housing, which he talked about so eloquently in his speech? Where is that in this Conservative motion?

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Martel:** Mr. Speaker, I am a little surprised that the NDP would ask me that kind of question, since they are supporting the Liberals and supporting so much spending. We know that inflation has changed everything.

Before inflation got so high, people could still pay for their homes, their mortgages, their housing. Inflation has driven up the price of everything, including groceries and electricity. People can no longer make ends meet.

This is a direct result of this government's inflationary spending, all supported by the NDP. This government has been spending this way from the very beginning, when it was spending money unnecessarily because the economy was doing well.

● (1355)

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I am going to share my speaking time with my hon. colleague from Devonport.

I have to admit it, I love opposition days. We get to debate issues and policies from the opposition's point of view.

It is too bad that the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka did not win the Conservative Party leadership race, because even though I do not agree with his ideas, they are a lot more sensible than the ideas of the member for Carleton. We would be better off if his party supported this member's brand of conservatism.

I believe in some parts of his motion, but I see weaknesses too. First off, provision (a) mentions “imposing clawbacks on municipalities who delay new home construction”. What would constitute a reasonable delay? Would it be based on decisions about public safety, related to drainage, for example?

[English]

That is important because it is easy to say that there are unreasonable delays by municipalities. What standard do we set for that? How do we look at smaller municipalities and what their capacities are to deliver reasonable timelines for developers versus larger cities?

I have before me an example from Huntsville of drainage work that delayed Sabrina Park attainable home construction. This is in the member opposite's riding, and he is the housing critic for the Conservative Party. The project was delayed for a year because of drainage that had to be reditched and repurposed because of concerns from the municipality.

Is the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka suggesting that the Government of Canada should claw back some of the money that we would be sending for infrastructure after those types of delays, or not? That is a question that needs to be asked and to be figured out. It is easy to talk about this in principle, but what does the member actually mean by a reasonable delay.

**An hon. member:** He wants to add gatekeepers.

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Who are these gatekeepers? We have heard that during the debate. I would like to see the Conservative Party start to name the individuals in question. I am not against the principle of trying to reduce red tape whatsoever, but the principle of how we go about this has to be a little more nuanced than what the Conservative Party is throwing forward right now.

The next part on provision (a) is allocating infrastructure dollars to municipalities based on housing built. Does the town of Kentville, which might build 25 houses a year, have a reasonable standard? Where do we go? Is it based on a percentage? If the City of Toronto builds 500, is that a reasonable standard? Who determines this? With the different nuances and sizes of municipalities across the country, how would we even go about this?

### *Business of Supply*

What about municipalities that are doing a good job and are above the average? Let us say one of the standards was to try to give municipalities money, as is in this motion, on the basis of the success of building new houses. If a municipality was a laggard, we would give more money to it versus municipalities that had been doing a good job, which might not be able to demonstrably show they are improving their housing stock in the same fashion because they were doing a good job before. Is that really the position of the Conservative Party right now? I have my concerns.

The Conservatives are essentially suggesting that, if there is local leadership, and that is in their view, not ours, but I will speak for them, they think we should punish Canadians where local leadership is not being lived up to and we should somehow cut federal infrastructure support to those communities. Again, I want to know who they think has poor leadership at the local level so I can know whether or not they are suggesting that the Government of Canada should be pulling back infrastructure dollars in my community. I would certainly like to know where they stand, other than just creating these arbitrary words about gatekeepers and creating these villains without naming who they are. Let us pull back the mask and see who we are talking about.

[Translation]

The provincial governments are in the best position to issue construction permits, considering their constitutional authority over municipalities. However, they must use this authority in a reasonable manner.

[English]

I do think the provincial governments, because of their constitutional relationship, are better arbiters of being able to help intervene, where necessary, in a reasonable fashion.

● (1400)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before I go to Statements by Members, I want to remind hon. members that, when they bring friends to the House of Commons, especially when they are in the back by the lobbies, they should make sure they keep the volume of their friends down a bit. During a couple of speeches, there was lots of noise going on in the lobbies. I would ask that members keep their conversations down a minimum roar so that conversations can be held here in the House of Commons.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[English]***HEALTH CARE WORKERS**

**Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, health care workers are the backbone of our health care system in Canada, and members of the Service Employees International Union play a crucial role in delivering quality care to patients across this country. From PSWs and nurses to support staff and caregivers, these dedicated individuals work tirelessly to ensure that Canadians receive the best possible care. Through their hard work and dedication, SEIU members have helped to improve health care outcomes for millions of Canadians. They were on the front lines during the pandemic, putting their own health at risk to care for others.

However, their contributions go beyond just health care. SEIU members are also leaders in advocating for better working conditions and fair wages, not just for themselves but for all workers.

I would like to invite all members of the House to join the SEIU this evening at 6 p.m., in room 325 in the Wellington Building, to take a moment to recognize members' invaluable contributions and personally thank them for their service.

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**MENTAL HEALTH WEEK**

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this morning, parliamentarians, members of the military, veterans and the mental health community gathered for the 10th annual Sam Sharpe mental health breakfast.

We heard a song from Terry Kelly and a keynote speech from retired Major Mark Campbell, a 30-year veteran of the military, a proud PPCLI officer and someone who was gravely injured on his second tour in Afghanistan, losing both lower limbs and suffering from major physical and mental injuries. He spoke in raw form about his recovery from the mental and physical wounds of service. He spoke about the impact of those wounds on Donna and their children. He spoke about his frustration with Ottawa and challenged us to do better as a nation. However, Mark also provided hope, talking about how the Soldier On program and peer supports helped him, as well as how we are making progress. That is why Roméo Dallaire and I started this breakfast 10 years ago.

I want to thank the Hon. Roméo Dallaire. I also want to thank the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound and Senator Rebecca Patterson, two great veterans themselves, for carrying on this important discussion on mental health each Mental Health Week.

We must honour those who serve. This event gives hope, healing and purpose to our veterans and first responders.

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**GORDON LIGHTFOOT**

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday evening, I was deeply saddened to hear of the death of Canadian icon Gordon Lightfoot.

With a career spanning over six decades, Lightfoot's music captured the hearts of generations of Canadians and fans worldwide. His songs reflected the Canadian experience, from the vast beauty of our country's landscapes to the struggles and triumphs of our people. *The Wreck Of The Edmund Fitzgerald* remains a haunting and powerful commemoration of the people who lost their lives in a tragic event.

Lightfoot's talent and contributions to the Canadian music industry were widely recognized. He received many accolades throughout his career, including from the Canadian Music Hall of Fame, and won numerous awards, including the Order of Canada and the Governor General's Performing Arts Award.

As we mourn his passing, we also celebrate his legacy, which will live on in the dynamic Canadian soundscape he helped shape. On behalf of all Canadians, we extend our heartfelt condolences to his family and friends.

Gordon Lightfoot will be greatly missed, but his music will live on forever.

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*[Translation]***TWO QUEBECKERS IN THE NFL**

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Quebecers will have two new reasons to watch NFL games. Two of our own heard their names called in the draft last week.

Victoriaville's Matthew Bergeron was selected in the second round by the Atlanta Falcons, after an outstanding run on the offensive line at Syracuse University and the Cégep de Thetford. The 23-year-old bulldozer is expected to clear a path straight to the end zone for running back Bijan Robinson.

Sidy Sow, another titanic offensive lineman, will stick closer to his native Bromont after being drafted in the fourth round by the New England Patriots. A standout player for Eastern Michigan and Champlain College, his extraordinary athleticism will be a crucial part of Bill Belichick's efforts to return to the top of the division.

Quebec has become a hotbed of talent, and Quebecers will proudly follow these two young men, just as they followed Laurent Duvernay-Tardif and Tshimanga Biakabutuka.

I wish our new NFL pros a great season.

● (1405)

[English]

#### KEIRA'S LAW

**Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my eternal gratitude to my colleagues in this chamber, who voted unanimously for Bill C-233, also known as Keira's law. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to Senator Dalphond, who sponsored the bill in the Senate, and the senators, organizations and individuals who supported this fundamental change to the Criminal Code of Canada.

Last week, the bill received royal assent. My colleagues have all worked together to help break the cycle of violence and empower those who are suffering. This legislation will strengthen laws surrounding domestic violence and coercive control.

[Translation]

For the first time ever under the Criminal Code, coercive control will have to be taken into consideration, since it is guaranteed that all judges will receive training on domestic violence and coercive control.

In addition, electronic bracelets will provide greater safety and peace of mind for complainants. This law sends a clear message to abusive spouses: Our justice system is equipped to monitor all aspects of their behaviour, even the subtle and devious ones.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### GIANT AXONAL NEUROPATHY

**Mr. Earl Dreessen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, May 2 is Curly Hair Day. Giant axonal neuropathy is a rare childhood genetic disorder; it affects the nervous system, and it is terminal. There are 73 cases of GAN in the world. Two such cases are in Alberta. One of these is our grandson, Julian.

There are international pilot projects that could offer unique research therapies for this and other genetic conditions, but what we lack is the ability to seamlessly coordinate such projects.

One of the symptoms that led to the diagnosis of GAN for Julian was his tightly curled hair. This marker, which is so obvious in this disorder, sparked an initiative called Hannah's Hope Fund, which calls for May 2 to be Curly Hair Day. To support these children and their families in the struggle for a cure, I encourage members to think about them every May 2.

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#### GARRY WATSON

**Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to honour the memory of Garry Watson, a founding father of Whistler ski resort. He was as responsible as any person for making Whistler the greatest ski resort and ski community in the world.

In 1960, Garry saw the potential that Whistler presented as a world-class ski resort, and he dreamed that it would one day host the winter Olympics. By 1966, he had helped open the area to skiers. Garry served three terms on Whistler council, including its

#### Statements by Members

inaugural edition, and he was instrumental in creating the vibrant and walkable town centre that makes the village special. He helped create and sustain a world-renowned model for workforce housing with the Whistler Housing Authority, and he consistently gave back to the community, including through the Whistler Community Foundation and Whistler Health Care Foundation.

Garry was rightly awarded a well-used lifetime ski pass, freedom of the municipality, the Citizen of the Year award and the Community Achievement Award from B.C.'s Lieutenant Governor. Garry's dream for Whistler was eventually realized when it hosted the 2010 Olympic Winter Games.

Beyond these achievements, Garry will forever be remembered as a loving husband and someone who was always a willing and cherished mentor.

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#### JUSTICE

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I recently met with a constituent of mine, Patty Seyers, who bravely shared her story of survival after sexual violence and the revictimization that survivors often face throughout the justice system process.

Patty mentioned that publication bans are meant to protect the identity of victims, but they are too often used to protect the accused and even perpetrators found guilty of sexual-based crimes. Many survivors and advocates are on the Hill this week, hosting an event tonight called My Voice, My Choice with the member for Victoria.

I encourage all members to listen to this advocacy and support passing legislation to give back survivors' voices, choices and consent. It took Patty four years to have the publication ban on her case lifted. Today, I wanted to use the voice I have in this place to tell her story and share the bravery of so many others like her who are sharing their experiences to bring change and equality to our justice system.

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● (1410)

#### DUTCH HERITAGE DAY

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise as the co-chair of the Canada-Netherlands Parliamentary Friendship Group to recognize the very special bond between these two countries.

### Statements by Members

In anticipation of May 5, Dutch Heritage Day, we will be celebrating in Ottawa this afternoon. In Holland, May 5 is, of course, the day Dutch people celebrate Bevrijdingsdag, or Liberation Day, when Canadian soldiers played a major role in their liberation during World War II. For this reason, I am pleased to invite all members of Parliament to join us this afternoon for a special reception with the Netherlands' ambassador to Canada, hosted by the Speaker. We look forward to marking this special occasion with all members as we continue our work to grow the special relationship between Canada and the Netherlands, be it through commerce, culture or people-to-people ties.

It goes without saying that the million-plus Canadians of Dutch descent have played a major role in shaping Canadian culture and society. *Fijne Bevrijdingsdag*. I wish everyone a happy Dutch Heritage Day.

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### GENOCIDE EDUCATION

**Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in April, members of Parliament observed commemorations of the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide and the genocide in Rwanda.

Remembering is vital, but education is equally important, if not more so. Racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and other forms of hate are proliferating today at an alarming rate, especially online. We need our children to know about the history of genocide and where hate can lead.

[Translation]

I want to congratulate the Foundation for Genocide Education and its founder, Heidi Berger, for working with the Government of Quebec over the past eight years to create an online teaching guide featuring case studies of nine 20th century genocides. The French version of the guide has been available to high school history teachers across Canada since 2022, while the English version has been available since April 27.

[English]

I again call on our provinces and territories to introduce mandatory genocide education, using the guide "Studying Genocide" as the main resource, so that Canada's youth will learn the consequences of hate and intolerance.

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[Translation]

### FIRST RESPONDERS

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the mayor of Baie-Saint-Paul, Michaël Pilote, had to declare a state of emergency because of the devastation caused by heavy rainfall. However, that was not all. Two firefighters who went to the rescue of people trapped by the flooding in Saint-Urbain were carried away by floodwaters. They are still missing. Our thoughts are with the family and friends of these two heroes.

It is with great humility that I wish to honour the sacrifices of first responders. They put their heart and soul into helping their fel-

low citizens. They give everything they have to help those in danger.

Members of the Paramedic Association of Canada are in Ottawa to meet with their MPs, tell them about the challenges they face every day and show them how dedicated they are to the well-being of Canadians.

Firefighters, police officers and paramedics deserve our respect. All Canadians have a place in their heart for these first responders because they recognize how important first responders are and how difficult their job is. No one appreciates them better than those who have needed their services in the past.

We hope that the two firefighters who were swept away will be found safe and sound. Let us remain hopeful.

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[English]

### LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years under the Prime Minister, Canadians are struggling; however, Conservatives have a plan to make Canada work for the people who do the work. We will bring home lower prices by ending inflationary deficits and scrapping the carbon tax on gas, groceries and home heating. We will bring home more powerful paycheques by cutting taxes and clawbacks to reward hard work, as well as bringing in homes that people can afford by getting rid of the gatekeepers and freeing up land to build on. We will bring home safe streets by ending the Liberals' broken catch-and-release bail system. We will bring home freedom from foreign election interference and woke government censorship.

We have a lot of work to do, but we are ready to get into the driver's seat. We are going to bring it home for Canadians.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I want to talk about Mental Health Week. This year's theme, "My Story", is about sharing stories and experiences with others to improve our mental health, fight stigma and help others feel less alone.

Talking about mental health is important every day, but this week is an excellent opportunity to highlight how important it is to be aware of our own mental health and that of those around us. A great way to learn more is to visit the Wellness Together portal or check out the resources at [mentalhealthliteracy.org](http://mentalhealthliteracy.org).



Together, we can build a better, healthier future for everyone, a future in which all Canadians know enough about mental health to recognize when their family members, their friends or they themselves are struggling and know how to access the mental health support they need.

Let us take care of each other.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

[English]

#### IDENTIFICATION SERVICES

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, thousands of people across Canada are unable to access crucial support because of gaps in identification services. In Victoria, the Community Social Planning Council is working to change this through its monthly ID clinics. It has helped over 750 individuals in our community.

The council's team helps underserved community members to obtain verified copies of their identification. This means that they can access a range of essential services, including housing, health care, banking, immigration services and employment. Without a physical copy of their ID, an individual is excluded from most aspects of our social safety net. When I recently met with their executive director, Diana Gibson, she shared that their ID clinics would not be able to continue to operate without over \$210,000 of annual funding. They have been unable to find federal funding to sustainably support their clinics. These are some of the most marginalized members of our community, and we need the government to fund these services, to invest in the future and to give opportunities to Canadians from all socio-economic backgrounds.

My thanks go to the Community Social Planning Council for all the important work it does.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### FLOODING IN QUEBEC

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the wet spring has caused many rivers in Quebec to overflow, and many municipalities are grappling with severe flooding.

In Lanaudière, residents have had to evacuate, and the situation in the Outaouais and Laurentides remains critical. In Charlevoix, Baie-Saint-Paul has been divided in two by the Gouffre River, which tragically swept away two firefighters yesterday. They are still missing. Our hearts go out to their loved ones as they await news, and to everyone whose lives have been turned upside down by the forces of nature.

Even after the flood waters recede, residents' troubles will be far from over. Repairing the damage will take a lot of effort, and going back to life as normal will take an act of courage.

To help our constituents overcome this ordeal, we have a vital role to play as their elected representatives. We have a duty to make ourselves useful, contribute toward solutions and come to the aid of

#### Statements by Members

the hardest-hit disaster victims. In the face of this spring flooding, we must show unwavering solidarity.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### GORDON LIGHTFOOT

**Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a cloud hangs over the “Sunshine City” as we mourn the passing of the legendary Gordon Lightfoot. Gordon Lightfoot was born in Orillia in 1938. He sang choir at St. Paul's United Church and performed on numerous occasions at the ODCVI high school.

It was his connection to the Canadian atmosphere and the environment around him that made him special. He is to Canadian music what the Group of Seven is to Canadian art. Indeed, Gordon said, “I simply write the songs about where I am and where I'm from”.

His presence was synonymous with the Mariposa Folk Festival. He headlined it countless times and even supported the festival when it struggled financially. In 2022, he was inducted into the Mariposa Hall of Fame.

Tom Wilson perhaps said it best: “Gordon Lightfoot lives in our blood; he's the soundtrack to some of our greatest and most beautiful memories as well as some of our biggest disasters and has comforted us in those times.”

We extend condolences to his family and friends and thank them for sharing Gordon and his talents with us.

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#### DURHAM REGION PUBLIC TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, well, I have fantastic news for Durham Region to share today: 104 new electric buses and charging infrastructure, 8,000 tonnes of carbon emissions reduced per year and \$74 million in federal support. That is \$12 million in funding through the Canada community building fund and \$62 million in financing through the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

This large investment in zero-emission buses will dramatically improve the public transit system that connects our region, making it easier to get around while improving air quality and helping fight climate change.

It is innovative federal financing like this that helps regional governments like Durham Region afford the needed updates to our public transit infrastructure. Unlike the Conservatives, our government invests in communities and infrastructure, demonstrating concrete action for a greener and more sustainable future.

It is a great day for Durham Region.

*Oral Questions*

● (1420)

**KEIRA'S LAW**

**Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my eternal gratitude to my colleagues in this chamber who voted unanimously for Bill C-233, also known as “Keira’s law”.

I express my heartfelt appreciation for Senator Dalphond, who sponsored my bill at the Senate, and senators, organizations and individuals who supported this fundamental change to the Criminal Code of Canada. This bill received royal assent last week.

We have all worked very hard to break the cycle of violence and empower those who are suffering. This legislation will strengthen laws surrounding domestic violence and coercive control.

[Translation]

For the very first time in the context of the Criminal Code, coercive control will be taken into account, because all judges will now be required to receive training on intimate partner violence and coercive control.

Electronic monitoring devices will also provide complainants with greater safety, security and peace of mind. This law sends an unmistakable message to violent intimate partners.

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**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[Translation]

**DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for two years, the government knew that an agent for Beijing made arrangements to intimidate the family of a Canadian MP in response to a vote in the House of Commons.

The government knew about this two years ago, yet it kept the agent accredited, allowing him to continue threatening the MP's family and other Canadians of Chinese origin.

Why did the Prime Minister not take action?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is simply not true. It is irresponsible to suggest that our government would sit on such a matter.

Based on briefings that I received following yesterday's story, I know that steps have been taken to protect members when they could attract the attention of foreign actors because of the legitimate work they do in this place.

Our security agencies will continue to independently do this important work, and I have, indeed, been in touch with the member for Wellington—Halton Hills to reassure him on this.

[English]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, he has reached out to reassure him on the subject. That might have been something to do two years ago.

Two years ago, in July 2021, the government had a CSIS document showing that an agent for the dictatorship in Beijing was ar-

-ranging to sanction and punish the family of a Canadian MP because of how he voted on the floor of the House of Commons. Yet, for two years, this Prime Minister's government kept that agent accredited with diplomatic immunity, allowing him to abuse countless other Canadians of Chinese origin. How can we believe anything he says about protecting our national interests?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is simply not true. It is actually irresponsible to suggest that any government might sit on a matter of such seriousness.

Based on briefings that I received following yesterday's story, I know that steps have been taken to protect members when they could be in the spotlight of foreign actors because of the legitimate work they do in this place.

Our security agencies will continue to independently do this important work, and I have, indeed, followed up directly with the member for Wellington—Halton Hills to reassure him on this.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we can forgive the member for Wellington—Halton Hills for not feeling reassured. Nobody should feel reassured.

The Prime Minister says that my question was false. What was false in it? We know there was a July 2021 document, two years ago, showing that an agent for the dictatorship in Beijing was threatening the family of a Canadian MP because he had stood up for human rights on the floor of this House of Commons.

Now, normally that would be a criminal offence for anyone to do, but this individual has immunity granted by this government. Has the Prime Minister taken away that immunity and kicked the diplomat out of Canada, yes or no?

● (1425)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think outside of this House, where there is extraordinary partisanship and sometimes personal attacks, most Canadians understand that no government of any stripe would see a direct threat on a member of this Parliament, and their family, and sit on it and not ensure anything was acted upon. It is simply unworthy of anyone sitting in this House to make those kinds of accusations. I can assure members opposite that we continue to take any threats seriously.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have to confess that, until 48 hours ago, I would have agreed that no government would ever sit on threats of this nature over two years long. However, unfortunately, what we have learned is that it is exactly what this Prime Minister did.

The government knew, in July of 2021, that an agent acting for the dictatorship in Beijing, accredited to work at the consulate in Toronto, was threatening a family member of a Canadian parliamentarian, and the Prime Minister's government knew about it and did absolutely nothing. Why?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is simply not true. I spoke with the member for Wellington—Halton Hills earlier today and ensured that he got a briefing from our top security officials to ensure that he gets all the information he needs. A core part of CSIS's mandate is to provide briefings and take action whenever a threat exists, and those same top security officials have confirmed that whenever there is action to take, they do so.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, and yet he did absolutely nothing other than to hold a meeting with the MP after the information became public. The Prime Minister was not interested in protecting Canadians; he was interested in protecting his political reputation.

The Prime Minister has the power to kick this diplomat out. Think of it: If a Canadian had threatened an MP or his family over a vote in the House, that Canadian would be in jail. This individual cannot be arrested because of diplomatic immunity granted by the current government, which is something the Prime Minister could take away any time he wants. Why is he keeping this agent in our country, threatening our people?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again, what the member opposite is proposing is actually not the truth. We are actually continuing to work with our security agencies in ensuring that whenever threats arise against Canadians those security agencies take action. They offer briefings, offer support and offer information as necessary and as appropriate every step of the way. That is what our security agencies do to keep Canadians safe. To suggest that anyone in this House would see a threat to a colleague and simply sit on it is unworthy of parliamentarians.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that I do not understand what part of the Leader of the Opposition's questions was not true. I therefore support the Leader of the Opposition's questions.

I have a question for the Prime Minister of a country that China holds in such contempt that it sees it as an easy target. If the person responsible for Pierre Elliott Trudeau's legacy at the Trudeau Foundation were to be called in for questioning by the CRA, the committee or whoever, would the Prime Minister recuse himself from participating in any way—

**The Speaker:** The right hon. Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Bloc Québécois leader that, here in Canada, we have robust institutions that ensure political interference in our judicial processes and our rigorous regulatory processes is neither facilitated nor allowed. In any of these hypothetical scenarios, legal processes would proceed as necessary.

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, here we go again.

If a competent authority, be it the committee, the CRA or any other entity—who knows—were to look into possible irregularities on the part of the Prime Minister's brother, would he consider the possibility that he is not qualified to make decisions with respect to an independent public inquiry into Chinese interference?

• (1430)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, despite the best efforts of the leader of the Bloc Québécois over the past few weeks, one fact has not changed, not in all these weeks, and not in 10 years. That is the fact that I have had no direct or indirect involvement in the operations of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation.

[English]

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Beijing government targeted a member of this House and targeted not only the member but the member's family. The Prime Minister knew about this and did nothing. Frankly, I am disappointed. This goes beyond partisan politics. This is about the ability for people in this House to be able to vote their conscience. Why did the Prime Minister not inform the member that his family was being threatened? What will the Prime Minister commit to doing to make sure this never happens again?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it would be outrageous for anyone in this House to see a direct threat at an individual sitting in this House or to their family and do nothing and that did not happen. I will be absolutely unequivocal about that and that is why we were pleased to be able to offer a full briefing to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills so he could ask questions of the top intelligence officials and ensure that we will continue as institutions, as a government and as security services to do everything necessary to keep Canadians safe.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, honestly, that is hard to take. Clearly, this government could not care less about the damage caused by its inaction on foreign interference. Clearly, the Prime Minister must have known that the member's family was facing threats abroad.

What will it take for this Prime Minister to take action and immediately launch a public inquiry?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have been taking action since 2015.

When we hosted the G7 in 2018, we created a mechanism with our allies to fight interference. In 2019, we set up a committee of national security experts to safeguard the integrity of our elections.

We also created a committee of parliamentarians to examine security and intelligence matters, as well as a review committee within the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency.

We are still doing everything necessary with an independent expert responsible for looking into all matters related to—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

[English]

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government has had 24 hours to get some basic facts about PRC diplomats targeting of MPs, but here is my question.

### *Oral Questions*

On September 10, 2019, the public safety minister issued a directive to CSIS ordering the service to inform the minister of any matter or action of interest to the minister.

When was the public safety minister or his office first made aware that a PRC diplomat, Mr. Wei Zhao, was targeting me or my family?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as this is the first occasion that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills has risen since this matter was brought to the attention of the public and this chamber, I want to express solidarity to him and to his family. We will continue to work with him and all parliamentarians to make sure he and all parliamentarians get the support they need.

Since the outset, when we took the reins of government, we have been vigilant in fighting against foreign interference. We have put in place the people, the resources, the tools and the oversight, as the Prime Minister just said, to defend our institutions. We will do that work together.

**The Speaker:** Before we go to the next question, I want to remind hon. members that calling each other names is not parliamentary language.

The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the directive of September 10, 2019, is clear. It says:

The Service has a duty to inform the Minister of any such matter as is relevant to enable the Minister to fulfill the Minister's accountabilities as outlined in the CSIS Act.

In general terms, the Minister expects to be consulted or informed regarding any action on which a Deputy Head would normally involve his or her Minister.

My question, again, is very simple. When did the public safety minister or his office first become aware that a PRC diplomat was targeting a member of the House and their family?

• (1435)

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague across the aisle for highlighting the directive that this government has put in place to ensure transparency and accountability around decisions, which are taken independently by our non-partisan professional public servants when it comes to which classified information is made public and which must remain classified to protect the people who work in that space.

This is not a partisan issue. We must all work together to defend the institutions, the communities and, most important, the parliamentarians who serve those institutions to protect our democracy.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what a gutless response. What if that happened to that minister's family? I have the same question. When did he know?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have just said, it is our non-partisan independent public servants who make decisions around operations, including which classified information is made public, and for good reason. It is important that we protect the people who work in those institutions, not only to protect our national security but to protect the

people who work within these institutions, including parliamentarians.

Let me just say that it is outrageous to make the claim that any member of Parliament would stand for any attack on any parliamentarian. We are united in fighting against foreign interference.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when did he know?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague can continue to ask the same question and she will get the same answer.

It is this government that has raised the bar on transparency, when it comes to protecting our institutions, by creating a committee of parliamentarians, by creating NSIRA. By the way, I would point out the Conservatives had nearly 10 years to create those institutions and they never did.

Rather than suggesting that we stand up, I suggest they now stand up and get behind the cause of the government so we can protect all parliamentarians and our institutions.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on September 10, 2019, CSIS received a ministerial directive to inform the minister of public safety of any disturbing fact concerning foreign interference.

I will ask the Minister of Public Safety a simple question: When did he learn that a Beijing diplomat was threatening a member of the House?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, that is the same question and I will give the same answer.

The government increased the level of transparency by creating a committee of parliamentarians to examine national security issues and by creating the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, or NSIRA. We will continue to work with all members to protect our institutions, and, more importantly, with all the people and all MPs who work in this institution to protect democracy. That is the most important thing.

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when did the minister find out?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the question is always the same, so the answer is always the same.

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, things are moving quickly today. The Liberals keep lecturing about democratic values when anyone asks them about the foreign interference they are involved in.

Let us talk about democratic values.

The Prime Minister was warned by CSIS that China was threatening an MP and his family. Any democrat worth their salt would have alerted that MP, whether they be a Conservative, Liberal, Bloc or NDP member. However, the Prime Minister again chose secrecy. By prioritizing partisan secrecy over a family's safety, he has crossed the line into the unacceptable.

When will there be an independent public inquiry?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, it is absolutely outrageous that the Bloc Québécois would suggest that this government stood idly by on an issue such as this one, which affected a member of Parliament and his family.

This is why the government has created tools to give our communities certain national security responsibilities in order to defend everyone working in our institutions. We will remain vigilant on this issue.

• (1440)

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in the meantime, CSIS is warning that Beijing sees Canada as a high-priority target for interference.

Obviously, it is easy for China. China could get close to the Prime Minister through the Trudeau Foundation. China could get close to the Liberals at their own \$1,500-a-head cocktail parties during their first term. Then, when China gets caught by CSIS doing things like threatening the family of an elected member, the Liberals keep it a secret.

Do the Liberals realize that it is their fault that China is infiltrating our institutions with disturbing ease?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I already explained, this government is truly proactive when it comes to dealing with the challenge of foreign interference.

That is why we gave more powers to CSIS. That is why we introduced Bill C-76 to crack down on foreign contributions that could pose a threat to our institutions.

We will continue to do this important work to protect communities, institutions and, more importantly, all Canadians.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, why are we still talking about this today? It is because the Liberals have chosen their culture of secrecy over full transparency.

It is their culture of secrecy that increases foreign interference: secrecy about China's connections through the Trudeau Foundation; secrecy about China interfering in democracy; secrecy about Chinese threats towards the family of an elected official.

From day one, the Prime Minister could have been transparent with an independent and public commission of inquiry. Will he go down with his secrets, taking the Liberal Party with him?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows very well that our government took foreign interference and threats seriously from the outset. We implemented sev-

eral measures in the first few months of our mandate, and we strengthened them in the months and years that followed.

The good news is that the Right Hon. David Johnston is on the job and will make independent recommendations because he is an expert who knows the facts. The government will take action to further enhance the measures immediately.

[English]

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for the gutless minister, when did he find out—

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

**The Speaker:** I want to remind the hon. members that unparliamentary language is not welcome in the chamber. Calling people names is not permitted. It is not the first time. It is not the second time. I want to remind the hon. member that the next time I will have to take his question away from him.

The hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn.

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan:** Mr. Speaker, when did the minister find out that a member of the House was threatened by a foreign diplomat from Beijing?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the Conservatives continue to pose the same question, they will get the same answer.

At the very core of the premise of those questions is the suggestion that somehow this government does not care about the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills. Nothing could be further from the truth. We may have disagreements in this chamber about domestic and foreign policy, but we will always stand united behind the right of all members to do their job to represent their constituencies, because that is a fundamental value of standing up for democracy.

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for the eighth time, when did the minister find out?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since we continue to get the same question in a broken-record format, let me highlight exactly what we are doing to combat foreign interference.

We introduced Bill C-59 to give CSIS additional threat reduction measure powers. We introduced Bill C-76 to crack down on foreign funding. We introduced the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians so we could work across partisan lines. We finally introduced NSIRA to ensure transparency on how we do this work to Canadians.

What is the distinction? We did those things; the Conservatives opposed.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the responses are not answering the questions we are asking. Once again, we are asking a very simple question.

### *Oral Questions*

When did cabinet and the minister find out that a member of the House of Commons was being harassed by Beijing?

• (1445)

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have explained several times now, decisions about what information should or should not be shared with the public are made by our public servants, who work in an independent and non-partisan manner. Yes, I will be working with the member for Wellington—Halton Hills to brief him and share information, because this government is there to protect not only that member, but everyone who works in the House.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a very simple question that deserves a clear answer.

When did the government find out that the Communist regime in Beijing was threatening people elected to the House of Commons?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. colleague understands the answer now. I hope that he and all of his colleagues will change their position on national security issues and challenges and support all of the government's efforts, such as creating new powers, increasing transparency and, most importantly, protecting democratic institutions as well as everyone who works in those institutions.

\* \* \*

[English]

### INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the ongoing genocide of missing and murdered indigenous women, girls, transwomen, gender non-conforming and two-spirit people is a Canada-wide emergency. Relatives of lost loved ones, human rights advocates and survivors are calling on the government to take action to end this unrelenting violence. We are not disposable. Our lives are precious and we deserve justice.

Will the Liberals recognize this ongoing genocide as a Canada-wide emergency?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think the answer to that is a resounding yes. Yesterday, I was in Val-d'Or to underline a \$60-million investment in the Friendship Centre there, which will allow people to use Val-d'Or as a regional hub and to get the culturally sensitive and appropriate care they need. That will save lives and address the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

This is a tragedy, but doing public policy by tragedy only leads to tragic results. I can only direct people to the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls to see the systematic work that needs to be done by our government, the provincial governments and municipal governments to make sure—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

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### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canada needs to get its critical mineral supply chain off the

ground, but Doug Ford has thrown a major spike in this by doing away with the duty for mining companies to come up with the funds for environmental cleaning. There is not a first nation anywhere that will allow mining without the guarantees for closure. Doug Ford is now driving his bulldozer all over the duty to consult and the result is Treaty 9 has launched a \$95-billion lawsuit against Doug Ford and the government.

What steps will the minister take to ensure that sustainability and the duty to consult remain at the heart of our critical mineral strategy?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the way we can get good projects built, including the critical mineral projects that are essential for the energy transition and offer an enormous economic opportunity to this country, is to do things the right way by respecting the rights of indigenous communities, ensuring that we are consulting thoroughly, working with indigenous communities as partners in these projects and ensuring that we are doing thorough environmental assessments. That is how we move projects forward.

That is very different from the gutting of the environmental assessment process that happened under Stephen Harper and the Conservatives. We are committed that going forward—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for St. John's East.

\* \* \*

### LABOUR

**Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada believes in the collective bargaining process and the best deals are the ones that are reached at the table. Public servants work hard to deliver important services to Canadians.

Could the President of the Treasury Board update the House on negotiations with the Public Service Alliance of Canada?

**Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the MP for St. John's East for her tireless work for constituents.

After many weeks of hard work, negotiation and compromise, the government has reached tentative agreements with PSAC for the core public administration. We appreciate Canadians' patience and understanding over this time because the best deals are reached at the bargaining table. We are deeply grateful for the public servants who work hard to serve Canadians. These deals are fair, competitive and reasonable, and bring stability to public servants and Canadians.

• (1450)

### DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is right that it would be outrageous for a government minister to know that a foreign agent was granted credentials by the government to carry out threats against an MP's family because of a vote held in the House of Commons. That would be outrageous.

The only way we can know if it actually happened is if the minister tells us when he saw this briefing note or any related information showing that the MP's family was threatened. When did he learn of it?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of questions on this issue. I agree with my Conservative colleague, in a moment of some consensus, that decisions regarding national security and intelligence should not be politicized.

I would certainly hope that this is not what the Conservative leader is now suggesting, yet it was him who said, a little more than a month ago, that when he was the minister responsible for democratic institutions, he knew about these things and he did not act because he did not think it was in his interest to do so. Let us now unite—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we do have to put the partisanship aside. It would have been a non-partisan act for the government to protect the MP's family, even though he is from another party. It would have been a non-partisan act to strip away the diplomatic immunity and kick this foreign agent out of country, yet the government did not do that.

We now need to know the facts. The briefing note showing these threats occurred was produced in July 2021. When did the minister find out?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat encouraged. At least the Conservative leader is now using the right words for a change, in that he is saying it is non-partisan, which is what the government has been saying for months now on this issue. I have said to the Conservative leader and the member for Wellington—Halton Hills that we will work with them to get them the information on this issue.

CSIS has offered a briefing to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, and the Conservatives now, finally, hopefully after some reflection, will agree to work with the government to protect our institutions and the people who work in this chamber.

[Translation]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the government knew that an MP's family was being threatened by a foreign agent and did nothing to kick that agent out, that is an outrage. The briefing on this incident is from July 2021. We need to know when the minister found out that these threats had been made against a member of the House of Commons and his family.

### Oral Questions

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely outrageous that the leader of the Conservatives would suggest that the government has no concern for the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. I contacted him yesterday to offer support and to offer a briefing with CSIS. This government is committed to working with all members of the House to protect our institutions and everyone who works here.

[English]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is a question of the gravest importance. There is a member of Parliament, of the House of Commons, whose family has been threatened because of the way he voted here. How can we defend national security on the floor of the House of Commons if our family members are being threatened based on the votes that we cast? We need to know whether the government is protecting us against that, or we cannot do our work.

Therefore, I will ask this one last time: When did the minister know that these threats were directed at this MP's family?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said now on numerous occasions, decisions regarding what information that touches on security and intelligence is released into the public domain are made by our independent and non-partisan public servants. We have reached out to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

The government's commitment is to work with him and all members of this chamber so we can do the work of protecting our institutions, our communities and, most importantly, the people who represent, in this chamber, the 338 ridings. We will do that work in a non-partisan way.

• (1455)

[Translation]

**Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Canadian Heritage told us the monarchy is not a priority for the government. It is so far down the list of priorities that the Liberals put recognition of King Charles III in the budget. It is so far down the list of priorities that the Prime Minister will be leaving his party's convention to attend the coronation of the King of Canada, his King. He could have sent someone in his stead, like a minister, but prostrating himself before the King is his priority.

Sometimes I think this is just embarrassing. Is it not time to get rid of the monarchy?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc members are really something. They get up in the morning, brush their teeth and start thinking about the monarchy. They are obsessed. They look at the paper but do not read articles about the climate change crisis. They do not look at articles about how to grow the economy. They do not pay attention to the work the House is doing around investing to attract businesses.

No, they want to talk about democracy. Actually, they want to talk about the monarchy. They are focused on the monarchy, but we are going to focus on Canadians' priorities.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, he said a word that is not usually part of his vocabulary, the word “democracy”. I will say no more, but if people could read my mind, they would get it.

The Prime Minister of New Zealand would like his country to become a republic. The ambassador of Australia in London is saying the same thing. England is about to get rid of its King before we do, but no matter. However, a majority of Canadians, the population of Quebec and Canada, want to cut ties with the Crown.

In the House, apart from the Bloc Québécois, no one is saying a word. It seems like everyone is a monarchist. Does this government truly think it knows better than the population of Quebec, Canada, New Zealand, Australia—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage.

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, other members of the House might want to talk about things like the economy and social programs, whether they agree or disagree. We talk about all kinds of things: how to invest here at home, how to attract businesses, how to help our seniors, how to help our students, how to help our families, how to help our young people.

They are fixated on constitutional change. That is what they want to talk about. We will be over here focusing on the priorities of Quebecers and Canadians.

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[English]

**HEALTH**

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals teamed up with the B.C. NDP on drug decriminalization policies.

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

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Mr. Speaker, now parents are more afraid than ever to take their kids to playgrounds and parks due to open drug use. Law enforcement are now handcuffed and can only stand by and watch. Because—

**The Speaker:** If I could just interrupt for a moment. I am going to have to ask the member to repeat the question. I was not able to hear it because of all the ruckus.

The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country can take it from the top, please.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals teamed up with the B.C. NDP on drug decriminalization policies.

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

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Mr. Speaker, now parents are more afraid than ever to take their kids to playgrounds and—

**The Speaker:** I am not sure how often they want to hear it repeated, but we will start it again, from the top. I want to remind—

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

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country has the floor.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals teamed up with the B.C. NDP on drug decriminalization policies.

Now parents are more afraid than ever to take their kids to playgrounds and parks due to open drug use. Law enforcement are now handcuffed and can only stand by and watch. Because of these new drug policies, the Kelowna mayor says that police cannot stop drug users from getting high and leaving syringes in children's playgrounds.

Our Prime Minister is out of touch and our streets are out of control. When are the Liberals going to take public safety seriously?

• (1500)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the toxic drug and overdose crisis continues to take a tragic toll on families, loved ones and communities.

Our government will use every tool at our disposal to work with our partners to end this national public health tragedy. Since 2017, we have committed more than \$1 billion to address the overdose crisis, and we are taking concrete steps to divert people who use drugs away from the criminal justice system. Approving B.C.'s decriminalization proposal for personal possession is an important step. So far, we have supported 31 projects, providing a safer supply.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is unbelievable that the Liberals think it is acceptable for open drug use where children play.

The answer from the minister is completely out of touch with reality, and the reality is that the drug policies of the Liberal-NDP coalition are making our streets and parks less safe for families. Now municipalities across British Columbia, from Kelowna to Campbell River, are having to take action through bylaws and provincial advocacy, just to keep their communities safe.

Again I will ask, when will the Liberals take public safety seriously?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are committed to ending the toxic drug and overdose crisis.

In moving forward on decriminalization, there is adequate supervision by the B.C. government and the B.C. Centre on Substance Use on both public safety and public health, with proper indicators. We are monitoring this very closely, but we have to stop this toxic drug overdose tragedy. We will do that.



[Translation]

### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of Public Safety—yes, him again—told a parliamentary committee that the illegal Chinese police stations in Montreal and Brossard had been shut down.

The problem with what the minister said is that it is not true. Those police stations are still operating. The heads of the two Chinese police stations say that they did not receive any closure requests from the RCMP and that they are continuing to operate normally.

The Liberals are obviously not taking the matter of Chinese interference seriously. This is a serious problem, a very serious problem.

Can the Prime Minister tell us the truth and confirm that the Minister of Public Safety misled the House?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I explained to my colleague, the RCMP has taken decisive action to deal with the so-called Chinese police stations. The RCMP will continue to monitor whether there are others. I hope that all members expect the RCMP to remain vigilant on this issue.

More importantly, budget 2023 allocates \$49 million to deal with this matter. I hope that my colleague and all Conservatives will support the budget.

\* \* \*

### INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is essential we support scientists and researchers across Canada so we can position ourselves as a global leader in the research ecosystem.

Can the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry talk about the recent announcement made through the first research excellence fund and how this funding will support important research initiatives with universities across the country?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Châteauguay—Lacolle for her important question and her excellent work as a colleague.

In fact, I was at Concordia University on Friday to announce an historic investment of \$1.4 billion in the sciences. Our students, our researchers and our scientists play a vital role. I think that all of my colleagues agree. This funding will support wide-scale research initiatives across the country, from Vancouver to Calgary, to Montreal and obviously Halifax. We will—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

\* \* \*

[English]

### HOUSING

**Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, CMHC is reporting that Canada could see a reduction of

### Oral Questions

almost 32% in new housing construction this year. Its chief economist said that, with record inflation, sky-high interest rates and labour shortages, the current economic situation is “inhospitable” for new construction.

The warnings are coming from inside the castle walls now. I am wondering when this government will actually clean up the fiscal mess it created so Canadians can one day afford a home again.

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wish the hon. member, in good conscience, would speak to his colleague from Sarnia—Lambton, who stood in this House and voted against the housing accelerator fund after praising it in committee and praising it in the House of Commons. This is the problem with that party. The Conservatives have no policies when it comes to actually delivering housing affordability and a housing supply for Canadians. The member's colleague from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon went further and said that the federal government should withdraw from housing investments and leave everything to the provinces and the market, and somehow it will magically be okay.

Canadians expect better from the official opposition.

● (1505)

**Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure members that when we replace the Liberals as the government, we will deliver better. We will not waste taxpayers' money so egregiously to achieve nothing for results. Under the Liberals, local politicians are delaying and even blocking new housing. Saskatoon guarantees a building permit for a house in five days. It can be done. There is no reason for the delay.

When will the government finally stand up to local politicians who are creating costly delays, so we can get the homes built that Canadians so desperately need?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know that the key to building more housing supply is to work with provinces and municipalities. The Conservatives do not understand that. In fact, their leader, this morning in this chamber, denigrated and attacked three of the mayors of Canada's largest cities. That is not going to build one unit of housing for the most vulnerable in this country.

What we have done is bring real solutions, including the housing accelerator fund, which will double the number of new homes built in Canada. Instead of supporting that and getting serious about this issue, the Conservatives offer gimmicks and buzzwords.

### Oral Questions

#### CARBON PRICING

**Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I grew up in the small forestry town of Nackawic, New Brunswick, which also happens to be the home of the world's largest axe. At the rate this government is increasing taxes, including a 41¢-per-litre hike on Canadians' heating, eating and meeting, we might need an even bigger axe to slay all of these back-breaking taxes.

Will the Prime Minister, who is out of touch, take his boot off the backs of hard-working Canadians who are out of money and finally axe this failed, ineffective and punitive carbon tax?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would ask my hon. colleague to work with me; it is going to be a bit difficult to follow. In 2006, the Conservative Party was against carbon pricing. Then, in 2008, the Conservatives were in favour of carbon pricing. Then, in 2009, they were against the fact that they were in favour of carbon pricing. That changed again in 2011, and it changed again during the last election campaign, when the Conservative Party of Canada campaigned in favour of having carbon pricing, and now they are against it.

If we give it another year or so, they will be back in favour of carbon pricing.

\* \* \*

#### HEALTH

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, three years ago, 22 people were killed in Nova Scotia in what was the worst mass shooting in Canadian history. The victims were friends, families and neighbours, and all Nova Scotians were touched by this tragedy.

Last week, our government announced funding, in partnership with the Province of Nova Scotia, dedicated specifically for mental health support for those who were impacted. Can the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions update this House on how that will support those who have been impacted by this terrible tragedy?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to all the people of Nova Scotia so affected by this tragedy. I want to thank the member for Kings—Hants for his work to support all of those impacted.

Our government is investing an initial \$9 million, along with \$9 million from the Nova Scotia government, to design and deliver mental health, grief and bereavement services in Cumberland, Colchester and Hants counties, as recommended in the Mass Casualty Commission's final report. We will also continue to work with community organizations to ensure that the appropriate supports are available for all Nova Scotians.

\* \* \*

#### INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, part of my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith is on the traditional territories of the Snuneymuxw First Nation.

Snuneymuxw entered into a treaty in 1854, yet this agreement has not been upheld. The government has committed to transfer land where the former Nanaimo Indian Hospital stood to Snuneymuxw, but continues to delay despite being aware of the potential presence of unmarked graves at this site. It is shameful.

Will the government finally transfer this land to Snuneymuxw so they can move forward as they see fit to ensure justice and healing can begin?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I did have the opportunity, a few months ago, to sit down with the leadership of Snuneymuxw First Nation to discuss this specific issue. I believe we are quite close on a resolution that would confirm the member opposite's question.

I would be glad to sit down with her but even more glad to conclude this in the right way. It has been a long time coming.

\* \* \*

● (1510)

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the late great Gordon Lightfoot sang “Lake Huron rolls, Superior sings” in his song *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*, a tribute to the Great Lakes and their power.

Our Great Lakes are a Canadian treasure, but from climate change to toxic waste pollution these lakes are increasingly under threat. Millions of people and several ecosystems are dependent on the largest concentration of fresh water in the world, yet, to our embarrassment, the government has not matched the U.S. in respecting our Great Lakes.

While many great organizations are engaged in their protection, why is the Liberal government still refusing to show leadership on protecting our Great Lakes?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is quite the opposite. The last budget from my friend and colleague, the Minister of Finance, made provisions for record-level investment in the Great Lakes in the history of Canada.

We are working with our partners across the Great Lakes on this side of the border as well as on the other side of the border. We are in the process of creating, for the first time ever in Canada, an independent Canada water agency that will help us address freshwater issues all across the country.

**GORDON LIGHTFOOT**

**The Speaker:** Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence in honour of Gordon Lightfoot.

I now invite hon. members to rise.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

\* \* \*

**VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN, GIRLS  
AND TWO-SPIRIT PEOPLE**

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations, and I hope that if you seek it, you will find consent for the following motion.

I move:

That, given that:

- (i) on October 27, 2022, the House unanimously recognized that what happened in residential schools was genocide,
- (ii) decades of insufficient action from all levels of government have failed to address the effects of this genocide, including the crisis of violence against indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people with the urgency it deserves,
- (iii) families in Winnipeg and throughout the country continue to experience the tragic loss of loved ones to this crisis,

the House call on the government to:

- (a) declare the continued loss of indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people a Canada-wide emergency; and
- (b) provide immediate and substantial investment, including in a red dress alert system, to help alert the public when an indigenous woman, girl or two-spirit person goes missing.

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

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**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

● (1515)

[*Translation*]

**BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023, NO. 1**

The House resumed from May 1, consideration of the motion that Bill C-47, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

**The Speaker:** It being 3:15 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment of the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent to the motion for second reading of Bill C-31.

[*English*]

Call in the members.

*And the bells having rung:*

*Government Orders*

**The Speaker:** The question is on the amendment. May I dispense?

**Some hon. members:** No.

[*Chair read text of amendment to House*]

● (1525)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 307*)

**YEAS**

**Members**

Aboultiaf	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
d'Entremont	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferreri	Findlay
Gallant	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Hoback
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Maguire
Martel	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
Melillo	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	O'Toole
Patzner	Paul-Hus
Perkins	Poilievre
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Scheer
Schmale	Seebach
Shields	Shipley
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Thomas	Tochor
Tolmie	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall

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Warkentin  
Webber  
Williamson

Waugh  
Williams  
Zimmer— 116

**NAYS**

## Members

Aldag  
Ali  
Anandasangaree  
Arseneault  
Ashton  
Bachrach  
Bains  
Barron  
Battiste  
Beech  
Bennett  
Bérubé  
Bittle  
Blair  
Blanchette-Joncas  
Blois  
Boulerice  
Brière  
Cannings  
Chabot  
Chahal  
Champoux  
Chen  
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)  
Cormier  
Dabrusin  
Davies  
Desbiens  
Desjarlais  
Dhillon  
Dong  
Dubourg  
Duguid  
Ehsassi  
Erskine-Smith  
Fillmore  
Fonseca  
Fortin  
Fraser  
Gaheer  
Garrison  
Gazan  
Gill  
Green  
Hajdu  
Hardie  
Holland  
Hughes  
Hutchings  
Idlout  
Jaczek  
Jowhari  
Kayabaga  
Khalid  
Koutrakis  
Kwan  
Lambropoulos  
Lamoureux  
Larouche  
Lauzon  
Lebouthillier  
Lighthound  
Longfield  
MacAulay (Cardigan)  
MacGregor  
Maloney

Alghabra  
Anand  
Angus  
Arya  
Atwin  
Badawey  
Baker  
Barsalou-Duval  
Beaulieu  
Bendayan  
Bergeron  
Bibeau  
Blaikie  
Blanchet  
Blaney  
Boissonnault  
Bradford  
Brunelle-Duceppe  
Casey  
Chagger  
Champagne  
Chatel  
Chiang  
Collins (Victoria)  
Coteau  
Damoff  
DeBellefeuille  
Desilets  
Dhaliwal  
Diab  
Drouin  
Duclos  
Dzerowicz  
El-Khoury  
Fergus  
Fisher  
Fortier  
Fragiskatos  
Fry  
Garon  
Gaudreau  
Gerretsen  
Gould  
Guilbeault  
Hanley  
Hepfner  
Housefather  
Hussen  
Iacono  
Ien  
Johns  
Julian  
Kelloway  
Khera  
Kusmierczyk  
Lalonde  
Lametti  
Lapointe  
Lattanzio  
LeBlanc  
Lemire  
Long  
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)  
MacDonald (Malpeque)  
MacKinnon (Gatineau)  
Martinez Ferrada

Masse  
May (Cambridge)  
McDonald (Avalon)  
McKay  
McLeod  
Mendès  
Miao  
Miller  
Morrissey  
Naqvi  
Normandin  
Oliphant  
Pauzé  
Petitpas Taylor  
Qualtrough  
Robillard  
Rogers  
Sahota  
Saks  
Sarai  
Scarpaleggia  
Serré  
Shanahan  
Sidhu (Brampton East)  
Simard  
Singh  
Sousa  
St-Onge  
Tassi  
Thériault  
Thompson  
Trudel  
Valdez  
van Koeverden  
Vandenbeld  
Villemure  
Weiler  
Yip  
Zarrillo

Mathysen  
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)  
McGuinty  
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)  
McPherson  
Mendicino  
Michaud  
Morrice  
Murray  
Noormohamed  
O'Connell  
O'Regan  
Perron  
Plamondon  
Rayes  
Rodriguez  
Romanado  
Sajjan  
Samson  
Savard-Tremblay  
Schiefke  
Sgro  
Sheehan  
Sidhu (Brampton South)  
Sinclair-Desgagné  
Sorbara  
Ste-Marie  
Sudds  
Taylor Roy  
Therrien  
Trudeau  
Turnbull  
Van Bynen  
Vandal  
Vignola  
Virani  
Wilkinson  
Zahid  
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**PAIRED**

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the amendment lost.

The next question is on the main motion.

[*English*]

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.

● (1530)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote.

● (1540)

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

(*Division No. 308*)

**YEAS**

## Members

Aldag  
Ali  
Anandasangaree  
Arseneault  
Ashton  
Bachrach

Alghabra  
Anand  
Angus  
Arya  
Atwin  
Badawey

*Government Orders*

Bains  
Barron  
Beech  
Bennett  
Bittle  
Blair  
Blois  
Boulerice  
Brière  
Casey  
Chahal  
Chatel  
Chiang  
Collins (Victoria)  
Coteau  
Damoff  
Desjarlais  
Dhillon  
Dong  
Dubourg  
Duguid  
Ehsassi  
Erskine-Smith  
Fillmore  
Fonseca  
Fragiskatos  
Fry  
Garrison  
Gerretsen  
Green  
Hajdu  
Hardie  
Holland  
Hughes  
Hutchings  
Idlout  
Jaczek  
Jowhari  
Kayabaga  
Khalid  
Koutrakis  
Kwan  
Lambropoulos  
Lamoureux  
Lattanzio  
LeBlanc  
Lightbound  
Longfield  
MacAulay (Cardigan)  
MacGregor  
Maloney  
Masse  
May (Cambridge)  
McDonald (Avalon)  
McKay  
McLeod  
Mendès  
Miao  
Morrice  
Murray  
Noormohamed  
Oliphant  
Petipas Taylor  
Robillard  
Rogers  
Sahota  
Saks  
Sarai  
Schiefke  
Sgro  
Sheehan  
Sidhu (Brampton South)  
Sorbara

Baker  
Battiste  
Bendayan  
Bibeau  
Blaikie  
Blaney  
Boissonnault  
Bradford  
Cannings  
Chagger  
Champagne  
Chen  
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)  
Cormier  
Dabrusin  
Davies  
Dhaliwal  
Diab  
Drouin  
Duclos  
Dzerowicz  
El-Khoury  
Fergus  
Fisher  
Fortier  
Fraser  
Gaheer  
Gazan  
Gould  
Guilbeault  
Hanley  
Hepfner  
Housefather  
Hussen  
Iacono  
Ien  
Johns  
Julian  
Kelloway  
Khera  
Kusmierczyk  
Lalonde  
Lametti  
Lapointe  
Lauzon  
Lebouthillier  
Long  
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)  
MacDonald (Malpeque)  
MacKinnon (Gatineau)  
Martinez Ferrada  
Mathysen  
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)  
McGuinty  
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)  
McPherson  
Mendicino  
Miller  
Morrissey  
Naqvi  
O'Connell  
O'Regan  
Qualtrough  
Rodriguez  
Romanado  
Sajjan  
Samson  
Scarpaleggia  
Serré  
Shanahan  
Sidhu (Brampton East)  
Singh  
Sousa

St-Onge  
Tassi  
Thompson  
Turnbull  
Van Bynen  
Vandal  
Virani  
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Sudds  
Taylor Roy  
Trudeau  
Valdez  
van Koeverden  
Vandenbeld  
Weiler  
Yip  
Zarrillo

**NAYS****Members**

Aboultaif  
Albas  
Arnold  
Barlow  
Barsalou-Duval  
Bergeron  
Bérubé  
Blanchet  
Block  
Brassard  
Brunelle-Duceppe  
Caputo  
Chabot  
Champoux  
Cooper  
Dancho  
DeBellefeuille  
d'Entremont  
Desilets  
Dowdall  
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)  
Epp  
Falk (Provencher)  
Ferreri  
Fortin  
Garon  
Généreux  
Gill  
Godin  
Gourde  
Hallan  
Jeneroux  
Kitchen  
Kram  
Kurek  
Lake  
Larouche  
Lehoux  
Lewis (Essex)  
Liepert  
Lobb  
Martel  
McCauley (Edmonton West)  
Melillo  
Moore  
Morrison  
Muys  
Normandin  
Patzner  
Pauzé  
Perron  
Poilievre  
Redekopp  
Rempel Garner  
Roberts  
Ruff  
Scheer  
Seeback  
Shipley  
Aitchison  
Allison  
Baldinelli  
Barrett  
Beaulieu  
Berthold  
Bezan  
Blanchette-Joncas  
Bragdon  
Brock  
Calkins  
Carrie  
Chambers  
Chong  
Dalton  
Davidson  
Deltell  
Desbiens  
Doherty  
Dreeshen  
Ellis  
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)  
Fast  
Findlay  
Gallant  
Gaudreau  
Genuis  
Gladu  
Goodridge  
Gray  
Hoback  
Kelly  
Kmieciak  
Kram-Neuman  
Kusie  
Lantsman  
Lawrence  
Lemire  
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)  
Lloyd  
Maguire  
Mazier  
McLean  
Michaud  
Morantz  
Motz  
Nater  
O'Toole  
Paul-Hus  
Perkins  
Plamondon  
Rayes  
Reid  
Richards  
Rood  
Savard-Tremblay  
Schmale  
Shields  
Simard

*Privilege*

Sinclair-Desgagné	Small
Soroka	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Tochor
Tolmie	Trudel
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Villemure
Vis	Vuong
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Williams	Williamson
Zimmer — 149	

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

**The Speaker:** I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 25 minutes.

We have a question of privilege.

The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

\* \* \*

## PRIVILEGE

## FOREIGN INTERFERENCE AND ALLEGED INTIMIDATION OF MEMBER

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a question of privilege, further to the notice that I gave earlier today concerning revelations published in *The Globe and Mail* yesterday. These concern efforts by a diplomat of the People's Republic of China, accredited by the Government of Canada, to target me and my family as a consequence of my February 22, 2021 vote on the Conservative opposition day motion, which I moved, condemning the government of the People's Republic of China and its treatment of the Uyghur minority as a genocide.

*House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states, at pages 107 to 108, “In order to fulfill their parliamentary duties, Members should be able to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed.... Any form of intimidation of a Member with respect to the Member’s actions during a proceeding in Parliament could amount to contempt.” This is long-standing and well-established procedure and principle of the law of parliamentary privilege, tracing its roots back to an April 12, 1733 resolution of the British House of Commons, which states, “That the assaulting, insulting, or menacing of any member of this House in his coming to or going from the House or upon the account of his behaviour in Parliament is a high infringement of the privilege of this House, a most outrageous and dangerous violation of the rights of Parliament and an high crime and misdemeanour.”

To be clear, this privilege is not being asserted, nor do I assert it today, against any Canadian who exercises his or her fundamental democratic right to enter into political debate and criticize elected

members of the House for the stands they take. Joseph Maingot, at page 235 of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition, articulates the appropriate balance between free debate and intimidation and coercion. He states:

All interferences with Members' privileges of freedom of speech, such as editorials and other public comment, are not breaches of privilege, even though they influence the conduct of Members in their parliamentary work. Accordingly, not every action by an outside body that may influence the conduct of a Member of Parliament as such could now be regarded as a breach of privilege, even if it were calculated and intended to bring pressure on the Member to take or to refrain from taking a particular course. But any attempt by improper means to influence or obstruct a Member in his parliamentary work may constitute contempt. What constitutes an improper means of interfering with Members' parliamentary work is always a question depending on the facts of each case.

Here are the facts of the present case. Yesterday's *Globe and Mail* reported that the government of the People's Republic of China “sees Canada as a ‘high-priority target’ and employs ‘incentives and punishment’ as part of a vast influence network directed at legislators, business executives and diaspora communities in this country, according to a top secret intelligence assessment from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service”. Later on in the report, Robert Fife and Steven Chase write:

The report, *People's Republic of China Foreign Interference in Canada: A Critical National Security Threat*, lists several examples of Chinese influence operations aimed at the opposition Conservative Party.

It says CSIS reporting from 2021 indicates that China's intelligence agency, the Ministry of State Security (MSS), ‘has taken specific actions to target Canadian MPs’ who are linked to the February 2021 parliamentary motion condemning Beijing's oppression of Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities. The motion, which passed, declared China's conduct to amount to genocide.

The spy agency said an MSS officer sought information on an unnamed Canadian MP's relatives ‘who may be located in the PRC, for further potential sanctions.’ This effort, the CSIS report said, ‘is almost certainly meant to make an example of this MP and deter others from taking anti-PRC positions.’

A national-security source, whom the *Globe* is not naming because they risk prosecution under the Security of Information Act, said the MP targeted was Conservative MP [my name] and that Zhao Wei, a Chinese diplomat in Canada, was working on this matter.

● (1545)

The motion in question was a Conservative motion that I introduced and moved in the House and that was adopted on February 22, 2021. Despite knowing about this intimidation operation involving a diplomat approved by the Government of Canada for two years, the government did not inform me that a diplomat was targeting my family, nor did the government take any action to expel the diplomat responsible for orchestrating this intimidation campaign. In fact, Mr. Wei Zhao continues to have the government's authorization to be and work in Canada with immunity, on behalf of Beijing's government. Frankly, I think this demonstrates a complete lack of common decency and leadership. Indeed, not a single Beijing diplomat has been expelled by the government since the news of Beijing's foreign interference threat activities started to be reported a couple of years ago. Nonetheless, the fact remains that this intimidation operation was launched and was in direct consequence of my motion in the House concerning the treatment of Uyghurs. These are the facts.

Bosc and Gagnon, at page 109, observe that, “In order to find a *prima facie* breach of privilege, the Speaker must be satisfied that there is evidence to support the Member’s claim that he or she has been impeded in the performance of his or her parliamentary functions and that the matter is directly related to a proceeding in Parliament.” A “proceeding in Parliament” is a technical term for which Bosc and Gagnon, at page 90, refer to two definitions, one from the United Kingdom’s *Erskine May* and the other from Australia’s *Parliamentary Privileges Act*, 1987.

May’s definition, taken from page 235 of the 24th edition of *A Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, states that “An individual Member takes part in a proceeding usually by speech, but also by various recognised forms of formal action, such as voting, giving notice of a motion, or presenting a petition or report from a committee, most of such actions being time-saving substitutes for speaking.” The Australian statutory definition, meanwhile, contains the expression “all words spoken and acts done in the course of, or for purposes of or incidental to, the transacting of the business of a House or of a committee”.

A long line of precedents affirm the right of members to go about their parliamentary duties free of intimidation. Speaker Lamoureux, on September 19, 1973, said, at page 6709 of the Debates, that he had “no hesitation in reaffirming the principle that parliamentary privilege includes the right of a member to discharge his responsibilities as a member of the House free from threats or attempts at intimidation.” On May 1, 1986, Speaker Bosley held, at page 12847 of the Debates, “If an Hon. Member is impeded or obstructed in the performance of his or her parliamentary duties through threats, intimidation, bribery attempts or other improper behaviour, such a case would fall within the limits of parliamentary privilege.” Subsequently, Speaker Parent, on March 24, 1994, commented, at page 2706 of the Debates, “Threats of blackmail or intimidation of a member of Parliament should never be taken lightly. When such occurs, the very essence of free speech is undermined. Without the guarantee of freedom of speech, no member of Parliament can do his duty as is expected.”

More recently, on March 6, 2012, a *prima facie* contempt was found, arising from an intimidation campaign of YouTube videos from the Internet, by hacking collective Anonymous, largely targeting a former colleague and his family members as a consequence of legislation this colleague tabled in the House. In so ruling, the Speaker said, at page 5834 of the Debates:

Those who enter political life fully expect to be able to be held accountable for their actions to their constituents and to those who are concerned with the issues and initiatives they may advocate.

● (1550)

In a healthy democracy, vigorous debate on issues is encouraged. In fact, the rules and procedures of this House are drafted to allow for proponents and opponents to discuss, in a respectful manner, even the most difficult and sensitive of matters.

However, when duly elected members are personally threatened for their work in Parliament, whether introducing a bill, making a statement or casting a vote, this House must take the matter very seriously.

I would echo those words, “this House must take the matter very seriously.”

### *Privilege*

While I am speaking of my own situation today, I am far from alone in experiencing Beijing’s foreign interference threat activities. Debates inside and outside of this House since November have been dominated by a succession of breathtaking disclosures from our national security experts, revealed by multiple media outlets. These have shown a concerted and organized campaign by Beijing’s Communist government to manipulate Canadian politics and the proceedings of this House in favour of that government’s positions. Equally concerning has been the Canadian government’s failure to do anything to curb it.

The latest report in *The Globe and Mail* demonstrates that this scourge of foreign interference threat activities directed at members of this House is not limited to elections, party nominations or diaspora communities. This nefarious campaign’s reach into parliamentary proceedings is a new fact, but it is one that we should not be too surprised about.

Just as it is a novel concern in this recently surfaced story, which is still unravelling, and for this House generally to consider interference and intimidation by foreign state actors, that is not a procedural impediment to the Speaker finding a *prima facie* case of contempt here. On this particular point, Bosc and Gagnon comment, at page 81:

The House of Commons enjoys very wide latitude in maintaining its dignity and authority through the exercise of its contempt power. In other words, the House may consider any misconduct to be contempt and may deal with it accordingly.... This area of parliamentary law is therefore extremely fluid and most valuable for the Commons to be able to meet novel situations.

They add, at page 112:

It is impossible to codify all incidents which might be interpreted as matters of obstruction, interference, molestation or intimidation and, as such, constitute *prima facie* cases of privilege.

Before closing, I would like to add one final point. Our authorities refer to the need for questions of privilege to be raised at the earliest opportunity in the House. While the *Globe and Mail* report was published yesterday morning, this afternoon is the first opportunity I have had to raise this point of privilege. In fact, this afternoon is the first time I have been up in the House since the report was published in *The Globe and Mail*.

In addition, I had to reflect on, and seek counsel about, the best way to move forward regarding these concerns, as the Speaker is aware. In addition, I confirmed the serious, grave details in *The Globe and Mail* report, including that an individual in Canada, Mr. Wei Zhao, who is accredited by the Government of Canada, was involved in conducting these intimidation operations.

I trust that, under the circumstances, the Speaker would not impose the narrowest possible interpretation to “the earliest opportunity to raise this in the House” so as to deny me the opportunity to raise this very important matter of foreign intimidation operations directed at elected members of Parliament. That is because it has become even clearer in the last 24 hours that members of Parliament, certainly opposition members, and Canadians at large cannot rely upon the Government of Canada, the executive branch of our system, to discharge its role as the defender of the realm.

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That is why Parliament, and this House in particular, must vindicate its own authority and protect our interests and those of the members of this place when those interests are under threat, as we now see them to be.

● (1555)

Mr. Speaker, I plead to you to see that it now falls to you, as the guardian of our rights and privileges, to send a clear and unambiguous signal that this sort of conduct on the part of the People's Republic of China is simply unacceptable. Should you agree, Mr. Speaker, I would be prepared to move the appropriate motion at the appropriate time.

**The Speaker:** I want to thank the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills, and I will return with a ruling as soon as possible.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on the same point of order.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the government has clearly indicated, any form of foreign interference or intimidation is completely unacceptable. I will reserve the opportunity to return to you or your offices as to whether there is going to be any further comment coming from the government.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I feel very sad that this has happened to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. This is shocking. I think all of us in the House are shocked, and I think we can all agree that this is something that, while affecting one member of this House, also affects many Chinese Canadian citizens across the country. This has been raised time and time again. We would like to come forward with further discussion and debate on this at a later date.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I pledge our wholehearted support for our colleague and his family, who are currently going through a very difficult situation. I believe that all members of the House must support our colleague. The Bloc Québécois will be doing so. I believe that is what each and every one of us would want to see if we were in his position. He can count on our support. We will be there to debate with him. We must get to the bottom of this.

[English]

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to say just a few words, not many. In case Canadians watching this do not know the quality and the integrity of the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills, I want to attest to it here in a non-partisan fashion. This is an exemplary member of Parliament. It is an outrage that any foreign government would target him and his family. I have had the honour of serving here for exactly 12 years today from when I was elected; since then, I have known no finer parliamentarian than the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

For any member to be treated in this way is offensive. Partisanship obviously happens here, but in a non-partisan way, I want to attest to the integrity, character and extraordinary ethical frame-

work of that member and ask that his concerns be addressed with diligence.

\* \* \*

● (1600)

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY****OPPOSITION MOTION—HOME OWNERSHIP AND RENTING AFFORDABILITY**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is great to get back to what we are talking about today, which, of course, is the opposition day motion.

I am going to take a moment to recognize Beatrice Weaver. Beatrice lives in Elmsdale, Nova Scotia, and this past weekend, she turned 109 years old. I had the opportunity to visit Beatrice. While recognizing and celebrating her birthday, I promised her that I would make sure her name and her accomplishment of reaching 109 are in Hansard forever. She is still spry. I am going to have this clip recorded and make sure she and her family can see it. Congratulations to Beatrice. I hear some colleagues clapping.

To go back to the matter before us right now, the opposition day motion, I actually agree with provision (b) in the fact that any time we can align all three governments with regard to investment and line this up with residential development, that makes a lot of smart public policy sense.

I was surprised to see the motion include these words: “so that young and middle-class people don't need to use cars”. I know the Conservatives have been against the government's effort to help renew the Canadian auto sector. The leader of the official opposition spoke against the partnership with Volkswagen to create 3,000 jobs in St. Thomas. However, I was surprised they did not say something along the lines of the following: “so that individuals can more easily access public transit”. I thought that the fact that they talked about not using cars was a little off brand for the official opposition, and I was quite surprised to see it. I want to make sure that it is there.

I also agree with provision (c); in principle, there is merit in being able to use federal resources, in terms of surplus lands. I would note that any time the government can create a more efficient process to deem federal lands surplus, where appropriate, it makes a lot of public policy sense. The lands could then be used for the type of purpose the motion talks about, which is affordable housing.

As I have said from the outset, for the benefit of my colleagues who were not here for my remarks before question period, there are merits in this motion that are, frankly, good public policy. There are other areas where I think there are real, considerable gaps. One of these is how to constitute what a reasonable delay is and whether we should be punishing Canadians who live in municipalities that, according to the official opposition, are not necessarily meeting the outcomes that they are arbitrarily putting in place.



*Business of Supply*

I want to talk about one element that was not included in the motion, and that is skilled trades and access to labour. I have before me a CTV article from Talisman Gate, a housing project in the Gravenhurst area in the riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka, which is that of the shadow minister for the Conservative Party. There is no mention whatsoever about access to labour. Developers talk about the challenge they have, which is that they are finding it more and more difficult to find the people who are able to build the housing.

I can appreciate the hon. member raising this concern around how we can expedite processes. I have some legitimate concerns about the simplification and how they framed this in the opposition day motion. It does not talk about having the men and women to build the houses. This particular project in Gravenhurst has been delayed by over a year because the developer was struggling to find the available labour. Why would the member not have included that? That is a really important point that could have helped round out this dynamic.

I will summarize my remarks by saying that there are elements within this opposition day motion that have merit. I thank the hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, because I think he is better than others at public policy framing in terms of what he can accomplish. I said earlier in my remarks that it is too bad he did not win the leadership. I think the opposition party would have been in better hands, although this is not to create grenades on that side. However, there are some real issues, particularly around what constitutes a reasonable delay and how we would go about even establishing rewarding municipalities that are doing good work on developing and building housing. There are not a whole lot of answers there. There are a lot of problems identified and simplistic solutions, but there is not a whole lot of nuanced public policy that is going to solve the issue.

• (1605)

**Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I was not planning on asking a question, but I will tell the member how the town of Gravenhurst is pronounced.

Many times in this House I have talked about the importance of the federal immigration system working directly with the provinces to make sure we are attracting the right skills to build the homes Canadians need. I wonder if he can speak to that. Are we actually doing enough to attract skilled trades to this country?

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Madam Speaker, my apologies to the good people of the Gravenhurst community in the member opposite's riding.

The point remains that I wish that was something the party opposite had put in the motion today.

The Minister of Immigration is developing skilled pathways that are specific to regional outcomes, whereby the provinces are able to identify gaps in particular types of labour positions. They can help identify ways we can create skilled pathways for immigrants who might want to come here and bring their trades and the opportunities to build the housing the member talks about. Also, the government is putting a lot of investment in working with provinces, institutions, universities and the skilled trades to get the folks who have the skills to build the houses we need.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Madam Speaker, it will come as no surprise to anyone that the Quebec government wants full powers over immigration. Part of the housing crisis can be attributed to the fact that the construction of new housing has not kept up with population growth.

Can my colleague not face the facts and recognize that it would be more efficient and more productive to give Quebec full control over its immigration and, at the same time, that it makes sense to transfer the money to Quebec so that it can plan its supply of new housing for the long term, taking immigration into account, if only to ensure that the housing crisis does not get worse?

Since 2016, we should have had 100,000 more new homes than we do now.

Does my colleague not realize that the Liberal national housing strategy is a complete failure and that there are human consequences to that?

[English]

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Madam Speaker, as I understand it, there are already significant devolved and delegated powers for the Government of Quebec in relation to selecting the immigrants who come to Quebec. Our government has been very clear regarding our desire to increase, on the federal side, the amount of immigration that is francophone-based. We know that is extremely important from a linguistic perspective, not only across the country but indeed in Quebec as well. Therefore, I think there is already a lot of devolved power going to the Legault government, the Quebec government, to help it choose. We are working on a regional basis as well to make that happen.

I think there are a lot of good existing programs. If the member has concerns about the immigration pathways in Quebec, he should raise that with the Quebec government, which has significant power to choose the immigrants in question.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, part of the immigration problem is that the government has decided to continue to use temporary foreign workers to address our skilled labour shortage, including in the construction sector. What the government should do is regularize people so they have the status to come to Canada, and ensure that those who are already in Canada have full status.

Would the member support the regularization of those without status or those with temporary status who are already in Canada so they can fully contribute to every aspect of Canada's development?

*Business of Supply*

• (1610)

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Madam Speaker, I am glad my remarks at the end of the intervention have bled into a really important conversation about immigration. Of course, I will remind listeners at home that this is about housing, but I agree that we have to help folks who want to come to Canada to make a difference.

My view, given my local experience in Kings—Hants, where we welcome almost 2,000 seasonal agriculture workers, is perhaps a bit different from the member opposite's. It is not that I do not support long-term access to pathways for citizenship in this country. I absolutely do. However, if we talk to some of the workers, they do not want to come to Canada and become full-time citizens. They find that the opportunity—

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Many of them do because they don't have a pathway.

**Mr. Kody Blois:** —to contribute to their family at home is one of the best foreign development programs.

The member opposite can try to scream me down in the House, but if she wants to hear my answer, it is simply, yes, absolutely we should regularize the opportunity for folks who want to come to Canada so they can. For those who do not want to, let us make sure there are protections in place to allow their valuable contributions to our country and the ability for them to help support their families at home.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to stand in this venerable House to speak on behalf of my residents of the riding I am very proud to represent, which is Davenport, and to speak to the Conservative opposition day motion on inflation and housing.

My remarks are going to cover three key areas. The first is the issue of inflation and housing and how it is impacting Davenport residents. The second is what our federal government is doing. The third will be the problems that I see with some of the key statements proposed in the opposition day motion. Unfortunately, I will not be supporting it.

The first thing I want to talk about is how inflation and housing costs are impacting Davenport residents.

I had the wonderful pleasure of being able to canvass on a rainy Saturday afternoon just recently, and I had a chance to speak to about 100 Davenport residents. I will tell members that the three issues that were top of mind for them were the cost of living, whether they will be able to live in Toronto and whether their kids or grandkids will be able to buy homes, which many were worried about.

We spoke at length at the doors, and I talked to them about all of the things we were doing at the national level. I prefaced my conversation with them by saying that for over 30 years, all three levels of government in the city of Toronto spent very little money on supporting housing affordability and creating affordable housing. Thirty years of non-investment has a huge impact.

I said to them that I have a lot of confidence that within the next few years, all three levels of government will be working really hard to address the issue. I do not agree with all of the decisions at the provincial level, but we are all seized with the issue of housing

affordability and affordable housing, and we are working very hard to try to resolve the issue. I have a lot of confidence that our kids and grandkids will see houses they can buy and can afford to buy, that we will be creating more rental spaces and that we will be creating more spaces for the most vulnerable in our communities.

This leads me to my second section, which is about what we have done on housing.

I am very proud of our government. Since we came here in late 2015, we have really taken charge of housing and the issues around housing and how to build more housing in this country. I will talk to a few aspects of that, because I think it is important for people to be reminded of what we have done.

We have introduced a national housing strategy, and we have allocated more than \$72 billion. We have put in a number of measures that will help individuals who are looking to save money to buy their homes. We have recently introduced a new tax-free home savings account to allow Canadians to save up to \$40,000 tax-free to buy their first home. We have also doubled the first-time homebuyers' tax credit to provide up to \$1,500 in direct support to homebuyers to offset closing costs involved in buying a new home.

We have introduced a whole series of measures to make sure the houses we have here in Canada are for Canadians, and to do what we can to curb speculation, which is driving our housing prices up, particularly in our major cities. I have a couple of things to mention there.

We have the two-year ban on non-resident, non-Canadian purchases of residential property to help curb speculation and ensure that houses are used as homes for Canadians to live in. We have introduced a 1% annual underused housing tax on the value of non-resident, non-Canadian-owned residential properties that are vacant or underused. We are also making sure that the profits from the flipping of properties held for less than 12 months are taxed fully and fairly.

These measures will go a long way to ensuring that the houses we have are being kept for Canadians and that we are doing what we can to curb speculation.

We have launched a \$4-billion housing accelerator fund to remove barriers and to incentivize housing supply growth, with the goal of creating at least 100,000 net new homes across Canada. We have also launched a \$200-million stream under the affordable housing innovation fund to develop and scale up rent-to-own projects, which I know is something that Davenport residents are very happy about. They like their apartments and are looking for opportunities to rent them. This program would allow them to actually own them one day. We have also launched a third round of the rapid housing initiative, which will provide \$1.5 billion to create 4,500 new affordable housing units for Canadians in severe housing need.

• (1615)

In my riding, we have some of these rapid housing initiatives. They have been life-saving for the most vulnerable in our community. When they are teamed up with supportive dollars from the provinces, it is a game-changer. If they have mental health supports and supports to help them find jobs, in addition to having a safe place to live, it saves lives and helps to produce more productive citizens in our society.

Another thing we have done as a national government, which I am very proud of but we do not often talk about, is renewed our co-op housing agreements on a long-term basis. There are a number of co-ops in my riding. They are affordable places for families to live in and are lifesavers for so many people. They allow families to continue to live affordably in our large cities and in the centre of our cities.

There are a couple of things that I would love for us to do. One of the key things we can do, which would not cost a lot of money, is serve as a coordinating body to bring all levels of government together. We need to include developers when looking at the inflation issue and ask this: Now that inflation is at a certain amount, how do we make sure that we get things out of the way, whether at city hall, at the provincial level or with any type of regulatory issue at the federal level, so we can expedite things quicker than where we are at right now?

A number of non-profits in my community would love to build affordable housing units on top of their community centres. They have asked us to work with CMHC to better facilitate ways for them to work with CMHC to ensure they have the capital, investment, framework and support they need to create affordable housing units.

This opposition day motion talks about inflation. We have talked quite a bit in the House about a number of targeted supports that our federal government has put into place, as well as some huge programs that are literally game-changers for families in my riding of Davenport and for all Canadian families across the country.

We are talking about the grocery rebate; the Canada child benefit; the Canada workers benefit; old age security, which we have increased by 10%; and the national child care program, which means Torontonians in my riding of Davenport are saving 50% of their costs. There are also some of the newer measures just introduced in federal budget 2022, such as automatic tax filing and dental care, which will be expanded to seniors and all youth under the age of 18, as well as a number of other initiatives. When I go to people's

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doors and talk about these initiatives, there is a lot of appreciation for them. They are working and they are helpful.

We have an opposition day motion, and part of my disappointment with the motion is that it seems to imply the federal government is the reason inflation has reached a 40-year high and that our government, for some reason, has not so much caused our grocery prices to be higher, but has caused Canadians to cut back on their groceries. I think members of this House know that we have high inflation because of the after-effects of COVID, supply chain disruptions, the geopolitical situation we have right now, the war in Ukraine and of a lot of other global economic changes that impact inflation not only in Canada but right around the world.

I will end on a positive note. I like the fact that opposition members are concerned about housing and inflation. We should all be concerned about that. I think we should all put forward our best ideas and continue to try to work together so we can support Canadians through this very trying time.

• (1620)

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, one of the things undermining the provision of affordable housing is that when privately owned affordable housing buildings come on the market and are flipped, they often become less affordable for tenants. This is causing us to move in the opposite direction than we need to be moving in.

One of the things the government in British Columbia did was create an acquisition fund so that non-profit housing providers could buy housing projects and keep them affordable. It is something we have advocated for on a national level.

I am wondering why the member's government has not proposed something similar. If not that approach, what approach does her government see for ensuring that we do not lose existing affordable housing to private developers?

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Madam Speaker, at the finance committee, which I have the privilege to serve on, we did a study on inflation and housing. We heard from a number of advocates saying that we really have to look at the REITs, which have a particular mechanism that allows companies to buy apartment buildings. What we are hearing, in many cases but not in all cases, is that apartment buildings are being bought and slightly renovated, and then the apartment rents go up exponentially, so a lot of people have to move out of what were affordable apartments.

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I can tell the member that our government is looking at that. We are looking at a number of measures that are stopping us from having affordable housing and housing affordability in the marketplace. We are looking at those, and if the member has other—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We will continue with questions and comments.

The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to hear what my colleague thinks of the NDP proposal to tie the level of federal funding to immigration caps within each province.

[English]

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Madam Speaker, I do not know if I totally understood the question, and I apologize for that.

However, on whether there are appropriate funding levels to go with immigration levels, I think that maybe the core of the issue is probably that we are bringing in a lot more immigrants and those immigrants need housing. We have revised our immigration policies and numbers, while being very much aware that there is a housing affordability issue across this country. I do think that we keep that mind. Yes, there is a housing crisis in this country, and we keep that in mind as we move forward on our immigration policies.

**Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to give the member an opportunity to respond to a little preamble.

I appreciate that the member is recognizing that it is a housing crisis, but what is the government doing to actually build housing stock? The patchwork approach the government has taken, the whack-a-mole approach to come out with a new program for its failures, is not helpful on the long term.

We need to build more housing, both for Canadians and new Canadians. What exactly is the government doing to get more housing stock on the market?

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Madam Speaker, we are doing a lot, but I will mention two key things.

One is rapid housing, which is getting a lot of housing for our most vulnerable, for new Canadians, and they are built very quickly. If we talk to mayors right across this country, they will tell members that this is a very successful program, which is why we are about to introduce the third stage. The second thing is the \$4-billion housing accelerator fund, which is going to help incentivize cities to eliminate a lot of their red tape and a lot of their long time-lines to get housing built in the cities.

Those are two key things that we have put into place. There are many other initiatives, but I have run out of time.

• (1625)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I am so pleased that the member raised the issue of REITs, the real estate investment trusts, which allow corporations to intervene and turn homes into investment properties where the prices get spiked and taxpayers lose. I was pleased to hear her say that the

Liberals were interested in looking at this. Motion No. 71, introduced by the Green member for Kitchener Centre, deals with it in detail, and I hope the member will support it.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for raising this.

When we heard about this in the finance committee, we were all very concerned about it. My understanding is that we are looking at it right now. We are studying it, and many of us are advocating for immediate and urgent changes.

**Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Kenora.

Homebuyers across Canada are confronted by two massive obstacles that they must work through as they try to buy and finance a home. First, families are struggling with the devastating impact of the Liberal government's economic mismanagement and its housing plans. To great fanfare, the government announced Canada's national housing strategy in 2017 to make housing, it said, more affordable and accessible. It has been an obvious and utter failure.

Canada's home prices have doubled since 2015. Today, the average home price in this country is an eye-popping \$800,000. Ask any recent buyer or aspiring buyer if they are better off today than they were eight years ago, and the answer is a resounding, emphatic no.

The second obstacle is the cost of financing a home, which has skyrocketed. Thanks to the Liberal government's massive deficit spending, Canada's debt has doubled to \$1.2 trillion. On top of that, the interest rates to service that debt have skyrocketed and will soon hit \$50 billion every single year.

The indirect costs of that debt are significant. Reckless spending has fuelled inflation to levels Canadians have not seen in 40 years, and this has driven up interest costs. The result is higher mortgage payments. Today the average mortgage payment in this country has doubled to \$3,000 a month. These two factors have made home ownership more expensive and pushed it out of reach for countless Canadians, particularly young Canadians.

The lack of housing and higher costs have also been ruinous to home and apartment rentals. The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Canada's 10 biggest cities is now \$2,213, compared to \$1,170 before Canada's Liberals broke the housing market. Vancouver and Toronto are now the third and tenth most unaffordable cities in the world, outstripping places like New York and London.

Big city governments that delay permits and have excess red tape and taxes can add as much as \$200,000 to the cost of each new home built in this country. No wonder people cannot afford to buy a home, with prices like this being driven up by the gatekeepers.

Owning a home and raising a family are the foundation of the Canadian dream, yet for many this dream appears to be slipping further and further away. It is out of reach because the Liberals are out of touch. Home ownership has become an impossibility for too many Canadians since the Liberals first took office. In Canada, it is considered affordable to buy a home if the cost is less than 30% of a household's before-tax income. It now takes 60% of Canadians' income to cover the cost of owning a home. Those who have scrimped and saved for years to afford their first home now find themselves questioning if they can ever achieve the Canadian dream.

This crisis did not happen overnight. It has steadily worsened every year the Liberals have been in office. The Bank of Canada's governor, as well as the finance minister, led people to believe that interest rates would remain low. Today, thousands of Canadians are grappling with the stark reality that those entrusted with governing and overseeing the nation's finances failed.

The Canadian dream was once a straightforward proposition: work hard; play by the rules; finish school; get a decent job; get married; save each month for a down payment; have a family; and one day retire, owning one's home. However, for many of my constituents in New Brunswick, those who have done everything right, this dream is unattainable today. That is, no matter how hard families work or how much they save, the dream of home ownership is a mirage.

• (1630)

The Liberals have failed to deliver affordable housing, and that was made abundantly clear in the Auditor General's report last November, which revealed that, despite spending tens of billions of dollars, and the Liberals are great at rattling off program after program and the mounds of money they have spent, when it comes to homelessness, the numbers keep rising.

The Auditor General says that the departments responsible, Infrastructure Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada, failed to even adequately track results, instead relying on outdated national shelter data to assess the effectiveness of their programs. In fact, the government's numbers, even using numbers the Auditor General said were less than reliable, indicate homelessness has increased nationally by 6.6% since 2018. We are talking about hundreds of thousands of people who no longer have homes.

The Auditor General also underscored that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC, which oversees the majority of the housing strategies under the government, has no idea who benefits from its initiatives. Low-income families are being priced out of the market by funding rental housing that is supposedly affordable, but proves to be unaffordable for working families. It is an absolute mess.

Housing is one pillar of the Canadian dream, and the other is raising a family, yet the high cost of living, driven by inflated housing prices, has further discouraged Canadians from that other joy of

### *Business of Supply*

life, which is starting a family. The average household debt in Canada reached 183% of disposable income in 2022, limiting the financial freedom and security of many Canadians.

The risk of homelessness is also going up because demand for homes has surpassed supply. New Brunswick's many affordable units were purchased in the last couple of years in my riding. This has forced people out, as buyers either moved in or increased rents. Families have been forced to move elsewhere to work and live. This has had a twin impact on the labour market, as small communities now cannot keep young families, which tend to be part of the economic foundation of these economies because they provide work for businesses and start small businesses, and it is not always by choice. This is happening because they are being priced right out of their neighbourhoods.

For those who cannot move or find an affordable place to live, the result is sadly and frequently homelessness, and this has a devastating impact on one's mental health, as well as personal safety. For the most vulnerable, those who are on the edge of poverty or trying to break the cycle, there are nowhere near enough shelter spaces, supported housing for persons with addictions or disabilities, rental units, or even starter homes. It is imperative that we address the housing crisis at its core by scaling up and building more. No government program is going to solve this problem. We need to build homes for future families. The Liberals cannot, but Conservatives will get it done.

The CMHC has noted that, as of April 27, the housing shortage throughout Canada is going to worsen. The agency has predicted that there will be a 32% decline in home building this year, as the cost of borrowing remains high and building costs have risen by 20% in the past year alone.

How is the carbon tax working now? We said it was a tax on everything, and it is. It is driving up the cost of living in this country, especially on new homes. It is Canadians, despite the government insisting it is doing everything right, who are paying the price. A Conservative government would incentivize home construction across Canada.

Step one would be to fix Canada's affordability crisis is restoring credibility to Ottawa's budgets. We would restore the federal government's finances, which have contributed to inflation and higher interest rates on home buyers. We would impose penalties on big city gatekeepers for excessive obstruction of housing projects. We would require cities seeking federal funds to pre-approve zoning for high-density housing and employment on land surrounding transit stations and hubs.

*Business of Supply*

• (1635)

Last, we will sell off at least 15% of underutilized federal buildings in its property to ensure these buildings become affordable housing for families.

We must make the dream of home ownership a reality for families again. This is the only way we can secure a brighter future for our nation, for our children and for the next generation.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciated the speech of my hon. colleague. I am just not sure what side of the fence he is on because, on one hand, he wants the federal government to take more action and, on the other hand, he, I believe, as a Conservative, would agree that it is market forces that determine a lot of housing affordability and it is individuals, Canadians and companies and so on, that build housing.

Does my colleague agree with his colleagues, such as the member of Parliament for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon and the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, who have said that the government should do less on housing and pull back from its investments in the national housing strategy?

**Mr. John Williamson:** Madam Speaker, I am not sure the member was listening to my speech. Nowhere did I say the government ought to spend more and do more. If anything, the government's spending is one of the reasons that inflation has been on fire in this country and home ownership is more difficult. I am not sure where that criticism came from, or the belief that I think the Liberals are not doing enough. They are actually going in the wrong direction.

When it comes to the markets, the federal government has the most responsibility for setting the conditions for economic growth and home construction. It has failed utterly. The problem is the Liberals do not recognize they are going in the wrong direction. That is why we need a new direction, under Conservatives.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Madam Speaker, on April 25, the Conservative member for Battlefords—Lloydminster said the following in the House:

...I am someone in this place who is on the record about respecting provincial jurisdiction. I believe provinces actually know better than the federal government does when it comes to their own jurisdiction and what works. Again, I respect provincial jurisdiction and provinces know what is best for the people who live in them.

The debate was on housing.

Given that the Conservatives have decided to move an “Ottawa-knows-best” motion that imposes conditions on the provinces, does my colleague think that the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster will be uneasy about voting in favour of the Conservative motion?

**Mr. John Williamson:** Madam Speaker, I have no idea. We would have to ask the member that question.

I am here to support this motion with the other Conservative members. I am ready to do that.

[English]

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I live in Vancouver, which I think is the epicentre for the hous-

ing crisis not only in this country but around the world. It is fair to say that it is indeed a crisis.

Housing anchors us in our communities. It is not just a commodity that can be traded, purchased and sold. It is an absolute necessity. It is how people anchor themselves for work; their children go to schools and people connect to community.

This has been a crisis for many years I was just curious to put this to my hon. colleague. To hear him speak, one would think the housing crisis in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland began in 2015. I can tell the member most assuredly it did not. It started back in the early 1990s when the government of Brian Mulroney actually cancelled the federal government's participation in the national housing program and, of course, the Liberals promised to restore it and did not, so we have really had an absent federal partner for many decades.

I wonder if the member acknowledges that. Could he tell us what specifically he would do to make sure that we can build truly affordable housing and not just rely on market supply? What does he think the federal government could do to make sure that people get access to social or affordable housing?

• (1640)

**Mr. John Williamson:** Madam Speaker, there are two points from the hon. member that I would like to respond to.

First of all, that is what makes this problem so infuriating. What began as an issue primarily for Vancouver and Toronto has now spread across the country. Even the smallest communities in my riding on the east coast, places with populations of 6,000 and 8,000, are experiencing homelessness, a lack of affordable housing and huge, huge price increases. This has been growing and I recognize that, but what is fundamental to understand is how much worse it has become over the last eight years with home prices doubling across the country. It is a tough file and there is no doubt about it, but it has become so much worse under a government that is doing everything wrong.

Where I disagree with my hon. colleague is that the NDP views the housing stock as static, as fixed, and that we have to try to control and regulate it. Our view on this side is that we need to expand the stock of homes—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We have to resume debate.

The hon. government House leader is rising on a point of order.

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I request that the ordinary hour of daily adjournment for the next sitting be 12 o'clock midnight, pursuant to order made Tuesday, November 15, 2022.

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Pursuant to order made Tuesday, November 15, 2022, the minister's request to extend the said sitting is deemed adopted.

[English]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kenora.

\* \* \*

## BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

### OPPOSITION MOTION—HOME OWNERSHIP AND RENTING AFFORDABILITY

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to take part in this important discussion today on our opposition day motion looking to address the housing crisis that we are seeing right across this country.

It truly is a crisis. Unfortunately, the housing minister has not been able to say that it is a crisis, but at least we have heard that terminology reflected in the comments of some of the other members of his caucus. I believe the hon. member for Davenport mentioned that it is a crisis. It is great to see that although the minister may not acknowledge it, some of the Liberal members are able to acknowledge that.

When we look across the country, we have seen that over the last eight years housing prices have doubled. Many young people feel they will never be able to own a home. The cities of Toronto and Vancouver have been mentioned by many of my colleagues. Those two cities are among the most unaffordable places to live in the world. As my colleague from New Brunswick Southwest mentioned, it takes many people up to 60% of their income just to be able to afford a home these days after eight years of this Liberal government.

It is incredibly concerning for a number of reasons. One that hits me is that the Liberal government has spent so much money on housing accelerators, housing strategies and all these wonderful things that the Liberals like to say are getting the job done, but the fact of the matter is that it is not getting the job done. The housing crisis is far worse in this country than it was when the Liberals took office.

Never before has a government spent so much to achieve so little. In fact, we have the fewest houses per capita of any of our allies in the G7, despite having an incredible wealth of land in this country.

As we know, Liberal spending has led inflation to rise to 40-year highs, making the cost of everything more expensive, and also leading to interest rates rising, making housing and constructive even more expensive. In fact, it is estimated that this coming year, there will be a 32% decline in construction. That would be a direct result of the government's policies and would make it even more difficult to build housing in this country. As well, there are 63 countries where it is faster to get a building permit for that construction than in Canada.

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We have a lot of work to do to get more homes built, to speed up those permits, to make it possible to get things built in Canada once again. That includes removing taxes and fees that are, on average, adding \$200,000 to the cost of every new home in Canada. When we put that all together, it is very clear that it is a housing crisis.

I mentioned Vancouver and Toronto. Obviously, these crises are in the major centres, but we are also seeing this crisis play out in my backyard, in northwestern Ontario, in communities like Kenora, Dryden, Sioux Lookout and Red Lake. Right across northwestern Ontario, there are challenges, not necessarily from the affordability side but from the supply side, in particular. Homes are being sold before they can even get to market, because there are so few available. As of now, the Kenora District Services Board estimates that there are 1,300 households currently on an affordable housing waitlist in the Kenora District. That is an increase of 1,000 in the last nine years.

I want to share a little about my own story. Recently, just in the last year, I purchased my home in my riding. It was a long process. It took over a year for me to be able to find that house. I lost out on many bids, because of the fact that there is such little supply. A house would come on the market, and it was almost impossible to get access to it unless one was right there at the front of the line. That highlights the crisis.

● (1645)

I did ask my sister her permission to share this story. She is moving back to Kenora after spending the last few years in Thunder Bay. She and her boyfriend both have great jobs. He is an engineer and she is taking on a new role doing X-rays at the Kenora district hospital, and they are struggling to find a place to live.

It goes without saying that this housing affordability issue is obviously a concern for the people who are struggling to find a place to live, but it is a concern for our entire economy in northwestern Ontario. We cannot attract new people to our region. We cannot attract people such as my sister to come back to the region to work, live and raise their families if they have nowhere to live.

That is one of the most major impediments to our economic development in northwestern Ontario. We have shortages of health care workers. We have shortages of workers in virtually every sector, including tourism, which is so vital to our economy in the summer months. We cannot fill those gaps in large part due to the fact there is such little housing supply.

I will share another personal angle on this. I had the opportunity to be in Thunder Bay last week for the Northern Ontario Municipal Association conference. It was a great conference, and I was able to speak with mayors from across northwestern Ontario. I also had an opportunity to catch up with some colleagues, some friends of mine from university. They are just finishing their degrees at Thunder Bay and are trying to figure out where to go next. Again, the housing challenges have led many to believe they cannot come back home to Kenora or Dryden because they cannot find a place to live, and they are not sure where they will be able to lay their roots.

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Another aspect of this housing crisis that faces our region is around first nations housing. The Kenora riding encompasses 42 first nations, and many of the homes in the communities are unfortunately in disrepair. There is, similar to the rest of the country, an issue of supply. There are still far too many people who do not own their homes or who are not able to own their homes on reserve.

In fact, during my last visit to Kasabonika, I was speaking with the community representatives about their difficulty in just being able to grow. The population is growing. They have a very young population. They have nowhere to build because government regulations and government bureaucracy is making it difficult for them to obtain new land to be able to build housing, new schools and all the critical infrastructure they need.

There is obviously an incredible challenge, but an incredible opportunity as well for the federal government to work with first nations to ensure there is an equity partnership in new infrastructure developments and resource projects so we can create more economic development, good jobs and really raise the economic level to hopefully raise more and more people out of poverty to a point where they can get into a position to be able to afford their home, whether they live on reserve or off of it.

Unfortunately, I am running out of time, but I would like to speak specifically to our motion that we put forward today to deal with this crisis. What our party is proposing is to tie federal infrastructure dollars for municipalities to the number of new homes built to ensure we can speed up building permits and free up more land for development.

We are also proposing to tie federal funding to major transit to ensure there are condos and apartments around those transit facilities. Granted, that is not something we will be seeing in our riding, but it is important for the larger centres. Of course, we are working to free up 15% of underused federal properties for development. That is something that would be huge in places like Ear Falls and Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls, where there is no shortage of land but there is a shortage of ability to access that land.

That is the plan we are putting forward to help address this housing crisis, and I urge all my colleagues in this chamber to support it.

• (1650)

**Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, Conservatives keep going back to punishing municipalities that do not build affordable housing and taking away their infrastructure. How can they build more housing if they do not have money for the infrastructure from the federal government, as a partner in it? They are defeating the very purpose of what they are trying to do.

I came from the municipal level before I got here, and the municipality has to be involved in any home-building projects in a community, whether it is issuing permits or making sure they are inspected properly for the Canadian building code. We cannot eliminate the so-called gatekeepers that they keep referring to as municipalities. They have to be a part of it. They have to be a part of this equation.

Again, punishing them and taking away infrastructure defeats the purpose of trying to get more housing built in any community.

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my remarks, I had the opportunity to join the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association last week and was able to connect with all nine mayors from my riding. I can say that they were incredibly enthusiastic about the approach that we are bringing forward because they know we need to get more development moving forward.

What I see here is an opportunity to work with the municipalities and the provincial government to ensure that we can get housing permits sped up and free up more land for development. I certainly disagree with the framing of the question by the member opposite.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my esteemed colleague from Kenora must know that on April 24, 2023, his colleague from Beauce said in this House, "It has been clear from the start that this government does not trust the provincial and territorial governments to implement the programs themselves and that the 'Ottawa knows best' approach is the only way to manage these projects. If only the government had more faith in the provinces and, especially, more respect for their jurisdictions, it might be surprised to see what can be done without Ottawa getting involved."

Given that my colleague has just supported a motion that dictates conditions to municipalities and provinces and proposes to interfere directly in provincial jurisdictions, does he think that his colleague from Beauce might also be uncomfortable voting for the Conservative motion?

• (1655)

[English]

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** Madam Speaker, we need an all-hands-on-deck approach in addressing the housing crisis. I certainly see a federal role to play in terms of what I laid out, which is in our motion today, but we also have to work with the municipalities and the provinces as well. We probably could have had a 50- or 60-page opposition motion, given the extent of the housing crisis. There is a lot of work that we can do, and I would like to work with my colleague and with the provinces moving forward.



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**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, as someone who also comes from the municipal sector, like my friend across the way, one clause stood out to me, around clawing back infrastructure dollars from municipalities that delay housing construction. It feels like something that perhaps makes for good politics, but poor policy. Of course, not every housing development is created equal and municipal governments are tasked with deliberating on very complex issues, whether they are environmental, infrastructure or social issues.

When it comes to implementing this statement around clawing back money from municipalities that impose delays, how does he foresee the federal government defining delays in a way that is fair to municipalities of different sizes and that accounts for the fact that many housing developments are quite complex? We could create, in this case, a bit of the opposite effect to what we are trying to do. If we are clawing back the infrastructure dollars that are needed to fund the infrastructure that then empowers and creates the housing developments that are so needed, how do we avoid those unintended consequences of—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Kenora.

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** Madam Speaker, as I said to my Liberal colleague when he asked his question, I do think this is an opportunity to work with our municipalities. Members of parties opposite like to flash their municipal credentials. Of course, the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, who brought forward the motion today, is a former mayor himself and understands these issues quite well, as do the nine mayors in my riding with whom I had a chance to connect last week. None of the mayors I have been talking to in my riding are concerned about our policy moving forward because they know we need to get things built. They want to move forward and are looking for the federal government to get out of the way and let that happen.

**Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle.

I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to today's debate. I will preface my comments by saying that, based on a former intervention, I will be concentrating on what was mentioned earlier by the member opposite: equity and the opportunities to provide for affordability through the investments that the government is currently making.

At the end of March, our government released budget 2023. Our made-in-Canada plan for a strong middle class, an affordable economy and a healthy future was paramount to the remarks made by the Minister of Finance. It comes at an important moment for our country, concentrating on the business of government versus the business of politics. I am proud to say that it makes investments, for example in public health care, and provides new measures to make life more affordable for Canadians. It makes investments to offset the cost of living and in many other areas, making life more affordable.

In Canada, inflation is coming down, having declined for nine months in a row, and the Bank of Canada predicts that it will drop to just 2.5% by the end of this year. However, we all know that it is

still too high, and it is still making it difficult for many Canadians to make ends meet, put food on the table, put gas in the tank and ensure that their little ones have the luxuries that we had when we were growing up.

Groceries are more expensive today and, for many people, higher prices on other essential goods are causing undue stress. Therefore, it is relevant that this government is making investments to offset that affordability crisis. That is why, once again, in budget 2023, we announced new, targeted inflation relief for the most vulnerable Canadians to help support them with the cost of living. This includes the introduction of a one-time grocery rebate, providing \$2.5 billion to target inflation. This is relief for 11 million low- and modest-income Canadians and their families. The grocery rebate will provide eligible couples with two children with up to an extra \$467, single Canadians without children with up to an extra \$234, and seniors with an extra \$225 on average.

The grocery rebate is making great legislative progress as we speak. I am glad to report that Bill C-46 passed the House at all stages on April 19 and is now being considered by the Senate. This means we are closer to being able to deliver this much-needed support and affordability for Canadians.

A couple of weeks ago, our government introduced Bill C-47, the budget implementation act. This essential piece of legislation proposes to implement many of the government's key commitments in the budget, including those that will continue to make life more affordable for Canadians.

For example, we are cracking down on predatory lending. Predatory lenders can take advantage of some of the most vulnerable people throughout our communities, including low-income Canadians, newcomers and seniors, often by offering very high-interest-rate loans. With budget 2023 and Bill C-47, our government is taking this challenge very seriously.

Another step our government is taking to support low-income Canadians is through automatic tax filing to ensure that—

• (1700)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I have to interrupt the hon. member.

We have a point of order from the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Speaker, I respect my hon. colleague greatly, as he knows, but I have to challenge the relevance. He has gone on now for almost five minutes and has not mentioned housing once.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member does know that we have quite a leeway, so I would invite the parliamentary secretary to eventually get us to the motion under discussion.

The parliamentary secretary.

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**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Madam Speaker, as I said in my preface remarks, once again, I am concentrating on the business of government. We are talking, this evening, about home ownership and renting affordability. What I am speaking about is affordability, whereby we are making it more affordable for Canadians to deal with the market conditions that are before them when it comes to housing by investing in other areas that, in fact, will make it more affordable for them to enter into the housing and renting market.

My colleague across the floor should recognize that, as I am sure he does have some business astuteness in terms of offsetting the cost of living with respect to some of the investments that the government is making.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Never assume.

• (1705)

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Madam Speaker, I know that I should never assume.

I will move on. Budget 2023 also announced that the federal government will increase the number of Canadians eligible for “auto-fill my return” to two million people by 2025, almost triple the current number.

We are also addressing affordability with our students, our younger generation, preparing them for the next stage in their lives and the adventures they are going to embark on, whether it be through co-ops and apprenticeships or student loans, and ensuring that they have the ability to enter the markets once they are finished with the hard work they are doing at either college or university.

The Canada workers benefit, which we committed to both in the 2022 fall statement and in the 2023 budget, provides up to \$714 for single workers and \$1,231 for a family, split between three payments, again, allowing for the affordability in some of the challenges that people are actually recognizing with homes, with groceries, with gas, etc., once again concentrating on the business of good government versus the business of good politics. That is our priority.

Regarding health care, I want to be very clear that in exchange for the new funding that we are providing the provinces, in the amount of \$198.3 billion over 10 years and \$46.2 billion to the provinces and territories, what this is going to do is create more affordability for Canadians when it comes to housing and home rentals, not to mention what it is going to do to provide equitable health care and ensure that the provision is given to all Canadians.

I will give an example. In Niagara, this will ensure that urgent care centres in the town of Fort Erie and the city of Port Colborne stay open to provide equitable services for their residents. This will ensure, once again, keeping, maintaining and enhancing all the services that are currently provided by the urgent care centres in Port Colborne or Fort Erie, as well as the hospital in the city of Welland. This is extremely important for those communities, not only adding equitable access to health care services but also, with the investments being made by the federal government in partnership with the provincial governments, ensuring affordability so that people are receiving these services while at the same time creating equity with respect to offsetting the higher cost of living.

This government is investing in Canadians, and by doing that, with the myriad of different services that we are embarking on today and well into the future, we will, in fact, offset the financial challenges that many of our neighbours and our families have to endure in the market conditions that are before us today.

**Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his comments regarding budget 2023 and the budget implementation act. He has spoken to a lot of the issues, but has not really spoken to the issue we are dealing with today, which is housing.

Perhaps he can respond to some of the issues we are bringing forward. The government's approach with its national housing strategy, this “everybody gets a pony” approach, has failed to deliver the results Canadians need, which is to get housing built. Housing prices have doubled. Monthly mortgage costs have doubled. The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Canada has more than doubled.

How would the member ask his government to respond to those issues?

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Madam Speaker, I think that is a great question from my neighbour in Niagara, specifically because of some of the challenges we are enduring in the Ontario. I will give an example.

At the current time, the Conservative Government of Ontario has now taken away the ability for municipalities to charge full development charges to builders to offset growth-related costs such as fire, police, community services, public health, infrastructure, roads, gutters, sidewalks and the list goes on. They are now defaulting on the property taxpayer or the water bills.

To answer my colleague's question, it is incumbent upon the federal government to not only encourage, but demand that the Conservative Government of Ontario ensure those development-charged dollars go where they belong: to the property taxpayers and water/waste water ratepayers.

• (1710)

[Translation]

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, let us put aside today's Conservative motion and talk seriously about housing.

One week after the budget, the National Housing Council stated that the national housing strategy is a failure, that it is not working and that in 10 years in Canada, between 2011 and 2021, a total of 550,000 affordable housing units were lost, while the strategy only produced 115,000 units. Since the Liberals have been in power and the strategy was launched, we have moved backwards.

I would like to remind members that the National Housing Council was created by the federal government to provide advice on the national housing strategy. It has reported that the strategy is not working and it is a failure.

One of the Bloc Québécois's recommendations, and one that has also been made by the council, is to establish an acquisition fund. As it is difficult to build quickly at this time, the government should follow the lead of British Columbia, which has created a \$550-million fund to help organizations or cities to purchase private housing stock, remove it from the market and ensure that it remains affordable. That is what the National Housing Council is proposing and what we are proposing as well.

Does my colleague agree that we should move quickly to do that?

[English]

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Madam Speaker, I think that is a great point and it is part of the discussion that we are having with those very partners. An example of that is the billions of dollars that we have provided in the budgets, not just budget, in the past two years. We are also working with the indigenous communities to ensure they get equitable access to that funding as well, with respect to the housing needs they have.

My point is the balance that we, as a country, have to have in ensuring that we address this challenge. I think the member is correct. Moving forward, we do have to work with our partners to find different creative ways to meet this challenge because it is bigger than the country. I think we have to come to that realization and we have to find those ways to meet that challenge by working together with our partners.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I have to say what we need is for the federal government to show the kind of leadership that is necessary. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has been calling for a national acquisition fund for a couple of years. The government has been talking about this and consulting about this. NGOs in the community have been calling for this. The NDP has been calling for this. However, it was not in budget 2023.

Will he support the NDP's call for the government to charge landlords for the financialization of homes, such as real estate investment trusts, for them to pay their fair share of corporate taxes, and take those resources and invest them in an acquisition fund for non-profits?

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Madam Speaker, once again, it is the same answer as for the question prior. This is the dialogue we are having.

It is a great question. Of course, I have to confess it was a tough budget this year. The government really tried to strike that balance between fiscal responsibility, especially after what we went through the last three years with the pandemic and of course getting a handle on that, while at the same time hearing what our partners are telling us and really being a part of that dialogue.

To the member, those are some of the options this government will consider moving forward.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am glad to see that, like us, our colleagues across the floor are concerned about housing affordability, but concern is not enough. Since 2015, our government has been turning our concerns into actions, producing real results for real people in this country.

### *Business of Supply*

When we entered office, our government saw the crisis in housing affordability looming and we knew that bold action was needed. We made history in 2017 when we launched the national housing strategy, the first of its kind in this country. The strategy is a 10-year, \$82-billion plan that offers grants, loans, innovation support, research funding and more.

The strategy addresses the needs of people across the housing spectrum, from homelessness to rental housing, to home ownership. It takes a human rights-based approach to housing, focusing particularly on the people who are most vulnerable to housing needs.

• (1715)

[Translation]

We are halfway through the national housing strategy timeline, and we are on track.

Better yet, in delivering on most of the measures, we have disbursed more than one-third of the strategy's funding. With this funding, we have achieved at least 50% of most of our targets. These results include supporting the repair of more than 298,000 units, just short of the 300,000-unit target; maintaining the affordability of 234,000 community housing units, which is 60% of the target to date; and supporting the creation of nearly 120,000 units out of a target of 160,000 units.

It can be hard to comprehend such large, abstract numbers, so I am going to talk about one of those 120,000 units that were built. That unit is occupied by Bill Beaton.

Bill is a Canadian Armed Forces veteran who was living on the street before being welcomed into Veterans' House, a supportive housing facility for homeless veterans in Ottawa. The 40-unit project was created through the national housing co-investment fund, one of the strategy's flagship affordable housing programs.

For Bill, Veterans' House is not just a statistic. It is much more. It is a safe place to live. It is stability. It is a home that he would not be able to afford otherwise.

His story is similar to those of many thousands of people across Canada who have a place to live thanks to the national housing strategy. It is the story of people who were given a helping hand to access housing that they can afford and that meets their needs.

The situation has changed drastically since the Government of Canada launched the national housing strategy in 2017. Since then, we have been dealing with the pandemic, global inflation, supply chain disruptions and a war in Europe, among other things.

*Business of Supply*

During that time, our government, through the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, updated, improved and expanded the strategy's programs. We did so in response to the changing situation and the input of our partners. We recognize that housing is a shared responsibility and that the federal government will not meet its ambitious housing objectives alone.

[English]

For example, we have simplified processes that were found to be too cumbersome and bureaucratic, cutting processing times in half.

We have made changes to better meet the needs of the not-for-profit housing sector. This includes a special stream of the national housing co-investment fund that turns approvals and agreements around in as little as four weeks. That feedback on turnaround times led to a new program, the rapid housing initiative, a program that is very important to the riding of Châteauguay—Lacolle. It was designed to build homes more quickly for people who need them most and has consistently exceeded its targets. We have since extended it twice, helping even more people.

One of the things we have heard from our partners is that the cost and availability of land is a persistent barrier to building new homes, and so in 2019, we launched a direct solution: the federal lands initiative, a streamlined process to make surplus federal property available for use in building affordable housing. This 10-year, \$200-million program is supporting the transfer of federal property to eligible proponents at discounted rates or no cost. So far, we have committed \$118 million of that budget and nearly reached the target of 4,000 new affordable housing units.

Still, we must do more.

The magnitude of Canada's housing challenges is bigger than any one program can address. The national housing strategy and its programs are supporting action, inspiring innovation and providing a platform for the public, private and non-profit sectors to come together. It is through collaboration that we would build a better and fairer housing system.

I am not standing here today just to talk about these programs and their success; I am here to make a request. I ask each and every member in this House to work with their constituents to help connect them to the programs and funding available.

The national housing strategy approaches housing affordability from every angle that would have an impact. We believe there is something in there to meet every type of housing need. Every community can benefit from the provisions of the strategy, and together we can ensure that everyone in Canada has a place to call home.

• (1720)

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Madam Speaker, for many families and workers, having access to affordable housing is the best way to lift themselves out of poverty and have a decent life. Unfortunately, we still have a major housing crisis.

The NDP believes that we need to speed things up. In her speech, my colleague stated that concern is not enough. I completely agree,

but unfortunately we are finding that things are moving slowly. Social housing is the most effective solution, but there are more than 35,000 people on the waiting list for social housing in Quebec. On the Island of Montreal alone, there are more than 23,000 people on the list.

What are the member's suggestions for accelerating the construction of social housing, first and foremost, co-operatives and truly affordable housing?

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question. I am very proud to say that we have a rather large inventory of social housing in Châteauguay—Lacolle. It is not enough, but we have quite a lot of social housing units on Montreal's south shore. That is thanks to the experience and expertise that has been developed over the years.

We have many organizations that work with community groups. They are also involved in the construction of low-income housing at the municipal level. They know how to make use of the programs when they are implemented and they make sure that social housing gets built. We have had some success stories lately in terms of low-income housing. That is also thanks to the rapid housing initiative and our partnership with our neighbour, Kahnawake.

[English]

**Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the problem we have on this side is this. I will reiterate what our hon. colleague from Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies brought up earlier on. When he had the minister and the officials before committee, he asked the minister how many houses had been built in the Yukon and how many houses had been built in the Northwest Territories. The minister could not answer that and neither could the officials. Then, we had our hon. colleague from the NDP, the member of Parliament for Nunavut, give a powerful message yesterday, saying that the lack of housing and the lack of action by the government in developing affordable housing in our most marginalized communities are keeping some of our most marginalized indigenous women and families in very dangerous situations.

The government has had eight years to follow through with it. Why should we wait and see, and trust that it will do it now? It has been eight years, and the government has done nothing.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Madam Speaker, I find that rather brutal. We are five years into a 10-year strategy. In my speech, I talked about how we are meeting different objectives.

I would like to continue my answer to that question by continuing my answer from before. We have increased the funding available through the CMHC. We need capital to build housing. When we are talking about social housing and affordable housing, that capital needs to come from public funding, which we all share so we can help each other equally.

[Translation]

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, this day has not been easy. All day long, the Liberals have been playing us the same tune about how things are not so bad and the situation is not so dramatic.

We do not agree with the Conservatives' motion, but at least they brought this debate to the House today. I thank them for it because it is truly an important debate.

I would like to set the record straight on the situation in Quebec. A CMHC economist I talked to recently said that we need to build 1.1 million housing units in the next 10 years. The private sector will build 500,000 that the government will not need to get involved with. To safeguard affordability and allow people to have access to housing they can afford, the governments need to step up directly or indirectly to build 600,000 housing units. It is believed that in the past five years, under the great strategy, 115,000 units were built.

When will the government really get to work for this society's less fortunate?

• (1725)

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Madam Speaker, I can simply answer that I agree that the federal and provincial governments must work together. As far as the province of Quebec is concerned, we have worked very well in the past with the Société d'habitation du Québec, and we continue to work with that organization and with the municipalities.

[English]

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Madam Speaker, we are talking about a very important topic today. We need homes for families. We need homes for dignity and homes for a purpose. The Conservatives want to bring homes for those reasons.

Under the Constitution, and we know the federal government and the provincial government know the roles, but it is the provincial governments that create municipalities. They are a creature of the provincial government.

The Liberal government, in its programs on housing, has not worked well with all the levels of government partners, which has been mentioned by the Liberals. For example, there is the big city mayors' group out there. I do not remember the city mayors' group being here in Ottawa to work on this crisis, so there are partner problems.

In eight years of the Liberal government, housing costs across Canada have doubled, and Canada has the fewest homes in the G7 but the most land to build it on. We have a lot of land. However, the regulatory burdens, the impact assessments and the red tape have increased delays and costs over the last eight years.

### *Business of Supply*

Municipal people tell me about the number of forms they need to fill out. When I was mayor, we hired a grant writer, a grant finder. Even being a small community of 15,000, we hired a person to try to find the grants and then fill out the forms. The red tape has increased for housing, so there are greater barriers. There is more staff in Ottawa, but dealing with applying for grants in the programs the government has set-up has not become more efficient.

There are a couple of problems. There is not a clear definition. We see the words "affordable" and "attainable". Affordable housing refers to it costing less than 30% of a household's income before tax. Attainable housing has a few more points to it and applies to a broader population in our country.

Attainable housing refers to being adequate in condition, which means it is not on that renovation show where they are fixing up a house that is falling apart. It is a house that is liveable. It also means it is appropriate in size, with the number of bedrooms, the kitchen or whatever living space is needed. Also, it is accessible to services, meaning it is located in areas where people can get the services they need. Attainable housing is available in a range of housing types.

If some of the pieces for attainable housing are missing, then we have a problem. We are not just building for affordable, we are building attainable housing. Under the government, and because of its policies on a range of files, the principles of attainable housing have been out of reach for so many Canadians.

I can remember when I was mayor we developed certain kinds of lots. I was speaking at a conference with developers, and I told them we were going to have 60-foot lots in the community. The planners were going nuts and saying that we needed 30-foot lots. I told them how things worked. If one builds a bigger lot, people would build a bigger home on that lot instead of going out and building on an acreage. If one builds that more expensive house in one's town, the domino effect is going happen, where that person moves out of a more affordable house, leaving it for someone else, into a bigger house.

Attainable includes a whole range of items. The whole range is needed, and municipalities can do that if one works with them.

According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, within CMHC's national housing strategy programs:

...there is no standard definition of affordability. Rather, each program uses its own unique definition, which can lead to the construction of units presented as "affordable" but which in reality may require households to devote more than 30 per cent of their income to housing.

That is problematic.

### *Business of Supply*

There are organizations that really need more partnerships. Many people in the House know what Habitat for Humanity is, and it is one of those great non-profits out there that does a great job of providing housing through working with families and communities. For example, I was just at an opening of a project, where the town donated the land, paid the fees and put in the servicing. The company these people work with supplied a lot of help, such as manpower, to work with the family.

• (1730)

Habitat for Humanity is a great example of a non-profit. That is the kind of partnership that needs to be developed. Those work because the people are very much involved with them.

Another one that I have run across in my riding is called Life at Key. It is an innovative program. Instead of increasing the down payment, which we often see as a huge barrier, this model works with a payment that requires only 2.5% to 5% initial payment. It involves co-ownership, equity in the property and making additional payments at one's own schedule. That is an innovative process. That is now happening in three or four communities in Alberta, and it is moving east with this proposal. That makes housing attainable, and we need those kinds of programs.

I have a community in Taber, with a housing initiative, that went out with a piece of land. They have great land in their community. They built a lake, pathways and then modular homes that they purchased, or homeowners could purchase modular homes. There are large lots. They have worked at this. It is another step for attainable homes. They have done a good job of that.

I have communities such as Standard and Arrowwood. They have gone out and built serviced subdivisions within an hour of Calgary. The demand is now there. Those communities have gone out and built those service lots and roads, and all of the things. That is what municipalities could do if the federal government worked with them.

Somebody mentioned the concern about a clause that says there is a penalty. Well, if they have worked in municipal government, they have gotten grants that may have been for one year, maybe two years. Sometimes those projects are complicated, and in two years it has not gotten done. There is a mechanism to go back to the grant funding and say, "We are this far through it, but we need an extension for a year."

Absolutely, but that is working with partnerships, and that is what we are talking about doing. Municipalities are the partnerships that need to be worked with, but the government has to be a partner in the room to get it done.

When we talk about some of the challenges that municipalities have, it is getting harder to do all the things they need to do for approvals. For example, to change a culvert under a road, it used to be that there could be a plan to go ahead and do it. It would take so much money, and if they had the equipment, they could go do it. Now, there has to be an environmental study one year, and the culvert cannot be replaced until the next year.

It is those kinds of costs that keep increasing on the municipalities. There is a challenge that the bureaucracies keep building

above them. It makes it problematic for municipalities to do what they need to get done with the money they get in grants, and that is why the federal government needs to work with them.

What we need to do is spend money in the right direction. This is a crisis. Earlier, the crisis in Nunavut was mentioned. In 1942, somebody built the Alaska Highway in a very short period of time because there was a crisis. They got that highway built from Dawson Creek all the way to where they needed to have it in Alaska, over territory where they said nobody could build a road.

How can we not get housing materials to Nunavut now? This is problematic. I listened to our MP for Nunavut talk about the housing crisis they have, and we cannot figure out how to get materials there at the appropriate time to build the appropriate housing they need. This is a crisis.

We have the capability to do those things. We are not getting them done because we do not view it as a crisis. This is problematic.

Let us look at the flooding on the Lower Mainland that occurred recently. It wiped out bridges. It wiped out roads and railways. How was that fixed? They got all the construction people together from municipalities in a month. It was a crisis because we needed the rail, the roads and the bridges going. In a month, they had those things repaired to have things moving.

When it is a crisis, we need to get all the people in the room. The federal people need to get the big city mayors in the room. The municipalities and provinces need to be in the room. They need to be in the room, and they can resolve it.

It is not just building programs and shipping it out. We want homes for people. This is a crisis. We need it now.

• (1735)

**Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I do not know if the member opposite knows this, but his leader, today and for the last number of months, has been blaming municipalities, small town mayors and big city mayors. He has been critical of mayors and councillors across the country for not doing their part as it relates to assisting with the affordable housing supply, and the housing supply in general.

Our government, as members know, has taken a more collaborative approach, working with municipalities to provide support in building supply. I wonder, as a small town mayor, whether he feels that a more collaborative approach is better than the one that his leader is taking, which is to demonize municipalities that are, in large part, trying to help all levels of government with the challenges we face.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Madam Speaker, one thing municipal people know is that the red tape that comes from both levels of government above them, provincial and federal, is huge. That is the red tape we are talking about. That is what we need to free up so that municipalities can get done what they need to do. They can do it, as in the example I mentioned before.

We need to get that done. If we can get rid of the red tape, it will free those people up. Major cities, for example, have staff getting projects shovel-ready in hopes that the federal government will put something out they can apply for. What a waste of resources that is, but it is because of the bureaucracy of the federal government.

[Translation]

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the Conservative motion accuses cities of being gatekeepers that are blocking construction. It is absolutely ridiculous.

Part of the collateral damage of the federal government's withdrawal from housing in 1993 is that we have seen the emergence of something called the financialization of housing, in other words, big national or international conglomerates owning large apartment buildings. This is problematic.

According to one study, in 1996, just a few years after the federal government withdrew from housing, the rate was 0%. The ownership of large apartment buildings by big corporations did not exist. As we know, these groups are not interested in the right to housing. They are only interested in making a profit.

The same study noted that, by 2021, 22% of the rental stock in Canada was owned by large groups. This poses a serious problem in terms of affordability and accessibility.

Can my colleague suggest any solutions to this major housing problem in Canada?

[English]

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Madam Speaker, I have one great solution. Across the street from where I live is a 15-storey empty building that the federal government left years ago. If we put federal government buildings on the market, it would drive prices down since we would have more buildings on the market. This is instead of building National Defence headquarters out on Carling Avenue, where there is no rapid transit, and leaving empty buildings in the core. That makes no sense.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member for Bow River talked a lot about working in partnership with municipalities, yet I think many municipal partners would be quite shocked that their infrastructure funding would be clawed back by this Conservative motion.

Has the Conservative Party consulted with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities or any of the provincial associations? If so, what was their response to this policy proposal?

• (1740)

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Madam Speaker, I used to be the vice-president of AUMA. We worked with them all. Partnerships work and we would do that.

### *Private Members' Business*

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** It being 5:40 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forth with every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[English]

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.

The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Speaker, I request a recorded vote please.

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 3, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### CRIMINAL CODE

**Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC)** moved that Bill C-321, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (assaults against health care professionals and first responders), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** We have a point of order from the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, just so we are on safe ground, I suspect that leave might have been required for us to go to private members' hour. If that is the case, I suspect that you have unanimous consent to do so.

My apologies to the member for interrupting the beginning of his remarks.

• (1745)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Do we have unanimous consent to go to Private Members' Business?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Private Members' Business*

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Speaker, I am truly honoured and humbled to rise in this House to speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-321. However, before I go further, I want to send, which I think I do for all parliamentarians, heartfelt condolences and well wishes to the friends, families and colleagues of the two firefighters missing in the Charlevoix region, who were doing what firefighters do: putting themselves in the line of danger. It appears that they were swept away by the floods in that region, so all of our thoughts and prayers are going out to those families.

Bill C-321 would amend the Criminal Code to require courts to consider that when a victim of an assault is a health care professional, a health care worker or a first responder, it is an aggravating circumstance for the purpose of sentencing. In preparing for delivering this speech, I agonized over what I was going to say. How do I adequately convey the messages, convey the pain, convey the fear and convey the stories that I have heard from the nurses, paramedics, first responders, police officers and firefighters who have written to me and shared with me their personal stories of violence, assault and terror?

When did it become acceptable to punch or kick a nurse when they are administering care? This is a real question. Nurses have the highest rates of violence in our nation. Ninety-two per cent of nurses have indicated they have experienced a form of violence in their workplace. They live in fear. Two-thirds of those nurses have said they have considered quitting.

Firefighters, police officers, correctional officers, nurses and doctors put on their uniforms each and every day to serve us and our families. They do so knowing they are going to experience human tragedy. They do so knowing and expecting that they are going to face violence. They mend our wounds. They bandage our cuts. They heal our hearts. Firefighters run into burning buildings. Police officers run toward bullets and run toward danger when others run away. They hold our hand when we take our last breath. Who protects them?

For the past few months, Canadians have been horrified to see the increasing rates of violence against our first responders, our nurses and our health care workers. This is splashed across our social media and splashed across our news feeds, and we cannot escape it. We are becoming desensitized to it. In the last number of months, 10 police officers have been killed, ambushed. Shaelyn Yang in Vancouver was an RCMP officer delivering life-saving naloxone care when she was viciously stabbed and killed.

Police, paramedics, ambulance attendants, nurses to some extent, and health care workers go into these domestic scenes to save people's lives and care for Canadians in their most trying times. Those scenes in those moments are very dangerous. They live in fear.

Just a month ago, Canadians were shocked to learn of the ambush of two Edmonton police officers as they responded to a domestic 911 call. They did not have a chance. I fear I will not do their words justice.

The motivation for this bill was a message sent to me two years ago through Facebook. It was from a paramedic who relayed to me a story of how she attended a call with her partner in a domestic scene. While they were attending to the victim, a family member of

the victim picked up the paramedic and threw her down a flight of stairs, and then proceeded to stomp on her and break her ankles. She was thrown down a flight of stairs. How, as a society, have we fallen so far that this is normal, that we allow this?

• (1750)

A paramedic wrote to me to explain that she was sexually assaulted by a patient in the back of her ambulance. She pressed charges, yet that perpetrator was out less than two days later, and less than three weeks later was back in that paramedic's ambulance again. We have fallen. I do not understand.

Since the beginning of the year, there have been reports of paramedics who have been shot at with pellet guns, threatened with machetes and stabbed with needles. The day-to-day physical and verbal abuse that they endure is growing. It is time we sent a message. There are 338 members of Parliament in this House. It is time that we sent a message to our health care workers, to our first responders and to our public safety personnel that we have their backs. We need to send a message.

This violence leads to fear. It leads to compassion fatigue. It leads to morale and recruitment issues. Currently, there is a group of nine applicants going through the RCMP depot right now. Why would someone want to become a police officer? Why would someone want to be a firefighter, a paramedic or a nurse, when they know this is what they are going to face? What protection is there for them?

Some 92% of nurses have experienced physical violence in the course of their jobs. Our health care workers and our first responders are ready to answer the call without hesitation. We dial 911, and they come running without hesitation. If we show up in an emergency ward, they are there to help us or our loved ones in our time of need, yet because they are there, they put themselves in a vulnerable setting. They can be walking by and get punched in the face or kicked on the floor. Who helps them? Oftentimes they are left alone with no one to attend to them.

They need to know that someone has their back. Unfortunately, while providing this essential care to our communities, our frontline heroes are being assaulted. They are being belittled and forced to confront a growing epidemic of violence against them. The statistics are alarming. They are not made up. Those workplaces, simply put, are not safe. When did violence in a workplace ever become the norm?



A recent internal survey by Region of Peel paramedics said that 97.5% of medics have all experienced physical and verbal abuse, forms of intimidation. Eighty per cent have been physically assaulted. Sixty per cent have been sexually assaulted. The International Association of Fire Fighters reported growing rates of acts of violence when responding to structural fires and reported acts of violence during medical calls. What are we doing to help those who help us?

A firefighter was punched while rescuing people from a burning building and a nurse was thrown down while she was administering care in a hospital emergency room. There is nothing enshrined in Canadian law that deters violence against them. The sole purpose of Bill C-321 is to provide those who serve us, those who protect us, protection.

Whether they are a nurse, a personal care worker, a paramedic, a firefighter, a correctional officer or a psychiatric nurse who is performing their duties, they are facing increasing rates of violence, and we need them to know they are cherished and that someone has their back. We need them to know there is someone fighting for them. We as parliamentarians are fighting for them. That violence being perpetrated against them is unacceptable, and we will not stand for it. We will stand against it.

• (1755)

Our health care workers and first responders should know and be assured that if they are attacked, there is a legal mechanism in place, and that the perpetrator will be tried and convicted with the full force of our Canadian legal system.

As it exists today, many of the health care workers and first responders who are assaulted while performing their duties do not get support from the legal system. Often they are told it is part of their job. They are told that it is part of their job description. It is a culture we are fighting to change. Getting abused at work is never acceptable.

The response to tabling this bill has been overwhelming. Hundreds, if not thousands, of paramedics, firefighters, police officers and nurses have written to us to share their stories. Nobody wants to get involved when this happens. Everybody stands by the way-side and just watches. That is unacceptable. It is unacceptable in society that we sit and watch that. When did it become okay to hunt RCMP, to hunt police officers or to hunt paramedics?

The stories are horrific and heartbreaking. I honestly could spend the next year sharing the stories that we have heard. At the natural resources committee on March 10, Carmen Santoro, senior executive of Eastern Canada's International Association of Fire Fighters, testified before the committee and said this:

Before I close, while I have the floor, I want to say that I've been a firefighter for 37 years. For most of it, I was a supervisor or a captain. What a lot of people don't realize is that we are one of the few professions that do not have the right to refuse unsafe work.

They do not have the right to refuse dangerous work. He continued, "Every emergency scene is unsafe work, and we rely on all of you," parliamentarians, "to include safety measures," and for us to consider their safety. Let that sink in. They do not have the right to refuse dangerous work.

### *Private Members' Business*

If a simple assault charge was enough of a deterrent, this debate would be irrelevant, but clearly there is nothing right now that is acting as a deterrent for the increasing rates of violence experienced by health care workers and first responders. That is why the International Association of Fire Fighters has come out and supported this. The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, the Paramedic Association of Canada, the Ambulance Paramedics of British Columbia, the Ontario Paramedic Association, the Paramedic Chiefs of Canada, the Manitoba Association of Fire Chiefs, the Saskatoon Paramedic Association, and the British Columbia's Nurses' Union have all lent their support for this legislation.

It is obvious there is a need for this because there are so many provincial, national and international organizations that have come on board. Big city mayors are talking about the increasing rates of violence and the need for deterrence. We need to do more as parliamentarians.

This is not the first time this has been brought up in this House. It was studied at the health committee in 2019. Its recommendation was that the Government of Canada amend the Criminal Code to require a court to consider the fact that if the victim of assault is a health care service sector worker, that be an aggravating circumstance for the purposes of sentencing. That is exactly what Bill C-321 does.

Members know the work I have done in this House with respect to our first responders, and those who serve our country and our community. I carry a challenge coin with me all the time to remind me of the sacrifices they make. These brave men and women put their uniforms on, and they fight each and every day. They get up each and every day knowing they are going to face dangerous circumstances and their lives are going to be put in jeopardy. They live in fear.

We always talk about honouring them. I think there is no greater honour for the hundreds of thousands of public service workers, health care workers and public safety personnel than to pass Bill C-321. That is truly honouring their service.

• (1800)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I know the coin means a lot to the member, but I remind him that we cannot use it in the House because it is considered a prop.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, one of the reasons the government has addressed this issue previously, in part, is because we do value our first responders and our health care workers.

*Private Members' Business*

We saw some horrific scenes during the pandemic where people protested against health care workers. All sorts of profanities were levelled against them during the pandemic itself in and around hospitals and other institutions. I suspect there is a great deal of sympathy, for good reason, toward our first responders and health care workers.

This is not something that is new. Sadly, it has been going on for a long time, but it was really emphasized during the pandemic. Would the member agree?

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Speaker, I would agree with my hon. colleague. Definitely, people are angry. People are frustrated. The rates of violence against our frontline heroes have been increasing in recent years and we must put a stop to it. That is why it is so important that we work together, collaboratively, and pass Bill C-321.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague on this bill. As he knows, it follows a bill that I introduced in 2019 to do the same thing, to make it an aggravating factor in sentencing for there to be an assault on a health care worker.

I noticed that in this bill, he uses the term “health care professional”, and he has expanded the protection to first responders. However, there is no definition of “first responder” or “health care professional” in his bill. I am wondering if he would be amenable to us, at committee, putting definitions in so that we can ensure that the broadest possible coverage is in place to protect our frontline responders and health care workers.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague and I have talked about this. I agree. It was a mistake on my part at drafting. I should have had “health care worker” to encompass all of those who work in the health care setting. Also, during the work of my bill, Bill C-211, we came to the understanding that there was no definition of “first responder”, but we used “public safety personnel”.

I would work with my hon. colleague to make those amendments.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would make the observation that in this place there are quite a few MPs here who do work that gets noticed on social media or even in the mainstream media, and then there are other MPs who just do great work. My hon. colleague is one of those individuals who just do great work.

He is here today talking about the need for legislation around protecting first responders. One of the things we often do not take the time to talk about in this place when we discuss policy is our motivation, our heart, our why. I would invite the hon. member to talk about that.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Speaker, the why is very simply that message I received from the paramedic who wrote to me telling me about the assault that happened to her, as well as the work that we have done through Bill C-211, the people we have lost who were first responders, who were health care workers, who we lost to suicide.

This contributes to post-traumatic stress disorder. It contributes to compassion fatigue and burnout. It contributes to those just fearing for their lives when they go to work. Sometimes, there is no way out. They see no way out but to end their lives.

I live and work every day to make sure that we are breaking the stigma and doing whatever we can to protect those who protect us and fight for those who fight for us.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I do want to remind members that if they want to have conversations, they might want to take them out into the lobby.

I am talking to the hon. parliamentary secretary and the deputy whip. They may want to take their conversation out into the lobby.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Richmond Hill.

● (1805)

**Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am indeed honoured and very pleased to join the second reading debate on Bill C-321, an act to amend the Criminal Code as it relates to assaults against health care professionals and first responders.

First, let me congratulate the member for Cariboo—Prince George, whom I have had the privilege of working with on a number of projects, especially in terms of mental health. I congratulate him and convey that I will be supporting this bill. It is indeed a pleasure to work with him on this file.

I think all members would agree that health care professionals, personal support care workers, frontline workers and first responders are not just workers. They are co-workers, friends, daughters and sons, and mothers and fathers. They are members of our community. They are the ones who reach out to us. They are extraordinarily empathetic members of our community. Every day, they risk their health to bring a smile to the beautiful faces of our community members. Every day, they risk their lives to save our lives and to protect our communities. They are not just workers; they are heroes. However, these heroes are struggling.

I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to connect with the amazing SEIU health care workers in Richmond Hill, and I learned about the economic, physical and mental challenges that they combat every single day because of the critical nature of their job. Despite all of this, with ever more fascinating courage and resilience, they continue to work to keep their communities safe. Their tireless effort is simply sparked by passion, love and care.

Richmond Hill firefighters are another group and another inspiring example of first responders. They face physical danger not only while on duty but also as they put on their protective gear for firefighting. This is because the PFAS used in their gear cause severe health effects. This is in addition to the mental impacts of living with the uncertainty of what the next mission on the job holds every moment of every day. It is truly hero-like that, every time, they face the uncertainty with the same bravery and notion of service.

Today I met with the Paramedic Association of Canada. I was given one of those coins that we are not supposed to use as a prop. In light of CMHA Mental Health Week, I would like to highlight the fact that, with the vital and high-pressure nature of their jobs, paramedics are exposed to severe mental and psychological pressures. This issue is exacerbated by the increasing violence and number of assaults they face, all while they passionately maintain the health and safety of their fellow community members.

Health care workers and first responders put their lives on the line every day to keep Canadians and our communities safe. They should never fear for their own safety or feel intimidated as they are going to and from work. Bill C-321 aims to respond to ongoing calls to denounce and deter violence against nurses; paramedics; firefighters; police officers, including transit officers or special constables; and other frontline health care staff. The bill proposes to amend the Criminal Code to require a court to consider the fact that the victim is a health care professional or first responder who was acting in the performance of their duties as an aggravating factor for sentencing purposes. The amendment would apply only at sentencing for cases involving assault-related crimes.

In 2019, as the hon. member mentioned, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health studied the prevalence of violence faced by health care workers in Canada. It reported that health care workers have a rate of workplace violence that is four times higher than that of any other profession. What is particularly alarming about this figure is stakeholders' report that most of the violence that workers experience remains unreported because of a culture of acceptance. That is not acceptable.

• (1810)

In its report entitled “Violence Facing Health Care Workers in Canada”, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health made several recommendations, including that the Government of Canada amend the Criminal Code to require courts to treat the fact that the victim of an assault is a health care sector worker as an aggravating factor for sentencing. In light of these calls for reform and the rise in violence against health care workers during the pandemic, our government introduced former Bill C-3, which, when it came into effect in 2021, added to section 718.2 of the Criminal Code an aggravating factor targeting offences committed against any person who, in the performance of their duties and functions, was providing health services. Bill C-321 would complement the amendments enacted by former Bill C-3 by providing additional protection for first responders and expanding the range of circumstances to which the aggravating factor would apply.

First, I want to provide some additional context in relation to aggravating factors. Aggravating factors are circumstances that relate to the seriousness of the offence or the degree of responsibility of

the offender and justify the imposition of higher sentences. The Criminal Code contains specific provisions that apply to certain types of first responders. These provisions include, for example, specific offences that capture all forms of assault against peace officers, directing that the sentences imposed for these offences be served consecutively to any other sentence imposed for an offence arising out of the same event.

The proposed aggravating factor in Bill C-321 is consistent with the broad discretion conferred to sentencing judges under section 718.2 of the Criminal Code. The list of aggravating factors provided in this section is not exhaustive, and courts can and do expand the list when recognizing new aggravating and mitigating factors at sentencing. In fact, reported cases in Canada have already recognized that assaulting first responders and persons working in the health care system is an aggravating circumstance at sentencing.

The aggravating factor enacted by former Bill C-3 applies where a victim of an offence was, in the performance of their duties and functions, providing health care services at the time of the offence. However, the beauty of Bill C-321 is that it would apply where a victim was a first responder or health care professional engaged in the performance of their duties. This is a subtle but important difference between the aggravating factor under section 718.2 and the amendment proposed in the bill before us.

The proposed section 269.02 would apply where the victim was performing any other duties, not only those duties relating to the direct provision of health care. For example, even if a firefighter who was assaulted on the job was not providing health-related services at the time of the assault, the aggravating factor proposed in Bill C-321 would still apply.

Our government supports the proposed amendments and would like to suggest replacing the reference to “health care professional” with “person who provides health services”. Our concern is that the term “health care professional” may be interpreted narrowly by the court, which could result in the exclusion of those who work in the health care field but who may not be considered health care professionals. Making such a change would not only result in protection for as broad a class of victims as possible, but the protection they are entitled to would also ensure consistency in terminology between the proposed section 269.02 and the aggravating factor enacted by former Bill C-3 in section 718.2, which applies to persons providing health services.

*Private Members' Business*

In closing, our government is committed to addressing the serious issue of violence against health care workers and first responders, such as SEIU health care workers and Richmond Hill firefighters, as well as paramedics. This amendment would, I believe, better achieve the objective of Bill C-321, resulting in expanded protection for all persons working as first responders and working in the health care field.

● (1815)

[Translation]

**Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Madam Speaker, Bill C-321 would amend existing provisions governing sentences for assault when the victim is a health care worker or first responder. The victim's profession would be considered an aggravating circumstance.

This bill is based on recommendation 3 from the Standing Committee on Health's report on violence facing health care workers in Canada, which was tabled in June 2019. The committee recommended that the government "amend the Criminal Code to require a court to consider the fact that the victim of an assault is a health care sector worker to be an aggravating circumstance for the purposes of sentencing".

A number of groups, including the Canadian Medical Association, the Ontario Medical Association, the British Columbia Nurses' Union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Concerned Ontario Doctors and the Canadian Nurses Association, have said they support this measure.

The report was tabled in the House on June 19, 2019, so the Trudeau government did not respond to the study before the dissolution of the House and the election. That is why it is back before us now.

Where are we at now? Obviously, assaulting someone who is providing care to a sick or injured person is unacceptable. That goes without saying. The assailant must be punished severely, and the sentence must send an equally serious message. We all agree on that. However, there are already Criminal Code provisions that cover this.

Subparagraph 718.2(a)(iii.2) states that any offence committed against a person who, in the performance of their duties and functions, was providing health services, including personal care services, must be considered to have aggravating circumstances. That applies to any offence, regardless of who the victim and the offender are.

This means that, if passed, Bill C-321 will merely reiterate that assaults and threats of assault against these workers may be punished more severely.

That is commendable. However, that being said, we need to be careful when determining that one category of citizens should receive special protection. Obviously, we care a lot about making sure that all those who dedicate their lives to caring for, treating or saving their fellow human beings from some sort of danger are well treated themselves. We want them to know that their dedication does not go unnoticed, that it is recognized, and we want them to be able to do their job safely.

However, there are other members of our society who also deserve our respect and attention. I will not give an exhaustive list because I will likely forget someone, but what about our teachers? What about the support staff in our schools? What about day care workers? Many of us who worked in the field of education are well aware of the fact that teaching in 2023 is a far cry from teaching 50 years ago. I think my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, who was a school principal not that long ago, could tell us all about that.

Should those who dedicate their lives to educating our children not be given the same consideration? What about those who spend their lives working in soup kitchens or shelters to help the most disadvantaged members of our society? Times are tough. Everything costs more. There is a labour shortage and a housing crisis. There are major problems, and the people working in those areas also need to be recognized and protected.

What message would we like to send to all those who work in a plant, at a courthouse, at a store, at a restaurant or in the public service? What would we say to them, that their work is not important enough? I am sure that is not what we want.

● (1820)

Let me remind this House that in 2015, Bill S-221 introduced by Senator Bob Runciman was adopted and was rather similar to the current bill, but drafted to the benefit of public transit operators. It did not have a deterrent effect on the violence against bus drivers. Other than a momentary decline in 2016, the statistics on this have not moved, except during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Quebec, work injury cases recognized by the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail went from 21 in 2014 to 22 in 2022.

Finally, I would add that our priority must continue to be to assure everyone that we want to keep the workplace, and society in general, safe and healthy. Prevention, and healthy, rewarding living conditions, must never be sacrificed in favour of legislative deterrents. They must be complementary approaches.

In conclusion, the Bloc Québécois believes that acts of violence against health care workers and first responders are concerning and that we need to discuss this. We need to find solutions that make it possible for these people to safely do their essential work.

Does Bill C-321 propose a perfect solution? Probably not, but it surely deserves our attention. For that reason, we will be supporting this bill so it can be studied in committee, ultimately improved and, if appropriate, passed.

*Private Members' Business*

[English]

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to express, on behalf of my New Democrat colleagues, our support for Bill C-321, an act to amend the Criminal Code, assaults against health care professionals and first responders. Once again, I would like to offer my gratitude and congratulations to my colleague from Cariboo—Prince George for his constant attention and care to our frontline responders in this country. This is a continuation of his fine work in this area.

In brief, this legislation amends the Criminal Code to require courts to consider the fact that victims of an assault were at the time of the commission of the offence a health care professional or a first responder engaged in the performance of their duty as an aggravating circumstance when they are the victim of that offence.

I think it goes without saying that no health care worker or first responder, in this country or anywhere, should ever be subjected to violence in the workplace. Bullying, abuse, racial or sexual harassment, and physical assault should never and can never be considered just part of the job. These workers care for us at our most vulnerable, and I think we have a responsibility to care for them in return.

Violence against health care workers in specific is a pervasive and growing problem in the Canadian health care system. Both the number and intensity of attacks are increasing at an alarming rate. Assaulting a health care worker or a first responder not only harms the individual involved but also puts our entire health care system and first response system at risk. Workplace violence is a major factor driving Canada's dire health staffing shortage, and I am sure it is a dissuading and discouraging factor for people pursuing this career.

Workplace violence is a pervasive problem in health care settings across Canada. Prior to COVID-19, health care workers had a four-fold higher rate of workplace violence than any other profession. Incidents of violence against health care workers and first responders escalated dramatically during the pandemic. I might say as well that first responders are often the first people on the scene when we are dealing with Canada's overdose crisis, and I do not think I need to point out how pervasive that is in every corner of the country and the danger it presents to them.

In a 2017 survey, 68% of registered practical nurses and personal support workers reported experiencing violence on the job at least once that year. Nearly, one in five said that they had been assaulted nine or more times that year. According to the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, violence-related lost-time claims for frontline health care workers have increased by almost 66% over the past decade. That is three times the rate of increase for police and correctional service officers combined. First responders, notably paramedics and firefighters, also experienced violence and threats on a shockingly frequent basis.

That is why on February 28, 2019, I introduced Bill C-434, an act to amend the Criminal Code, assault against a health care sector worker. That legislation would have amended the Criminal Code to require a court to consider the fact that the victim of an assault is a health care sector worker would also be an aggravating circum-

stance for the purpose of sentencing. I reintroduced that legislation in successive parliaments in February 2020 and December of 2021.

Although the present bill, Bill C-321, before the House today is very similar to Bill C-434, it does not define a health care worker as broadly. This bill is limited to an assault against "a health care professional or a first responder", but does not define the terms. The bill I introduced was specifically drafted to ensure that, when we talk about a health care worker, we include not only professionals, but everybody who works in a health care setting, from the porter who greets people at the door, to the orderly and the admin clerk, many of whom experience bullying, abuse and violence. I know my colleague has already indicated that he is willing to look at a broadened definition, and I thank him for that because we want to make sure that this contemplated measure does not exclude any health care sector workers who are not members of professional bodies.

As has been pointed out by my colleague on the government side, in December of 2021, Bill C-3 was passed in the House, which amended the Criminal Code to enhance protections for health care workers, those who assist them and those accessing health care services, and it received royal assent at that time.

• (1825)

Among other measures, Bill C-3 amended the Criminal Code to make it an aggravating factor in sentencing for any offence when there is evidence that, one, "the offence was committed against a person who...was providing health services, including personal care services," as a part of their duties or, two, where there is evidence that the offence "had the effect of impeding another person from obtaining health services, including personal care services".

By the way, I also think it is important to point out that we ensure that this bill is broadly defined to include any setting in which a health care worker may perform health care services, including in the home, long-term care centres or any other non-conventional place other than a hospital.

Unlike Bill C-3, the bill before the House, Bill C-321, broadens that protection, I think very laudably, to apply to first responders who are engaged in their duties but not necessarily engaged in providing health services. This is a welcome improvement. Again, I thank my hon. colleague for broadening this important protection.

Assaulting a peace officer is already a stand-alone offence under section 270 of the Criminal Code. The punishment for assault of a peace officer is no more serious than the legislated sentence for common assault. However, the court is likely to consider that the victim, as a peace officer, is an aggravating factor at sentencing.

*Private Members' Business*

The Criminal Code offences in sections 129 and 270 do define public officer and peace officer, but case law on the interpretation of section 2 shows the varying occupations that have been counted as peace officers for the purposes of prosecutions under the Criminal Code in particular contexts. They have been included to define members of the Anishinabek Police Service and military police. However, despite the existence of cases which mention paramedics or firefighters that cite section 270 of the Criminal Code on peace officers, there are none that I am aware of where the person assaulted was a paramedic or firefighter. Therefore, current case law suggests that first responders are not considered peace officers under the Criminal Code. This omission must be rectified and would be rectified by this bill that is before the House.

I have already talked about Bill C-321 employing the term “health care professionals” and how that is not defined in this bill, so we are going to work, I hope collaboratively, to ensure that that definition is broadly expanded. It is similar with first responders, who are not defined in this bill because the Criminal Code does not define this term. Other federal statutes do not either, so it will be important for us to have a good, broad description of that to ensure that any person in this country who is providing first response services in our communities is covered by this legislation.

I want to just mention that this is an important step because the Criminal Code is an expression of society's values and priorities. I think sending a message to the Canadian public that these health care workers are taking care of us, that they deserve to be protected and are inviolate is an important message for Parliament to send.

I am not sure I understood completely the comments by my hon. colleague from the Bloc Québécois. He did mention some important points about broadening this protection to many other kinds of workers, but there is one key difference. Health care workers and first responders do a job that we ask them to do. We ask them to be there for people when they are in trauma, and we are putting them in a situation that regular workers are not often in. They have no choice but to be there. They have to be there. That is why I think it is particularly important to send the message that they are inviolate and we must protect them. We have to send a message that under no circumstances is it ever acceptable to violate those people, either by word or deed.

Finally, I want to recognize that, as important as this bill is, it is only a first step. To keep health care workers and first responders safe, they need resources and tools. We want to prevent them from getting assaulted in the first place so they need proper security. They need proper physical barriers. They need sufficient staffing.

We all need greater mental health supports because we also have to recognize that many times the people who are doing the assaults are in some cases victims and are suffering from mental illness and trauma themselves. We have to recognize that we need a comprehensive holistic approach to this problem so we are doing everything we can to prevent the situations that often lead to assaults from happening in the first place instead of dealing with the sentencing after the assault occurs.

• (1830)

**Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague from Cariboo—Prince George, who in-

troduced Bill C-321, said he could go on about this particular topic for hours and perhaps years if we allowed him to. As I listened very carefully to his speech, it made me very emotional to hear the harrowing stories that have been told to him. Of course, we know that those things are difficult to hear and difficult to understand.

As I have said in the House before, I have been a family doctor. I graduated from medical school 30 years ago. It is difficult to understand, very carefully, what people have to put up with day in and day out. When someone works in an emergency room, they will, every day, see paramedics and nurses and, as we say in Nova Scotia, LPNs, and CCAs, support workers and other staff who work inside the hospital and have suffered violence. That is something that becomes very hard to understand. For those who are not interested in perpetrating violence, it becomes very hard to understand how someone could possibly have any interest in harming the person who is there to help them. For the majority of people around this country who are listening in this evening, I am sure that does not compute. However, it is important that we make it very clear to the Canadian public that this does happen and that it happens on an everyday basis.

Underlining that fact with some personal experience is something that is very important. We can all talk about numbers. We can talk about the percentage of paramedics in Ontario and Nova Scotia. Sixty-seven per cent of them were verbally abused and 26%, in 2014, had been subject to a physical assault. In North Bay, Ontario, 60% had endured violence, including sexual harassment and physical assault. We all know very clearly that this has no place in the workplace. The strange fact, though, is that it happens in the health care workplace, where health care is being delivered, which, as we have heard from multiple members, could be at the side of the road or in a hospital setting, a nursing home or the person's own home. We know very clearly that this happens.

I have heard the word “hero” used here this evening. It is heroic, in a sense, that the workers who endure this kind of violence show up to work again. It is inexplicable. There really are no words for it. If this type of violence occurred in another workplace, it would very likely be a career-ending injury for many folks. In the health care field, as strange as it is, perhaps owing to the fact that many health care workers are there because they have a heart for the work, they show up to that work again and again, in spite of being abused verbally, physically and, sadly, also sexually. Have I seen this happen? Yes, I have seen it happen, and that presents a very difficult situation. The verbal abuse endured by frontline medical staff in 2023 is beyond belief. People who believe that they can take their frustrations out on other people has, sadly, become some sort of weird, acceptable situation in our society. My friend and colleague from Cariboo—Prince George brought that forward in a very eloquent and elegant manner.

Understanding that, of course, there is frustration with the medical system, we know very clearly that those frontline workers are not in charge of the medical system. They are not the administrators of it. They are not the funders of it. However, those folks who are frustrated by the level of care they have received and the time they have waited still feel it appropriate to lash out at those frontline health care workers who, we know very clearly, are there to help and have gone into these professions with very good reason and a clear conscience.

• (1835)

We know, sadly, that in our society, many frontline health care workers, especially nurses and often paramedics, are females. We also know, sadly, that is a particular difficulty because certain individuals of our society feel the need and, perhaps the superiority, I do not know what goes through their minds, to lash out at females in our society. This appears to be something that happens much more regularly, and, obviously, this is borne out in studies. I have a daughter, Samantha, who is a paramedic. We have that kindred shared relationship to understand the things that she has seen and experienced. She is a tough cookie. She was a rugby player in university. However, we can all understand very clearly that having those things said and done to one certainly takes its toll over time. Once again, it has been said very clearly that that contributes to compassion fatigue, burnout and the reason why people begin to leave their profession.

Especially in today's day and age, when we know that there is a significant need for nurses, paramedics, physicians and any type of health care worker, it must not help them to think they are not being supported by their society. This is an epidemic, which is a bit of an overused word, but it is an epidemic of violence against frontline health care workers. For those who choose to work in these professions, it is important to understand that there are 338 of us in the House of Commons who want to support them and to say that the violence that they endure, sadly, on a regular basis is not acceptable, and that it needs to be a mitigating factor when perpetrators of such violence are brought to justice.

We need to get to the root causes, to understand what we could do as legislators to help with prevention, what we could do as legislators to help change this country so that the attitude is different. We know that those steps are all so important. Certainly as an interim step, allowing frontline health care workers to know that we are there, from all across this country, to support them is going to be a necessary and important step so that they know they are not forgotten.

I do not think it would be helpful to the House or those listening at home to continue to talk about the terrible cases we have heard about very clearly this evening. I will not belabour those points, other than to be very clear that I would challenge my colleagues in the House, not only those who spoke but also the folks who would have the opportunity to pass this bill on to committee and to perhaps make amendments there. I challenge them to make a bill here that, when it goes to committee, is even better. It is not that I want to criticize my colleagues, but let us not weaken this bill; let us strengthen it. Let us make it broader. Let us define those things that need definition. Let us not let perfection be our enemy and allow

### *Private Members' Business*

this bill to not get into the great laws of Canada. I think that is the challenge we have.

I spoke about another challenge in the House before. I believe that we actually have an opportunity here to do something. There are so many days when coming to the House of Commons can be very frustrating. Quite honestly, oftentimes, not much happens and not much gets done. There is a lot of talking and there are a lot of words, but there is not a lot of action. This bill is something that we could have as an actionable and effective tool to help reduce the violence against frontline health care workers. When we have an opportunity in the House of Commons to actually operationalize something, then we need to seize that opportunity with both hands and be able to move that forward so it becomes the law of this great country. My colleague from Cariboo—Prince George has captured a moment in time that is going to allow us, with the support of all of my colleagues, to do that here in the House of Commons. I hope that we are able to do that, because it is something that would be transformative.

• (1840)

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

Madam Speaker, I am very happy to hear the support for this bill in the House today. I want to congratulate the member for Cariboo—Prince George for bringing it forward. There is great opportunity in this bill to further ensure that those who go out, as he indicated in his speech, to protect Canadians and to quite often stand in the way of harm would be given further protections in terms of the consequences for those who seek to harass or intimidate them. I must admit that, when listening to the debate in the House today and when reading the contents of the bill, the first thing that popped into my mind was what was happening in the middle of the pandemic. People were trying to survive, were falling asleep or being deprived of sleep. They were trying to enter Kingston General Hospital, in my riding of Kingston and the Islands, and were being subjected to harassment and intimidation by protesters, believe it or not, on the street.

I totally respect and understand that the people who choose to put their names forward and are elected to the House could be subject to that from time to time, but I completely disagree that anybody who is simply following the policies and legislation enacted by the various different levels of government should ever have to be subject to that. They are just there to do their job, as the member for Cariboo—Prince George pointed out so well.

Perhaps I will have time to expand a little further in the second hour of debate on this. I am hopeful that the discussion at committee will be a productive one, that we can perhaps identify some weaknesses in the bill, strengthen it and look for other opportunities to make it even better.

• (1845)

[Translation]

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

*Government Orders**[English]*

Pursuant to order made on Thursday, April 27, I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole to consider Motion No. 24 under government business.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

*[Translation]***RED DRESS DAY**

(House in committee of the whole on Government Business No. 24, Mrs. Carol Hughes in the chair)

**The Deputy Chair:** Before we begin this evening's debate, I would like to remind hon. members of how proceedings will unfold.

Each member speaking will be allotted 10 minutes for debate, followed by 10 minutes for questions and comments.

*[English]*

Pursuant to order made on Thursday, April 27, the time provided for the debate may be extended beyond four hours, as needed, to include a minimum of 12 periods of 20 minutes each.

Members may divide their time with another member, and the Chair will receive no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent.

*[Translation]*

We will now begin tonight's take-note debate.

*[English]*

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.)** moved:

That this committee take note of Red Dress Day.

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Nunavut.

It was a monumental day today having all members of the House recognize the crisis of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls and two-spirit transwomen, a Canada-wide crisis, because it is a crisis. How many tragedies do we have to endure before appropriate action is taken? We are seeing constant, unrelenting violence against our women, girls, two-spirit people and transwomen.

Rebecca Contois, Morgan Harris, Mercedes Myran, Buffalo Woman, Linda Beardy, an eight-year-old girl in Samson Cree Nation: I send my love and sympathies to their families, but they deserve justice. Almost every week we learn about new and heart-breaking stories of sisters who have gone missing or who have been murdered.

We cannot let this be normalized. It is not normal because this is a result of vile human rights violations, something that the current Prime Minister likened to an ongoing genocide. I want to acknowledge our trans sisters and gender non-conforming relatives who face a heightened risk of violence, particularly with the rise of anti-trans hate and a woeful lack of funding and support.

Too often they are forgotten when we speak about this ongoing genocide. I want to say to our trans sisters that I see them, that they are sacred and they deserve to have space in every circle, even when they are forgotten.

Three years since it was announced, the federal government's violence prevention strategy to address the crisis of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls is mostly unspent, only 5%, just \$37.1 million out of a fund of \$724.1 million.

Not a single new shelter or transitional home has been built. How much longer do we have to wait for this life-saving money to get out the door? How many lives are going to be lost? How many women are going to disappear without action, without a safe place to go?

To make matters worse, we have learned that the Liberals are cutting \$150 million from women's shelters in September. Over 600 shelters will have less resources to help people fleeing gender-based violence, rates of violence that we know have increased since the pandemic. The pandemic might have shifted but gender-based violence is on the rise and this government is turning its back on people needing safe places to go. That \$150 million could be used to save lives. They need to be providing more resources, not less, because lives are at stake.

The solutions to the crisis are there. Listen to the national inquiry's 231 calls to justice, to families, survivors, advocates. Listen to the young people who are fighting on the front lines, who often do not even have space to speak at the table, young people who are being impacted by violence.

Families and survivors were clear today. They are calling for a Canada-wide emergency, to start work immediately on developing and implementing a national red dress alert system, to create a guaranteed livable basic income and immediately carry out prevention initiatives that honour the rights of indigenous women, girls, trans and gender non-conforming individuals, including but not limited to a right to health, a right to culture, the right to security and the right to justice.

This funding needs to be directed toward indigenous women, youth, children and indigenous-led and serving organizations.

• (1850)

It is time for the government to heed the call. This threat and this ongoing genocide deserve urgency. We are not disposable. People in the hundreds took to the streets in Winnipeg declaring that we are not garbage. We are not garbage. We deserve justice now.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Madam Chair, the member for Winnipeg Centre has been a tireless advocate for justice, for decency and for bringing our sisters home.



It is no secret that this prolonged and continuous genocide is persistent. It is persistent not only in the forms it has taken, such as violence against women or the results of poverty we are seeing, but it is also nefarious in the way the government operates. It is nefarious that it continues to limit the funding necessary to get to the organizations that need it most.

We have young people who are present with us today who need these kinds of resources. They need the support of their government to put that money into their pockets so they can do the work of community life saving.

Can the member speak about the importance of young people and their contributions to ending this crisis?

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Madam Chair, as I mentioned, young people are on the front lines of this issue. They need to be supported. They need to be supported in this life-saving work. They need mentorship. They need to work with youth as peers and help each other stay safe.

We have so many kids who age out of care onto the streets. Do members know who is stepping up? It is other young people with common experiences. We need to immediately invest in places for kids aging out of care. We need to support youth organizations that are doing this frontline work to lift people up.

That is what we need. The government talks a good game, but it needs to start investing in youth-led initiatives that save the lives of other young people.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Madam Chair, my colleague's motion today mentioned the red dress hotline, something every party supported earlier today when asked to do so.

I want to make a link to how the government responds to something so important. We had a call many years ago regarding a three-digit hotline for mental health support, which the government took its time implementing, despite a clear deadline to do so.

Does the member from the NDP anticipate the Liberals will deal with the red dress hotline the same way they dealt with the three-digit mental health hotline?

• (1855)

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Madam Chair, I think I just have to look at what has been going on so far. It has been almost four years since the national inquiry. In 2020, the government released \$724.1 million to address the crisis of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. The money is there. How much has it spent? Only 5%. No new shelters and no new transitional homes have been built.

This system is already in place. All we need is the political will to put it in place. We have Amber Alerts for child. We have weather alerts. This system is already in place.

I have spoken to a minister across the way about this initiative. We were planning to set up meetings, but we do not need to meet for the sake of meetings. We need to meet with a tangible goal to have immediate action. There has been enough talking. The government needs to act now as it is costing lives.

### *Government Orders*

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Madam Chair, thank you again for the speech and the advocacy that you are putting forward.

What is the role of allyship? It is a big question in my riding. We are neighbours to Kahnawake. We have started some partnership, but perhaps you could talk about allyship in advancing this work.

**The Deputy Chair:** I just want to remind the hon. member she is to address questions and comments through the Chair and not directly to the member.

The hon. member has 40 seconds to respond.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Madam Chair, whenever there is violence, it is everybody's problem. Nobody should ever ask permission to do something about violence. We are talking about indigenous people. We are talking about indigenous women and girls, transgender women and young people. Nobody needs to ask permission. It is about political will.

Not acting or finding reasons not to act at this point when the Prime Minister has recognized it as an ongoing genocide and our Parliament has recognized it as a Canada-wide crisis, is an excuse. It is an excuse. We need to stop with the excuses. The government needs to act now.

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, it breaks my heart to have to make this speech tonight.

Canada's genocidal laws and policies have remained strongly intact for over 150 years now, and because of that, we see the success of these policies by governments over those generations. The success of the policies in what we see in Canada today are so many, but I will name just the tip of the iceberg of some of them. They include the crisis of violence that we see against indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people, and the systemic discrimination that we continue to hear about, whether in law enforcement, the health care field, child apprehensions or the education system. Systemic discrimination strongly exists now.

There have been generations of a lack of targeted investment in indigenous people's well-being, including a lack of investments in housing, shelters and social programs that would improve our well-being. These include language revitalization, cultural revitalization and so many more social programs that we know could have better impacts on how we see indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people.

### *Government Orders*

On the other end of the spectrum of those successes is the overinvestment this government has had, in the billions, in industry, which is well known to contribute to missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people. The violence they experience from the resource sector is very well known.

Today, I had the tremendous honour to support the great work of my inspiring colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, who hosted a media event with power. That power was shared with families of survivors of missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people.

I especially would like to acknowledge that Nikki Komaksiutiksak was at the media event. She is now an inspiring leader as the executive director for Tunngasugit in Winnipeg. During the media event, she shared again what unfortunately she has had to share over and over again, the loss of her sister, the late Jessica Michaels, originally from my home community of Chesterfield Inlet. Her life was tragically lost to violence on August 26, 2001. Nikki also shared the experience with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which later published the "Calls for Justice". There were 231 calls for justice announced in 2019.

I want to remind Nikki and all the other Inuit women who feel that there is no voice for them in this House of Commons that there is. They should feel free to approach my office on these matters. I will fight for their needs, for justice and to ensure that we are having more indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people celebrated for the beautiful people we are.

We need to see more funding and investments for indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people as well as for victims and survivors. We need to be the ones that help to stop the genocide against indigenous women. The House needs to take part in ensuring that we are doing better to protect indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people, including ensuring that the red dress alert is implemented as soon as possible.

• (1900)

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Madam Chair, my friend from Nunavut is also a member on the committee for indigenous and northern affairs. Some of the things we studied recently in the committee were not only the supports that are needed to end what is currently going on, but also the fact that the government could be working in a way that would allow indigenous communities to empower themselves. One way was to work on levelling the playing field between non-indigenous police services and indigenous police services.

In some cases now, depending on the community, one would have to get an RCMP or non-indigenous police service to go into a community to make a certain arrest, when the powers could be given to an indigenous police service that is currently doing the job in that community and that knows the community, the people and the background. Would the member feel that might be one acceptable piece in this big puzzle?

**Ms. Lori Idlout: Uqagtittiji,** I do enjoy working with that member as well on the indigenous and northern affairs committee.

Police services are also a very complicated matter. Unfortunately, they are used as a way to ensure that genocide happens against indigenous peoples. RCMP in Nunavut, for example, have very limited services, and I think the member brings forward a great solution. It is a great idea to make sure that it is indigenous peoples who are handling difficult situations in their communities.

Right now, as an example, in Chesterfield Inlet, from nine to five, RCMP will be available, but when the violence is happening after five and in the middle of the night, a phone call is diverted, not in Chesterfield Inlet, but all the way to Iqaluit, which is in a different time zone, and Iqaluit services do not always offer services in Inuktitut. That guarantee of response is not the same as it is in other parts of Canada, so I would definitely agree on needing to make sure we are empowering indigenous communities to deal with those kinds of situations.

• (1905)

[Translation]

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Madam Chair, I thank the member for Nunavut for her speech. Nunavut is a lot like Nunavik in my riding.

This evening we are having a take-note debate on Red Dress Day out of respect for indigenous women and girls. They still live in fear. There are still indigenous women and girls going missing and being murdered. In northern Quebec, the suicide rate is high. There are no policies, despite the funding at the government's disposal. This raises serious questions. There is no nation-to-nation respect either.

What measures should the government take, besides commemorating missing and murdered indigenous women and girls?

That is my question for my colleague.

[English]

**Ms. Lori Idlout: Uqagtittiji,** I think there are so many different solutions, and the biggest one, which I agree with the member for Winnipeg Centre on, is that we have to lift indigenous peoples up. I think the red dress alert would be a major solution because I know that indigenous women are targets, and the reason they might be targets is that there is not enough of a quick response when it is discovered that there is an indigenous woman, girl or two-spirit person who disappears or is missing. When those responses can be reported more quickly, more people will realize that indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people cannot be targets anymore.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I am wondering about this. Earlier in the policing piece, there was a lot of talk about introducing social workers to address difficult situations. I would like to hear the member's thoughts on the kind of training needed and who those community social workers should be.

**Ms. Lori Idlout:** *Uqaqtittiji*, hopefully, it would be Inuit, first nations and Métis who would be helping in the responses. Unfortunately, the social work services are also a very patriarchal system. They use the best interest of the child to apprehend children, so I cannot trust easily the social work system.

Hopefully, it would be Inuit elders, Inuit people and indigenous peoples, who we know can help during these situations. Indigenous peoples have very collective communities, and they know who the helpers in their communities are. Those are the systems where the federal government needs to do better in tapping into as resources.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Madam Chair, it is with great humility that I rise to speak this evening on a very difficult subject that is a true tragedy, that is, the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

It is a difficult but necessary conversation, and one that cuts across party lines. We need to name things as they are in order to improve the lives of indigenous women and girls. I am pleased to be able to take part in this conversation with my fellow parliamentarians.

First, let us be honest. Indigenous women and girls often face terrible situations. The statistics are chilling, but it is important to talk about them. While indigenous women and girls represent only 4% of women in Canada, the homicide rate for young indigenous women in Canada was four times that percentage between 1980 and 2012.

I am a member of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, and we are currently studying the very sensitive issue of the human trafficking of women. We are hearing from a number of witnesses who are telling us their stories, and it is sometimes, or too often, very difficult to hear. Just yesterday, Fay Blaney, lead matriarch of the Aboriginal Women's Action Network, appeared before the committee. One of the things she told us is that more than 50% of the victims of human trafficking are indigenous women and girls. I would remind the House that they represent 4% of women in Canada.

Here is another troubling fact: On average, indigenous girls first become victims of exploitation at just 12 years old. This is an average, which means that some of them are younger than 12. It can be difficult to determine the exact number of victims of human trafficking and sex trafficking, and to determine the exact number of missing or murdered indigenous women and girls. For example, prior to 2014, the number of missing or murdered indigenous women and girls was estimated to be approximately 600. However, in 2014, we learned that more than double that number had gone missing or been murdered in the previous 30 years.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission report was tabled in 2015, and its call to action 41 led to the establishment of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, also in 2015. A final report was tabled in 2019, and it contained no fewer than 231 recommendations or calls for justice. There were 21 calls for justice that were primarily aimed at Quebec.

### *Government Orders*

The Government of Quebec committed to implementing these calls for justice in collaboration with indigenous representatives and organizations. In the budget following the tabling of the reports, it also announced \$200 million over five years in order to promote the academic success of indigenous youth, make public service workers aware of indigenous realities, support the well-being of indigenous women and girls, and improve access to culturally adapted services that meet the needs expressed by first nations and Inuit.

As we know, at the federal level, the government introduced a national action plan in June 2021 to advance reconciliation with the first nations, Inuit and Métis.

It said that substantial, immediate and transformational change was required by all Canadians to address the root causes of violence against indigenous women and girls. Unfortunately, there is still a lot of work to be done, as evidenced by the fact that we are here in the House this evening to discuss this subject.

As I mentioned earlier, I am part of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, which has conducted several studies over the past two years. We are currently studying the situation of women in sport and, over the past two years, we have conducted other studies on topics such as intimate partner violence and family violence, the mental health of young women, and human trafficking. We also did a study on the bill about judges, which we heard an update on today in a member's statement by one of our colleagues. One of the studies we did in 2022 stemmed directly from the calls for justice set out in the 2019 final report.

● (1910)

Calls for justice 13.1 to 13.5 target the resource extraction and development industries. According to the national inquiry, resource extraction projects can “exacerbate the problem of violence against Indigenous women and girls”. Canada has many natural resources, and this industry sustains hundreds of communities and millions of people. This is not about demonizing an entire sector of the economy. It is simply about recognizing that we need to be vigilant to protect indigenous women and girls.

The committee heard from 47 witnesses and made a certain number of recommendations. It called on the government to ensure indigenous women's participation in all aspects of resource development projects, from consultations to decision-making. Another recommendation encouraged the government, in consultation with the provinces, territories and municipalities, to require resource developers to implement mandatory training for all employees on sexual violence and anti-racism.

### *Government Orders*

In that regard, I want to point out that the issue of violence against women in the specific context where they find themselves in an environment where many men from different areas of Canada will be working, and where they are in a vulnerable position, does not just concern one group of people. It concerns society as a whole. I think that all members will agree with me on that. City representatives, first responders and, most importantly, the people from the company or business should sit down together to discuss this issue, even above and beyond the training that should be given to the workers who come to the site. I would remind members that this is a key sector because it sustains many Canadian families.

I am very proud to say that the work being done at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women is collaborative. This committee is an example—a very rare one, unfortunately—of goodwill between the different parties. I would like to commend my colleagues, who are doing an extraordinary job. That, of course, includes the member for Winnipeg Centre. We are all committed to advancing women's rights. This study, along with all the others, is a good example. As I mentioned earlier, there is much more to be done, but the discussion is under way, or continuing. Meaningful actions are being taken, and the creation of Red Dress Day is one such measure.

May 5 is a day on which we honour the memory of these girls and women, our sisters. It reminds us of the magnitude of their loss. Red Dress Day is an initiative started by Métis artist Jaime Black, whose REDress Project involves hanging red dresses in public places across Canada. She was inspired by a group of Colombian women who wore red dresses in memory of their lost sisters. These dresses evoke a presence, but also an absence. They provide an unsettling reminder, but also a ray of hope, the hope that, one day, violence against indigenous women and girls will be nothing but a bad memory.

Things need to change. The only way to eradicate this scourge is by talking, reflecting collectively and naming things as they are, as we are doing here tonight, even if it makes us uncomfortable, even if it hurts us.

• (1915)

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her speech. She shared some recommendations for helping vulnerable people in difficult situations. There have been tragedies, many of them in Quebec, but also across Canada, involving indigenous women.

Does my colleague agree that systemic racism exists in Canada?

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** Madam Chair, there are factors that make some communities more vulnerable, more at risk. That is the case for indigenous women and girls. Various studies have shown this to be true. Today I became aware of various documents indicating, based on evidence, that indigenous women and girls are vulnerable and at risk. We need to take care of them. It is important to recognize that. We also have to tell it like it is and take care of these women and girls.

Today, under the leadership of our colleague from Winnipeg Centre, the House passed a very important, very interesting motion. She came up with an appropriate name for a tool similar to an Am-

ber Alert, an alert that we could create here in Canada. It is indeed a very promising and interesting idea. We were very pleased to support it.

• (1920)

[*English*]

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Madam Chair, I just want to start out by saying how much I appreciate working with my hon. colleague on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. We may be from different parties, but at the end of the day we all have a responsibility to end gender-based violence no matter who it is.

In the case of indigenous women, girls, two-spirit and trans women, we know we are disproportionately represented. My colleague spoke about resource extraction. In our committee we spoke about how companies often come into communities and there is no accountability in place for them to ensure there is any safety put in place for communities, including for women and girls in the communities or in the nations they are reaping wealth out of. I am wondering if she can comment on that.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** Madam Chair, here in my hands I have all the recommendations that were developed as a result of this important study that we conducted on resources.

Obviously, the whole community needs to step up in areas where natural resources are being extracted and developed. The community must include the company, the municipal council, community organizations, first responders, workers and, of course, representatives from indigenous communities. That allows for a broader view of the entire issue and ensures that promising solutions are being developed in order to enable us to turn things around once and for all.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Madam Chair, I want to go back to some of the things my colleague mentioned in her words, and specifically about the study on human trafficking and the sheer disproportionate number of indigenous women and girls who are caught up in this. I am wondering what recommendations she would like to maybe go into more detail about at this time, in addition to what we are talking about today with Red Dress Day and perhaps even the motion we passed today regarding an alert system.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** Madam Chair, they are like building blocks that can be stacked up, one on top of the other. There are so many solutions that could be implemented. My colleagues have gone over them: shelters, halfway houses, or safe houses for these women and girls who wind up on the street, with nothing, at the mercy of bad people who can sense their vulnerability.

I want to say that I am distraught at the increase in violence that we are currently seeing in Montreal and elsewhere. Yesterday, a colleague delivered a member's statement about rising violence in other provinces. There has been a 32% increase in violent crime and a 92% increase in gang-related crime. That is the setting that vulnerable women and girls like indigenous women find themselves in. That is something that needs to change. Criminals should be in jail, not on the streets.

[English]

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Madam Chair, in good Conservative fashion we began this conversation talking about the risks to indigenous women and have now gone to the discussion of resources. However, I digress.

I would like to ask the member a question with respect to her speech. She mentioned the right to consultation. Would she agree that the right to free, prior and informed consent includes the right to say no?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** Madam Chair, obviously, when a woman says “no”, she is not saying “yes” or “maybe”. When a woman says “no”, it means “no”.

The study I mentioned is an important study. It was conducted by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. During that study, we took a closer look at what was happening in certain workplaces. Some men who come from all over and go to work in resource extraction unfortunately take advantage of vulnerable indigenous women and girls. Unfortunately, it is often men who commit these acts. That is the current reality.

I think it was only right and appropriate to mention the huge amount of work we did. Moreover, we conducted this study in solidarity as women and with the support of our male colleagues.

The member for Winnipeg Centre is always at the heart of these discussions. She has been very involved and presented her vision to our committee.

• (1925)

[English]

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Madam Chair, I love working with my colleague on the status of women committee. She is bright, insightful, wise and compassionate. I know when we first started our work on missing and murdered indigenous women that she was horrified to learn of a lot of the statistics. I would like her to share her journey of learning with respect to this, because I think it ties in really well with this conversation we are sharing with the people watching at home and brings this to light, because some people still do not know that this is a real statistic.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** Madam Chair, I feel the same way about my colleague, a very vibrant woman who has very good judgment.

I have had the opportunity to hold positions where I had decision-making powers as I was formerly a Quebec MNA and minister. These positions made it possible for me to make positive contributions, I believe. Let us take, for example, labour standards, which

are not inconsequential since the success of women and girls requires that they have economic autonomy. I also believe that a woman's economic maturity and independence from men depend on it.

In the studies we carried out, that was a key point. The most important thing I learned is that women's economic security provides them with access to housing and care and lets them meet their basic needs. I believe that is where we need to focus most of our efforts.

**Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ):** Madam Chair, it is with great solidarity with my female colleagues that I rise to speak this evening. Of course I am thinking of my colleague from Winnipeg Centre, my colleague from Nunavut and also my colleague from Edmonton Griesbach.

Today I was thinking about this speaking opportunity, and there are some topics that truly speak to us as human beings. Certainly we are elected members first and foremost. I represent a riding. However, I will never stop thinking about the tragic events all around, most recently in Winnipeg.

Empathy is the foundation of every human being. Even if it is impossible to truly get there, I try to put myself in someone else's shoes, in those of the family and that of my colleagues who are elected. It hurts every time.

Yes, it is happening in Winnipeg, but it can happen anywhere. As a classic playwright once said, “I consider nothing human alien to me”. This affects us all. I am the member of Parliament for Manicouagan, a riding that is not Nunavut or Winnipeg, but it is large. There is natural resource extraction. There are women who are stuck in situations of poverty, isolation and lack of resources. Basically, these are very difficult situations, so we also have our own missing women, women who left their homes one day and were never seen again. Some of them are still missing.

I would like to begin by expressing my full solidarity, as a woman, as an elected member and as the Bloc Québécois indigenous affairs critic. This is not unrelated to my own past experience, since I worked as a coordinator for the Regroupement des femmes de la Côte-Nord, which is also in my riding. I have worked in shelters for abused women where I have seen the reality on the ground, although I have never witnessed this violence first-hand.

I often speak about my children. One does not necessarily need to have children to be compassionate. However, when we make decisions and take positions as elected officials, the fact that we are parents makes us question things and consider issues with our children in mind.

### *Government Orders*

I have two sons and a daughter. I remember that I talked about my daughter in the House last year. When my daughter was very young, I told myself that her life would be harder because of violence against women. My daughter is not indigenous. In theory, it is less likely that she will experience this violence, but she does still run that risk.

I wonder if, since giving that speech last year, things have really changed for indigenous women, who are four times more likely than non-indigenous women to be impacted by such violence. I would like to say that things have changed, but I have to say that I do not see it in general and given everything that has been accomplished.

Actually, my colleague from Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis was just talking about what gets accomplished in committee. It is true that important work gets done in the House. This afternoon, a motion was moved that proves it, but at the same time, Parliament is a sort of bubble. There are positions and wishes that are expressed, but it all remains theoretical once again. These are not meaningful actions.

I have been wondering how we can measure what we are doing right now, what has been done since the report was tabled and even before that. We can do something before the report is tabled. We know that something is happening. We know that many women are killed or disappear when they should not have been killed or disappeared. What do we do? What tools do we have to find out?

It is quite broad. I am not saying we can find out exactly, but it feels like we need some tools. There is talk of the 231 recommendations. I will name two huge pieces. This involves both colonization and the entire issue of the patriarchy, as someone else has already noted.

● (1930)

Those are daunting issues. They are huge. How are we able to say that what we are doing as elected officials is really having an impact?

We can see that funding was invested in various programs, for example, and more investments were made this year. We need to look at how those investments will really address the root of the problem. Will it make a difference? Is it really a practical solution? I do not think we are doing that. Perhaps we need to think about that.

I was talking about the ability to measure. I do not like to talk about units of measurement for this type of subject, but I think that, as human beings, we always have to be able to measure what we are trying to do to see whether improvements have been made or whether we are failing to meet our objective. That is huge, but we need to have this overall view to figure out where we can provide more assistance.

I was pleased to see that the motion by my colleague from Winnipeg Centre mentioned an alert. For me, that is a concrete example where we can see a real, measurable impact on the ground. I am grateful for that. That is not exactly the word I am looking for, but I do appreciate it. At the same time, it is interesting that that comes from the indigenous community itself.

I am the Bloc Québécois critic for this file, however I am not indigenous. Earlier my colleague from Edmonton Griesbach talked about consultations. Yes, we must always consult the people involved. We must always ask what first nations and indigenous people would like and what can be done. Here we have some examples. I say this quite humbly because I am not an indigenous person. I found it interesting that my colleague from Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis used the word “humility”, a word I often use. Consultation is needed. Once again, it must not end with the tabling of a report. We must continue to have relationships with all the first nations, organizations and women's organizations to go even further.

I talked about money. I talked about one-size-fits-all measures, but there also needs to be flexibility, perhaps through a number of smaller measures. It would be impossible to come up with one big measure that will solve everything, so we need to take baby steps, although perhaps we can pick up the pace, with measures like the alert.

As my colleague from Nunavut stated earlier, there are no roads in certain regions. There may not necessarily be a police force. Women are on their own. Their families are nearby. The individual who may be violent is part of their immediate circle. These are very complex situations requiring many measures that are truly adapted to and appropriate for each situation.

In conclusion, I will come back to what I said at the beginning. I hope that, in the House, we show what we are doing in theory, but that we can see the concrete applications of the decisions we make. We need to take action and not just by investing money. We really need to see how this can appropriately respond to the calls to action. We are talking about urgent situations. Nothing can be more urgent than people's safety, integrity and lives. For these women and communities, it is their lives that are at stake. Their lives are in danger. For me, there is nothing more urgent than saving human lives.

Clearly, this cannot wait.

● (1935)

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, in her speech, my hon. colleague mentioned some very important aspects of this problem, including decolonization and the patriarchy. This demonstrates that there are some cultural concepts that are deeply anchored in this problem.

I would like to know if she agrees with me that more indigenous women are affected by this problem even though they represent 4% of the population.

Does systemic racism exist in our society?

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, I will quite simply say yes. The Indian Act is the epitome of systemic racism. We are talking about segregation. We are talking about denying human rights. This exists, of course, and we need to eliminate it. The first nations, indigenous peoples, the Inuit and the Métis peoples will show us how to do this.

[English]

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Mr. Chair, it is nice to see solidarity in the House on such a serious issue.

One of the questions I would ask is whether there are any personal stories from the hon. member's riding. I have some, as many do, but as to her riding, can she share how this issue affects her constituents?

• (1940)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for the question. Certainly, we all have stories to tell. I cannot say that everyone I have spent time with has wanted to tell these stories. Sometimes it is so painful. We need to respect each person's choice. They might not be able to tell their stories.

I have several, but I have one in particular I heard from a woman. In 2015, I organized a march for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and a woman came up to me to talk about her sister. She told me that her sister left for the city, let us say Quebec City, roughly 500 kilometres away, and she never came back. Marching is a symbolic action to call for change, but for this woman, just participating in the march helped her to talk about her sister. We did not talk about it as much as we do today. There are also a lot of taboos. She realized that she was not the only one to have gone through this, that there were other cases.

Where I am from, it did not happen in an industrial area. It actually happened in an indigenous community of 5,000, where someone disappeared one day. That was one case, but there are so many more across Quebec and Canada, each under different circumstances. There are places in my riding, 1,000 km away, where children were taken away at the age of one or two and never returned to their communities. There are little girls who have gone away, never to be seen again. People are still mourning these children who never came back to their communities. There are so many stories, so many permutations, but they all boil down to the need for solidarity and concrete action to ensure this never happens again and to enable these people to grieve their loss, if not heal.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I want to thank my colleague for her inspired and heartfelt speech. I want to acknowledge the importance of the 11 first nations in Quebec. They have a long history and strong roots in many areas, particularly in the member's region, but also in Montreal, where they face many difficulties and challenges.

Several years ago, as a result of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, recommendations were made and money was allocated in the budget. My colleague from Winnipeg Centre pointed out earlier that after all these years, the federal government has spent only 5% of this money, despite the fact that there are urgent and pressing needs, such as shelters or transition houses.

How does my colleague interpret the fact that the Liberal government has been dragging its feet for years on such a critical issue?

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, obviously, it is unacceptable when the amounts allocated to resolve these situations are not

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spent. This is not the only area where we see that happening. It also happened with the indigenous languages commissioner. Money was available, but it was not used.

When I spoke about mechanisms to measure and track progress, that is one example. I know that there are mechanisms here in the House, but we never ask enough questions and we will never be able to follow up enough to eliminate the situations that my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie was talking about.

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Mr. Chair, the matter of missing and murdered women and girls also affects Nunavik. As I mentioned earlier, the suicide and disappearance rates there are high in Nunavik. Very little progress has been made over the past year, and nothing has been done to respond to the report's recommendations.

I would like my colleague to give us some ideas so that the government can finally take action to respond to the recommendations and help indigenous communities and indigenous women and girls.

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, I feel like saying that we have already put all the ideas out there.

We have the recommendations that resulted from the consultations. We listened to all the witnesses who told their stories and gave ideas to the commission. We already have all that information.

Of course, we may run into difficulties, but I think that this is more a matter of will than a matter of means.

• (1945)

[English]

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, one of the criticisms the NDP is talking about is the lack of funding for housing. It is \$4 billion over seven years when we know there is a huge housing crisis. My hon. colleague from Nunavut has spoken many times about how women are forced to live in violence because they have nowhere else to go.

I am wondering if my colleague would agree that more needs to be invested in housing and that the government has really failed in the federal budget on urban and rural indigenous housing initiatives.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, when people are experiencing violence, not having a home and not being able to leave keeps them in that cycle of violence. Obviously there has to be more funding and solutions to provide housing for women.

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We are talking about women, but I believe my colleague from Winnipeg Centre would agree that this affects the whole community. Children are also affected when they are in crowded living conditions, and every aspect of life is affected. Housing really is a key issue.

The Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs studied this issue and discussed it with the minister. We realized he means well, but at the same time, there was an admission during the committee that the shortfall would never be eliminated. There is already a shortage, and there will be no way to meet growing demand. These populations are very young, and they need safe places to live.

There is not enough money and not enough housing being built. We need concrete measures.

[English]

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Oakville North—Burlington.

I want to acknowledge, as many have, that we are meeting here today on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

May 5, Friday, is Red Dress Day, the national day of awareness to honour and remember the survivors of the ongoing national crisis of violence against indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people. The red dresses displayed or worn each year on Red Dress Day are a visual reminder of the first nations, Inuit and Métis women and girls, and two-spirit and gender-diverse people who make up a vastly disproportionate number of victims of violence in Canada. This day also speaks to the collective responsibility we share as governments and citizens to work together to address the root causes of the crisis, to protect indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people, and to ensure they are safe across Canada.

It is timely that we are currently waiting for the results of a study that will provide guidance on the feasibility of searching the Prairie Green Landfill for the remains of women. I thank families, community leadership and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs for overseeing this work, as well as the advocacy of the member for Winnipeg Centre. The discovery of the remains found at the Brady Road landfill recently in Winnipeg and the recent deaths of other indigenous women have made it terribly clear that we must continue to take action.

[Translation]

At the federal level, our work is guided by the federal pathway to address missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people, which is the government's contribution to the national action plan and was released on June 3, 2021. The pathway is anchored in principles directly related to the principles for change outlined in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which begin with respect for the human rights of indigenous women and girls.

The principles also include acknowledging the leadership of women and 2SLGBTQI+ people and indigenous survivors in developing and implementing local self-determined, indigenous-led solutions and services.

For example, the 2021 budget included \$2.2 billion for initiatives related to missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and LGBTQ individuals. This includes funding for the support for the wellbeing of families of survivors of missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people contribution program, the supporting indigenous women's and 2SLGBTQI+ organizations program, and the cultural spaces in indigenous communities program, which has enabled projects such as the construction of several safe and secure spaces across the country. These spaces will serve as safe spaces for community members to pass on their traditional knowledge and culture through various programs, including language revitalization programs. Elders and speakers will be able to do so in this safe space.

I was in Val-d'Or on Monday to take part in the announcement of the much-needed expansion of the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre. This \$60-million expansion will provide a safe space and accommodations for the 9,000 people who travel to Val-d'Or each year for medical services and who do not want to stay in a motel for safety reasons, including the many Cree and Algonquin people living in Val-d'Or. This initiative will save lives.

• (1950)

[English]

With budget 2023, our government is reinforcing and expanding our commitment to MMIWG. It proposes an additional \$125 million over six years, followed by \$20 million ongoing, to put toward measures for implementing the national action plan. This includes, among other things, \$1.6 million over the next two years to support the creation of an indigenous and human rights ombudsperson. In January, I announced the appointment of Jennifer Moore Rattray as the minister's special representative; she will provide recommendations on call to justice 1.7 through engagement with families, survivors, partners and organizations.

In budget 2023, we also propose \$2.6 million over three years starting in 2023-24 to support the National Family and Survivors Circle, which has been indispensable for this conversation. At the federal-provincial-territorial-indigenous table on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, we will prioritize the launch of a red dress alert to notify the public when an indigenous woman or two-spirit person goes missing.

Finally, this Friday, on Red Dress Day, our government will remain unwavering in its commitment to continuing its engagement and collaboration with families and survivors, indigenous partners, and provincial and territorial governments to address this violence and end the crisis.



*Government Orders*

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, my hon. colleague spoke about all this money. I am going to mention some of that money. Of \$724.1 million that was issued in the 2020 budget, only 5% has been spent. Meanwhile, women are being murdered and going missing. We are dying on the streets, and they are throwing us in landfills. Although I was very pleased that there was support given for searching, the current government has failed to invest in keeping us alive, in real time.

The minister talks about all this money: \$1.6 million over six years. He knows very well that this funding is completely inadequate. I will tell members how I know that; it is because we continue to go missing and be murdered.

The government, in real time, is cutting \$150 million for women's shelters in September because it was emergency support given during the pandemic. I will tell members something. Gender-based violence was a crisis before the pandemic, and it has increased since the pandemic. The government should not be cutting back resources from shelters; it needs to be increasing these resources. We have a right to be safe, and we have a right to justice.

The time for waiting for the government to figure it out is over. When is the minister going to get that money out the door? How is he going to ensure that women who are survivors of violence, family members of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, trans women and nonconforming women who are impacted by this violence are actually going to be able to lead these discussions?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Mr. Chair, again, as easy as it is to stand here in this place and talk about historic sums that have been invested, it is equally easy to stand up and dismiss them.

I think the member is accurate on a very important point. No one in the House should be talking about success until every woman and child and 2SLGBTQ person who is indigenous is safe in this country.

This tragedy is indeed ongoing. I want to address one point, which is the shelters. They need to get out faster, and I will absolutely concede that. Half of the money that she spoke about is dedicated to the continuing operation of these shelters, and the other half dedicated to creating shelters across the country outside of the "reserves" reality. This is indispensable in her riding, and she knows it. It exists in my riding in downtown Montreal. That need is crying to us, and we cannot get it out fast enough.

We are looking forward to some announcements in the very near future to make sure that people have those shelters available to them. It is never right to ask for patience, because people are going missing every day, but I do expect a number of those announcements to be coming out in the very short term.

• (1955)

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I am fortunate enough to represent two first nations in my riding, Saugeen First Nation and Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation. I reached out to them to ask them if they had any questions for the government.

They posed two questions that they would like some clarity on. One is really more of a comment. The first one is to get an update

on where the government is on all the recommendations that were made in the murdered and missing women and girls report. They would just like an update on whether the government is fully committed to actioning on all of them.

Second, the chief shared with me that they had been in great consultation, just even today, I believe, with the local police detachment. Obviously, when we are dealing with this very tragic and important issue, that relationship needs to exist between first nations and their local law enforcement to help find these missing women and girls before they end up in a tragic situation. The chief highlighted to me that more education is needed.

Is the government committed to providing the necessary resources needed to help educate law enforcement and Canadians in general about this very important subject?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Mr. Chair, clearly, there is a need for education. We know this from the clear record of failure of enforcement bodies across this country to serve indigenous peoples and protect them, for stronger reasons, that is still going on in this country.

Absolutely, there is a need to continue that education, cultural sensitivity training and engagement with the community. There is a need to understand that reality and put in the same efforts that they put in with everyone else when they are looking for someone who goes missing. It is the most basic of requirements that we would ask for. We still see those forces failing. There are requirements for the guidance from the federal government, as well as our provincial counterparts.

As for the calls to justice in the final report on MMIWG, what we have heard very clearly is that we need some form of accountability. That is why I moved, in January, to appoint Jennifer Moore Rattray to give us recommendations on an ombudsperson. Therefore, we can have a third party who is able to look at what the government is doing, what it is not doing and what it can do faster to make sure that we are properly responding to the calls to justice.

I can stand here all day and talk to people, but, really, that level of trust is often missing toward people like me and the government. We need a third party to actually help us move along the way so that we can continue to implement those calls to justice, which are systemic in nature and require a thoughtful process as to how they actually get put into place.

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, Friday is Red Dress Day, a devastating and unacceptable reality in Canada also known as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-Spirit People. Everyone has the right to safety and to live free from violence. All families deserve to know that if a loved one goes missing, every effort will be made to find them.

*Government Orders*

I want to thank the member for Winnipeg Centre, and I commit to working closely with her on finding justice for indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people, particularly around creating a red dress alert.

The release of the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls prompted a period of deep reflection, and urgent action is required. In June 2021, the government released its pathway, which is aligned with the broader national action plan.

We must acknowledge colonialism's impact on the disproportionate representation of indigenous peoples in the criminal justice system. Indigenous women continue to be the fastest-growing prison population in Canada, and almost half of all federally sentenced women are indigenous. Most of the women whom I have visited in several women's prisons are there because of poverty, addiction, abuse, mental illness and intergenerational trauma.

Recently, Correctional Services appointed a deputy commissioner for indigenous corrections. This was a direct response to call to justice 5.23. Incarceration has a devastating impact on women and their children. If a woman is incarcerated, her child has a 25% chance of being convicted in adulthood. This is unacceptable. Corrections has also undertaken an expansion of the mother-child program at institutions for women offenders.

We must ensure safe spaces for indigenous women. Recently, I visited Saskatoon and helped announce an 18-bed transitional housing project in partnership with the Saskatoon Tribal Council and all levels of government. At the Thunder Woman Healing Lodge Society in Toronto, I have worked with Patti Pettigrew, who envisions a facility to support indigenous women. However, we need more of these initiatives.

Indigenous peoples have long been mistreated by law enforcement, going back to the time of residential schools, when the RCMP were used to forcibly remove children from their families. We know that we need to do more for reform. Our government introduced Bill C-20, which would enact a new stand-alone statute to provide an external review regime of oversight called the public complaints and review commission for both the RCMP and CBSA.

The RCMP is making progress on its first nations, Inuit and Métis recruitment strategy. This strategy is led through an indigenous lens, and it examines how systemic barriers can be further mitigated to ensure diverse and inclusive recruitment. Community-led and culturally sensitive approaches to community safety must be at the forefront. The government is co-developing first nations policing legislation with the Assembly of First Nations and first nations partners to recognize first nations policing as an essential service.

A red dress alert would notify the public when an indigenous woman, girl or two-spirit person went missing. We must put women, girls and two-spirit people, along with survivors, at the centre of the development. The member for Winnipeg Centre and I recently met with the Minister of Emergency Preparedness to determine next steps.

In budget 2023, our government announced investments of \$2.5 million over the next five years to establish a federal-provincial-ter-

ritorial-indigenous table, providing a forum to discuss and act on the red dress alert and other initiatives. The budget also announced a \$2.6-million investment over three years to support the National Family and Survivors Circle in keeping families and survivors at the centre of the implementation of the national action plan and federal pathway.

When I was in British Columbia recently, I spoke with grassroots female advocates from You Empowered Strong and others in the Okanagan. They talked about their efforts in their communities to engage the public's assistance in their search for loved ones.

The government must support those efforts, and a red dress alert would send a strong signal to Canadians and to indigenous peoples that we value the lives of indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people. I not only give my personal commitment, but I know that the government is also committed to working with indigenous partners, communities, and provinces and territories while centring survivors and their families for the success of a red dress initiative.

We cannot stand by while first nations, Inuit and Métis women, girls and two-spirit people go missing. If they do, every effort must be made to find them. Their lives matter, and we must urgently act for change.

● (2000)

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I would agree with my hon. colleague that we do need justice reform. I appreciated her mention of the incarceration rate of indigenous women in prisons and its impact on family. I did have the privilege to meet with her and the minister the other day about a red dress alert. Very central to our conversation was the need to centre advocates, women, family members and survivors of violence in the discussion to lead the way, in terms of implementing a red dress alert.

However, I cannot stress enough that we do not have time to talk. We need the political will to get this red dress alert in place as soon as possible. Just in the past couple of days, we have seen the loss of an eight-year-old girl and another young woman from Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation. I send my condolences to the Roulette family.

We are not disposable in this country, and should we go missing, we must be found urgently. We know the systems are in place. We know the system to do this is the same system that would be used for amber alerts and for weather alerts.

I want to ask my hon. colleague how committed her government is to getting this red dress alert put in place quickly. We know that everything is in place. It just takes political will, so I would like to give that question to my colleague.

● (2005)

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Mr. Chair, I just want to thank the hon. member. I do not know how she is standing here tonight as an indigenous woman listening to the debate, answering questions and not getting emotional like I am.

We have talked many times about the fact that I am a white woman and that if I went missing, people would look for me and my family would be listened to. In the case of the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre, she does not live with that privilege, and that is a deep flaw in our country.

I know the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and I have agreed to go to Winnipeg, and the member has agreed to organize a meeting with advocates, survivors and families so that we can ensure they are at the centre of this. We also know that implementing the red dress alert requires the provinces and territories to be part of it, because they are the ones that actually implement the alerts, but she is absolutely right that it takes political will, and with her advocacy and with support from those in the government, I am confident we can get this done and we must get this done.

I just want to thank the member for being such a strong, fierce and incredible woman.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I believe that in her heart, the member really wants to move the issues forward.

Most recently, with the Coalition on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls in B.C., in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, our community has been talking about this issue. In fact, it was in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside where the first memorial march was led back in the day, so many years ago, when I was a community legal advocate. Fewer than 20 people showed up for that march, and now we see it across the country.

That being said, here are some of the issues people raised at that meeting. They are calling for the red dress alert to be implemented, of course, but beyond that they also want to see a national summit led and organized by indigenous women, and they want to see the continued conversation about a missing persons database. These are some of the things that need to be done, and they need to be done now. In addition, the coalition has been calling for government support to fund community people who are out there looking for missing loved ones. So often, they are just doing that work all on their own without any support anywhere.

My question for the member is this: Will the government undertake to ensure that the ideas and strategies coming from indigenous organizations, like the Coalition on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls in B.C., and family members are supported? Will it actually fund those initiatives and implement them?

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Mr. Chair, the women I met with in the Okanagan talked about their efforts of going out themselves to find missing loved ones without the support of police or the government, which is absolutely incredible. I will commit to the hon.

### *Government Orders*

member that I will ensure those recommendations are shared with the minister responsible. I will continue to work with members on all sides of the House to ensure that there is urgent action taken on this issue.

**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. Chair, I want to first say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Edmonton Griesbach.

This is the second consecutive year in which we have dedicated a take-note debate to the ongoing national crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people. The timing of this debate coincides with the annual national day of awareness, which is this Friday, May 5, commonly known as Red Dress Day.

I would like to share with this House the story of how a red dress became such a potent and meaningful symbol. The individual I want to highlight is an artist with deep roots in my hometown of Winnipeg who shares a proud Métis heritage, Jaime Black. Jaime learned about the tragedy of the missing and murdered from Jo-Ann Episkew, a Métis writer from Manitoba. She was also inspired in part by the image of a red dress on the cover of *The Book of Jessica* by Linda Griffiths and Maria Campbell. From this knowledge and inspiration, Jaime proposed an idea to the University of Winnipeg's Institute for Women's and Gender Studies, an installation of red dresses. Through her work, Jaime was also told by an indigenous friend that red is the only colour spirits can see.

● (2010)

[*Translation*]

On Red Dress Day, thousands of families, indigenous and non-indigenous, will feel closer to the memory and spirit of someone they have lost to this violence. This is more than just a day to hang up a red dress to remind us of those who have been murdered or are still missing. It is a day that calls for action to address the appalling circumstances that have allowed, and continue to allow, so many indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people to be murdered or disappear.

[*English*]

The first exhibition of Jaime Black's installation was at the University of Manitoba in 2011. Later that year, it was installed in the Manitoba legislature. In 2014, it became part of the permanent installation at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

### *Government Orders*

Much has changed since 2011, when a young Winnipeg artist conceived the idea of displaying a red dress to draw public attention to the plight of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, a cause that has expanded to include 2SLGBTQI+ people. We know the work is very far from being done. Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people are still very much in danger. Each and every year, there are more names added to the list of the murdered and missing. I am acutely aware of this. In my hometown of Winnipeg, where I come from, the remains of murdered indigenous women have been found in landfills a shocking number of times. It has to stop.

[Translation]

I am thinking of the ongoing trauma, the scars that still linger today. Every story, every disappearance, every violent end re-traumatizes our community, our friends, our neighbours. This has to stop. As a Manitoban, Métis, father and grandfather of indigenous women and girls, I am deeply concerned. It is clear that we have a lot more work to do.

[English]

As members of the House, all of us are privileged to be able to rise today and add our voices to the chorus demanding that action be taken.

I acknowledge those who have worked tirelessly to advance awareness of this ongoing Canadian tragedy, including one Winnipeg artist who turned a red dress into a widely recognized symbol of the urgent need to make the world safer for indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people.

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, the minister plays an important role as the Minister of Northern Affairs in determining whether resource extraction will be approved in Nunavut, impacting many Inuit communities.

I want to ask the minister if he has read the report by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women from its study of violence against indigenous women and girls in the context of resource development and what his response is to make sure indigenous women are being protected, especially knowing that the resource sector is known to have more frequent cases in making indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people in the category of being lost through MMIWG.

• (2015)

**Hon. Dan Vandal:** Mr. Chair, I want to thank the member for her hard work, dedication and advocacy toward this very important cause throughout her life.

We know resource development is an important part of Canadian history and Canadian society, and it will be an important part of the future of Canada, likely even more so in the north. It is absolutely imperative that the rights of all indigenous people and the rights of indigenous women and girls be respected and not be compromised through any of that activity.

I have confidence that, working together with the member for Nunavut, the territorial governments, the provincial governments and industry, we can do better. That is something that is a mandate

for all of us. We need to work with absolutely everybody in our society to make sure we do better.

[Translation]

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague, the Minister of Northern Affairs, for his speech.

Earlier, his colleague spoke about government investments. What is happening with the recommendations from the report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls?

In my riding, women and girls are still going missing. We must protect them and ensure their survival. We also need to listen to what communities are saying about their needs. We must provide safe air transportation for health care services in northern Quebec. We have to act quickly on behalf of women and girls who must be able to live safely.

How can the government implement these actions?

**Hon. Dan Vandal:** Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for that excellent question.

Everyone knows that reconciliation with indigenous peoples and environmental protection have been key priorities for our government since it was elected in 2015. Since then, we have invested hundreds of billions of dollars in education, health and child and family services. We are working closely with provincial, territorial and indigenous governments.

Budget 2023 includes about \$125 million in investments to implement a plan to fight violence against missing and murdered women. We are working closely with all our partners.

[English]

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Mr. Chair, today, as in times before, I unfortunately have to rise in this place to speak to this issue. I am a new member of Parliament. I have sat in this chamber for less than two years, and we are again debating the crisis facing murdered, missing indigenous women and two-spirit folks.

This is not just a crisis. We often talk about this being a crisis, but these are people's lives, just like those of my colleagues and just like mine, and they have been affected so greatly by mistreatment, neglect and, oftentimes, ignorance. It is the will of ignorance when it plays out this way.

What I mean by that is those times when we know that solutions exist, and there are champions to implement them, but we do not show up to the table with the resources to support them. That is one of the most critical problems we are here to address. It is one I want to highlight in a different way.

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The last time I spoke to this issue, I spoke about my family. I spoke about my mother, who is no longer with us. I spoke about my sister, who is no longer with us. I spoke about the people in my life who are not here anymore. There are individuals right across this country who feel the same way I do. They feel robbed of the kind of justice that Canadians deserve. They feel neglected by the systems that were built to support us. We feel broken by a country that does not want to see who we are.

There are fundamental questions about what kind of country we want to build. Who belongs in this country? When we allow women to be murdered, go missing and find themselves in dumps, that is not a society that values indigenous women and two-spirit folks.

We think we understand this issue, when it is far greater than its results. What I mean by that is that the issue that is present to indigenous people is much greater than the consequences we often find ourselves in. We are talking about the consequences of serious issues. We are talking about the consequences of government in action. We are talking about the consequences of wilful racism. We are talking about the consequences of genocide.

In order for us, and all Canadians, to understand how deeply important this issue is, we have to understand how deeply wounded our country is. Canada may present itself to the world as just. We even, oftentimes, as members of this chamber, have a belief in the kind of country we have told ourselves is just. It is a process, not a destination. We need to ensure that we take more seriously the concerns and solutions of indigenous leaders in this place.

I spoke to young people who were invited here by my good friend, the hon. member for Edmonton Centre, to speak about what youth are doing, given this crisis. Young people are having to fend for themselves right now. They call it peer-to-peer support. They say that because they are only there for one another, when in fact they should have the support of the government. They even went so far to say that residential schools took so much from them, and now that the government recognizes that, it does not want to give anything.

Members of the New Democratic Party spoke previously about the things we need to do to see resources get into the hands of organizations such as A7G, the Assembly of Seven Generations, which has fought so long to see just one call to action implemented of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, call to action 66.

Although the willingness of the government was there to find people to do a report and to commission results, the results did not hit the mark. Those youth are still asking for support. Those youth are still here looking for ways to survive. Some of those youth found themselves in the street because of the failure of our inability to see the solutions and put the tools of those solutions in the hands of those who will do the work.

I will end with this: Indigenous youth are not just victims. Women, girls and two-spirit people are not just victims. They are resilient. They are here because of their will. They are here because they fought, and they are here because they are valued. They know that. We will stand with them, and we will not let up.

• (2020)

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Mr. Chair, my colleague's speech was very passionate. It was great to listen to.

One of the questions I would love to ask the member, and it is a topic we have studied in our status of women committee, is about educating young men, not only young indigenous men, but also men in general, about this and giving them the tools to recognize what is wrong. We do not know what we do not know.

How does the member feel about programming for educating, in particular, young men about this?

• (2025)

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** Mr. Chair, that is such a good question, and it hits on part of the solution. I am very grateful for the member's candidness in offering of this topic and giving me a chance to deliberate on and talk about the need to ensure this.

Men, particularly indigenous men, have also suffered the kind of history that indigenous women had to, but they suffer through that in a different way. They suffer that in a way that has often resolved itself in substance abuse, broken families and not knowing how to teach our loved ones what it takes to have a good and stable family. That is something this country has taken from so many men, particularly indigenous men.

That is why we need to see investments in indigenous healing circles for men. I have been part of indigenous men's circles, bringing in and holding other men accountable for their actions. Nine out of 10 times, I have found that those men are remorseful. They break down, cry and commit to doing better. They show up every single day, and that circle grows.

We can bring these men into a position where they understand, one, that what they are doing is harmful; two, that it needs to end; and three, that they can be part of the solution and ensure that other men continue to be part of the solution.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I want to thank my hon. colleague for sharing his life story and his personal advocacy and growth in this area. I extend my deepest sympathies for the loss of his family members.

We sit together on the public accounts committee, which is all about value for money and that kind of thing, so I would be interested to know, in an ideal world, where my colleague would like to put the emphasis of funding and programming to work toward a solution, or if not a solution, at least a better place with this problem.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** Mr. Chair, I have the great pleasure of sitting with my hon. colleague on the public accounts committee and often find that her words are not only guiding, but in this particular case, provide me another opportunity to speak to the solutions. I appreciate that.

I said in my speech, and I will talk again about where resources need to go. The government cannot be the decider and the administrator of all solutions, particularly this solution.

### *Government Orders*

We know that indigenous-led organizations, and the example I gave was indigenous youth organizations, are doing work, such as peer-to-peer support. They are the ones dealing with those who need the support most, and they are the ones who need the support. It should be our job in this place to support those who are best supporting indigenous advocates and those working on the ground. It is an opportunity for us right now. We can do this. We can do this tomorrow, as long as we have the will.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Mr. Chair, as always, that was a powerful and heartfelt speech. I learn daily from my colleague, the member for Edmonton Griesbach, from his wealth of knowledge. It is always so powerful.

While we are talking tonight about this important topic, I think about my friend, Lisa Marie Young, who went missing almost 21 years ago. Lisa Marie Young was a member of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation and was 21 at the time. She brought an amazing light into every room she entered.

Her friends, family and loved ones continue to search for her. They put on annual marches and continue to put signs on lawns and any green space they can find. They have billboards and coordinated searches for Lisa Marie, and still, to this day, they have no answers.

Will the member share what the government needs to do to implement solutions and actions today so that no more indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people go missing and, if they do go missing, ensure that their families and loved ones have the answers they need and deserve?

• (2030)

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** Mr. Chair, I want to thank the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith for her consistent advocacy. I had the opportunity to visit her community to speak directly with indigenous folks who are experiencing many of the difficult issues she has spoken about, particularly some of the issues related to murdered and missing women.

What she spoke about just now is a sad and terrible truth. For 21 years, this woman has been missing. I was there, and I was able to feel her spirit in the people's advocacy with posters and signs. Her name was spoken daily in Nanaimo—Ladysmith when I went to visit. However, the solutions need to be solutions of accountability when it comes to ensuring that our sisters are found.

The police need to take an honest and clear look in the mirror to understand what their obligations are. As a matter of fact, we need a national inquiry into the conduct of police when these things happen.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Mr. Chair, as always, it is an honour and a privilege to rise on behalf of my community of Peterborough—Kawartha as their voice in the House of Commons.

This evening we are participating in a take-note debate on Red Dress Day. For those tuning in at home who may not know what a take-note debate is, it is type of debate that allows members of Parliament to debate a matter of public policy without any decisions being made. It does sound a little frustrating, but it is also very im-

portant to highlight key things that are happening in this House and things that need to be done.

Red Dress Day, also known as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-Spirit People, is observed on May 5. The day honours and brings awareness to the thousands of indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people who have been subject to disproportionate violence in Canada.

Red Dress Day was inspired by Métis artist Jaime Black's "RE-Dress Project" installation, in which she hung empty red dresses to represent the missing and murdered women. Red dresses have become symbolic of the crisis as a result of her installation.

The stats on our current state of affairs on this issue speak for themselves. The 2019 general social survey, or GSS, on victimization, along with Statistics Canada data indicated that indigenous women were more likely to experience intimate partner violence than non-indigenous women. During a study on sex trafficking of indigenous peoples, experts said 52% of human trafficking victims are indigenous, 52%. The average age of exploitation of an indigenous girl was 12 years old.

Although the indigenous population up to the age of 14 makes up 7.7%, almost 8%, of all Canadian children, they represent 52% of the children in care. Studies have highlighted that having been a child in the welfare system was the most common denominator among women and girls who entered prostitution.

In December, I stood in this House during a take-note debate on the serial killer in Winnipeg and the failure of the Liberal government to protect vulnerable indigenous women and girls despite having the tools to protect them. What are these tools I speak of? They are the 231 calls to action outlined in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls report which was released in 2019. These 231 calls are specific to help stop the murder of indigenous women.

Here we are four months later with very little change. Former Commissioner Robinson said it best about the Liberals last April in an interview for Aboriginal Peoples Television Network:

They must do more than show you the budgets that they've spent and the line items attached. They must be prepared to show you how it has affected people's lives. You must learn to understand and they must demonstrate how their actions, decisions, have informed and enhanced the lives of people.

We have learned success cannot be measured strictly by government dollars spent or programs created. Meaningful reconciliation involves more than just photo ops and take-note debates with no decisions. It requires partnership and collaboration with indigenous communities across Canada.

Recently I had the opportunity to tour the new state-of-the-art facility across the river in Gatineau at the Native Women's Association of Canada. This pin is actually from there. It is a beautiful pin. Anybody watching should take the time to visit this unbelievable building, this social enterprise. This Friday, on Red Dress Day, May 5, they are going to be open from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m. People will not be disappointed by the incredible knowledge that is in that building. It is also visually incredible and has the rich history. It is definitely worth the time. It is just over the river in Gatineau.

In June 2022, the Native Women's Association of Canada released their annual scorecard on Canada's missing and murdered indigenous women action plan. This is an annual report outlining the federal government's progress on implementing the commitments made in the plan. I would like to quote a few of their findings in the report:

It becomes clear, when assessing the government's National Action Plan goals and the actions deemed necessary to achieve them, that little headway has been made over the past 12 months toward ending the violence. Few of the promised actions have been completed, some have seen a little progress, but far too many remain untouched. This lack of urgency is especially concerning given the fact that the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry are legal imperatives dictated to end a genocide. For that reason, this report grades the government's performance, one year after the release of its National Action Plan, to be a FAILURE.

● (2035)

It is another F, another fail, by the Liberal government under the leadership, or should I say the lack of leadership, of this Prime Minister. I know there are lots of colleagues across the way who care. I do put a lot of this responsibility on their leader because leadership comes from the top down. There is an ability to change. There is the power the Prime Minister holds and we have not seen that power executed.

There is so much more work to be done to protect the lives of indigenous women and girls across our country. This starts with the federal government's implementing its portion of the 231 calls for justice, including a standardization of protocols for policies and practices that ensure that all cases are thoroughly investigated; establishing a national task force to review and, if required, to reinvestigate cases across Canada; and ensuring that protection orders are available, accessible, promptly issued, and effectively serviced and resourced to protect victims.

"Implementation starts tomorrow." That was the quote from the former Crown-indigenous relations minister, Carolyn Bennett, in 2021 with the announcement of the missing and murdered indigenous women national action plan—

**The Chair:** Order. Members cannot mention the name of a member who is in the chamber.

The hon. member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Mr. Chair, here we are, two years later, and tomorrow still has not come.

This is an issue that hits home in my community. I have talked about this in the past, but it certainly warrants repeating. Cileana Taylor was 22 years old when she was assaulted in September 2020. Her brain injury left her in a coma for five months. She died in February 2021. The man who assaulted Cileana was not charged with murder and he is currently walking free on the street.

### *Government Orders*

What happened to Cileana and what continues to happen in this country to indigenous women is an injustice. It is shameful and it rests solely on the backs of the inaction of this Prime Minister and the Liberal government's failed catch-and-release bail system. Indigenous women's and girls' lives matter. Cileana's life matters. The calls for justice are not photo ops and they are not optional. They are necessary to create the substantial and systemic change necessary to end the ongoing violence.

There is something we can do today. It is a simple, actionable item. We have an Amber Alert and it helps find children quickly by leveraging technology. A red dress alert can do the same. It is a simple, actionable item that every single member in this House can get behind. While we wait for these actionable items to be put into place, why not try something tangible that we can put in place today? A red dress alert would stop indigenous women from being murdered and going missing. It seems pretty simple.

Enough is enough. We need action. I stand in solidarity with all the members in this House tonight to say that a red dress alert is something we can get behind. We need to stop indigenous women from going missing and being murdered.

● (2040)

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, what a pleasure it is to work with my hon. colleague on the status of women committee. We are in different political parties, yet we strive to find common ground on so many issues to fight for women.

Former Prime Minister Harper, at a time when we had to fight for a national inquiry, indicated in this House it was not on his radar when women were coming forward sounding the alarm around the ongoing genocide of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. That sparked my motivation to start, along with Rain Hamilton, the We Care campaign to fight for a national inquiry and to get allies on board to fight to put in place a national inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women and girls.

It is very nice to see the member from the Conservative Party supporting our calls for justice regarding a red dress alert. I encourage other members of her party to share her enthusiasm and compassion when it comes to trying to understand and address the crisis of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls.

The crisis continues. One of the areas we know contributes to violence, which is something we talk about a lot in the status of women committee, is the need to implement a guaranteed livable basic income. All gender-based violence organizations have unanimously supported this call. If we want to deal with gender-based violence head on, then we need to implement a guaranteed livable basic income. That is something everybody seems to recognize.

### *Government Orders*

We know there is a direct correlation between poverty and violence. We know that indigenous women and girls and trans women are some of the poorest in this country as a result of violent colonization and violent dispossession.

Does my colleague agree with me? Would she support a guaranteed livable basic income as a means to tackle gender-based violence in the country?

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Mr. Chair, the member across the way is a wonderful colleague to work with and teaches me lots. I enjoy working with her. We definitely see things differently when it comes to universal basic income. I know that is a big passion of hers.

There is something that would be amazing, and I believe her colleague touched on it when he talked about healing circles. We recently had a witness in the status of women committee on human trafficking. She was brought here as a Hungarian immigrant and she was trafficked. She spoke about solutions they have to help women get back into real life and the supports they need. It is not just giving them housing or money without supports, but giving them the tools to relearn things that were taken from them.

There is some value and we can learn from that model. I think there are workable models. My colleague and I could find common ground on this in terms of how we support and help give back autonomy to the life that has been taken from so many of these women who have been victims of violence.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for the very inspiring speech this evening and for taking part in tonight's debate. I thank all members in this chamber.

I think about some of the indigenous-led solutions in my home riding that are really making an impact and difference, like our wonderful Under One Sky Friendship Centre.

Can the member speak to the important role friendship centres play in this as well?

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Mr. Chair, that is a really great question and it is clearly a very important role when we look at truth and reconciliation, but also giving back autonomy. There is a great saying, and it would be great if it was implemented: Nothing about us without us. Friendship centres are imperative. A lot of the indigenous people I know were taken from their homes, their culture and their roots. It is a journey to get back to who they were and what they were. I find extreme value in the friendship centres.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I do appreciate the opportunity to participate in this very important discussion. One of the things the member talked about in her very passionate speech was not only to end the violence that is occurring, but also to create opportunities and supports for those in need.

Can the member expand on that? I think that was an important part she touched on and it is something that adds real value to this conversation.

• (2045)

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Mr. Chair, one of the things that I think is really critical in this discussion is giving back the power that was

taken away. When we look at victims, the biggest thing is that power is taken away.

We were actually studying Bill C-35 in committee, which is on child care, and we just wrapped it up today. My colleague for Winnipeg Centre put forward an amendment looking at free, prior and informed consent and giving indigenous peoples the choice to choose what is best for their children, and I could not agree more.

I think that is what we need to do as leaders in Parliament: give back power and autonomy to the indigenous communities. They know what to do. They do not need the government to tell them what to do or how to do it. They know exactly what their people need, and they should be in charge of deciding what is best for their people.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Chair, one of the issues the member raised was about indigenous children who have been brought into care, and far too many of them have. In fact, in my home community of Vancouver East, our community call this the modern-day residential school where indigenous children have been taken into care. What is worse is that when they come out of care, they have zero support whatsoever, and many of them do not have access to housing. In fact, in British Columbia, 15% of the homeless population are youth. This is not acceptable.

In the "Calls for Justice" report from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, there were 231 calls for justice, and housing was mentioned in that report numerous times.

My question to the member is this: Should we not now have a dedicated approach on a for indigenous, by indigenous housing strategy that targets indigenous youth, particularly those who are coming out of care and those who are from the LGBTQ2+ community as well?

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Mr. Chair, that is a great question.

We had the opportunity, through the status of women committee when we were recently doing a tour studying human trafficking, to go to Sault Ste. Marie, and we visited a centre that oversaw indigenous care. It was an incredible facility, and speaking exactly to what my colleague was just asking about, it has increased indigenous children in care, which was up an extreme amount. However, with the money that was being spent, there was no housing. So, the member is extremely on point in terms of having access to the tools that are needed, housing and supportive housing.

One of the things we do not talk enough about in this House of Commons is that housing is fine, but when we are dealing with people who have never been given the tools or knowledge, especially young children who have never been loved in the way they were supposed to be loved by no fault of their own, the parents' own, they need supports, they need connections and they need a lot of wraparound support. I definitely think we need to be focusing on that.

To tie back to what I said earlier, we need to listen to the people who are dealing with these children on what their needs are so that we can make sure that we are giving them the right resources that they need.



**Ms. Jenna Sudds (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I will be sharing my time today with the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Before I begin, I also wanted to take a moment to acknowledge that we are gathered on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe nation.

It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to rise tonight for this important debate and to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of my riding of Kanata—Carleton.

May 5 marks the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-Spirit People. This day, of course, we all know is known as Red Dress Day. On this day each year, red dresses are hung in public places across the country: in windows, on monuments and on trees. They are a stark and visual reminder of the indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people who have not come home to their families and communities.

Every year on this day, we come together across the country in rallies and in ceremonies, uniting in grief and in resolution to do better and to be better. On May 5, we are reminded that we must do more to protect the lives of indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people.

As we remember those who have been victims of gender-based and racialized violence, we must also acknowledge the reality that indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people continue to experience violence, no matter where they live. Although indigenous women represent only 5% of the female population in this country, they continue to experience disproportionate rates of violence. Indigenous women and girls are five times more likely to be victims of homicide than non-indigenous women and girls in this country.

The lived reality behind this data is made evident in the news. We continue to have too many reminders of how much work remains to be done. Too many families, communities, children and friends are left to mourn their loved ones. The death of indigenous women in such tragic and horrific circumstances is not just a loss to their families and friends; it is a loss for us all.

To move reconciliation forward, everyone across Canada must walk this path together.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was an important step in bringing this national crisis to the forefront of public awareness. As we all know, the national inquiry's final report contained 231 calls for justice from governments, institutions, social service providers, industries and all Canadians. It has also called for the creation of a national action plan.

The Government of Canada released the Federal Pathway to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ People, its contribution to a national action plan. The pathway outlines the government's efforts to end gender-based violence and the systemic racism responsible for missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people.

To support the federal pathway, the government announced over \$13 million in 2019 for women and gender equality to support

100 commemoration initiatives across the country, to help honour the lives and legacies of missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people.

In addition, we announced \$55 million through budget 2021 over five years from WAGE to bolster the capacity of indigenous women and 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations to provide gender-based violence prevention and programming aimed at addressing the root causes of violence against indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+people.

So far, we have announced funding to regional organizations in Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan and British Columbia to support their GBV programming, and we also launched the national action plan to end gender-based violence. The action plan serves as a federal-provincial-territorial framework for a Canada free of gender-based violence.

● (2050)

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I have the pleasure to work with my colleague on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. She was talking about funding announcements.

I want to remind my colleague, with all due respect, of the announcement of cutting \$150 million from shelters in September. We know rates of gender-based violence are increasing. Although the reasoning was emergency funding during the pandemic, the pandemic may be shifting, but the crisis of gender-based violence has been increasing and this cut is going to cost lives.

We talk about \$55 million over five years. We know it is inadequate. I mentioned it to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations. I know it is inadequate because people, indigenous women, girls, two-spirit, diverse-gendered individuals and trans women, continue to be murdered and go missing at crisis levels.

Just this week, we found out about a little child who had been murdered in Samson Cree Nation. Another woman in Sandy Bay, from the Roulette family, I found out has been murdered. This is a daily occurrence.

For the government to praise its investments makes me feel, as an indigenous woman, that we should be satisfied, when we clearly should not be satisfied. We are yelling in the streets of Winnipeg that we are not garbage. Can one imagine? This is not a time for celebration.

*Government Orders*

Although I really appreciate working with the member across the way on the status of women committee, I hope at the very least we can admit in this House the government and all governments have failed in investing to protect indigenous women and girls and diverse-gendered folks in this country. Can we please at least acknowledge that truth, because we are dying?

● (2055)

**Ms. Jenna Sudds:** Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague across the way for her advocacy. It is a pleasure working with her on FEWO, and like was said by another member across the way, continuing to learn from her as well.

It is fair to say we will continue to walk the path of reconciliation with indigenous people. Women, children, 2SLGBTQIA+ and two-spirit individuals are at the centre of the work that the ministry and I continue to do.

With respect to funding specifically for shelters, what I would like to point out is that undoubtedly our government stepped up when COVID hit and additional funds were put in place to ensure women had a safe place to land.

Further to that, where we are now, I am quite happy to say we have now an agreement on the national action plan to end gender-based violence with the provinces and territories. That is \$539 million we are putting in their hands to help direct those resources to the shelters and to the communities and resources that need it most.

I do believe by working closely with community, with indigenous people, this money will be spent in the best possible way to ensure women, girls, 2SLGBTQIA+ and two-spirit individuals have a safe place to land.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, could the hon. member further elaborate on the national action plan to end gender-based violence and some of the concrete steps that might impact indigenous women and girls across the country?

**Ms. Jenna Sudds:** Mr. Chair, I thank my hon. colleague for her advocacy and ongoing work.

I mentioned the national action plan to end gender-based violence and that we were able to announce an agreement in principle with the provinces and territories a few months back. As I said, this is almost half a billion dollars being invested back into our communities to help women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. We are working with the provinces and territories directly on their priorities and projects so they are able to ensure women and girls have a safe place to land at the end of the day.

● (2100)

[Translation]

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would like to start by acknowledging that we are on the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

May 5, Red Dress Day, is a day to reflect, mourn and recommit to our continued work together to put an end to this ongoing national tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

[English]

On Red Dress Day and every day, our hearts are with families and survivors as we mourn and honour missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

Jaime Black, as the Minister for Northern Affairs reminded us, began The REDress Project, where we saw empty red dresses blowing in the wind from trees and hanging on lampposts. We wear red dresses on this day to support families and survivors and to honour all the lives lost and those whose lives have been ever changed by violence toward indigenous women and girls and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Canada's colonial past, along with sexism, ableism, racism, homophobia and transphobia, and the unacceptable actions and inactions of past governments, have created systemic discrimination. These systemic inequities must end for indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people to be safe wherever they live.

For decades, families, survivors and communities have been demanding justice, healing and concrete actions to stop this tragedy. It has been that way since the death of Helen Betty Osborne in 1971. That was over 50 years ago.

I remember that one of my first meetings here on the Hill, probably not knowing very much about this situation, was with Bernie Williams and Gladys Radek, who crossed this country seven times in their walk for justice. That was 20 years ago, and I learned much from these truly inspirational people about the need for justice, healing and concrete actions to stop this tragedy.

It was the tragic death of Tina Fontaine that galvanized the nation and the long-standing calls for a national public inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. We launched the national inquiry in 2016, and its final report in June 2019 recommended concrete actions to end violence through systemic, substantial and transformative change. We recommend that all Canadians read or reread "Reclaiming Power and Place" and the calls for justice to raise awareness, broaden understanding and then take action.

[Translation]

The national inquiry called on all governments, federal, provincial, territorial and indigenous, to work together to build an effective and responsible national action plan.

[English]

We were truly inspired by the work done with families, survivors and over 100 indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people to develop the regional, first nations, Inuit, Métis, urban, two-spirit+ and data components of the whole-of-Canada action plan to respond to the calls for justice. Incredible indigenous leaders like Diane Redsky and Sylvia Maracle helped to ensure that the action plan reflected the urban indigenous perspectives and the unique lived experiences of indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people from across the country.

We know that much more work needs to be done. Budget 2021 invested \$2.2 billion over five years. Building on that is more than \$2.7 billion in funding to support housing in indigenous communities. Budget 2022 invested another \$4.3 billion to support housing in first nations and Inuit communities.

• (2105)

[Translation]

We are determined to continue our ongoing work in co-operation with our indigenous, provincial and territorial partners in order to put an end to this tragedy.

[English]

As the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, I pledge to ensure indigenous-led, trauma-informed, culturally safe care for all first nations, Inuit and Métis across this country. We will fight for reforms in child and family services, indigenous policing, indigenous housing and all the social determinants of health so we can end this terrible tragedy.

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, I thank the minister for her intervention. I know she has been a minister for many years, and I know she has heard from many first nations, Métis and Inuit over her time as a politician in many different portfolios.

I am sure she has heard from families, survivors and advocates who are calling on the federal government to declare the continued loss of indigenous women and girls and two-spirit people a Canada-wide emergency. Indeed, that is what the motion calls for. I wonder if the minister supports this call.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for her ongoing advocacy and her always eloquent and heartfelt interventions in this House.

I remember the terrible debate on the convoy and how diligent the member was in fighting for justice and fighting for the feeling of safety that had been lost in this town.

I think we are fighting an ongoing tragedy across this country and it is an emergency. However, it means that everybody has to see themselves in the solutions. It means that everybody has to know to call out discrimination and deal with it every day of their lives, not just on May 5 or October 4, but every day of the year.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I was reading through the calls for justice from the national inquiry, and I just want to cite one of them:

3.2 We call upon all governments to provide adequate, stable, equitable, and ongoing funding for Indigenous-centred and community-based health and wellness services that are accessible and culturally appropriate, and meet the health and well-

### Government Orders

ness needs of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. The lack of health and wellness services within Indigenous communities continues to force Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people to relocate in order to access care.

Representing a remote area of northwest British Columbia that I know the minister is familiar with, I know this issue affects so many people. There are not enough wellness facilities for the people who need the help. People are forced to travel to faraway communities, often to the Lower Mainland of B.C. Those services are not accessible enough.

The Northern First Nations Alliance has a vision for a healing centre that would provide culturally appropriate care in communities in northwest B.C. They are struggling to get the funding support they need to provide this help to people in northwest B.C.

My question to the minister is a very simple one. Can they expect financial support from her government in a timely way to ensure this facility gets up and running as soon as possible?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for his ongoing commitment to his community, to fairness and to the culturally safe, indigenous-led approach that leads to durable solutions.

In the budget and in the February 7 announcement of the Prime Minister, we were very pleased to see not only \$200 billion ongoing for 10 years, but \$25 billion for serious action plans from all the provinces and territories on the four pillars, and the extra \$2 billion for indigenous-led health and social services.

I look forward to working with the Minister of Indigenous Services to do whatever it takes to build those bottom-up solutions not only in remote and rural areas but in urban centres as well.

• (2110)

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Mr. Chair, it is so important that we are all gathered here today as we are discussing this issue. I would like to thank all of the speakers prior and all those coming after me.

I am looking at some of the speakers and notice many members of the status of women committee speaking on this important topic tonight. I think it is wonderful. I guess if we need to get it done, we will just take it to the status of women committee, right ladies?

The murdered and missing women and girls issue in Canada is a well-known phenomenon that has been plaguing the country for decades. The issue gained notoriety in the country's consciousness in recent years, but it has been an ongoing problem for indigenous women and girls for much longer.

*Government Orders*

According to the Native Women's Association of Canada, there have been over 1,200 indigenous women and girls reported missing and murdered between 1980 and 2012 in the country. However, this number is believed to be much higher since many cases had gone unreported or were misclassified as non-indigenous, which actually limits the accurate documentation of the issue.

The previous research done for the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls issue has revealed that the problem has a complex and multi-faceted root, including colonization, the residential school system, systemic violence and oppression, and ignorance about indigenous culture and heritage. The horrors of the residential schools that indigenous people experienced have had a traumatic effect on generations of families and individuals.

This brings me September 30 and the importance of gathering together from all walks of life in our communities to meet with those persons who were representing indigenous communities. We know that a lot of time has passed, but we have a lot of things that we must go forward on in working together. Reconciliation is about the communities all coming together, as I said, from all walks of life, to ensure that we build these links and bridges that we have lost.

The issue of missing and murdered women and girls has been exacerbated by a lack of accurate data, a poorly equipped legal system and limited accountability for perpetrators. Indigenous women and girls experience gendered and racialized violence at a much higher rate than non-indigenous women, and this is due to the history of colonization, which deeply entrenched systemic inequalities. The history is compounded by a lack of government interest in this issue, and the belief that indigenous women and girls are unworthy and not to be considered as first-class victims of violent crimes.

I want to stop here, because I think this is something we hear all the time. I heard multiple times from the member for Winnipeg Centre, who came forward and had to share some of the tragic stories of things that are happening in her own community. The fact is that these young women and girls are not seen as worthy. I have heard time and time again members from the community talk about the unworthiness and of people feeling second class.

However, it is up to us to change that. It is up to the members of Parliament and all Canadians to work together. This is part of the reconciliation. It is recognizing that when people are being treated as second-class citizens, they are being treated like objects. They are being treated like they are garbage to throw away. The words that the member for Winnipeg Centre said before, unfortunately, I do believe ring true in some cases, that people do not understand that these are women's lives, these are daughters, sisters, mothers and aunts. These are women's lives, and they deserve to be fought for, they deserve to be found and they deserve to see that this never happens.

Furthermore, the societal displacement and dislocation that indigenous women and girls experience has made them more susceptible to violence and harassment. It occurs not only outside indigenous communities, but with both non-indigenous and indigenous men who target them as lower status.

When we are talking about missing and murdered indigenous women, regardless of all of the data, and we know that there is a lot

of information there, it really comes down to societal change where we say that indigenous women matter. It comes back to the whole thing that is to love, to matter and the mental health pieces, which are lacking for so many of the women who have lived on reserve and have not had proper housing or proper care. They see their job is to be there and, in some cases, their job is to be the object of violence. We know this to be true, and we know that with intergenerational trauma over the years, there is difficulty for that perception to change. For all the generations that were there, it takes time to go back as well, and there is a lot of undoing that we must do.

● (2115)

We look at the unethical treatment in the justice system. This is something that we can talk about, recognizing the number of people who are in prisons and looking at those numbers. We have to also understand the justice system. The missing and murdered indigenous women and girls report talked about the bias. It talked about the bias of the justice system.

I recall when I was growing up, as I think we all do, some of the slang words that were used. I have heard them sometimes from people in the chamber and outside the chamber. When we start disrespecting people and, as we say in this House, when we start calling people names, we are not valuing those people. We have seen that time and time again with our indigenous population, specifically the women and girls who deserve to be recognized, deserve to be loved and deserve to be standing among every single person in Canada as an equal.

However, we have not seen this. The missing and murdered indigenous women and girls report released in 2019 pointed out that the systemic bias is there. It is real. We see it in our police. We have seen it in law enforcement with some of the different issues that happen. This comes with training. This comes with recognizing the past and building those bridges.

Over time, all of that has been broken. Not only the government but all Canadians need to work to rebuild those bridges. We need to work with our police force to rebuild those bridges. We need to make sure that when people go into the criminal justice system, they are going to be treated fairly and there will not be bias. Unfortunately, that is part of the issue. They are going into something they feel they will already fail in.

We are looking at the red dress alert system as the key issue here. In my bedroom when I hear the beep that goes off here in Ontario letting us know that a child is missing, I know there is a call to action. There is a call to action from the people who live in Canada, or live in Ontario specifically, that we need to be on the lookout. That is something I make sure to share. That is something I am watching for.

There have been some transient people in my community. We want to make sure everybody is safe. We want to make sure everybody is accounted for. When looking at this, we need to make sure this is also extended to women. There are indigenous women and girls who have been lost and who have been buried in landfills. This is not acceptable at all. We have heard about young women in garbage bins. No person's life belongs in a garbage bin. That is why we need to work together on this.

When it comes to the red dress alert, I will be fully supportive of it. We need to make sure that it is done by the people themselves, that it is done by the community, that it is done by the indigenous people ensuring their communities are safe. We are working to make sure that the resources are available for them.

It is not just the red dress alert that we need. There are multiple things that we need for those living on reserve and those living off reserve. When it comes to indigenous women and girls, we need to make sure they have the assistance they need. This includes assistance in going to a shelter when fleeing violence, and medical care when living on reserve when the only way to get to a doctor is by getting on an airplane. We need to make sure they have that care and those resources, and that they are accessible.

Unfortunately, we have not seen that. I have heard members across the way talk about those resources not being available in communities. We need to make a dedicated promise that we are not going to break. I have heard people talk about governments now and before. It is all of us who need to work together. We have all made mistakes in the past, and it is time that we work together to fix this.

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I cannot say how touched I am tonight, because this is about being seen as human beings. I am sorry; I am emotional. It is a non-partisan issue. It is a human issue. Talking about funding announcements detaches the government from us, as indigenous women, girls, transwomen and non-binary people, as loving human beings.

I want to thank my colleague for being such a marvellous chair on the status of women committee. I really appreciated her talking about how we have all made mistakes in this place and how we have to unite together to deal with this Canada-wide crisis, because it is a crisis. Our community is in a constant state of grief, because we are losing children, sisters, aunties and mothers. It is not a funding announcement. There are kids growing up without mothers. Can members imagine? We have kids aging out of care onto the streets, because society has deemed them disposable even though they are worthy of the same human rights.

I wonder if my colleague can expand on how she thinks we can work together as parliamentarians to deal with this Canada-wide human rights crisis.

• (2120)

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for teaching me to become a person who understands this a lot better. Seeing it through her eyes or sharing the experiences that she shares with her own community makes us all better people. It makes us all recognize what a job we can do. That is how we work together, by sharing who we are.

### *Government Orders*

Earlier today, I texted a lady asking where she was, and she responded by asking if I was okay. She was worried about me, for goodness' sake. When people work together and build relationships, amazing things can happen. I thank the member for all the hard work she is doing. I have her back and I know she has mine.

[Translation]

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague from Elgin—Middlesex—London for her touching speech.

This evening, we are here for a take-note debate on Red Dress Day out of respect for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. Let us remember those who are no longer with us.

The member talked about colonization, violence and September 30. She might agree with me that the government is building bridges, but little by little, and not enough. In my riding, women and girls are still disappearing. We need to protect them, as the member said, and ensure their survival. Let us never stop talking about them as long as there is no change because the situation is not reassuring. We need to listen to what the communities are telling us. We need to listen to the communities talk about their own.

How can we change society and ensure that the recommendations in the report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls are followed?

[English]

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Mr. Chair, I think what we often do when we look at inquiries and recommendations is point fingers at who was to blame in the past instead of asking how we make a plan for the future. I know it is really important that we reflect on the past when we do these inquiries so we know what to reflect on. That is why doing these inquiries is important. However, from there, it is about taking these recommendations seriously and finding a plan.

We have seen a number of recommendations from both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. There is some very low-hanging fruit that is so easy for us to all work together on. Yes, the harder things will be challenging, but imagine how challenging it is for the indigenous women and girls who have gone through this all their lives. We need to step back and ask how we can make it better for all. We need to break away from the beliefs we had in the past and ask how we can change things for the future.

*Government Orders*

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saannich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Chair, at moments like this, when we hear the stories of the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre in this place, we realize how much we are of one mind. When I look at the report of the inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people, I recognize there are things in there that we need to do, but we have not acted on those recommendations. However, this notion of a Red Dress Day is a way to be able to say that we are putting out an emergency and that we will protect the lives of our friends as forcefully as we can so that the carnage and the genocide stop.

I want to thank my friend from Elgin—Middlesex—London for being open-hearted and committed to the lives of women.

• (2125)

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Mr. Chair, that is what we all should be doing: fighting for women. When we are talking about that, we always talk about how to raise women up and how to empower them. It is when we work together on something that we all find a common goal. I think that if we looked at everybody, as members of Parliament, this is a common goal. We know that indigenous women are not seen as equals. That can stop right now. It really can. It can stop for us right now. We need to have that conversation and we need to change the conversation, but we can have the leaders in here doing so. As I said, this has to be a team effort where everybody is on board.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Mr. Chair, my hon. colleague is an outstanding chair on the status of women committee. She unites all party lines on the issues that we face, one of which is this issue that she spoke to tonight. She has such a wealth of experience. She has worked and has her own personal experience. She is compassionate with what she brings to the table here in Parliament.

What would she love to see happen that we can do together? What are some things? She knows so much about so many things. She has had so much work experience here of working across party lines. What would she love to see? What is her pie in the sky?

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Madam Chair, I think about today when I went to the Native Women's Association. I was sitting here thinking, "I need a red dress pin, I need a red dress pin", and I ran over there and got it. I jumped into a cab and got red dress pins for me and a couple of my ladies.

There are the relationships to be built and the culture. I went into the red dress room to take in some of the history of what had happened. Understanding the culture is definitely something that we can do as well as sitting and having those conversations with indigenous people to share their experiences. We learn more when we are listening.

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Madam Chair, I thank the member for all of her work. She spoke about the 231 calls for justice. One of those calls for justice is for a universal basic income. I spoke to an indigenous woman whose mother was murdered. She said that this would not have happened to her mom if she had had the economic support that she needed. It is such a critical piece of this conversation. I would love to hear the member's thoughts on that call for justice.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Madam Chair, with respect to the issue of the guaranteed basic income, when I was doing the poverty study, I was able to review them between 2015 and 2019. I know that we need to look at something that actually works.

We probably have very different ways of approaching that when it comes to a guaranteed basic income. We may have a different way of approaching it on systems, but I do know that those people who are living in poverty do need a boost up. What does that look like? When it comes to indigenous people, I really focus on the economic reconciliation and the opportunities they can have to build when we are letting people share not only their arts and culture but also their skills and professions. I think of the woman who is behind me who was a professor in academia. I look at her and say she can do anything. That is why I think we all can do anything.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I will be sharing my time with the member for Sydney—Victoria.

I first want to acknowledge that I am addressing everyone today from the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people. At the core beliefs of the Anishinabe is the notion of respect. Each element is part of the cycle of life. Each element has its purpose and deserves as much respect. Our relationships are what matter the most, and we should cherish them.

I would be lying if I said anything other than that I am deeply saddened to be here this evening, yet again, to continue this essential conversation on the real crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirited people. Even if the conversation is continuously evolving, we have to admit that it is not concrete, rapid or transformative enough for families who are missing loved ones, such as families back home in Fredericton right now.

How did we get here? That is a question we do not ask ourselves enough. I remember first learning about this issue. My stepfather taught native studies, and he brought his lived experience to the classroom. He took part in the Kanesatake resistance, and he has consistently represented Wabanaki voices at the United Nations. He is a lodge keeper, a language keeper and a pipe carrier. From when I was very young, he would share with me the truth about injustice in Canada for indigenous peoples and how women were targeted for their strength, leadership and resilience.

Women and girls give life to the nations, but they were an inherent threat to the goals of colonization and assimilation. I learned with horror of how indigenous women were killed or went missing at significantly higher rates and how law enforcement was far too often slow to investigate or pursue justice, if it was pursued at all. Only 53% of murder cases in the Sisters in Spirit database have been solved, compared with 84% of all murder cases across the country.

We often felt alone in our efforts to bring awareness. There was no media coverage at that time. There were no demonstrations, and no one knew or cared to know what we were talking about. We have come a long way in Canada since that time, but that fact alone will not bring these women home. This issue is about misogyny, racism and systemic discrimination. Today, my wish would be that this discussion can also be about hope, not just for awareness or education but also for broad consensus and swift action. It can be about hope for adequate resources, policy change and justice. We are here to ensure that the laws of the land and Canadian society are accountable and that women and girls are no longer taken from us by violence.

The issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls is not a phenomenon. It is not the result of unexplained circumstances. We know the root causes, and we can and must address them. We know, for example, that housing is a critical piece of this issue, and indigenous women are five times more likely to experience homelessness. Current investments are not enough, but I know that I am working with my colleagues in this House to make a difference in communities across the country. We are seeing the narrative shift, and solutions do exist.

I look around this chamber, and I am incredibly proud and honoured to work with such devoted and informed MPs from every party in every corner of Canada. I thank all of them for their work, their tireless advocacy, their friendship, their teachings and their tenacity, and I am grateful to know that real allies are in positions to act. I feel a synergy that did not exist in this House or in this country before. I am more certain than ever that we will drive the change to make things better. I know that each of us addressing the House this evening is deeply influenced by the conversations we have with community leaders, with elders, with organizations and with representatives who are leading the cause and guiding the path forward.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the people in my own riding who are making a true difference in people's lives. They are the indigenous women of the Wabanaki territories, the team at the Under One Sky Friendship Centre, the Gignoo Transition House, traditional leadership, chiefs and councils, health directors, education directors, and language and culture teachers. I am using my voice to uphold theirs, because they are the ones who inspire me to do more.

Let us not lose this momentum. Let us not lose another life to violence against indigenous women and girls and two-spirited people.

On May 5, we mark Red Dress Day. Red dress walks bring people together and give strength to families and loved ones. Public vigils shine a light on those lost. May we never forget their stories and passions. May we honour their lives, and may we act now to end this crisis. *Woliwon*.

• (2130)

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, the motion specifically asks that more immediate and substantial investments be created, including a red dress alert system. We know that the infrastructure already exists for this because of the amber alert.

### Government Orders

With the red dress alert system, we can do a better job of ensuring that indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people are protected right at the time that they are considered missing or murdered. Does the member agree that there needs to be immediate action to ensure that the red dress alert system is put in place?

• (2135)

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** Madam Chair, I deeply appreciate the teachings that my colleague from Nunavut brings to our committee on indigenous and northern affairs.

I absolutely support the red dress alert. I was really pleased to see it as part of our 2023 budget and that the steps are already there to get this moving forward. I also just appreciate the leadership from the member for Winnipeg Centre for bringing this forward. It was not something I had heard of before, and I really think that it would have an immediate impact and at least mobilize that call to action that we are hearing about. It would bring that awareness piece to realize how urgent this crisis really is. I believe it would save lives.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Chair, to my hon. friend from Fredericton, I know how closely she is engaged with the indigenous communities near where Fredericton sits on the land of the Wolastoq. I thank her for her speech in the language of that territory: *Woliwon*. I also recognize this opportunity that we have before us. As she said, this is a moment where there is synergy; things have changed, and we need to push forward to ensure that when an indigenous woman goes missing, action is taken immediately.

Does she agree with me that one of the cultural changes that must urgently take place is within the approaches taken by policing, whether the RCMP or city police forces?

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** Madam Chair, as I mentioned in my speech, it is one of the root causes. It is one of the reasons why we have this issue and this crisis in Canada. I think it is incumbent on all of us as members of Parliament to do that work within our own communities and to have those conversations.

Personally, I meet with our J Division RCMP leadership team, in my riding, as well as with our Fredericton city police, to constantly push them. How are they meeting the action plan? How are they strategizing to ensure that this does not come to impact more families in our community?

I am not always satisfied by the answers that I get. However, they know that I am there pushing them and that I am not going to give up until we see this come to a resolution.

*Government Orders*

**Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Madam Chair, some of the questions that have arisen today have been touching. They are about the cross-partisan work that has been done on the issue.

In terms of the work that the member has done at committee and since being a member of Parliament, what does she think has had the most impact? What else would she like to achieve in her role as a member of Parliament here?

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** Madam Chair, I have really tried to look at this issue from a multi-faceted standpoint. I think it is very complicated, and there are many things we can do.

I have been so incredibly proud of the work of our indigenous and northern affairs committee. I have to mention again the members for Nunavut, Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River and Manicouagan. There are so many others. We work really collaboratively; we are all there for the right reasons, and we have all come to an understanding. We actually began our committee with a blanket exercise just for all of us to understand this collective history that we have and our duty and responsibility as parliamentarians to be on the same page and to address this issue.

I was also really fortunate to be able to sponsor Bill S-219, an act respecting a national ribbon skirt day on January 4, in this House. This was done in the name of Senator Jane McCallum for Isabella Kulak and her community in Saskatchewan.

These are concrete steps that we can take to honour and cherish indigenous women, as well as to uphold culture and identity in this country. I think that is a key component to this whole discussion this evening.

**Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I rise today, in this take-note debate, aware that we are gathered on the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

On Friday, we recognize Red Dress Day, the national day of awareness, a day dedicated to honouring the memory of the thousands of indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ people who have disappeared or been murdered in Canada. We join their families, their communities and the survivors in mourning those we have lost. Red Dress Day is dedicated to acknowledging the conditions the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls so rightly called “a national tragedy of epic proportions”. The national inquiry was launched in 2016, and on June 3, 2019, the final report, entitled “Reclaiming Power and Place”, was tabled. The report represented 231 individual calls for justice directed at government, institutions, social service providers, industry and all Canadians. These calls for justice cover issues ranging from health to language and from culture to security.

In budget 2021, our government responded by investing \$2.2 billion over five years to implement the MMIWG national action plan, which was developed in partnership with indigenous people across the country. This \$2.2 billion included \$16.6 million over six years for the establishment of a permanent MMIWG secretariat, which works with indigenous partners, families and survivors to ensure their perspectives are reflected in the development and implementa-

tion of the national action plan. It also engages with other federal departments and agencies to ensure that their policies and programs are aligned with the national action plan so that our government advances a more comprehensive and effective approach.

Budget 2021 also provided \$12.5 million over five years, with \$2.5 million ongoing for families and survivors; \$36.3 million over five years with \$8.6 million ongoing for capacity funding for indigenous women and 2SLGBTQ+ organizations; and \$120.5 million over two years for indigenous cultural space projects. I understand that the minister was, today, talking about some of our new investments in budget 2023 that I am proud of. Together, these investments provide assistance not only to families and survivors, but also to the frontline organizations that provide safe, no-barrier and permanent places where the voices of indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ people can be expressed openly, without fear, in an atmosphere of trust and respect. These investments have supported 66 projects across the country, including longhouses, women's lodges, powwow grounds, heritage parks and cultural centres, as well as facilities to support cultural ceremonies and teachings.

I would also like to highlight some of the work being done in Nova Scotia for indigenous women. Thanks to an investment of over \$6.5 million through the green and inclusive community build-ings program, the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association will soon open a resilience centre in Truro, Nova Scotia. A first of its kind, the centre will include healing circles, family group conferences, a day care and other resources to ensure that indigenous women who are escaping violent situations or sexual exploitation have a safe space they can rely on. This was a project I advocated for, in support of calls from the Atlantic Chiefs and the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association, to ensure women have access to safe and culturally appropriate supports and spaces in our communities.

I would also like to highlight another recent project from Nova Scotia, in Membertou First Nation. The Mi'kmaw Circle of Hope Society is an indigenous organization that connects women and girls to traditional practices and teachings, connects them to community, provides mentorship and facilitates healing. With support from Women and Gender Equality Canada, this organization will receive more than \$477,000 in funding to prevent and address gender-based violence against indigenous women and girls.



One of the last projects I would like to highlight is one that is really close to me because I worked on this personally when I became the MP for Sydney—Victoria. It is a project involving creating awareness through music for the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls calls to justice. It was highlighted by Canadian rock Hall of Famer Myles Goodwyn, in collaboration with two Mi'kmaw young women from Nova Scotia, Deedee Austin and Kalolin Johnson, who, together, created a video to share and create awareness about missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. It also features the Mi'kmaw language. I think it is one of the greatest tools we have for creating awareness.

• (2140)

I know I do not have much more time, and so I would encourage people, on Red Dress Day, to take a look at the video for *Darling, Where Are You?* by Myles Goodwyn. Sharing that will create a lot of awareness toward indigenous women. I am proud of my part in coordinating those efforts.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Madam Chair, tonight we heard testimony, stories and the voices of many of our colleagues. We heard their personal experiences and what they have faced in the light in their community and how they face that issue here today. We witnessed learning, and that is one of the most incredible pieces of today and something we can all be grateful for.

However, this speech does not hit that mark. It talks greatly about the government's spending plans but does not speak to the reality that there are human lives at risk. I will take the Liberals' near unanimous speeches about how supportive they are of this issue and will remember the fact we had this exact same debate over a year ago, where we heard Liberals agree right across the bench.

We heard Liberals agree this is a tragedy. We heard they have some money in their pockets. When will they actually ensure the money they plan to spend in their budget actually gets to the organizations they say are going to support?

• (2145)

**Mr. Jaime Battiste:** Madam Chair, nothing I can do in a five-minute speech can really talk about what the challenges we need to face together are going to be. I do need to make sure, when we are talking about some of the action that is required, that the call I made to the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association resonates. It said that for 30 years it had been asking for a project, and our government was funding it. Not only was I able to make that call, but I was actually there for that announcement.

There were tears being cried by its members. They said they never thought this was going to happen. They never thought this would be coming true, and now we are in the planning and building stages of an indigenous resilience centre in Nova Scotia. I want to see that being done in every province across Canada.

To say there is no action diminishes the hard work of indigenous women in that province of over 30 years that resulted in their vision of a women's resilience centre. I know we have a lot more work to do, but the member opposite has my guarantee we are going to work every day to see that we do more.

### Government Orders

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Chair, I have actually seen the video my hon. colleague from Sydney—Victoria talks about tonight. It is very deeply affecting and does follow the theme of red dresses.

It is critical something we are speaking about tonight translates into action, which is that every single time an indigenous woman or girl goes missing there are immediate steps and an immediate alert while there is time for them to be rescued and brought home safely.

I wanted to ask him if he had any thoughts on the power of the symbol of the red dress. Red dresses hanging on trees, red dresses seen in communities across Canada as a statement, is it powerful as a statement of solidarity or is it just performative? How does he feel about it?

**Mr. Jaime Battiste:** Madam Chair, I would like to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her commitment to this file.

I believe the red dress has become a symbol of political action as well as a symbol of creating awareness. We have seen indigenous communities from coast to coast to coast have their own different displays, many artistic, in their cultural centres or in music videos. All of them have the same idea that we need to do more.

We need to create more awareness. We need to create a society that understands we need to do more for missing and murdered indigenous women, for missing and murdered indigenous people all across Canada. Until we get to that awareness where people understand there is a historic problem we are trying to remedy, we need to continue to promote the red dress as a symbol and as a political statement everywhere across Canada.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for his speech. What stands out for me tonight, as a member of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, is the number of times we have talked about this issue and the number of reports that have been completed on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. How many times have we talked about the recommendations and the reports?

We are here tonight. I was here last year, too. We are still talking about missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in 2023. My colleagues on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women will agree with me. We are unfortunately, still, in 2023, talking about this issue, noting that indigenous women and girls are disproportionately affected—

• (2150)

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** I have to give the parliamentary secretary 15 seconds to answer.

*Government Orders*

[English]

**Mr. Jaime Battiste:** Madam Chair, I think we need to continue talking about this until we figure out a solution. Keep in mind that this is not something we are just talking about in Canada. I just came back from the United Nations where they were having this very same discussion in the United States, New Zealand and Australia and asking how they can all do better. They are coming to us for the steps we have taken on having a public inquiry. This is a greater global issue that comes with indigenous people and colonization. We need to fix it and we need to continue talking until we have—

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** We have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Lakeland.

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC):** Madam Chair, I represent nine indigenous communities, first nations and Métis settlements across the 35,000 square kilometres of Lakeland, among 52 municipalities of different sizes, mostly small communities in rural areas.

Near St. Paul, Canada's first indigenous-owned and directed Blue Quills University, once a residential school, stands as a reminder of successive government policies that interfered in families, broke the bonds between children and parents, extended relatives and communities, involved barbaric abuse and led to children becoming adults cut off from their cultural identity and belonging. My own family background is one with a social services-caused family gap from Ojibway relatives. That, among other government policies and laws that prevented indigenous people from being in control of their own lives, caused trauma that has impacted generations and the reality of disproportionate socio-economic, domestic violence and crime-related challenges experienced by indigenous people in Canada.

Local indigenous people turned more than four decades of hurt into hope, and Blue Quills now offers jobs training and degrees in first nations languages, focuses on restoring indigenous languages and cultures to contribute to intergenerational healing, and offers all Canadians information about residential schools.

Today, Blue Quills, like on the grounds of so many other former residential schools across the country, is also identifying the remains of children who died there and were never returned to their families.

Indigenous women and girls are still being taken. They are going missing from their families and communities in Canada.

The facts are brutal. Indigenous women and girls are disproportionately affected by all forms of violence. At a parliamentary committee, experts testified that 52% of human trafficking victims are indigenous. Horrifically, the average age of exploitation of an indigenous girl is just 12 years old.

Many reports show that indigenous women are more likely to experience intimate partner violence and more severe harm than non-indigenous women. Indigenous youth under the age of 14 comprise fewer than 8% of all Canadian children but represent 52% of children in foster and adoptive care. Having a child in the welfare sys-

tem is also the most common feature among women and girls trapped in prostitution.

In 2019, the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls made 231 recommendations. Two years went by and we waited for the Liberal government's action plan. This is the same government that claims to prioritize the relationship with indigenous people above all else. It is a lengthy process that has not yet delivered better outcomes and has resulted in many participants calling it toxic, flawed and unsafe.

The government failed to address one of the core elements that any plan has, which is an obligation to the victims and survivors, their families and all indigenous women and girls to ensure their voices are reflected so that indigenous women and girls today and future generations can live safely and freely.

Communities in and around Lakeland mark Red Dress Day in many ways. Last year in Cold Lake at Joe Hefner Park, Fawn Wood and the Kehewin Native Dance Theatre performed a tribute while family members of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls shared their tragedy and grief.

The Mannawanis Native Friendship Centre in St. Paul helped amplify voices of victims and their loved ones through a red dress runway, along with a traditional pipe ceremony, feast and round dance.

The Bonnyville Friendship Centre created a window display that embraces those who are still missing and victims of murder. For two weeks, the red sand project in front of Bonnyville's town hall raises awareness of human trafficking victims through grains of red sand that fill sidewalk cracks and symbolize people who have fallen through them.

People of all backgrounds in Lakeland want to see transformative change to paternalistic government policies that hold indigenous people back and cost a lot of tax dollars in a lot of bloated bureaucracies and lobby groups. However, they often do not actually get to local communities and do not seem to make actual differences in the outcomes, well-being and self-sufficiency of indigenous communities so indigenous people everywhere can live safely and peacefully with opportunities and hope for their future.

Indigenous people in Canada have higher unemployment and poverty rates, lower levels of education, disproportionately more inadequate housing and poorer health outcomes. These at-risk factors, by-products of generations of government policies and barriers, are directly related to the disproportionate vulnerability of indigenous people in Canada and involvement with the criminal justice system.

Since Lakeland first elected me in 2015, I have consistently called on the government to implement real measures to protect victims and stop the revolving door of repeat offenders that impacts everyone.

• (2155)

Three of the five communities in Alberta with the highest crime rates are in Lakeland, and like violent crime across Canada, rural crime has spiked under the Liberals. More than half of rural crime victims are indigenous. In Alberta, with the second highest number of cases of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls of all the provinces, the homicide rate of indigenous women is more than seven times that of non-indigenous women and higher than the national average.

The highest percentage of indigenous women who go missing in Alberta are over the age of 31, and a vast majority are mothers. Indigenous women 18 and under are 23% of missing women and 10% of murder victims, and 40% of indigenous people experience sexual or physical violence by an adult before the age of 15. More than half of them aged 55 and older have experienced the same, twice as high as those who are 15 to 34. More than a quarter of indigenous women experience sexual violence by an adult during their childhood, compared with 9% of non-indigenous women, 6% of indigenous men and 3% of non-indigenous men.

From 2015 to 2020, the average homicide rate of indigenous victims was six times higher than the homicide rate of non-indigenous victims, and the homicide rates for indigenous people are particularly high in the Prairies and the territories.

This is obviously a crisis, involving many complex factors, that requires action from government, so with a broken heart and a little bit of a sense of rage, I want to talk about what the Liberals have done.

The vast majority of violent crime in Canada is committed by repeat offenders, and indigenous people are disproportionately victims of violent crime, but after eight years, violent crime is up 32% across Canada and gang-related homicides are up a shocking 92%. A top concern indigenous leaders raise with me every time we meet in Lakeland is about more police presence and frontline support to combat growing gang activities in their communities.

These days, the justice minister claims to want to fix the very broken system he created, but despite all of these tragic facts, I want to read, verbatim, the law the Liberals passed. It says, "In making a decision under this Part, a peace officer, justice or judge shall give primary consideration to the release of the accused at the earliest reasonable opportunity and on the least onerous conditions". That is explicit that the top priority at a bail hearing is to release as quickly and easily as possible, even for the most violent accused. How does that protect indigenous victims and innocent indigenous people in Canada?

Even more appalling are the Liberals' changes through Bill C-5, which now make many serious offences eligible for conditional sentencing, house arrest and community service. I will list those crimes for which convicted offenders can now get house arrest: human trafficking, sexual assault, kidnapping, abduction of kids under 14, criminal harassment, prison breach, motor vehicle theft, theft

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over \$5,000, being in someone else's house unlawfully, breaking and entering, and arson.

Again, this includes sexual assault, kidnapping, human trafficking, abduction of kids under 14. These are the very crimes that indigenous women and girls are disproportionately victims of. How does this honour indigenous victims of these crimes? How does it possibly do anything to stop it? It is no wonder that deterrence does not seem to be a factor.

Obviously, improvements must also be made in supporting and preventing at-risk youth from taking dangerous paths in the first place, and in corrections around mental health and addictions treatment, skills training and reducing recidivism.

Certainly indigenous communities take their own diverse cultural approaches to punishment, accountability and making amends, but these Liberal changes on bail and serious crimes also create an obvious perpetual catch-and-release system that does not protect the most vulnerable populations and victims. It does not protect indigenous women and girls, or anyone else for that matter.

The Liberals have taken years and have announced hundreds of millions of dollars to set up projects, plans, roundtables, frameworks and photo ops, but indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians alike are right to ask what it is achieving. They ask how it makes sense in the context of a government that simultaneously reduces penalties for the severe crimes of which indigenous women and girls are disproportionately victims and survivors of, while enabling serious criminals to serve sentences in their living rooms while their victims and peaceful neighbours live in fear?

On Red Dress Day, let indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians together demand better, more than performative words and empty promises, but real action and real change.

• (2200)

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Chair, the hon. member spoke quite a bit about repeat offenders and about the tough-on-crime approach Conservatives like to talk about these days.

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We are here on Red Dress Day to talk about murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, and I think informing our discussion must be the calls for justice from the national inquiry, which took place just a few years ago. I have read through those calls for justice. When they come to police reforms in our justice system, I do not see calls for the kinds of changes the member talked about in her speech. How does she reconcile the gap between what she is talking about this evening and what we are hearing from the national inquiry and those calls for justice?

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:** Madam Chair, notwithstanding that I am a person of actual Ojibwa descent myself, I guess I appreciate him telling me what my opinion should be. I am saying exactly what indigenous leaders and community members in Lakeland tell me. The other thing is that I also stand here as a member who, in my first term, put forward a motion to focus on rural crime, and with the help of the NDP, made valuable amendments to that motion, including a concentrated, comprehensive analysis and assessment of the partnerships and resourcing between municipal, provincial, federal and indigenous policing to ensure that indigenous communities are safe and that innocent and law-abiding indigenous Canadians can live safely and peacefully in their own communities.

In terms of the Liberal government's lack of action on some of these low-hanging fruit for the calls to action, that is the federal government's job. I guess I would encourage him to ask his coalition partners, who he is propping up, what they are actually going to do, and on what timeline, to actually protect indigenous women and girls and all indigenous Canadians.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Madam Chair, tonight we have heard a great deal of conversation. We have heard, from the Liberals and the Conservatives, quite compassionate speeches about how many people have had to reflect and learn. I did not hear that in the member's speech, and I want to take this as an opportunity to ensure the member can learn from someone I have learned from in my own life who is a resident of Lakeland.

His name is Dr. James Makokis, a resident of Lakeland and one of the most fantastic physicians we have in our country who helps and treats trans youth, in particular, trans youth in indigenous communities. He works in the Kehewin first nations. He says that FNI-HB and institutional barriers for first nations to access gender-affirming care make it difficult to get. There are access barriers and the government is not participating in reducing those barriers.

Would the member speak directly to how important it is to support trans lives in Lakeland and to ensure that doctors, like Dr. James Makokis, can continue to ensure that his patients of the Kehewin first nations and the trans youth can get the access to this life-saving and life-affirming treatment they need?

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:** Madam Chair, I have enjoyed working with that member over the years, especially to get the issue of Métis settlements onto the federal radar and also I represent his family members, relatives and friends in Fishing Lake and Lakeland.

I just wanted to say I know Janice Makokis very well. My husband knows Dr. James Makokis as well, so I thank the member for raising those familiar names, with whom we have been friends for a long time. I am glad to hear the member talk about him and the bar-

riers that he is describing for vulnerable people trying to access services. Again, I think he needs to ask the party in power, the Liberal government his party is propping up right now, exactly what it is that it is doing, and on what timelines, to remove barriers, so that people can access services they need.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Madam Chair, I do appreciate the opportunity to once again participate in this very important conversation. I do appreciate the words from my colleague from Lakeland. They were very wise, indeed.

I would like to have her conversation focus now on removing the “Ottawa knows best” mentality that has been in existence for 150-plus years. We all know, or we all should know, the devastating impacts of that policy by successive governments. How can we get to the point where indigenous communities are charting their own path in a true nation-to-nation relationship?

• (2205)

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:** Madam Chair, I believe that successive generations of government policies that have been barriers to indigenous people and indigenous communities, in almost every aspect of their lives, have led to the disproportionate challenges today.

My own view is that more top-down, big-government bureaucracies and money getting lost in layers of administration is actually not making any change. I think the emphasis should be on the bottom up. It should be on indigenous-led and -directed initiatives, programming and organizations, and I think that the federal government, over generations, has proven that. In very core ways, it has failed indigenous people, and that is because there are layers of bureaucracy and barriers to indigenous people and communities being able to control their own lives and to be able to be self-determining, to be able to be self-sufficient and to have opportunities and hope for the future.

However, the key thing is that I think any and all changes must be driven by indigenous communities, indigenous leaders and indigenous organizations, for indigenous communities.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Chair, I went to Winnipeg last month, and one victim told me she did not want to continue, she was fed up, she wanted to give up and that she was hearing a lot of rhetoric but seeing little in the way of action plans.

What does the member think of the fact that, for many years, successive governments have not produced the results that communities want and expect?

[English]

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:** Madam Chair, I share the member's view and frustration, and I heard the exact same thing from indigenous people whom I represent. I also have experiences in my life of loved ones going missing and being murdered.

I hear from indigenous people and, increasingly, from non-indigenous people who have more and more of an awareness of the many factors that have led to the kinds of situations that indigenous people disproportionately experience and suffer through today. The member and every other Canadian are quite right to say it is time for the words to turn into action. In fact, it is catastrophically long overdue for actions to meet those words, and for real change and real outcomes to be delivered on behalf of indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians all across the country.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Chair, as we debate Red Dress Day today, there is a tremendous amount of support for meaningful action to save lives. However, I wonder if the member for Lakeland has reflected on the recommendations in the inquiry for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit peoples. We have had those recommendations now for years, and they have not been implemented. I wonder if the member has any thoughts on which ones she believes would be the most meaningful as well as creating this new alert.

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:** Madam Chair, we do support the creation of the red dress alert.

I mentioned the low-hanging fruit, although I should not be flip-pant about the complexity of it. It seems to me that of the really obvious, outstanding calls to action that have been neglected by this government so far, it is the standardization of protocols for policies and practices that ensure all cases are thoroughly investigated; the establishment of the national task force to review and, if required, reinvestigate cases across Canada; and, ensuring protection orders are available, accessible, promptly issued and effectively serviced and resourced to protect victims. It seems to me that these are actions that should have been delivered by now. I do not quite understand what the hold up is.

What all of us have to reflect on is more than words and announcements. As the former commissioner said, the government must do more than show us the budgets that it has spent and the line items attached. It must be prepared to show us how it has affected people's lives. That is what I am most concerned about: real action to better people's lives and their futures.

• (2210)

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I am sharing my time today with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

It is an honour to speak in this place, located on the traditional and unceded territory of the of the Algonquin Anishinabe people. “Unceded” is another word for “unsurrendered”, which means taken without permission or agreement, like so many of the women and girls we will remember today, who were taken by force from their families and loved ones.

I am from the traditional territory of Fort William First Nation, and I represent a vast geographic area that includes many first nations communities that have been deeply impacted by decades of racist policies imposed by colonialism. Of course, my region is home to indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, who have to fight daily for dignity, safety and their inherent right to exist in their communities and hometowns. All across my riding

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and indeed this country, many have disappeared, been tortured or died despite these efforts and those of their families. Many indigenous women and girls exist daily with threats, intimidation and overt racism.

Friday is Red Dress Day, a sacred day to remember sisters, daughters, aunties and loved ones. Each dress serves as a reminder of a life that ended too soon and is a recognition of those who are living in constant fear. This is the reality for indigenous women and girls. It is a manifestation of a country formed by displacement, a colonial and patriarchal system imposed on indigenous culture and a dehumanization of indigenous lives and bodies, especially of women and girls.

The recent discoveries of the bodies of women in Winnipeg dumps are horrific examples of these long-held perspectives. How much clearer can it be? Despite public outrage, it was not as shocking as it should have been. After all, finding naked, raped indigenous bodies is something many Canadians have heard about for a long time.

The first time I heard this was with the discovery of the body of Sandra Johnson, who was murdered in February 1992, her body dumped on a frozen river and the crime still unsolved. There are so many names, including Rena Fox from my region, a mother of four who was murdered in February 2003, her body dumped on a rural road, her four children left without their mom and her killer still at large. They are just two women in a list that is so long, and the stories go on and on.

Eighty-one per cent of indigenous women who are placed in child welfare systems will experience physical or sexual violence. Imagine that. A system with the stated goal of protecting children is doing exactly the opposite.

Changing colonial, patriarchal systems is not easy work. Governments at all levels must invest and change laws. Organizations must change governance and add indigenous people and, importantly, cede power.

However, change is happening. I have had the immense honour of signing four agreements with indigenous nations and the provinces to return care and control of family services to communities. A total of seven of these agreements are in place, with more under way. Each ceremony is extremely moving, with a recognition of loss and the hope of healing.

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This spring, the government signed an amended settlement agreement to compensate first nations children and their families who suffered harm and pain by Canada's discriminatory underfunding of the child welfare system. This settlement is an expensive reminder to Canada that fiscal discrimination must end and has no place in the budgets of Canada or any order of government.

The federal Liberals ended long-standing discrimination in primary and secondary education funding, are investing to close the infrastructure gap and are taking significant steps to ensure economic reconciliation. These are all important factors in protecting women and girls, as the national inquiry's final report noted. Called the "social determinants of health", they help to prevent violence, abuse and risks that lead to murdered or missing women and girls.

For the decade under Stephen Harper, the party opposite refused calls for a national inquiry into the situation of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and it maintained inequities in funding for water, infrastructure, child welfare and education. However, in 2016, the Liberal government launched that inquiry and reformed the way education is funded. The government set provincial education formulas as a new minimum base, and agreed to modifications that address specific first nations needs and priorities. To match the policy, the government invested \$781 million, increasing the national education funding formula by 52%.

The way to make a difference for indigenous women and girls is through the tools of equity and self-determination and through a relentless commitment to truth. Then and only then will we see an end to this tragedy. We have begun this work with indigenous peoples and we must be relentless in the next steps.

• (2215)

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Madam Chair, I want to bring to the minister's attention that graphically describing some of the violence that has occurred impacts survivors. It impacts indigenous families that have lost loved ones. I would ask her to reflect on the language she uses in this House, especially knowing that there are families tuning in.

The recent budget named the need for a red dress alert, but it failed to provide funding and a timeline for when it is going to happen. Could the minister outline right now what she is going to do, how much money is being provided and when this will be put in place?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Madam Chair, I appreciate the comments by the member opposite, in particular about retraumatization of victims. I agree, and I am grateful for the reminder. I have also reflected on the fact that it is difficult to discuss this without, for me at least, reflecting on the serious and ongoing nature of the violence that women are facing every single day. However, it is an important point in terms of how I speak about this, particularly in public forums.

In terms of the budget and the alert, the commitment of this government is clear. We have invested historic amounts of money in many of the calls to action that are very significant, including, for example, closing the infrastructure gap and some of the inequities that exist in child welfare and education, as well as the very difficult job of closing a number of other gaps that put women, girls and, indeed, all indigenous people at risk.

We are going to continue that work. It is not easy, and it is not simple, but it is certainly worthwhile.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Chair, I want to follow up on the question by my hon. colleague from Victoria. The notion of a red dress alert is critical. It will need funds. Can the minister give us a sense of how likely it is that this will be implemented with adequate resources and exactly when?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Madam Chair, I can say that this government is laser-focused on all the calls to action. I will work with my colleague, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, to make sure that we are doing this in an appropriate fashion, in full consultation with indigenous partners and in an expeditious way to ensure that there are as many tools as possible to protect indigenous women.

I will say, as the Minister of Indigenous Services, that my focus remains on the social determinants of health, on the preventive factors that actually lead to families that remain intact and reduce the risk factors for women and girls that many members in this House have spoken to. The risk factors are increased by things like poverty, exclusion, racism and underfunding. I continue to focus on them in the work that I do, day in and day out.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Chair, one issue is of particular concern for indigenous peoples. The minister talked about education as a key component in supporting opportunities. In British Columbia, one of the first acts of the former minister of advanced education, Melanie Mark, was to ensure that children in care and coming out of care would have access to free education in British Columbia.

If the minister really believes in supporting indigenous, Métis and Inuit peoples to thrive, would she call publicly for the government to fund an educational program for all indigenous peoples across the country who are coming out of care?

• (2220)

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Madam Chair, in fact, part of the work that the government has been doing is to improve what is called post-majority care for people coming out of the child welfare system and ensuring that supports extend beyond these people's emergence from the system.

I want to pick up, though, on the member opposite's rightful focus on post-secondary education. It is wonderful that B.C. is pursuing this. It is an example of a partnership with a province that can go a long way. In fact, I think we have an untapped source of incredible talent in indigenous peoples, and I spend a lot of my time thinking about how we can accelerate—

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** I have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Chair, it is an honour to stand here on the lands of the Algonquin Anishinabe people. To them I say *meegwetch*.

I am moved to say the power of the red dress symbol has been overwhelming. One moment that indicates the power of the red dresses hanging empty of the women's bodies who should be living and walking with us was the RCMP's reaction to the Fairy Creek encampment of largely indigenous land protectors and forest defenders. In a certain part of the Fairy Creek protest area they had hung red dresses everywhere. The violence with which the RCMP made sure they tore down all the red dresses and threw them away was indicative of some of the larger problems I think we face in terms of the culture of violence and racism.

The report of the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, two-spirit plus inquiry made it very clear that when they looked at the culture within law enforcement, it was largely defined by colonialism, racism, bias and discrimination. There are many important recommendations in the inquiry that we have had now for so many years, and so many recommendations have not been implemented. I think of the recommendation that if we want to stop a genocide of indigenous women and girls, we need a guaranteed livable income to ensure that no one lives in poverty.

It is pretty obvious that indigenous women and girls are going missing because the only way to get anywhere is to hitchhike. They are vulnerable and not safe as there is no public transport. What are they to do? The inquiry called for safe and reliable public transportation, particularly in our remote and rural areas. It also called for an end to man camps, the resource exploitation camps. Obviously, it is not universal and it is not all the men who work there, but many times there is a direct correlation between the man camps that build pipelines and dams and the exploitation and killing of women.

In the report after re-reading it in light of tonight's debate on Red Dress Day, we become very aware of a tone of voice, a framing, a verb tensing throughout the report, which is really about trying to find justice for the women who have disappeared, trying to solve the cases for the women who have been killed, to look at systemic changes throughout society. There are over 50 pages of calls for justice and very important recommendations, but the tone of voice and the tensing is around finding out what happened to women and girls who have been gone a long time. It does not speak to the urgency of how we stop this genocide.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre has said frequently in this place that she is at ground zero for the assault on women and girls, but we also know that sometimes indigenous women and girls are killed and we know who killed them. Chantel Moore was killed on

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June 4, 2020, by a member of the Edmundston police force. We know his name. We just do not know why he chose to kill Chantel Moore. We have a police culture problem. We have an urgent need to make sure the police, when an indigenous woman or girl goes missing, respond the same way they would as if it were their own sister, daughter, mother or wife who had gone missing.

That does mean that we change our verb tense. That means we stop looking back at things that have happened and find ways to try to make them right, that we provide the services for women who have been assaulted. Many recommendations in the report go to that, but nowhere in the inquiry for murdered and missing indigenous women and girls do we find anything as immediate and proactive and life-saving as saying we need a red dress alert. We need people's phones to go off. We need people to go out and look, just as we do on an Amber Alert for a missing child. We need to actually take the steps that are required for one of our dear, dear friends; mothers, daughters, aunties, sisters.

Every indigenous woman I know has lost someone close to her. It must stop.

• (2225)

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Chair, the member mentioned public transit, and I think safe transportation is one of the things we can do to ensure that people in our communities, like indigenous women and girls and two-spirited people, are safe as they move between towns and cities, especially in rural Canada.

Since Greyhound cancelled its service in Canada, we have potentially the worst passenger service in 100 years, combined with the failure of our passenger rail system. From the Minister of Transport, we have seen a real neglect of this file and a failure to show the kind of federal leadership we need, especially in providing bus service across provincial borders.

Some provinces have neglected rural transit entirely. Luckily, my province of British Columbia is not one of them. The B.C. government has invested quite heavily in northwest B.C. in transit services.

We need to see federal leadership. I wonder if the member could provide her thoughts on what we need to do to convince the government to ensure that the gap left by Greyhound is filled as quickly as possible with affordable, safe, reliable and interconnected bus service.

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**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Madam Chair, I could not agree more with my hon. colleague, but I will say this. I have met with the current Minister of Transport frequently on this, and I am aware, as I saw the letter, actually, that he sent a letter to every provincial minister of transport asking to meet to discuss how we can deliver exactly what the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has set out and exactly what is in the inquiry. Not a single provincial minister answered the letter, so I think we have to start holding provincial governments to account for the needs we all have. Let us bring the level of transportation for passengers, particularly low-income and marginalized people, up to the standards of Mexico, shall we? That would be a big leap forward.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.):** Madam Chair, as part of this discussion about indigenous women and girls and two-spirited people, I think about the 2SLGBTQ+ community and how the recent rhetoric harming the trans community feeds into some of the issues we are seeing around missing and murdered indigenous women. I am wondering if the member could comment on that.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Madam Chair, the violence and hatred that are now being exhibited toward trans people well beyond Canada and within Canada should be alarming to every one of us. As a society, we were embracing and enjoying *RuPaul's Drag Race*. Drag shows are about talent, exuberance and pride in who we are without all the stigma of ignorant times.

Now we know that people who are trans are at risk increasingly. We need to stand up for trans women and their rights. We need to ensure that law enforcement understands this is not acceptable and, more than that, that society as a whole condemns it.

• (2230)

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Madam Chair, this has been a very emotional debate, but I will tell members something I have found quite off-putting. At a time when there is a crisis, there is boasting about how well we are doing, with families grieving throughout the country. I have found it more than insensitive. It is detached and not reflective of showing our humanity in this place. This is not a partisan issue. It is a human being issue. Women, girls and trans women are fighting for their lives.

Some people have done well in the House, but I would say that boasting about government announcements at a time of crisis, when we have unanimously, in the House, called this a Canada-wide crisis, is disturbing to me and makes me question the government: Is it just talking, or is it actually going to act to save lives?

I am wondering—

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Madam Chair, I am honoured to respond to the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre. I can add nothing to her words. I hope that I can be worthy of her thinking of me as a good ally, and I agree.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr  anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Chair, it is with a great deal of emotion that I rise this evening on behalf of the Bloc Qu  b  cois to close this debate after my incredible colleague from Manicouagan, who spoke earlier this evening.

From the outset, I would like to remind the House that our political party has repeatedly reiterated its commitment to being an ally to the first nations. We believe that it is critical that we collectively remember all missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA persons to honour their memory.

I will go over some of our proposals, and then I will talk about Red Dress Day. I will close my speech by reminding the House of the origin of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

First, we called for the creation of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and we supported its findings. We continue to support initiatives aimed at ending the impact of Canadian colonialism on indigenous peoples.

The government has been slow to implement some calls to justice. Although it publicly underlines the importance of reconciliation, the chronic underfunding of indigenous people in Canada continues. The federal government's inability to make sufficient investments in social and affordable housing, health services and infrastructure, water in particular, in indigenous communities has devastating consequences for indigenous people, their families and communities, in particular indigenous women and girls.

Massive efforts and investments must be made to honour the federal government's commitments and put an end to the crisis being experienced by indigenous women. The investments being made are insufficient to erase the harmful effects of colonialism. The resulting trauma is still deeply felt today and keeps women in particular trapped in a cycle of violence and vulnerability.

The Bloc Qu  b  cois is calling for true reconciliation. It must be social, cultural and economic. It must enable indigenous people to free themselves from the harms they were subjected to, and it must be done with the communities, not by imposing a Canadian vision of what reconciliation is.

The Bloc Qu  b  cois has always been a strong advocate of nation-to-nation discourse, and we reiterate that position once again. May 5 is Red Dress Day, the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It is a time to honour our missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people. We believe that one way to do this is by accelerating the implementation of the calls to action of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Second, Red Dress Day is about honouring the victims, raising awareness of this crisis and encouraging governments to take action to address racist and gender-based violence against indigenous people in Canada.



I saw the REDress Project, which is now a permanent exhibit at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, when I visited Winnipeg for a symposium on human trafficking and the resulting sexual exploitation that disproportionately affects indigenous women and girls, who often wind up missing or murdered.

Third, I would like to talk about how the national inquiry came about. In 2014, the issue finally broke into the headlines as a potential systemic problem after the RCMP unveiled its figures on the number of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. The numbers speak for themselves. A total of 1,007 indigenous women and girls went missing or were murdered between 1980 and 2012. There are still 105 women unaccounted for, who disappeared under unexplained or suspicious circumstances. Between 2004 and 2014, as the murder rate fell across Canada, six times more indigenous women and girls were murdered than non-indigenous. Taking advantage of the momentum generated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work, many groups held demonstrations on October 4, 2014, demanding a national inquiry into the causes of the disappearance and murder of indigenous women and a national action plan.

It is also important to note that there is still a disproportionate number of indigenous women in Canadian prisons, many of whom were victims of violence themselves. That being said, pressure was mounting on the federal government, which until that point had ignored all calls for action.

Less than a year later, in 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada called for a national inquiry into the disproportionate victimization of indigenous women and girls.

• (2235)

On June 3, 2019, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls released its final report, "Reclaiming Power and Place", after more than two years of gathering testimony from indigenous knowledge keepers, experts, and 1,484 survivors and family members of missing and murdered women and girls.

The report contains 231 separate calls for justice. These are legal imperatives, not mere recommendations. They call for immediate action and are directed at indigenous and non-indigenous governments, institutions, social service providers, industries and Canadians from all walks of life.

In Canada, according to 2018 figures, 25.1% of non-indigenous women reported having been physically or sexually abused by an intimate partner, while this percentage rises to 43.7% among indigenous women. Furthermore, 38.2% of non-indigenous women have been physically or sexually abused by someone other than an intimate partner, but this percentage rises to 54.9% among indigenous women.

Internationally, Canada finally signed on to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on June 21, 2021, when the related act received royal assent. This is one of the most important human rights issues facing Canada. The purpose of the act is to affirm the UN declaration as an international human rights instrument that can help interpret and apply Canadian law. This act requires the Government of Canada, in consultation and co-opera-

tion with indigenous peoples, to take all measures necessary to ensure that the laws of Canada are consistent with the declaration, to prepare and implement an action plan to achieve the objectives of the declaration, and to table an annual report on the progress made in aligning federal laws with the action plan.

### *Government Orders*

The act requires that the action plan include measures to address injustices, combat prejudice and eliminate all forms of violence, racism and discrimination against indigenous peoples, including elders, youth, children, persons with disabilities, women, men and two-spirit and gender-diverse persons. It aims to promote mutual respect and understanding, as well as good relations, including through human rights education. The plan must include measures related to the monitoring, oversight, follow-up, recourse or remedy or other accountability with respect to the implementation of the declaration. This action plan must also include measures for monitoring the implementation of the plan itself and for reviewing and amending the plan.

In their descriptions of encounters, families and survivors who spoke at the national inquiry consistently linked their experiences to colonialism, both historic and modern forms, in one of the following four ways: historical, multi-generational and inter-generational trauma; social and economic marginalization; maintaining the status quo; institutional lack of will; and refusal to recognize the expertise of indigenous women and girls and their capacity to act. The Canadian government and the clergy planned the collective trauma with the ultimate goal of driving all indigenous communities to extinction. Those communities have since been left to deal with the consequences alone.

We might say that indigenous communities need to fight. Quebecers and Canadians alike need to be aware of the collective trauma experienced in these communities, understand it and make sure these atrocities never happen again. In listening to the testimony of indigenous women, Quebec Native Women counted four types of violence: structural violence, institutional violence, family violence and personal violence. That last type of violence covers actions such as physical violence, psychological manipulation and financial control, and it involves individuals.

In conclusion, the government must act on the report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls on the occasion of Red Dress Day, which seeks to raise awareness of this problem. We are calling on the government to take concrete measures to protect indigenous populations, to recognize the disproportionate level of violence faced by indigenous women and to stand in solidarity with them. We must commit to putting an end to racism and systemic violence against indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people. As elected officials, we must take action and not settle for a simple speech about this situation.

*Government Orders*

I would like to point out one last thing because the numbers speak for themselves. In a report released in May 2014, the RCMP documented 1,181 cases involving indigenous women, including 1,017 who were murdered and 164 who went missing, between 1980 and 2012 when this all happened. Some estimate that more than 4,000 indigenous women are missing. According to the national inquiry, it is impossible to determine the exact number of murdered and missing women.

The fake feminism must stop, and there must be action.

• (2240)

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Madam Chair, I thank the member for her speech and all the work she is doing to end gender-based violence. We need the government to provide immediate investments for a red dress alert system to notify the public when an indigenous woman, girl or two-spirit person is reported missing.

Budget 2023 recognized the need for an alert system. However, the Liberals refuse to fund and set a deadline for its implementation. The member for Winnipeg Centre, the member for Nunavut and the member for Edmonton Griesbach have been fighting hard for far too long. The families and victims have been bearing the burden of change for far too long.

Can the member tell us how urgent it is for the government to take action right away?

**Ms. Andr  anne Larouche:** Madam Chair, one thing is certain. It is well worth looking into this issue of the alert.

In my speech, I talked about the government and about us as elected officials. I talked about the wrongs that have been done over the years. Since we are talking about action, I think that we are at the point now where we need to raise public awareness of this issue and recognize that missing and murdered indigenous women and girls do not receive the same treatment as others do.

Finally, this type of alert could perhaps make people aware of the fact that indigenous women do not get the same treatment when they go missing and that people are not as concerned about them. That is probably what the red dress alert system could be used for. I know that my colleague from the Standing Committee on the Status of Women firmly believes in it, and I think it is worth looking into. After that, if it is worthwhile, then the government will have to provide funding and walk the talk.

[English]

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Madam Chair, I have the pleasure of serving with my hon. colleague on the status of women committee. I am really proud of our status of women committee. We come from different parties, but tonight we showed up in full force, fighting to end gender-based violence in all forms.

I am very moved by my colleague from the Bloc on a regular basis, by her allyship with indigenous women and her genuine desire to understand the issue and find solutions. One of the things that we have called for, or that has been talked about regularly, in the status of women committee is to implement a guaranteed livable basic income. Gender-based or women's organizations, the organizations that are trying to end violence against women, girls and gender-diverse folks, support, almost unanimously, the critical need for a

guaranteed livable basic income if we are going to tackle gender-based violence.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls call for justice 4.5 calls for exactly that. I am wondering if my hon. colleague supports that.

• (2245)

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr  anne Larouche:** Madam Chair, there is a clear link between women who are victims of violence, both indigenous and non-indigenous, and precarious financial situations.

We must work on making these indigenous women and girls financially self-sufficient again. There are many ways to give them the financial means they need to escape the cycle of violence. I mentioned it in my speech.

My colleague spoke about the committee. I am certainly frustrated to note that every time we talk about a study, we find that indigenous women are disproportionately affected. Why? It is because they are trapped in a cycle of poverty and insecurity.

We recently studied the situation of women in the resource development industry in western Canada to determine how and why, in those cases, women are victims of sexual violence. Why are they? It is because they, too, are kept in a cycle of poverty. It is because the government does not invest enough in infrastructure.

There are so many ways to improve all that and to financially empower indigenous women and girls so they can finally escape the cycle of violence.

I completely agree with my colleague. We have to think about giving them back their self-sufficiency and empower them to move away from their attackers and oppressors and escape the cycle of violence.

**Mrs. Maril  ne Gill (Manicouagan, BQ):** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for her commitment to the cause of indigenous women and girls. I have a question for her.

She mentioned something that I said myself earlier. Last year, we were here talking about the same subject. Despite the fact that we likely think about this every day, I still feel we are not making any progress.

Where would my colleague like us to be at this time next year? Why does she think that so little progress has been made to date?

**Ms. Andr  anne Larouche:** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague from Manicouagan for her question. Unfortunately, I do not know why we are here once again.

I so wish I did not have to be here tonight talking about this issue. I wish that when we talk about feminism, we could put words into action.

It is not right that, in 2023, we still have to point out that indigenous women and girls are being killed simply because they are indigenous women and girls, because they are victims of discrimination. Why are so many women still victims of violence in our society?

Why is it that when women and girls are assaulted, even in the world of sports or in the military, it is only when there is a sensationalized case in the media that the government finally thinks about doing something?

We know the solutions. There have been plenty of reports on various issues that affect women. I could even talk about EI. We know the solutions. Why are the reports shelved? Why are they not implemented? There is the financial aspect, but I have the impression that political will is also a major factor.

As I said at the end of my speech, the fake feminism must stop. Tears are all well and good, but it is time for action.

• (2250)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Chair, I thank our esteemed colleague from Shefford for her passion and her commitment to taking action. I have a brief question for her.

As feminists here in Parliament, are we clear on the fact that we must immediately bring in a red dress alert, as we have been discussing this evening?

**Ms. Andr  anne Larouche:** Madam Chair, one thing is certain: An alert system could engage the public. I answered that question earlier.

### *Government Orders*

Beyond what we as elected officials can do and what the government can do, there is also a need to raise public awareness of this issue. I hope that we can open up a broader debate and make people aware of the fact that, in 2023, indigenous communities are disproportionately victimized. We need to realize that they are victims of a precarious situation because we put them there and that we do not care enough about them. There is a pressing need to talk to each other nation to nation, to make people aware of the different challenges that affect indigenous communities. Beyond the fact that it could make us think about saving lives, could this alert allow us to open up a debate with the public?

That is also what an alert is for. That discussion needs to take place. It is one way to get the issue out of the House of Commons and into the world and to make as many people as possible aware that we need to talk to each other.

[English]

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** It being 10:52 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 53.1, the committee will rise.

(Government Business No. 24 reported)

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mend  s):** Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 10:52 p.m.)



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