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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 31, 2023

The House met at 2 p.m.

[English]

Prayer

• (1400)

[English]

The Speaker: I understand the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay will be leading us in the singing of the national anthem.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

DE ROCHEBELLE HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday evening, I had the pleasure of once again attending the traditional SOPAR committee dinner at De Rochebelle high school.

The SOPAR committee is made up of dozens of young people who, year after year, without fail, dedicate themselves to raising funds to build wells in southern India. Through good times and bad, they have managed to build over 100 wells in the past 13 years.

I want to congratulate all of the young people, past and present, who helped achieve this feat. Their commitment does them credit. I congratulate them. I also want to underscore the inspired and inspiring work of the staff members who spent countless hours making this involvement possible. My thanks go out to Denys Parent, Nicole Lagacé, Manon Lapolice, Nicolas Blanchet and Marina Gonzalez.

Finally, I would like to say a special word about principal Daniel Lemelin, whose well-deserved retirement is fast approaching. Rochebelle has always had a special place in Daniel's heart, and he always managed to bring people together, whether they were students, teachers or parents.

Daniel reminded me last Thursday that once, in the long-distant past, when I was running for school council president, my campaign slogan was: “Rochebelle can do better”. I would have a hard time campaigning on that slogan all these years later, considering how Rochebelle has thrived under his caring leadership. I thank Daniel for everything and wish him a very happy retirement.

MS AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, May is MS Awareness Month. I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all the different communities and individuals who have participated in events like the MS walk.

This past weekend, in the town of Eastend, over \$11,000 was raised for MS awareness and research. This great event was organized by Donovan Henrion, who has MS himself.

Since my wife was diagnosed a couple years ago, we have both seen first-hand how important this campaign to create awareness really is. Through continued research and development, we will not only continue to help people live with MS, but find a way to repair and cure it. For now, the advancements in treatments have enabled my wife to not just live with MS, but continue to work full time and be the amazing mother, wife and rock for our family that she has always been. She refuses to let this disease define her.

My message to people who have been diagnosed recently is that they are not alone and their diagnosis is not the end of their life as they know it. They will soon learn there is a great community alongside them that is willing to help every step of the way.

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[Translation]

WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, World No Tobacco Day is a good opportunity to remember that, despite decades of efforts, tobacco use is still the leading preventable cause of premature death and disease in Canada. Sadly, tobacco still kills about 48,000 Canadians every year.

Our government recognized the need to do more to protect Canadians' health and inform them of the health risks of tobacco use. That is why, today, our government updated the health-related messages and images printed on cigarette and other tobacco product packaging. This will help prevent the preventable by providing more information on the risks of tobacco use to the health of millions of people in Canada every day. These updated health warning messages will help more Canadians live healthier and avoid tobacco use.

Statements by Members

Together, let us continue to promote healthy, tobacco-free living.

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• (1405)

11TH GALA EDIS

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Jeune Chambre de la Mauricie held the 11th edition of its Gala Edis on May 5 at the Complexe Laviolette in Trois-Rivières.

The gala recognizes young entrepreneurs in the region who have excelled over the past year. Muraluxe, a company in Trois-Rivières, won the ultimate award of business of the year, in addition to an award for innovative business practices.

Marilyne Desaulniers, a media solutions adviser with the company icimédias Mauricie, received the community involvement award in the business people category and was also named volunteer of the year.

I would like to personally thank the Jeune Chambre's executive director, Catherine Lessard, and its president, Célia de Montigny, for their warm welcome and their outstanding work.

Finally, I would like to congratulate all the businesses that were nominated and express my support for the next generation of entrepreneurs in Trois-Rivières.

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[English]

INDSPIRE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a Mi'kmaq elder, whose wisdom, knowledge and persistence will be rightfully recognized during Indigenous History Month.

Albert Marshall, Sr., of Eskasoni, is this year's recipient of the Indspire lifetime achievement award for his life's work to preserve and foster Mi'kmaq teachings and language. Elder Albert Marshall is the innovator of the emerging indigenous knowledge system known as *etuaptmumk*, or two-eyed seeing, a perspective that speaks to the need for both indigenous knowledge and western ways of knowing in all that we do.

Albert teaches that every action we take should be in balance and harmony with our earth. We call this *netukulimk*.

In closing, I could not mention Albert's achievements without also honouring the contributions of his late wife Murdena. Together, they created a wealth of knowledge that continues to inspire future generations.

Wela'liog, Albert. I congratulate him.

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AL HORNING

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to pay tribute to a pillar of Kelowna—Lake Country, Al Horning. It was not too long ago that I did the same for his powerhouse wife, Donna Horning.

Al was known for getting things done and was a fierce advocate of our community, in particular, Rutland, while he served on all three levels of government. He served several terms on Kelowna City Council, as an MLA and as a Progressive Conservative MP from 1988 to 1993.

Al was a mentor and friend. I met him one time at one of his coffee spots, the McDonald's on Highway 33, where he said, "Why don't you come to Rutland?" I said, "Al, what are you talking about? I've been to Rutland many times this past week alone" and let him know the activities, and that there were pictures on my social media. He said, "I don't look at that" in Al's matter-of-fact, to-the-point way.

He contributed so many ways locally within agriculture, the Black Mountain Irrigation District, and sports and recreation organizations. Al was inducted into the Central Okanagan Sports Hall of Fame. The City of Kelowna recently presented Al with the naming of a future roadway, "Al Horning Way".

My heart goes out to the Horning family. Al will always be remembered for setting the bar for community service.

The Speaker: I want to remind the hon. members that S. O. 31s are taking place, and we all want to hear what individual members are telling us about in their riding and what is important to them. I am going to ask everyone to just keep their talking low or whisper to each other rather than talking loudly.

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TIBETAN COMMUNITY IN CANADA

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the Tibetan community in Canada, as we mark the end of Asian Heritage Month.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Canada opened its doors to Tibetan refugees, offering them a chance to rebuild their lives. They were trailblazers. Many were the first non-European refugees to be permanently resettled in Canada as part of a government-sponsored refugee program.

Since that time, Tibetan organizations have been established across the country, with five in Toronto. I think of the Canada Tibet Committee, the Tibetan Women's Association of Ontario and of course, the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre, which is located in my riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Their vibrancy, deeply rooted values of peace, community and caring for others, and rich cuisine and culture greatly enrich our lives. Tibetan humility and modesty are legendary. In Canada we gained with their arrival and we are much stronger because of them.

• (1410)

[Translation]

OPIOID CRISIS

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is shameful that the Conservative leader is relying on fear and moral arguments in his attack on the overdose crisis. He was part of a government that fuelled that crisis and added to the stigma faced by people who needed more compassion. Today, he is trying to continue his party's dogmatic tradition at the expense of Canadians, who deserve better than contempt. He is ignoring the fact that decisions concerning the overdose crisis must be carefully considered and evidence-based. That is hardly surprising, given that his party does not believe in science.

Our government put harm reduction back into the Canadian drugs and substances strategy, when the Conservatives had taken it out in favour of an outdated ideological view of drug policies. Thanks to our government, safe consumption sites have helped prevent over 46,000 overdoses. We must have the courage to abandon repressive policies. We must have the courage to implement an approach based on human rights and dignity.

[English]

The Speaker: Once again, I just want to remind everyone that we are trying to hear what the individual members have to say. If members are going to talk to each other, please whisper to each other. Do not talk out loud.

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LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister, inflationary Liberal deficits have caused a world of hurt.

After their latest carbon tax increases and their \$43-billion deficit-busting budget, the inflationary pain Canadians are feeling continues to rise. Rent and mortgages have doubled. Food inflation stands at 8.3%. Our ability to spend is not infinite. What Canadians want is for inflation to come down now. While millions visit food banks, the Liberals choose to pour fuel on the inflationary fire. The Prime Minister wants Canadians to believe that they have never had it so good.

However, a new day is dawning. A new Conservative prime minister would turn that hurt into hope by ending inflationary deficits, by scrapping the carbon tax on heat, gas and groceries, by cutting taxes and making paycheques powerful again, and by building homes that workers can afford.

It is the common sense of the common people. For their home, my home, our home, let us bring it home.

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ONTARIO DUMP TRUCK ASSOCIATION

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and to welcome to Parliament Hill the Ontario Dump Truck Association.

Statements by Members

The members of this organization play a vital role in coming together to help build essential infrastructure that keeps our communities connected. In my riding of Brampton East, it is always a pleasure to connect with its members to hear about the amazing work this association and its members do. In conversations with my constituent Mr. Jarnail Mand, I got to hear first-hand about the important advocacy this association does on behalf of the industry and hard-working drivers who are always giving back. Seva Food Bank, the Salvation Army and GTA women's shelters are just some of the charities its members generously support. I would like to thank Bob, Sarbjit, Mandy and hundreds of members of this association for their commitment to the betterment of the industry.

I ask everyone in the House to please join me in thanking our hard-working truck drivers for their tremendous contributions to our economy and to building our beautiful country.

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CARBON PRICING

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I remind the government that Atlantic Canada exists east of the Laurentians, and Atlantic Canadians are between a rock and a hard place.

Last year, Newfoundland and Labrador's Liberal premier, Andrew Furey, stated, "Further cost increases at this point will only provide diminishing returns in terms of decarbonization while placing undue economic burdens on the people of this province." All Atlantic premiers agreed, but the Prime Minister did not listen, so here we are in 2023, and Atlantic premiers are demanding that carbon tax 2.0 not be placed on fuel. They know it will have a devastating effect on fuel prices, which, in turn, will increase the cost of goods imported into the region. Carbon tax versions 1 and 2 will cost households in my province, when fully implemented, an extra \$2,166 a year. Carbon tax 2 will be placed even on fuel that fishermen use to land their catch.

It is time for the Prime Minister and his Minister of Environment to listen to the Atlantic premiers and scrap the carbon tax. Atlantic Canadians are not picking up what the government is laying down.

*Statements by Members***NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA**

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that Beijing interfered in the last two federal elections. The Liberals' response was to use their Trudeau Foundation friends to cover it up. The NDP's appearance of standing up to foreign interference is like a bad group-work partner: They arrive late, do nothing, copy others and then boast that the best ideas were their own. I guess the NDP is just an empty "be-woke" suit.

Just yesterday, after the bark and bluster of an NDP motion calling for the resignation of the special rapporteur, the NDP leader walked out of the House right into a media scrum, and dismissed calls to end this Canadian coalition nightmare.

If the New Democrats were serious about wanting to restore confidence in our electoral system, they would do what Canadians are asking: get out of the way and let Conservatives fix what the Liberals have broken.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

FESTA DELLA REPUBBLICA

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on June 2, Italians celebrate *Festa della Repubblica*. This festival marks the victory of democracy and the will of the people over autocracy and oppression.

With peace in Europe undermined by the invasion of Ukraine, we must cherish and remember to commemorate these types of victories. For the Italian diaspora and friends of Italy, this day is also an opportunity to celebrate Italy's rich history and culture. Italians have chosen Canada as their home, bringing with them a spirit of resilience, hard work and commitment to family values. They have contributed to Canada's growth and prosperity.

I invite all MPs to join the *Festa della Repubblica* celebrations in the Speaker's dining room tomorrow, from noon to 1:30 p.m., for a little taste of Italy.

Viva l'Italia! Viva Canada!

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[English]

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability recently released a report on gender-based violence and murder in Canada. The "#CallItFemicide" report, 2018 to 2022, shows gender-based violence and murder are on the rise, and the numbers are chilling.

[Translation]

The report notes a 27% increase in the number of women and girls killed by a male accused compared to 2019. Young women aged 25 to 34 are more likely to be victims. The report also states that one in five female victims killed by a male accused was an indigenous woman or girl.

[English]

The "#CallItFemicide" report shows exactly why Parliament needs to take the national action plan to end gender-based violence seriously. There is also a dire need to ensure that the funding for the indigenous shelter and transitional housing initiative is allocated, which would go a long way to protecting indigenous women from dangerous situations.

Let us immediately do all that we can to end gender-based violence.

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[Translation]

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF MAISON DES FAMILLES DE MERCIER-EST

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to recognize the 25th anniversary of the Maison des familles de Mercier-Est.

The family unit is the foundation of society and the future of Quebec. The Maison des familles de Mercier-Est has been anchored in La Pointe-de-l'Île since 1998. It is a vital organization.

I would like to thank its director, Véronique Coulombe, as well as the entire team and the participating families. The Maison des familles de Mercier-Est is an essential resource and the only organization for families in that neighbourhood.

Through workshops, one-off interventions, support and referrals, the staff members work tirelessly to combat isolation. They create communities and support networks by fostering the enrichment—

The Speaker: I will ask the member to start his speech again, and I am going to ask everyone else to whisper and speak much more quietly.

[English]

We are trying to hear what hon. members have to say, but we are really having a hard time.

[Translation]

The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to recognize the 25th anniversary of the Maison des familles de Mercier-Est.

The family unit is the foundation of society and the future of Quebec. The Maison des familles de Mercier-Est is a vital organization that was established in La Pointe-de-l'Île in 1998.

I would like to thank its director, Véronique Coulombe, as well as the entire team and the participating families. The Maison des familles de Mercier-Est is an essential resource and the only organization for families in that neighbourhood.

Through workshops, one-off interventions, support and referrals, the staff members work tirelessly to combat isolation. They create communities and support networks by fostering the enrichment of the parenting experience. They have helped hundreds of families develop their potential where they live. They help give the children of Mercier-Est equal opportunities.

I want to thank the whole team at the Maison des familles de Mercier-Est, and I wish them a happy 25th anniversary.

* * *

• (1420)

[*English*]

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this May, Canadians celebrated Asian Heritage Month.

One in five Canadians, including my family and many members of the House, traces their roots back to Asia. Asian Canadians have made significant contributions going back to Confederation. In fact, Confederation would not have happened if it were not for the back-breaking labour of Chinese railway workers, who built the railway that laid the constitutional foundations of this federation. Today, the Asian community is a cherished part of our Canadian family. From business to politics, the academy, arts and charity, Asian Canadians play leading roles in Canadian society.

Let us remember the sacrifices Asian Canadians have made. Let us stand in solidarity with Asian Canadians against racism and discrimination, and let us celebrate Asian Canadians for the contributions they have made and continue to make to our home and native land.

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[*Translation*]

MICHEL DENAULT

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great appreciation that I rise today before you and the entire House to pay tribute to a good, kind and gentle man from Gatineau, Quebec, who has dedicated 38 years of his life to serving his country. He spent 10 of those years in the Royal Canadian Air Force, while the last 28 years were spent protecting us, the MPs, and all those who come to the House.

I am talking about the man who is sitting in the Sergeant-at-Arms' chair today, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms Michel Denault.

We all know this man, but what many may not know is that on that terrible day in October 2014, he faced the danger unarmed, ready to give his life to back up his colleague and keep us safe. He disobeyed a direct order to stay back, because that is just who he is. He put our well-being above his own, not just on that day, but every time he entered this place.

Michel Denault's dedication and altruism are not often mentioned, but today I want to recognize just how hard he has worked during his career in the House of Commons. More importantly, I want to thank him.

Oral Questions

On behalf of all parliamentarians, I sincerely thank Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms Michel Denault. We wish him a happy retirement. I want him to know that he will be sorely missed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how many police stations is Beijing operating here in Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you well know, it is completely unacceptable for a foreign government, especially the government of China or others, to interfere in the lives and concerns of Canadians, whether in relation to our citizens, our democracy, our educational establishments or our government institutions. We will continue to ensure that protecting Canadians is a priority. The RCMP is currently following up on all of these police stations.

• (1425)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how many?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows full well that the RCMP is conducting investigations and taking action against these illegal acts in Canada.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister admitted that there were police stations. His government said that all these stations had been shut down. We found out that is not true, that at least two were still operating and that his government had given taxpayer money for those police stations. I will ask my question for the third time: How many police stations is Beijing operating here in Canada? How many?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the RCMP has been tasked with conducting the necessary investigations and laying charges in due course against those attempting to interfere in our democracy. If the Leader of the Opposition is so curious about the details of foreign interference, then he should accept the briefing that has been offered to him by the intelligence services. Then he would no longer not know the details and he could learn about the serious issue of foreign interference. I encourage the Leader of the Opposition to get informed.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the number of police stations controlled by a foreign dictatorship in Canada is not a detail. It would not be a detail if any government had foreign police stations operating on our soil.

Second of all, all Canadians deserve to know the answer. The government claimed that it had shut down all these police stations. Now we know that there are two in operation and that the Prime Minister's government has given taxpayer money to help fund them.

Oral Questions

My simple question is this: How many of Beijing's police stations are operating on Canadian soil today?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Canadians well know, the government takes extremely seriously the issue of foreign interference and has done so since 2015, when we brought in significant measures to counter foreign interference. We continue to do so. The RCMP is quite rightly charged with the responsibility for investigating and following up on these reports of Beijing-funded police stations but, indeed, if the Leader of the Opposition is so—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I must interrupt the right hon. Prime Minister.

I just want to remind everyone of this: The way it works is that you ask a question and then you listen to the answer, whether you like it or not. You cannot keep asking the question over and over again while the person is speaking. I wanted to point that out.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition continues to have questions on foreign interference, as many Canadians do, I would suggest that he actually take our security agencies up on the offer they have made to him of being briefed on all the intelligence related to foreign interference. That way, he does not have to hide behind, to quote the report on this, “a veil of ignorance”, and he can actually work from the facts.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister can brief all Canadians right now. These are police stations that exist to harass and intimidate Canadian citizens on Canadian soil. No real country would allow a foreign dictatorship to run police stations on its soil. The Americans are arresting Beijing's agents in their country.

I will give the Prime Minister the chance to answer the question one last time. How many police stations are being operated by Beijing on Canadian soil?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition were to take this issue of foreign interference seriously as an issue facing diaspora communities and Chinese Canadians, he would be interested in actually understanding the facts around foreign interference. Instead, he chooses to play partisan games. He chooses to make personal attacks against a former governor general instead of actually accepting the need to take this issue seriously. He knows full well that the RCMP's responsibility is to do these investigations and make arrests, and they are actually following up on that.

* * *

[*Translation*]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada no longer has a government worthy of being called democratic.

This Prime Minister refuses to clear up any doubts about his desire to protect secrets that we are only just starting to uncover.

Let us ask the people of Xinjiang how China's dictatorship operates. Let us ask the people of Hong Kong how China operates. Let us ask the Tibetans how the Chinese Communist Party operates. Let us ask the bullied MPs how Xi Jinping, the Chinese president, operates.

Should the Prime Minister not get his act together before going down in history as pandering to a hostile foreign power?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like the leader of the Conservative Party, the leader of the Bloc Québécois is choosing not to look at the facts. He is choosing not to consult the information at his disposal.

We may not agree on the best way to defend our democracy, but we cannot disagree on facts. He is entitled to his own opinions, but not his own facts.

That is why we offered him a briefing on confidential information, but he refused. He prefers to make uninformed attacks rather than understanding the real facts in order to take this issue seriously.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is encouraging an insidious culture of secrecy; China is too.

David Johnston is making a game out of hiding secrets from Canadians and Quebecers, like China would. The Liberals' entire strategy is now obvious: to divert attention from the close ties between Liberal power brokers and China, possibly even to protect the interests of investor friends in China by devising a strategy for accessing secret documents that keeps them secret.

It is not up to David Johnston to determine what I can or cannot see. It is not about me. An independent judge will set the terms of reference of a public inquiry.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we just heard directly from the Bloc Québécois leader that he is choosing not to learn the facts.

He complains about a culture of secrecy. He feels frustrated at the confidential information that our security agencies—

[*English*]

The Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt. I am going to ask the hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe to keep it down, and many others as well.

I will ask the hon. Prime Minister to start over again.

[*Translation*]

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois leader is complaining in an extremely partisan manner about a culture of secrecy. As he is well aware, the fact is that our security intelligence agencies must operate in different ways to protect Canadians, especially when it comes to a foreign force like China.

He is choosing to remain in the dark. He refuses to accept the confidential information we are prepared to share with him so that he can contribute to this debate in a sensible and responsible way in the House—

The Speaker: I am sorry, but there is a discussion going on in the background. If members want to have a conversation, I invite them to go into the lobby or anywhere else. All I ask is that members not shout back and forth, as this should not happen in a Parliament.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, like the Conservative Party leader, the leader of the Bloc Québécois would rather hide behind a veil of ignorance than understand the impact of the situation.

Obviously, he is just playing partisan games. We take the matter of foreign interference seriously and we hope that others will too.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Dan Stanton, a former CSIS counter-intelligence officer, testified in committee. He said that a public inquiry into foreign interference is necessary. He, like many Canadians, is wondering what is going on. He said very clearly that there are safeguards that can be put in place to protect sensitive information. I agree with Mr. Stanton.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing? Will he listen to Canadians, listen to this House and listen to a former CSIS counter-intelligence officer and vote in favour of our motion calling for a public inquiry?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will do one better than a former CSIS agent. Current leadership across our intelligence agencies and across the public service continues to say that the best way to move forward is not with a public inquiry, which would have to happen behind closed doors. Many who testified at committees expressed that perspective. To remove it from the political realm, we asked an unimpeachable man of integrity, a former governor general selected by Stephen Harper, to look into these matters deeply and to make a determination as to whether a public inquiry was the right mechanism. He said—

• (1435)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Burnaby South.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is not restoring confidence with the decisions he is making. We need confidence restored.

[Translation]

What will it take for the government to see reason? Last week, we learned that the special rapporteur's key legal adviser is a long-time Liberal donor. Is that this government's definition of ethics?

This afternoon, the Prime Minister can do the right thing and put the country's interests before his own personal interests. He can vote in favour of our motion to launch a public inquiry. Will he do that?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, foreign interference is an extremely serious, fundamental issue for our democracy and our institutions.

That is why we implemented a number of measures, including committees of parliamentarians, expert committees, such as the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, a process during the election campaign and an independent expert responsible for as-

sessing everything that we are doing and making recommendations. He found that the 2019 and 2021 elections were not compromised and he will continue his work.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a real prime minister would never allow a foreign dictatorship to have police stations on our soil. The Prime Minister has known for at least six months that Beijing has these police stations here. I will ask him the following question.

How many agents of Beijing have been arrested here in Canada because of these active police stations here in Canada? In the United States, several such agents have already been arrested.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows full well that it is not up to the police officers to direct the police in their operations. However, we have ensured that the RCMP is following up and investigating this foreign interference and these Chinese police stations.

In the meantime, the leader of the Conservative Party chooses to remain ignorant and refuses to accept briefings on the facts in the matter of Chinese interference. He made that choice because he wants to continue to make unfounded partisan attacks.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is not serious is that we do not have the laws to have the RCMP arrest these Beijing agents who created these police stations.

Why is it that the Americans have been able to arrest the Beijing agents who created the police stations in the United States? It is because they have laws. The Conservative Party has been calling for this for years, especially for the creation of a foreign agent registry.

Why is the Prime Minister protecting Beijing police stations instead of putting in place laws to arrest them?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are in fact creating this foreign agent registry because it is the responsible thing to do.

However, the reality is that the opposition leader's decision to refuse access to the intelligence and briefings needed to get to the bottom of foreign interference demonstrates that he does not want to fix this problem. He does not want to defend the interests of the Chinese communities exploited and attacked by Beijing. The only thing he is interested in is making partisan attacks and continuing his personal attacks.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is all an act with this guy. He would have us believe that if he committed me to secrecy and forced me to take an oath of silence, that would somehow close the Beijing police stations here in Canada. Of course, it would not. What we need is a strong law that will allow our police to arrest them.

The question is very simple. Why is it that the Americans have been able to shut down the Beijing police stations in their country and arrest the agents involved with them, while in this country, the Prime Minister has been able to do neither?

• (1440)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, any serious politician in this place should understand how the Security of Information Act actually works, particularly someone who has sat in cabinet and who was Canada's minister of elections.

The reality is that if the member opposite does not understand how the Security of Information Act works, we would be happy to provide a briefing to him from officials to explain the Security of Information Act, so he can understand that it would be okay for him to take a briefing on the facts of foreign interference and so he can be better informed in his questions and his challenges to government.

The reality—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they do not have to brief me on the laws. I have actually read them. Subsection 12(1) of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians Act says that not only would I be silenced from speaking about matters broadly, but I would be prevented from debating them on the floor of the House of Commons, which is exactly what the Prime Minister wants.

He is not going to get it. I will not be gagged. I will not be silenced. I will continue to seek the truth.

Here is the truth that I want him to finally speak to. We have known that there are foreign police stations operating on Canadian soil. We know the Prime Minister's government has given them tax dollars. How much did he give them?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, hiding behind “a veil of ignorance” is very characteristic for a leader who has no interest—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to interrupt the right hon. Prime Minister. I got some complaints because there were some people shouting from this side when the opposition leader was asking a question. I am going to ask the same courtesy from both sides. I do not think it is that hard. It is not that complicated. When somebody is speaking, we do not speak.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, hiding behind “a veil of ignorance” is very characteristic for a leader who has no interest in actual facts. There is nothing stopping him right now from get-

ting cleared, briefed, and disagreeing with the former governor general's conclusions if he so chooses, regardless of his opinions. He is entitled to those. He is not entitled to his own facts.

Please, I really encourage the Leader of the Opposition to get briefed—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians are entitled to the facts. That is why we want a public inquiry.

We know that Beijing gave \$140,000 to the Trudeau Foundation. We know that when the scandal broke, he named Mr. Rosenberg to look into it. Rosenberg is with the Trudeau Foundation. When the scandal exploded further, he named Mr. Johnston, also a member of the Trudeau Foundation. What did he do? He named another judge from the Trudeau Foundation to look into the conflict of interest.

Is the Prime Minister afraid of a public inquiry because he has run out of members of the Trudeau Foundation to run it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Leader of the Opposition continues with his personal and partisan attacks, we are going to continue to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am sorry. I have a question for all members to reflect on. I do not want anybody to shout the answer out. This is not a question I want answered. What part of “while somebody is speaking, we sit quietly and listen” do we not understand? Write me an email if you want once we are done, and you can explain it to me, because I do not understand it.

The right hon. Prime Minister, from the top, please.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, once again, we see that the Leader of the Opposition, on this very serious issue, has not nothing to offer other than partisan attacks and personal attacks, rather than actually dealing with the substance of this serious issue.

To deal with the substance of this serious issue, we have directed intelligence agencies to offer him secure briefings so that he can understand the facts underlying both the former governor general's report and the issue of foreign interference. He has simply refused because he does not want anything, like facts in particular, to get in the way of a good partisan argument.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are entitled to the facts. When Beijing gave \$140,000 to the Trudeau Foundation, a scandal broke. To investigate, the Prime Minister appointed Mr. Rosenberg, a member of the Trudeau Foundation. The scandal exploded further. He then appointed Mr. Johnston, who is a member of the Trudeau Foundation. To ensure that there was no conflict of interest, Mr. Johnston appointed Mr. Iacobucci, who is a member of the Trudeau Foundation.

Does the Prime Minister not want a public inquiry because he has run out of members of the Trudeau Foundation to run it?

• (1445)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has made several comments about how Canadians are entitled to all the facts. However, he understands very well, or he should understand, that members of the armed forces and the intelligence services are working in incredibly complex and difficult situations that make them vulnerable in foreign countries in order to keep Canadians safe. They conduct investigations to uncover the secrets of countries that would do us harm.

The idea that he does not understand how much we, as members of the House and as Canadians, need to protect those who serve Canada in this regard is—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to use another example. The Quebec National Assembly is unanimously asking for information about Ottawa's interference in the democratic process during the 1995 referendum. The Prime Minister is choosing secrecy. This Parliament is asking to have the information from David Johnston's secret briefings entrusted to an independent commissioner. Again, the Prime Minister is choosing to keep his buddy's secrets.

Either the Prime Minister is weak, or he is being used by a foreign power. Is this Prime Minister working for his country, or for the financial interests of his Liberal friends?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member started off by talking about the 1995 referendum and ended by talking about money and the ethnic vote. Let us take a look at what the member just said. The Bloc is caught up in old arguments, and that is just what it is banking on. It always wants to attack—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: In the history of Parliament, there has been one instance when the Speaker decided he was fed up with question period and walked out. The sitting was suspended for about 30 minutes. Today, I am sorely tempted to do the same.

I invite the Prime Minister to begin again from the start.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois leader is bringing us back to the 1995 referendum, even though it is now 2023, and at the end of his question, he alluded to money and the ethnic vote. The Bloc Québécois has truly become a laughing

stock for how little they care about foreign interference. They only care about picking a fight here in Ottawa.

We take these issues seriously. We will continue to work with the necessary seriousness on these issues that are important to Canadians, while continuing to create a strong and growing economy, and continuing to fight climate change.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to suggest a hypothesis that explains why we are seeing what we are seeing. Has there ever been a Prime Minister less serious than this one, or one so unworthy of the office he holds?

We are talking about the intimidation of elected officials, illegal election financing, industrial espionage, research funded by Huawei, the Trudeau Foundation and contempt for intelligence officers. We already know more than enough to demand a truly independent and public inquiry, not just this nonsense from his buddy.

Will the Prime Minister scrap his policy, which is damaging to Canada and Quebec, and is good for China?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc Québécois just said, “we already know more than enough”, but the reality is that he does not know because he refused to receive briefings on confidential intelligence that has been gathered by our security intelligence services. He refuses to hear the facts at the heart of the matter of Chinese interference so that he can continue his personal and partisan attacks and his bickering.

All Canadians, including Quebecers, deserve representatives that take the issue of foreign interference seriously. That is what we are doing.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the B.C. Centre for Disease Control revealed today that it now costs over \$1,200 a month for a basket of nutritious food for the average family in that province. It is an explosion of costs that have taken place under the Prime Minister.

Those numbers come from a year ago, and the same report says that prices are higher now. Now the Prime Minister's solution for that is a 61¢-a-litre carbon tax that will push gas prices well over two dollars a litre and increase the cost to farmers and truckers who bring us our food.

How much will that increase the cost of food for Canadians?

• (1450)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have seen the extent to which, not just for the past seven and a half years but for the decade before that, the Conservatives refuse to take the fight against climate change seriously and refuse to accept that the cost to Canadians from coast to coast to coast will get increasingly larger as the years go on.

Oral Questions

Over the past seven years, we have stepped up on the fight against climate change, including with a price on pollution that puts more money back in the pockets of eight out of 10 Canadians. We are going to continue to step up with the grocery rebate to help Canadians with the high cost of food. We are going to continue to create good jobs. We are going to continue—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax is not an environmental plan; it is a tax plan. It has done nothing to meet any targets, and it has done nothing to reduce the cost of climate change. What it has done is increase the cost of food, because when we tax the farmers who make the food and the truckers who ship the food, then we tax the food itself.

Now, the Prime Minister's plan is not to triple the carbon tax but to quadruple the carbon tax, while he adds more and more. It is 61¢ a litre.

My question is this. How much will his 61¢-a-litre carbon tax add to the monthly basket of food for Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again we see that the leader of the official opposition is not willing to let the facts get in the way of a great political argument. Even then it is not that great an argument; it is just a bumper sticker that he can stick on to scare Canadians with.

The reality is that we are delivering with dental benefits, with a grocery rebate and with a carbon price that is putting more money back in the pockets of eight out of 10 Canadians. While he continues to cross his arms and vote against things like the dental benefit, we have delivered to 1,100 kids in his riding dental benefits that have made a real difference.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the facts that I have just quoted from the B.C. Centre for Disease Control are false, then maybe the Prime Minister can tell me what the real numbers are. I have asked him that.

Given that he wants to bring in a 61¢-a-litre carbon tax and increase gas and diesel prices by 61¢ a litre on the farmers who produce the food and the truckers who bring it to the grocery store, how much will that tax increase add to the monthly cost of groceries for the average Canadian family?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians know clearly is that the inaction by a decade of Conservative governments and the continued resistance of Conservatives to taking action on fighting climate change are costing them incredible amounts. How many homes have been lost in Nova Scotia? How many people have been affected and evacuated across Alberta? How many people in the Northwest Territories are affected and in New Brunswick? People in central Canada are worried about forest fires coming there in the coming weeks and months.

The reality is that extreme weather events are getting more and more expensive for Canadians, which is why we need to continue to lean on climate change while supporting Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of those things have happened with this carbon tax in place. This carbon tax has done nothing to reduce emissions, let

alone stop storms and other weather events. That is nothing more than another act from the Prime Minister.

Let us get back to the question. My question was very specific. We know that a British Columbia family has to spend \$1,200 a month on groceries just to feed their kids. He wants to raise the tax up to 61¢ a litre on the farmers and truckers who bring us our food. How much will that add to the grocery bill of an average family?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is the problem with the Leader of the Opposition. He is in love with the sound of his own voice and his own attacks, but he does not actually check the facts.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister, from the top, please.

• (1455)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, here is the issue with the Leader of the Opposition. He is so in love with the sound of his own voice that he does not actually check the facts.

He is talking about our price on pollution, when the reality is that B.C. has its own price on pollution. The federal backstop does not even apply in B.C. He is mixing everything for political arguments and partisan attacks to try to scare Canadians and cover for the fact that he has no plan to fight climate change and, therefore, no plan for the future of the Canadian economy.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Wahpeton Dakota Nation has not had a proper school in a long time.

I have been to the school. Students are forced to learn in portables. They do not have proper running water. They do not have heating in the winter or cooling in the summer. The school itself has a roof that is caving in. There is black mould everywhere.

This is often the reality for first nations and indigenous kids—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to ask everyone, one last time, to calm down and be quiet while we listen to whoever is asking or answering the question.

The hon. member for Burnaby South can begin from the top, please.

Oral Questions

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, Wahpeton Dakota Nation has not had a properly functioning school in a long time.

I visited the first nation and saw the school. They have to operate in portables. The portables do not have proper heating and cooling. These portables do not have running water in the winter. I went to the school itself, and the main structure has a roof that is caving in. There is also black mould.

This is often the reality for indigenous children in our country. When will the Prime Minister take this matter seriously and ensure that this first nation has a proper school so indigenous kids could learn in a safe and secure surrounding?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague. We need to do more.

We have built hundreds of new schools across this country in indigenous communities over the past seven and a half years, but there is much more to do. We will continue to work hand in hand with indigenous peoples on record investments and partnerships to build schools, health centres and senior centres. We will continue to work to solve outstanding land claim issues and to install wastewater and water treatment plants to ensure drinking water across the country.

These are things that we are doing and continue to do. I appreciate the member opposite's hard work on bringing them forward as well.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a priest accused of, and arrested for, abuse and forcible confinement of an eight-year-old girl. More victims are coming forward. Families are in shock. A first nation is in shock.

This is not history. This is happening now in Little Grand Rapids first nation in 2023. What is the government doing to support the community? What will the government do to work with the community to support its clear calls for accountability?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a horrific situation that never should have happened, at any time. We know it happened decades ago, and it never should have happened. This one is just recent, and it never should have happened.

We have obviously reached out to the community, and we are working closely with them on what is needed for healing and moving forward. We are also serious about accountability and ensuring that these kinds of abuses never happen again.

* * *

● (1500)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know all too well there are tragic consequences and costs to the climate crisis.

Just this week, we are seeing unprecedented wildfires back home in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and my heart goes out to the people facing these incredibly difficult circumstances. We know that the cost of inaction is far too high. We must work towards

rapidly decarbonizing our society and ensuring Atlantic Canada protects our precious ecosystems and builds a resilient economy.

Could the Prime Minister please tell us what the government is doing to address the climate crisis while positioning Atlantic Canada as a hub for renewable energy and clean tech for the future?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Fredericton for her leadership on climate change and her hard work on the file.

Canadians are thinking about our friends on the east coast and across the country who are impacted by wildfires right now. It is a reminder that climate change is real, and that its devastating impacts cannot be ignored.

Unfortunately, the Conservative Party still does not have a climate plan, which means Conservatives do not have a plan for the future of the Canadian economy. On this side, we are investing in and leveraging technologies that are cutting emissions and creating good jobs in, for example, Come By Chance, Newfoundland and Labrador, and we are making sure that it is no longer free to pollute, while giving Canadians money back.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the high school drama teacher over here accuses others of liking the sound of their own voices. This is from a guy who, if he were made of chocolate, would eat himself. However, we do not want him to do that until he answers the question I keep asking.

It is about the cost of groceries in B.C. and everywhere else. He is right. The NDP has already put in a carbon tax there, but he wants to force them to increase it by almost 40¢ to 61¢ a litre. It would be a federally imposed tax by the costly coalition of the Liberals and the NDP. How much will that add to the cost of groceries for the average family?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, I was a high school teacher before getting into politics, and I am having a little trouble remembering what exact job the Leader of the Opposition had before getting into politics.

Oral Questions

We have a plan to fight climate change. We have a plan to continue to move forward on supporting Canadians with a grocery rebate, with a growing economy and with great middle-class jobs. We are delivering health care supports for Canadians from coast to coast to coast and delivering dental care, which has helped 300,000 kids access dental care over the past number of months, including 1,100 in the member's own riding. We will continue to be there for Canadians.

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THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister left right in the middle of a semester, and I am having trouble remembering why.

However, he certainly was not a math teacher. His own finance minister said that deficits pour fuel on the inflationary fire, right before she introduced \$60 billion more in deficit spending measures. How much will that add to the inflation rate Canadians have to pay?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Leader of the Opposition continues to talk down the Canadian economy, we have the lowest deficit in the G7, and we have the best debt-to-GDP ratio of the G7.

The fact is that Canadians can expect arguments back and forth about fiscal responsibility, but if they check the international bond rating agencies, the people whose job it is to evaluate the fiscal responsibility of a given government, they continue to give us a AAA rating for fiscal responsibility. Canadians know we are on the right track.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not just me who acknowledges that deficits pour fuel on the inflationary fire. It is his own finance minister. In fact, she said that two weeks before she introduced her budget. What followed her budget was a spike in the inflation rate the Prime Minister had promised would only ever go down. What do you know? Dumping \$60 billion of fuel on the inflationary fire actually makes prices go up.

Did the finance department calculate how much this extra \$60 billion of inflationary spending would add to the consumer price index? How much?

• (1505)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition likes to talk about being in disagreement with the investments we have made in the Canadian economy, but perhaps he would be open with Canadians and share how he would not have funded child care at \$10 a day right across the country for Canadians. He would not be delivering dental care benefits, including to 1,100 kids in his riding, and he would not be stepping up with targeted supports, with a doubling of the GST rebate for 11 million Canadians. He is not saying where he would be cutting, what programs he would be slashing and how he would be hurting Canadians while—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been very clear that I would get rid of the \$35-billion incompetent infrastructure bank. I would get rid of the \$54-million ArriveCAN app, which did not work and was not necessary. I would not blow billions of dollars buying back hunting rifles from lawful and licensed Canadians instead of going after serious criminals. The list of waste and corruption goes on and on.

My question, though, is this: How much is all of this spending adding to inflation? John Manley, the former Liberal finance minister, said that, just as the current finance minister has said, when we add deficits, we add inflation. The question again is this: How much extra inflation will the \$60 billion in budget deficits cause?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for trying to clear things up, but the fact is that no Canadians doubted he would pull back on measures to fight gun crime.

We are moving forward on increasing gun control. We have banned assault-style weapons. We put a freeze on the market for handguns, and the Conservative Party, in the pocket of the gun lobby, has continued to insist that they will roll back those measures. They will continue to not protect Canadians in communities across the country. That is their approach. Our approach is to continue to invest in Canadians to lift millions of people out of poverty and create millions of great jobs.

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[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada is dragging Quebec into a crisis that will literally undermine democracy with all the secrecy. The Prime Minister responds by grandstanding.

We are going to get to the bottom of this matter. How will he explain to Canadians and Quebecers that he will treat with contempt the vote of an elected majority of the House, with each one being an elected member of Parliament just as he is?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with all colleagues in the House to fight foreign interference and to take it seriously.

To take it seriously, the leader of the Bloc Québécois need only demonstrate that he is open to understanding the impact of the issue, to see the intelligence that was collected about what happened. He has refused. He prefers to hide from the truth to continue his bickering and partisan attacks.

That is not a responsible approach worthy of our democracy. I encourage him to take part in the necessary briefings.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, he just needs to come out with the facts, but as someone once said, he would not know what to do with the facts.

The Prime Minister is protecting someone or something. Who? What? What skeletons are hiding in the Trudeau Foundation's closet? Just how low will he go to protect his secrets? What is China doing and to whom? How has China managed to intimidate the entire Liberal government?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc Québécois wants to know who I am protecting.

First and foremost, I am protecting Canadians by fighting Chinese interference. I am protecting Chinese Canadians who are more often the target of Chinese interference. I am protecting our institutions and our democracy by creating mechanisms to fight Chinese interference. I am continuing to protect the men and women who put their lives at risk to find out and expose the secrets of China and other countries that want to do us harm by keeping their secrets and protecting our national security.

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THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance admitted that deficits throw gas on the inflationary fire. Two weeks later, she threw another \$60-billion-worth of gas on the same fire.

How much does the Prime Minister think that the \$60-billion inflationary deficit she added in a single budget will increase the inflation rate on the backs of Canadians?

• (1510)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives continue to argue in favour of austerity, we will continue to be there to invest in Canadians.

While they are proposing cuts, cuts to programs and cuts to services for Canadians, we will continue to lift Canadians out of poverty, as we have done for 2.7 million people in recent years. We will continue to be there for our seniors by lowering the retirement age to 65 after his government raised it to 67. We will continue to be there for our young people, for our families, with child care services. We will continue—

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one in five Canadians is skipping meals because they cannot afford groceries and are already living in austerity. The 1.5 million Canadians who are forced to rely on food banks are already living in austerity. The nine out of 10 young Canadians who believe they will never be able to buy a home are already living in austerity.

The only person not living in austerity is the Prime Minister, because he is forcing austerity on all other Canadians.

How much will the \$60 billion in additional spending add to the inflation rate?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me see if I understand the Conservative Party's austerity plan correctly. They are saying that Canadians are already facing hard times, so it is okay to make matters worse by spending less, investing less and providing less help for families in need.

Oral Questions

Perhaps that is why the member voted against the dental care assistance we are providing to children. Thanks to our initiative, 300,000 children across this country have been able to access dental care services they could not access in the past, including 1,100 children in his riding of Carleton. He voted against it because, for him, it is all about austerity. That is irresponsible.

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[English]

FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he has been Prime Minister for eight years. The half-trillion dollars in inflationary deficits he has enacted is causing the inflation that Canadians are paying; it is not the solution to the inflation. After eight years of the Prime Minister, one in five Canadians skips meals because they cannot eat, and 1.5 million people go to food banks, some of them asking for help with medical assistance in dying, not because they are sick but because they are hungry. He has driven people out of their homes and into tent cities, as nine in 10 young people believe they will never be able to own a home.

How much is he going to make them pay before the suffering ends?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we hear the Leader of the Opposition continue to spread his message that Canadian is broken right across the country and that we should, therefore, just throw up our hands, give up and stop spending to invest in Canadians, stop supporting low-income Canadians, stop creating great jobs, stop drawing in great factories like Volkswagen and stop working to secure Stellantis investments. This is what the Conservatives' plan is: to throw up their hands and say, "Everything is broken, so let us just burn it down."

Canadians do not feel that. Canadians roll up their sleeves and solve the challenges we are facing. That is what Canadians are doing every day across the country, and that is what they are going to continue to do.

[Translation]

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after weeks of study, but mostly obstruction, by the Conservative Party, we have finally reached the clause-by-clause study of the budget implementation bill. This is one more step towards being able to provide the support that the people in my riding and across Canada need.

Could the Prime Minister tell us more about the importance of passing the budget implementation bill as quickly as possible?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Laval—Les Îles for his important question and hard work.

Oral Questions

Like him, I am disappointed to see the Conservatives trying to block the essential support measures contained in the budget, especially a tax to fight residential property flipping, the doubling of the deduction for tradespeople's tool expenses and the Canada workers benefit advance payments.

Their political games in committee are blocking the passage of our budget. I hope that all members of the House, including the Conservative members, will come together to give Canadians what they need.

* * *

● (1515)

[English]

HOUSING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister tells Canadians to stop complaining, because they have never had it so good. Well, nine in 10 young people cannot afford a home because housing costs have doubled under the Prime Minister. Rent has doubled, the average mortgage payment has doubled and the needed down payment for an average house has doubled. The inflation rate has hit the highest level in 40 years and now is back on the rise. They might beg to differ.

Will the Prime Minister stop trying to silence Canadians' voices and start reversing the policies that have caused the damage in the first place?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to grow the economy. We are going to continue to create great, well-paying jobs for Canadians right across the country, because that is what Canadians continue to need. That is what we have been doing over these past years. The fact that the Leader of the Opposition suggests we should be growing less, that we should be seeing less wage growth across the country, maybe reveals a little more about his economic thinking than about anyone else's.

At the same time as we do that, we are going to continue to invest in programs and supports for first-time homebuyers, for low-income renters and for construction of new rental homes by working in partnership with municipalities. We are going to continue to deliver for Canadians.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he delivers only for himself. We are not growing. Under the Prime Minister, we have the slowest per capita GDP growth of any government since the Great Depression. Under eight years of the Prime Minister, housing costs have doubled, 1.5 million people are eating from food banks and one in five is skipping meals because they cannot afford food. Now, interest rates, which his government said would stay low for long, are skyrocketing because of his deficits.

How much have interest rates had to go up to accommodate his \$60 billion in new deficits?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is a thought experiment for Canadians: Imagine how much worse off we would be if the Conservatives' plan on not encouraging vaccinations had led during the pandemic, if their reliance on ideology and conspiracy theories instead of science and experts had governed our pandemic response. The Canadian economy—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am sorry. I am going to have to ask the hon. Prime Minister to stop for a second.

We had started getting better, and now, all of sudden, everybody is getting excited again. Maybe it is because the end of question period is coming, and maybe I will just skip to the last question and then work my way back. That might work out better. I am going to let the Prime Minister continue, and we will see if I have to resort to that.

The right hon. Prime Minister has the floor.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, we are a government grounded in facts and evidence, and that is part of why we got through the pandemic better than most other countries around the world that we are comparable to. The fact is that the Conservatives' reliance on conspiracy theories, their unwillingness to promote vaccination, would have harmed Canadians significantly over these past years of the recovery.

We have seen significant job growth and economic growth post-pandemic, and we will continue to be there to support Canadians who need it, by investing in food banks, investing in countering homelessness and investing in supporting families from coast to coast.

* * *

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he says he is investing in food banks. He has definitely increased the business at food banks; we have 1.5 million people eating from there. Instead of reversing the policies that cause that hunger, he divides. He divides to distract. He reaches back and uses the pandemic as a point of division to tear this country apart, just like he did then, and he did it only because, under eight years of him, life costs more; work does not pay; housing costs have doubled; drugs, disorder, crime and chaos have reigned in the street; and the country is more divided than ever.

Why does he not reverse those damaging actions rather than trying to divide Canadians some more?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have all heard the Leader of the Opposition, and according to him—

The Speaker: The Prime Minister is getting a standing ovation, and he has not even started yet.

Please continue.

• (1520)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, we have heard the Leader of the Opposition again and again. He believes that everything is broken in Canada and that we should all just throw up our hands. Well, he is wrong about that, and when he talks about the economic record of the past few years and seems to ignore the pandemic because it was inconvenient for him, his own behaviour during the pandemic, his own mistrust of science and evidence, his own encouragement of disorder and—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

The right hon. Prime Minister, please.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, it is inconvenient for the Leader of the Opposition for us to talk about what happened during the pandemic, even though it had a deep and serious impact on Canadians, on families and on our economy. We were there to support them. We were there, grounded in science, ensuring that everyone was kept safe with vaccination programs, with science, evidence and supports. The reality is that we will continue to be there for Canadians. We will continue to not believe Canada is broken but to know we are building together a—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

* * *

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, parents across my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge and the city of Vaughan are again telling me how their children now have better access to dental care, clean teeth and bright smiles.

Would the Prime Minister provide an update on Canada's—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I need to interrupt the hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge. I can hardly hear his question.

The hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge from the top, please.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, parents across my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge and the city of Vaughan are again telling me how their children now have better access to dental care, clean teeth and bright smiles.

Would the Prime Minister provide an update on Canada's dental care plan and how it is impacting Canadian families from coast to coast to coast?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge for his dedication to his constituents.

We introduced the Canada dental benefit because we believe that no parent should have to choose between the health of their children and putting food on the table. Today, I can announce that the Canada dental benefit has now helped 300,000 kids across the country go to the dentist, including 1,100 kids in the riding of Carleton. It is all part of our plan to make life more affordable for fami-

Oral Questions

lies, and it is a real shame the Conservatives continue to stand against a dental benefit for low-income Canadians.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a year ago tomorrow, most of the Liberal caucus and all Conservatives teamed up to defeat Bill C-216 for a health-based approach to substance use. If it had passed, today we would have a multi-faceted plan to fight the toxic drug crisis, based on the recommendations of the government's own expert task force. Instead, thousands more families have lost loved ones because of poisoned drugs purchased on the street.

When will the government deliver a comprehensive plan to keep people who use drugs alive and provide no-fee, on-demand treatment for those who need help now?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know how devastating the opioid epidemic is for families right across the country. That is why we have continued to step up, while being grounded in science and evidence and working in partnership with others.

I salute the intention of the member opposite to contribute to this debate, but, as we have worked concretely on the ground with partners, including with the government of B.C., for example, to move forward on decriminalization in a way that is showing positive impacts across B.C., we will continue to be grounded in evidence as we take action to save lives and keep Canadians safe.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, we learned from an article by journalist Daniel Leblanc that the RCMP is preparing to provide additional protection services to a dozen senior officials and maybe even some ministers.

We are all aware that in-person and online threats and aggressive language are on the rise. The risks are real, and we cannot wait for something bad to happen to realize that we should have done something.

It is therefore high time that the government and Parliament showed some political courage and gave all ministers and party leaders a bodyguard, as is already the case in the Quebec National Assembly.

Can the Prime Minister tell us whether he intends to put such a measure in place here in Ottawa?

Business of Supply

● (1525)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question and his concern, which is one we all share.

Unfortunately, over the past few years, we have seen a rise in polarization, in toxicity, and in hatred toward Canadians and parliamentarians. We need to do whatever it takes to keep those who serve our democracy safe because protecting them means protecting the very foundation of our democracy.

We are looking at tangible measures to increase the safety of our ministers, and we also are working with the Sergeant-at-Arms to ensure the safety of all parliamentarians.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO ALLEGATIONS OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

The House resumed from May 30 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:25 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 motion of the member for Vancouver East relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of motion to House*]

● (1540)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 339*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultarif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Angus	Arnold
Ashton	Bachrach
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blaikie	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blanney
Block	Boulerice
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Cannings
Caputo	Carrie
Chabot	Chambers

Champoux	Chong
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
Desbiens	Desilets
Desjarlais	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferreri	Findlay
Fortin	Gallant
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Green	Hallan
Hoback	Hughes
Idlout	Jeneroux
Johns	Julian
Kelly	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Kwan
Lake	Lantsman
Larouche	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lemire
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	MacGregor
Maguire	Martel
Masse	Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
McPherson	Melillo
Michaud	Moore
Morantz	Morrice
Morrison	Motz
Muys	Nater
Normandin	O'Toole
Patzner	Paul-Hus
Paupé	Perkins
Perron	Plamondon
Poilievre	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Savard-Tremblay
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shiple	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Strahl	Stubbs
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Tochor
Tolmie	Trudel
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Vierson
Vignola	Villemure
Vis	Vuong
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Williams	Williamson
Zarrillo	Zimmer— 174

Private Members' Business

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Atwin
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blois	Boissonnault
Bradford	Brière
Casey	Chagger
Chahal	Champagne
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Fergus
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Gerretsen
Gould	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Jowhari	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
May (Cambridge)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
Mendès	Medicino
Miao	Miller
Morrissey	Murray
Naqvi	Ng
Noormohamed	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Petipas Taylor	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara	Sousa
St-Onge	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thompson	Trudeau
Turnbull	Valdez

Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Zahid	Zuberi— 150

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[English]

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

The House resumed from May 18 consideration of Bill C-281, An Act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act, the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act (Sergei Magnitsky Law), the Broadcasting Act and the Prohibiting Cluster Munitions Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at report stage of Bill C-281 under Private Members' Business.

The question is on Motion No. 1. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 2 and 3.

● (1550)

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 340)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney
Block	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Bragdon
Brassard	Brière
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Cannings
Caputo	Carrie
Casey	Chabot

Private Members' Business

Chagger	Chahal	McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Chambers	Champagne	McLean	McLeod
Champoux	Chatel	McPherson	Melillo
Chen	Chiang	Mendès	Mendicino
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Miao	Michaud
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper	Miller	Moore
Cormier	Coteau	Morantz	Morrice
Dabrusin	Dalton	Morrison	Morrissey
Damoff	Dancho	Motz	Murray
Davidson	Davies	Muys	Naqvi
DeBellefeuille	Deltell	Nater	Ng
Desbiens	Desilets	Noormohamed	Normandin
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal	O'Connell	Oliphant
Dhillon	Diab	O'Regan	O'Toole
Doherty	Dowdall	Patzner	Paul-Hus
Dreeshen	Drouin	Pauzé	Perkins
Dubourg	Duclos	Perron	Petipas Taylor
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Plamondon	Poilievre
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi	Powlowski	Qualtrough
El-Khoury	Ellis	Rayes	Redekopp
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Reid	Rempel Garner
Falk (Provencher)	Fast	Richards	Roberts
Fergus	Ferreri	Robillard	Rodriguez
Fillmore	Findlay	Rogers	Romanado
Fisher	Fonseca	Rood	Ruff
Fortier	Fortin	Sahota	Sajjan
Fragiskatos	Fraser	Saks	Samson
Freeland	Fry	Sarai	Savard-Tremblay
Gaheer	Gallant	Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Garon	Garrison	Schiefke	Schmale
Gaudreau	Gazan	Seeback	Serré
Généreux	Gentis	Sgro	Shanahan
Gerretsen	Gill	Sheehan	Shields
Gladu	Godin	Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Goodridge	Gould	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Gourde	Gray	Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Green	Guilbeault	Small	Sorbara
Hajdu	Hallan	Soroka	Sousa
Hanley	Hardie	Steinley	Ste-Marie
Hepfner	Hoback	Stewart	St-Onge
Holland	Housefather	Strahl	Stubbs
Hughes	Hutchings	Sudds	Tassi
Iacono	Idlout	Taylor Roy	Thériault
Ien	Jaczek	Therrien	Thomas
Jeneroux	Johns	Thompson	Tochor
Jowhari	Julian	Tolmie	Trudeau
Kayabaga	Kelloway	Trudel	Turnbull
Kelly	Khalid	Uppal	Valdez
Khera	Kitchen	Van Bynen	van Koevorden
Kmiec	Koutrakis	Van Popta	Vandal
Kram	Kramp-Neuman	Vandenbeld	Vecchio
Kurek	Kusie	Vidal	Vien
Kusmierczyk	Kwan	Viersen	Vignola
Lake	Lalonde	Villemure	Virani
Lambropoulos	Lametti	Vis	Vuong
Lamoureux	Lantsman	Wagantall	Warkentin
Lapointe	Larouche	Waugh	Webber
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Weiler	Wilkinson
Lawrence	LeBlanc	Williams	Williamson
Lebouthillier	Lehoux	Yip	Zahid
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)	Zarrillo	Zimmer
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert	Zuberi— 325	
Lightbound	Lloyd		
Lobb	Long		
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)		NAYS
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)		
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Nil	
Maguire	Maloney		PAIRED
Martel	Martinez Ferrada		
Masse	Mathysen	Nil	
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)		
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)		
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty		

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 carried. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 2 and 3 carried.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in at report stage with further amendments.

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

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

• (1605)

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

(Division No. 341)

YEAS

Members

Aboultarif	Aitchison	Ferreri	Fillmore
Albas	Aldag	Findlay	Fisher
Alghabra	Ali	Fonseca	Fortier
Allison	Anand	Fortin	Fragiskatos
Anandasangaree	Angus	Fraser	Freeland
Arnold	Arseneault	Fry	Gaheer
Arya	Ashton	Gallant	Garon
Atwin	Bachrach	Garrison	Gaudreau
Badawey	Bains	Gazan	Généreux
Baker	Baldinelli	Genuis	Gerretsen
Barlow	Barrett	Gill	Gladu
Barron	Barsalou-Duval	Godin	Goodridge
Battiste	Beaulieu	Gould	Gourde
Beech	Bendayan	Gray	Green
Bennett	Bergeron	Guilbeault	Hajdu
Berthold	Bérubé	Hallan	Hanley
Bezan	Bibeau	Hardie	Hepfner
Bittle	Blaikie	Hoback	Holland
Blair	Blanchet	Housefather	Hughes
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney	Hutchings	Iacono
Block	Blois	Idlout	Ien
Boissonnault	Boulerice	Jaczek	Jeneroux
Bradford	Bragdon	Johns	Jowhari
Brassard	Brière	Julian	Kayabaga
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe	Kelloway	Kelly
Calkins	Cannings	Khalid	Khera
Caputo	Carrie	Kitchen	Kmiec
Casey	Chabot	Koutrakis	Kram
Chagger	Chahal	Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Chambers	Champagne	Kusie	Kusmierczyk
Champoux	Chatel	Kwan	Lake
Chen	Chiang	Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Lametti	Lamoureux
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper	Lantsman	Lapointe
Cormier	Coteau	Larouche	Lattanzio
Dabrusin	Dalton	Lauzon	Lawrence
Damoff	Dancho	LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Davidson	Davies	Lehoux	Lemire
DeBellefeuille	Deltell	Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Desbiens	Desilets	Liepert	Lightbound
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal	Lloyd	Lobb
Dhillon	Diab	Long	Longfield
Doherty	Dong	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
Dowdall	Dreeshen	MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
Drouin	Dubourg	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Duclos	Duguid	Maloney	Martel
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Dzerowicz	Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Ehsassi	El-Khouri	Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
Ellis	Epp	May (Saamich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)
Fast	Fergus	McGuinty	McKay
		McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
		McLeod	McPherson
		Melillo	Mendès
		Mendicino	Miao
		Michaud	Miller
		Moore	Morantz
		Morrice	Morrison
		Morrissey	Motz
		Murray	Muys
		Naqvi	Nater
		Ng	Noormohamed
		Normandin	O'Connell
		O'Regan	O'Toole
		Patzer	Paul-Hus
		Paupé	Perkins
		Perron	Petitpas Taylor
		Plamondon	Poilievre
		Powlowski	Qualtrough
		Rayes	Redekopp
		Reid	Rempel Garner
		Richards	Roberts
		Robillard	Rodriguez

Private Members' Business

Private Members' Business

Rogers	Romanado
Rood	Ruff
Sahota	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Savard-Tremblay
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Seeback	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Shields
Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Small	Sorbara
Soroka	Sousa
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Stewart	St-Onge
Strahl	Stubbs
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thériault
Therrien	Thompson
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Uppal
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Van Popta
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Villemure
Virani	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Weiler
Wilkinson	Williams
Williamson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zimmer	Zuberi — 324

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

COPYRIGHT ACT

The House resumed from May 30 consideration of the motion that Bill C-244, An Act to amend the Copyright Act (diagnosis, maintenance and repair), as reported (with amendment) from the committee, be concurred in.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in Bill C-244 at report stage.

● (1615)

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, it has come to my attention that my second vote on Bill C-281 did not go through correctly. Therefore, I seek the permission of the House to apply my vote as a yea for the previous vote.

The Speaker: We are going to finish this round of votes. Then, if you do not mind coming back afterward with a point of order, we will see if the chamber will allow you to do that.

● (1620)

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

(Division No. 342)

YEAS

Members

Aboutaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney
Block	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Bragdon
Brassard	Brière
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Cannings
Caputo	Carrie
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Chahal
Chambers	Champagne
Champoux	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Dalton
Damoff	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Fergus
Ferreri	Fillmore
Findlay	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gallant	Garon
Garrison	Gaudreau
Gazan	Généreux
Genuis	Gerretsen
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gould	Gourde

Gray
 Guilbeault
 Hallan
 Hardie
 Hoback
 Housefather
 Hutchings
 Idlout
 Jaczek
 Johns
 Julian
 Kelloway
 Khalid
 Kitchen
 Koutrakis
 Kramp-Neuman
 Kusmierczyk
 Lake
 Lambropoulos
 Lamoureux
 Lapointe
 Lattanzio
 Lawrence
 Lebouthillier
 Lemire
 Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
 Lightbound
 Lobb
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 MacGregor
 Maguire
 Martel
 Masse
 May (Cambridge)
 Mazier
 McDonald (Avalon)
 McKay
 McLean
 McPherson
 Mendès
 Miao
 Miller
 Morantz
 Morrison
 Motz
 Muys
 Nater
 Noormohamed
 O'Connell
 O'Regan
 Patzer
 Pauzé
 Perron
 Plamondon
 Powlowski
 Rayes
 Reid
 Richards
 Robillard
 Rogers
 Rood
 Sahota
 Saks
 Sarai
 Scarpaleggia
 Schiefke
 Seeback
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Shipley
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Sinclair-Desgagné

Green
 Hajdu
 Hanley
 Hepfner
 Holland
 Hughes
 Iacono
 Ien
 Jeneroux
 Jowhari
 Kayabaga
 Kelly
 Khera
 Kmiec
 Kram
 Kurek
 Kwan
 Lalonde
 Lametti
 Lantsman
 Larouche
 Lauzon
 LeBlanc
 Lehoux
 Lewis (Essex)
 Liepert
 Lloyd
 Long
 Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
 MacDonald (Malpeque)
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Maloney
 Martinez Ferrada
 Mathysen
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 McGuinty
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 McLeod
 Melillo
 Mendicino
 Michaud
 Moore
 Morrice
 Morrissey
 Murray
 Naqvi
 Ng
 Normandin
 Oliphant
 O'Toole
 Paul-Hus
 Perkins
 Petitpas Taylor
 Poilievre
 Qualtrough
 Redekopp
 Rempel Garner
 Roberts
 Rodriguez
 Romanado
 Ruff
 Sajjan
 Samson
 Savard-Tremblay
 Scheer
 Schmale
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Shields
 Sidhu (Brampton East)
 Simard
 Singh

Small
 Soroka
 Steinley
 Stewart
 Strahl
 Sudds
 Taylor Roy
 Therrien
 Thompson
 Tolmie
 Trudel
 Uppal
 Van Bynen
 Van Popta
 Vandenbeld
 Vidal
 Viersen
 Villemure
 Vis
 Wagantall
 Waugh
 Weiler
 Williams
 Yip
 Zarrillo

Speaker's Ruling

Sorbara
 Sousa
 Ste-Marie
 St-Onge
 Stubbs
 Tassi
 Thériault
 Thomas
 Tochor
 Trudeau
 Turnbull
 Valdez
 van Koevorden
 Vandal
 Vecchio
 Vien
 Vignola
 Virani
 Vuong
 War Kentin
 Webber
 Wilkinson
 Williamson
 Zahid
 Zuberi — 324

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, as I previously mentioned, my second vote on Bill C-281 did not go through accordingly on the app. I did not inform you at the appropriate time, but I am seeking permission to apply my vote as a ye.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to change his vote?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED INADEQUACY OF GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO FOREIGN INTERFERENCE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised yesterday by the member for Durham. I would like to thank the member for having raised this matter.

In his intervention, the member alleged having been a victim of an ongoing campaign of foreign interference, orchestrated by officials and agents of the People's Republic of China and dating as far back as the previous Parliament. He added that this campaign was not related to the one single event, which made his question of privilege distinct from the one raised by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. He also indicated that interference of this scale had violated not only his privileges, but also those of many more members of the House.

Routine Proceedings

I am hearing some noise, I am not sure if it is coming from the outside or inside. I am going to ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to maybe just take a walk around the hall. I am sure there is nothing intentional there, but we just want to make people aware that if they are speaking on the outside, it echoes into the chamber.

[*Translation*]

The member for Rosemont—La Petite Patrie, supporting the member for Durham's assertions, suggested that the matter either be found *prima facie* or be integrated into the current study of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The House has the right to the services of its members free from intimidation, obstruction and interference. The Chair takes any claim of foreign interference in the work of members, as well as its impacts on their families, very seriously.

[*English*]

This is why I ruled on May 8, 2023, that a similar matter raised by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills constituted a *prima facie* question of privilege. At that time, the Chair agreed that the matter of a foreign entity trying to intervene in the conduct of our proceedings, targeting members and their relatives, touches upon the privileges and immunities that underpin our collective ability to carry out our parliamentary duties unimpeded.

[*Translation*]

The member for Wellington—Halton Hills subsequently moved a motion to refer the matter of the intimidation campaign orchestrated by Wei Zhao against him and other members to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The motion was adopted by the House on May 10, 2023. Though the motion related to the actions of one specific individual, the Chair's ruling referred more broadly to a foreign entity.

[*English*]

The points raised by the member for Durham are extremely serious. While I agree they must properly be addressed, in considering a question of privilege, the Chair must determine whether it should take precedence over the business of the House. Given that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs has already been instructed to investigate the matter of foreign interference, the Chair believes that it is the appropriate forum for further discussion of this issue.

As such, I invite the member, and any other member impacted, to make representations to the committee over the course of its study.

I thank members for their attention.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to

table, in both official languages, the government's response to one petition. This return will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

● (1625)

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HEALTH

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Health, in relation to Bill C-293, an act respecting pandemic prevention and preparedness.

[*English*]

The committee has studied the bill and, pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(1), humbly requests a 30-day extension to consider it.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3)(a), a motion to concur in the report is deemed moved, the question deemed put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred.

Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 7, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

FINANCE

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Finance in relation to Bill C-47, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023.

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

I would like to thank our legislative clerk, Philippe Méla; the finance committee clerks, Alexandre Roger and Alexandre Sacha Vassiliev; committee assistant Lynda Gaudreault; the whole team of 16 additional clerks who came in to help during the long hours into the night; the whole team of interpreters, technologists and staff of the committee; and, of course, the hard-working members of the committee, our witnesses and department officials for all of their hard work in getting this report completed. I thank them all.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development in relation to Bill S-8, an act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, to make consequential amendments to other acts and to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations.

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, entitled “Main Estimates 2023-24: Vote 1 under Canadian Dairy Commission, Vote 1 under Canadian Grain Commission and Votes 1, 5 and 10 under Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food”.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, entitled “Main Estimates 2023-24”.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 28th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts entitled “Main Estimates 2023-24”.

[English]

I wish to thank the Auditor General of Canada for appearing, as well as her team, and thank as well all committee members, the clerk, our analysts and all the other support we had to get this done.

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled “Main Estimates 2023-2024”.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. We are excited to send you the 42nd report, entitled “Report on the Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of British Columbia, 2022”.

● (1630)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Conservative members of the procedure and House affairs committee to table a dissenting report to the main report of the committee with respect to redistribution for the Province of British Columbia.

Conservative members on the committee respect the work of the electoral boundaries commission, which consulted broadly, and therefore we oppose many of the objections; however, we do ask the commission to respectfully consider in a favourable light the objection of the member for South Surrey—White Rock to move Lantzville into Nanaimo—Ladysmith as well as to favourably consider the name changes proposed by the member for Kelowna—Lake Country and the member for Langley—Aldergrove

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, the procedure and House affairs committee has been very busy, so I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, three other reports from the—

Points of Order

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable is rising on a point of order.

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

DECORUM

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think you noticed that the member is wearing a T-shirt with very obvious connotations. Promoting any cause at all in the House is inappropriate. It is not a scarf, or something minor. I would ask for your opinion on this situation.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: What I will say on this one is that we are not supposed to be wearing things that say something on them, that have writing on them. I know the hon. member is wearing something from Easter Seals; I will let her complete her report, but I will remind all members to be more judicious in what they are wearing in the chamber.

The hon. member for Waterloo.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised it would be a Conservative member who would be concerned with people living with disabilities or telling a woman what to wear.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, the problem is not the slogan on the T-shirt, but the T-shirt itself. Just as a man cannot rise without wearing a tie, it is inappropriate for a member to be wearing a T-shirt when rising to speak in the House. A certain level of respect is necessary in the House. I really do not appreciate the comment that the member just made about a simple dress-related rule in the House and the rules that we all have to follow to maintain decorum in the House.

The Deputy Speaker: A number of members wish to speak to this, so I will give the floor to the House leaders of each party.

The hon. member for La Prairie.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois follows the rules to the letter. I think we are grown-up enough to abide by the rules. I would ask the Speaker to enforce the rules that are clear in this case.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on the same point of order.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think you made the right call when you indicated some discretion. This is much like what was done earlier today. The Speaker called for a vote, and a member stood up who was not wearing a tie; the member was still allowed to have his vote counted. I support what you have implied, which is that the member should be able to finish what she had to say, and you made a very clear statement on the issue.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, your ruling was clear. There is discretion in this House; all members abide by it. I do not see how anyone could object to accessibility and inclusion in the House of Commons.

● (1635)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think your ruling was judicious; unfortunately, the member could not leave well enough alone and decided to take a shot on this side. That is the problem. Because of that, I actually think you should now enforce the rules of this place, which is that one does not make statements in this House when one is not appropriately dressed. There would be problems from that side if I came in wearing an “I love Alberta oil” or “I support agriculture” shirt. Therefore, I think this member should not be permitted to finish because she did not respect your ruling, which was to continue. She had to take a gratuitous shot at the opposition for trying to work with the system and uphold the rules of this place, which we should all be trying to do.

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

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was wondering whether you would have raised a question about a T-shirt, but you did not, and the opposition did not, so it was understood that this was going to happen. I am not sure whether we are dealing with our colleagues on the Conservatives' side being special snowflakes and feeling hurt and now wanting to shut down a voice. My question is about the colour red. I was actually very concerned; I thought that might be a Liberal colour. Since some of the Conservatives are wearing red too, should we rule on colour today? Is it the fact that it is a positive message of inclusion, or are we concerned that the Conservatives are feeling hurt once again?

The Deputy Speaker: Again, the rule is more about slogans and props. They all fit in the same group of rules. If everyone would like to indulge me, I would be more than happy to read some of the rules, and then we will go back to the order.

Chapter 13, the “Rules of Order and Decorum”, on page 611, reads:

While the Standing Orders do not prescribe a dress code for Members participating in debate, Speakers have ruled that all Members desiring to be recognized to speak at any point during the proceedings of the House must be wearing contemporary business attire. Current practice requires that male Members wear jackets, shirts and ties. Clerical collars have been allowed, although ascots and turtlenecks

have been ruled inappropriate for male Members participating in debate. The Chair has stated that wearing a kilt is permissible on certain occasions (for example, Robert Burns Day). Members of the House who are in the armed forces have been permitted to wear their uniforms in the House. Although there is no notation to this effect in the Journals or in the Debates, a newly elected Member introduced in the House in 2005 wore traditional Métis dress...on that occasion without objection from the Chair.

In certain circumstances, usually for medical reasons, the Chair has allowed a relaxation of the dress standards permitting, for example, a Member whose arm was in a cast to wear a sweater in the House instead of a jacket.

The other point I want to make is on what I said about slogans and/or props. It goes on to say:

Speakers have consistently ruled that visual displays or demonstrations of any kind used by Members to illustrate their remarks or emphasize their positions are out of order. Similarly, props of any kind have always been found to be unacceptable in the Chamber. Members may hold notes in their hands, but they will be interrupted and reprimanded by the Speaker if they use papers, documents or other objects to illustrate their remarks.

The point I am trying to make here is simply that we need to be judicious in what we are wearing. I am going to allow it, but I would caution the member on the retort back. That is what caused this to happen this afternoon.

I will recognize the hon. member for Waterloo. Let us get reports from committees done, and let us just be judicious in the future on the wearing of T-shirts with slogans in the House.

The hon. member for Waterloo has the floor.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following reports from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs: the 43rd report, in relation to its study of the main estimates for the fiscal year 2023-24; the 44th report, in relation to the motion adopted by the committee on Thursday, May 25, regarding the study on foreign election interference; and the 45th report, requesting a further extension of eight sitting days to consider the 2022 report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 45th report later this day.

* * *

● (1640)

CRIMINAL CODE

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-334, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Judges Act and the Director of Public Prosecutions Act (orders prohibiting publication of identifying information).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to table my private member's bill on publication bans this afternoon. This bill is an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Judges Act and the Director of Public Prosecutions Act to better support survivors of sexualized violence.

Routine Proceedings

Tabling this bill was made possible by the phenomenal work of My Voice, My Choice, a group of women who courageously advocated to make sure that other survivors have a choice when it comes to publication bans. Currently, there is no obligation to get consent from victim complainants when a ban has been placed on their name, and if they choose to speak out about their own experiences, they can face criminal charges. This is appalling, and I strongly believe that, as MPs, we have a responsibility to reform these systems.

I know that Bill S-12 was recently introduced in the Senate, which I was very happy to see. However, there are gaps in this government bill. I look forward to working with MPs from all parties when it comes to the House to make it better. I hope that my bill can act as an example of how Bill S-12 can and must be strengthened, to ensure that all survivors are given a choice.

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I would just like some clarification about your decision earlier on wearing a T-shirt. I know that you cited the Standing Orders, but I would like it to be clear. This is how I interpret your decision. If a member decides to come to the House wearing a T-shirt with a slogan, speaks on a topic and the Chair or another member intervenes to raise the matter, the Chair will tell the member that they can finish their comments, but must dress in the future in accordance with the Standing Orders.

Tomorrow morning, if I arrive in the House in a T-shirt that reads “Vive le Québec libre”, I would be able to finish my comments, but my dress must be in accordance with the Standing Orders for my next intervention. I would just like to clarify that that is how things will work in the future. In the Bloc Québécois, we have always wanted the Standing Orders to be enforced and for things to be clear. We have always wanted the government to respect the Canadian Constitution, even though we do not like it.

The Deputy Speaker: I think I made that clear. I allowed the rules to be bent this one time in the interest of getting through Routine Proceedings, but let us just say it will not happen again.

[*English*]

I believe that if we want to talk about what we are wearing in the chamber, I would invite the caucuses to maybe put a motion on the floor so that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs can look at it. It is not something we can be deciding on the floor.

In the future, I would suggest that we do not wear T-shirts with slogans on them in the House.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 45th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for La Prairie is rising on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, the last time, you allowed the member to complete her speech even though she was in breach of the Standing Orders of the House. That was clearly explained in the remarks you read. Now, she is rising wearing the same T-shirt and you have just told my colleague that you would not allow that in the future. This is the future. Now, she is rising wearing the same T-shirt. I am sorry, but at some point, there are limits. Could you enforce the standing order that you read and that is extremely clear? She is obviously in breach of the Standing Orders. It was fine earlier, but this is not earlier, this is now.

• (1645)

[*English*]

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, again, because I know there are certain members who are listening this time around, I will just repeat what I had indicated earlier. We saw the Speaker make a ruling, inadvertently, by allowing a member to stand for the introduction of a vote on a bill not wearing a tie and then, in your ruling, you used discretion in this situation.

My understanding was that it was just so that we can get through the rubric. It is a one-time issue where we saw something earlier in a vote, and it is not something that is going to be accepted going forward because you are giving a detailed explanation.

That was my understanding, so I would suggest that we just continue to get through the rubric. Members on all sides of the House have taken note of what you have said, and I am sure that the respective whips will make sure that it is reinforced in caucuses.

* * *

PETITIONS

HAZARAS

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is truly a great honour for me to present a petition today on behalf of the Canadian Hazara advocacy group. This is a group with members from across the country, from coast to coast, and they are particularly concerned about the persecution that the Taliban is subjecting members of the Hazara community in Afghanistan to. It is well recorded that there are many atrocities going on. Members of the Hazara community in Canada have come together and put their shoulders to the wheel to make sure that we are fully aware of this and that we do everything we can possibly do.

It is important to point out that other Parliaments and municipalities have taken note of this and recognize full well that we should stand up and stand with all members of the Hazara community. In this particular case, the petitioners are rightly asking us to support an investigation by the Human Rights Council of the UN into the serial atrocities that are going on against the Hazaras. In addition, they request that we substantially increase visas for Hazaras seeking asylum in Canada through special immigration programs.

Routine Proceedings

It is a great honour to present this petition, and I would remind all members how incredibly important it is that we continue to pay attention and continue to stand up for members of the Hazara community.

JUSTICE

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise for the fifth time on behalf of the people of Swan River, Manitoba, to present a petition on the rising rate of crime. The people of Swan River are demanding that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on-crime policies, which have fuelled the surge in crime throughout the rural community.

The crime severity index in the rural town of 4,000 has increased by over 50% from just five years ago. What was once a safe community has now turned into a place where people fear for their lives; this is because the government's catch-and-release policies have allowed violent repeat offenders to be out on bail instead of in jail. The people of Swan River demand that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on-crime policies, which directly threaten their livelihoods and community.

I fully support the good people of Swan River.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1387 to 1391, 1394 and 1398.

[Text]

Question No. 1387—**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:**

With regard to notifications for environmental emergencies in the province of Alberta, broken down by calendar year since 2020: (a) what is the number of environmental occurrences that took place as defined in the Canada-Alberta Environmental Occurrences Notification Agreement; (b) what is the total number of occurrences that were officially reported; and (c) what are the details of all environmental occurrences in (a), including the (i) location, (ii) deleterious substances involved, (iii) date of the first notification?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), Environment and Climate Change Canada, ECCC, can only report on the number of environmental occurrences that were reported to the National Environmental Emergencies Centre by Alberta. For the calendar years 2020, 2021 and 2022, Alberta notified ECCC of a total of 4175 environmental occurrences.

With regard to part (b), for the calendar years 2020, 2021 and 2022, Alberta notified ECCC of 4175 environmental occurrences.

With regard to part (c), for details on the notifications of environmental occurrences reported to ECCC by Alberta, ECCC would need a significant amount of time to extract a report that would organize all of the calls, exclude sensitive and personal information and provide the details of all notifications by location. ECCC concluded that producing and validating a comprehensive response to this question is not possible in the time allotted and could lead to the disclosure of incomplete and misleading information.

Further information can be found at: www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-emergencies-program.html

Question No. 1388—**Ms. Christine Normandin:**

With regard to BGRS, which is handling the Canadian Armed Forces' (CAF) relocation program: (a) on what date was the contract awarded to BGRS; (b) what firm was responsible for the relocation program prior to BGRS; (c) was the contract awarded to BGRS as a result of the expiry of the previous contract with that firm; (d) if the answer in (c) is negative, why was there a change in the firm responsible for the program; (e) was the contract awarded by mutual agreement or through a competitive bidding process; (f) how many compensation awards to CAF members in connection with their relocation have been subsequently claimed retroactively or cancelled (i) since the start of the contract with BGRS, (ii) for the duration of the contract with the firm that preceded BGRS, broken down by year; (g) how many complaints have been received regarding file management (i) since the start of the contract with BGRS, (ii) by the firm that preceded BGRS, broken down by year; and (h) what is the ratio of the number of complaints per number of files handled (i) since the contract was awarded to BGRS, (ii) by the firm that preceded BGRS, broken down by year?

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), the current contract for the Canadian Armed Forces, CAF, relocation program was awarded to Brookfield Global Relocation Services, BGRS, on August 25, 2016.

With regard to part (b), BGRS was previously awarded the contract for the relocation program on August 14, 2009.

With regard to parts (c) to (e), the contract was retendered on expiry in a competitive bidding process.

With regard to part (f), National Defence, and not BGRS, approves reimbursement or recovery of all or part of the expenses reasonably incurred that are directly related to the member's relocation.

Since the start of the current contract on August 25, 2016, there were 3285 instances where funds were recovered by National Defence from CAF members. This total includes recoveries from CAF members who requested and received advances in excess of what they claimed, as well as those who received benefits and then upon additional review had the benefit adjusted or cancelled. Further details on funds recovered prior to this time period would require an extensive manual search of paper records, which could not be completed in the allotted time.

With regard to parts (g) and (h), CAF members typically submit complaints to National Defence when they feel they were denied a financial benefit resulting from a decision or omission within the policy itself and not regarding the process or the file management, i.e., with BGRS. Further information on relevant policies can be found in the Canadian Armed Forces relocation directive at the following link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/relocation-directive/cafrd.html>.

Since August 25, 2016 there have been 73,978 files, i.e., individual moves initiated. Isolating the requested data would require an extensive manual search, which cannot be completed in the allotted time.

Routine Proceedings

Ultimately, National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces recognize the challenges that members and their families face when relocating, and seek to address any grievances in a timely manner.

Question No. 1389—**Mr. Michael D. Chong:**

With regard to planned defence spending by the government: what will Canada's level of defence spending be as a percentage of gross domestic product, broken down by year for each of the next five fiscal years?

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, National Defence remains committed to maintaining the defence budget increases set out in Canada's defence policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged". These investments will increase the total National Defence budget from \$18.9 billion in 2016-17 to \$32.7 billion by 2026-27, an increase of more than 70%.

This is an ongoing process and figures on planned spending continue to be refined. Indeed, at any given time, projected calculations can fluctuate based on changes in defence investments, capabilities and needs. Further, Canada's defence spending and procurement will be based on threat analyses and assessments of needs.

Annual reports on defence expenditures of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO, countries, including Canada, are published in March of each year, and can be found at the following link: NATO - News: Defence expenditure of NATO countries (2014-2022), 21-Mar.-2023.

Finally, as announced in budget 2022, National Defence is undertaking a review of its defence policy, which will include considerations for defence spending.

Question No. 1390—**Ms. Michelle Rempel Garner:**

With regard to sexual assault, physical assault or harassment complaints filed by those abiding by the government's hotel quarantine measures since March 1, 2020: (a) how many sexual assaults, physical assaults or harassment complaints have been filed, broken down by type of complaint; (b) how many of the complaints in (a) resulted in criminal charges; (c) how many sexual assaults, physical assaults or harassment complaints have been filed against quarantine screening and enforcement officers during regular visits, broken down by type of complaint; (d) how many of the complaints in (c) resulted in criminal charges; (e) has the government made any payments related to legal or settlement fees related to harassment or assaults related to government quarantine measures, and, if so, how many payments have been made and how much has been paid out; (f) how many complaints have been filed related to quarantine officers inappropriately demanding cash payments from those under restrictions; (g) for any complaints filed in (f), was any disciplinary action taken against the quarantine officers, and, if so, how many officers were disciplined, broken down by type of disciplinary measure; and (h) did the government conduct a gender-based analysis of its quarantine measures and programs before implementation, and, if so, what were the findings and details of the analysis, including whether (i) vulnerability due to confinement and authority of the officer was assessed, (ii) evaluations of any private security firms hired were conducted with respect to safety, (iii) other measures were considered, in order to ensure the safety of those under government restrictions?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), the Public Health Agency of Canada, PHAC, is aware of two sexual assault complaints filed by travellers while abiding by the government's hotel quarantine measures since March 1, 2020. Further information is provided below in the response to part (b).

With regard to part (b), the following two complaints resulted in criminal charges. In February 2021, an individual was charged by local police with sexual assault, break and enter, and harassment at

the Sheraton Montreal designated quarantine facility, DQF. The victim was a quarantined traveller.

In May 2021, a hotel employee within the housekeeping department at a Toronto government authorized accommodation, GAA, was arrested and received one charge of sexual assault. The victim was a traveller staying at the hotel. The hotel is no longer using the services of this employee.

With regard to parts (c) and (d), there are no sexual assault, physical assault or harassment complaints filed against quarantine screening and enforcement officers in relation to travellers who have stayed at a DQF or GAA.

With regard to part (e), the government has not made any payments related to legal or settlement fees related to harassment or assaults related to government quarantine measures.

With regard to parts (f) and (g), there have been no complaints filed related to quarantine officers inappropriately demanding cash payments from those under restrictions.

With regard to part (h), notwithstanding the fact that emergency orders issued under section 58 of the Quarantine Act are not subject to the cabinet directive on regulations or the requirement to conduct a gender-based analysis plus, GBA+, analysis, PHAC did conduct a GBA+ analysis to inform the development of border measures, including DQFs, and continued to make necessary adjustments to these programs throughout the pandemic response.

To ensure the health and safety of all personnel and travellers, contracts were established to provide security services 24 hours per day, seven days a week at the DQFs. Security service providers were required to have a reliability security clearance or equivalent. In addition, all personnel were required to complete mandatory specialized training to support the provision of quarantine services. The enhanced training provided them with skills, including how to de-escalate critical situations, improve communication between travellers and hotel personnel, and improve the capacity to respond to the needs of diverse populations.

GBA+ factors were considered during the development of the programs. Unforeseen impacts on diverse and vulnerable groups were continually addressed throughout operations, including by quarantine officers who, as nurses, have professional training and follow duty of care standards when interacting with vulnerable populations under their professional designation.

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These considerations were factored into programming, including accommodating different religious dietary needs, e.g., halal and kosher; ensuring that materials were available in a variety of languages; and instructing quarantine officers to consider a broad range of factors, e.g., medical requirements, families travelling together, unaccompanied minors, etc., at the border, as well as the need for alternative quarantine options.

Question No. 1391—Mr. Michael Kram:

With regard to the budget 2022 announcement of \$539.3 million for the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, broken down by province and territory, and by organization: what is the amount of funds (i) committed, (ii) allocated but not distributed?

Ms. Jenna Sudds (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the amount of \$539.3 million over five years, starting in 2022-23, is to enable provinces and territories to supplement and enhance services and supports within their jurisdictions to prevent gender-based violence and support survivors.

With regard to parts (i) and (ii), budget 2022 funding is being provided directly to provinces and territories through negotiated bilateral funding agreements. Once the bilateral funding agreements are established with the provinces and territories, the funding amounts will be made publicly available.

Question No. 1394—Ms. Niki Ashton:

With regard to the government's commitment to close the infrastructure gap on First Nations by 2030: (a) what metrics is the government using to measure the progress on meeting this commitment; (b) has the government made any assessments on whether it is on track to reach this commitment; and (c) what year does Indigenous Services Canada expect the infrastructure gap will be closed, and what is the current level of progress based on the metrics in (a)?

Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), infrastructure investments are a key element of the government's commitment to foster the growth of safe, healthy and prosperous indigenous communities and support indigenous economic participation. Infrastructure needs of first nations communities are always evolving, whether due to changing population and demographics, adapting to climate change, or changes in technology. ISC is committed to working with first nations partners to determine the scope and scale of the infrastructure gap, and identify ways to close this gap, based on first nations needs and priorities.

In 2022, on-reserve first nations communities were asked to identify and prioritize their housing and infrastructure needs in comprehensive fashion through a community infrastructure needs engagement. In British Columbia, the First Nations Health Authority was engaged on health-related infrastructure assets. A total of 405 communities, representing 72% of on-reserve first nations communities across Canada, provided these surveys to ISC, as of April 24, 2023. ISC has committed to provide additional capacity support in 2023 to the Chiefs of Ontario, to work directly with Ontario first nations that have not yet provided input to this survey. As such, ISC cannot yet provide a final report on this exercise; however, it expects that a comprehensive estimate of the first nations infrastructure gap will be available in 2023.

In 2023-24, in order to better respond to fire suppression needs and to measure progress, ISC began collecting annual data from first nations communities on fire incidents, what type, or types, of

fire suppression services are available in the community, and what education and prevention programs are being delivered.

Through its departmental results framework, ISC has identified a number of indicators to measure progress made to close infrastructure gaps in first nations. For example, in 2023-24, the departmental result "Indigenous communities have sustainable land management and infrastructure" will be measured, in part, by the following indicators: percentage of first nations housing that is adequate as assessed and reported by first nations; percentage of on-reserve public water systems financially supported by ISC that have low risk ratings; percentage of on-reserve public wastewater systems financially supported by ISC that have low risk ratings; percentage of on-reserve ISC funded other community infrastructure assets with a condition rating of "good" or "new"; percentage of on-reserve education facilities with a condition rating of "good" or "new"; and percentage of on-reserve health facilities with a condition rating of "good" or "new".

ISC will report publicly on progress made against these indicators in its Departmental Results Report.

The department is also exploring alternative approaches to reform how it funds and delivers infrastructure programming, to provide first nations with a more fulsome suite of financing options, comparable to non-indigenous communities, to better support first nations in prioritizing, building and maintaining infrastructure assets in their communities. To that end, the department continues to engage with first nations communities to seek their views, including on results reporting.

With regard to part (b), as noted in part (a), ISC continues to work with first nations to determine the scope and scale of the infrastructure gap, and therefore, reporting against it is not yet feasible. While more work needs to be done, since 2016 and as of December 31, 2022, \$8.49 billion, excluding operating expenses, of ISC targeted infrastructure funding for first nations on reserve has been invested toward 8,206 projects, and 4,996 of them are complete. A further \$8.43 billion will be invested before 2031-32.

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With regard to part (c), closing the infrastructure gap on reserve is a whole-of-government commitment. Once the initial needs-based infrastructure and housing surveys are completed, ISC will continue to work directly with first nations and other federal organizations that invest in first nations infrastructure, e.g., Infrastructure Canada and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, to identify what further measures and investments may be required to close the infrastructure gap by 2030.

Question No. 1398—Mr. Garnett Genuis:

With regard to gender parity amongst ministerial exempt staff, as of April 13, 2023: (a) how many chiefs of staff for ministers are identified as (i) male, (ii) female, (iii) neither; (b) how many directors of policy for ministers are identified as (i) male, (ii) female, (iii) neither; (c) how many directors of communications for ministers are identified as (i) male, (ii) female, (iii) neither, and (d) how many political exempt staff in general are identified as (i) male, (ii) female, (iii) neither?

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government is steadfast in its commitment to gender equality. Since 2015, the Prime Minister has led a cabinet with gender parity. While a comprehensive response cannot be completed in the time allotted, across government, ministerial exempt staff reflect the diversity of Canada. Currently, across ministers' offices, the gender balance for chiefs of staff, directors of policy and directors of communication is between 40% and 50%. Further information on ministerial exempt staff can also be found through the GC directory.

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*[English]***QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 1386, 1392, 1393 and 1395 to 1397 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*[Text]***Question No. 1386—Mr. Blake Desjarlais:**

With regard to individuals removed from Canada by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, broken down by province or territory and fiscal year since 2015-16: (a) what is the total number of removal orders issued as (i) departure, (ii) exclusion, (iii) deportation, orders; (b) what are the total expenses paid by the CBSA for the removal of individuals from Canada that were expected to be repaid by the individuals; and (c) of the expenses in (b), what is the total amount that has been recuperated, reflected as a dollar amount and a percentage?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1392—Mr. Philip Lawrence:

With regard to tax revenues collected by the Government of Canada: (a) how much does the government collect in tobacco taxes annually; (b) what is the amount of federal tax revenue that is lost annually from the sale of illegal, untaxed tobacco; (c) how does the government track and monitor the sale of illegal, untaxed tobacco in Canada; (d) what resources are presently committed by the government to eliminate contraband tobacco from the market and recoup lost tax revenues resulting from the sale of these products; and (e) are there any plans for the federal government to refresh or re-assess the RCMP's Contraband Tobacco Enforcement Strategy, which was created 15 years ago?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1393—Ms. Michelle Rempel Garner:

With regard to the government's commitment to provide free menstrual products in federally regulated workplaces, since January 1, 2019: (a) how many consultations has the government held on this policy; (b) how many stakeholders has the government consulted with on this policy; (c) what are the details of the consultations, including, for each consultation, the (i) names of organizations consulted, (ii) date, (iii) outcome, recommendation, or feedback; (d) what is the total cost of all consultations which have occurred to date; (e) what is the breakdown of (d) by date and line item; (f) have any outside consultants or service providers been involved in the development of this policy and any related consultations, and, if so, what are the details of each consultant or service provider's involvement, including the (i) name of the individual or firm, (ii) contract value, (iii) date of the contract, (iv) description of the goods or services provided; (g) what are all specific concerns that have been raised to date in the consultations; (h) how many government employees or full-time equivalents have worked on the consultations; (i) what are the travel costs associated with the consultations incurred to date (i) in total, (ii) broken down by year and type of expense; (j) what costs associated with the development of the government report "What We Heard: Proposal on the Provision of Menstrual Products in Federally Regulated Workplaces" have been incurred to date, (i) in total, (ii) broken down by type of expense; and (k) what is the current status of this policy proposal?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1395—Ms. Niki Ashton:

With regard to government settlements on class action suits involving First Nations, since 2015: (a) how many have been administered or monitored (i) by private firms like Deloitte, (ii) through the federal public service; (b) how is the decision made on whether a settlement is administered by the federal public service or a private firm; (c) what is the process for an individual to file and seek resolution to a complaint that a recipient did not receive the appropriate amount from a settlement; (d) how many complaints have been made relating to a recipient of a class action lawsuit not receiving the appropriate amount, broken down by year; (e) how many of the complaints in (d) have resulted in a change in the amount the recipient received; (f) what is the total dollar amount of the changes in amounts received in (e); (g) what is the dollar amount of these settlements, broken down by year and organization responsible for administering the settlement; and (h) what is the dollar value paid to each firm in (a)(i) for the purpose of administering or monitoring each settlement?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1396—Ms. Niki Ashton:

With regard to government contracts with nursing agencies to serve rural and remote Indigenous communities, broken down by fiscal year, since 2011-12: (a) what is the total number of contracts signed; (b) what are the details of all contracts signed, including the (i) nursing agency contracted, (ii) value of the contract, (iii) number of nurses provided, (iv) duration of the contract; and (c) what is the total amount of extra costs incurred as a result of relying on nursing agencies instead of employing nurses directly?

(Return tabled)

*Government Orders*Question No. 1397—**Ms. Niki Ashton:**

With regard to funding of flood mitigation activities: (a) in Northern Manitoba, what is the current amount of money dedicated to flood mitigation efforts by the federal government; (b) in Northern Manitoba, how much money was dedicated to preventative flooding measures, since September 1, 2021; (c) in Northern Manitoba, how much money was dispensed since September 2021; (d) in Northern Manitoba, what companies or organizations are tasked with managing the implementation of flood lines; (e) what are the expected areas to be flooded if 100 mm and 150 mm of rain were to fall around the Northern Red River area; (f) how much money is currently dedicated to Northern Indigenous Communities and First Nations for flood preventions across Canada; (g) how much money is dedicated to reactive versus preventive funds in (i) all of Canada, broken down by province, (ii) Northern Manitoba; and (h) broken down by year, how many people were displaced or have permanently moved away due to flooding in Northern Manitoba in the past five years?

(Return tabled)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers also be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Shefford on a point of order.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind members about the interpreters' hearing. They mentioned that there were cellphones near the microphones, creating a risk of interference. Out of respect for those who are interpreting, I would like for the members to be reminded to please be careful.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a good recommendation, and something I mention quite often.

I would remind hon. members to put their cellphones on their chairs or in their pockets, away from the microphones on the desks.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Waterloo is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, the procedure and House affairs committee tabled a series of reports today. We had requested an extension to June 9, and we are getting through that work. However, I am requesting that the 45th report, which was provided earlier this day, be concurred in.

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

An hon. member: Nay.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CANADA BUSINESS CORPORATIONS ACT

The House resumed from April 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am here today to talk about Bill C-42, an act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act, to create a beneficial ownership registry to combat money laundering.

I have the honour today of sharing my time with my friend and colleague, the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap.

Canada has a big problem with money laundering, and nowhere is that more evident than in metro Vancouver where my community of Langley—Aldergrove is located. Now, this is well known around the world. People have given Canada's very accessible money laundering streams a special name. They call it "snow washing".

Generally speaking, Canada is known to have a stable government and economy, and to be a safe place to invest, so honest people make assumptions that money coming from or going to Canadian-registered corporations must be legitimate, but sadly that is not always the case. We need to work hard to maintain that favourable impression that the world has of us. It is easy to ruin one's reputation. That is sadly what is happening.

According to a 2017 analysis by Transparency International, Canada is tied with South Korea for the weakest corporate transparency rules among G20 nations. That is why I welcome this legislation, Bill C-42, which is going to create a beneficial shareholder register so that crooks cannot hide behind a veil of secrecy, complexity and confusion. We want things to be transparent. We want to know who owns what.

B.C. has been taking the lead in building transparency rules to combat money laundering. In March 2019, in a report entitled "Combatting Money Laundering in BC Real Estate", an expert panel appointed by the B.C. government had this to say about the problem of money laundering. It focuses on British Columbia, but of course it applies right across the country. It reads:

Money laundering significantly damages our society and causes ongoing harm, not limited to the real estate sector or other economic sectors. Money laundering is a contagious, corrupting influence on society...It facilitates other criminal activities, contributing in particular to drug trafficking and the violent crime and opioid deaths that result, as is sadly so evident in [British Columbia].

The report goes on to say that, given the secret nature of money laundering, it is very difficult to estimate how much damage it is doing to our economy, but they do estimate that somewhere around \$50 billion in dirty money is pumped into our national economy every year. This activity is estimated at 5% of real estate prices in British Columbia, feeding into the housing unaffordability crisis.

The expert panel recommended several anti-money laundering tools, starting with implementing a land ownership transparency register, which is in effect at the moment in British Columbia. They were of the opinion that transparency in real estate would be the single most effective tool in the anti-money laundering arsenal, but they also acknowledge that money laundering touches on more than just real estate transactions.

I think it is informative to understand what money laundering is. It is effectively the process of making illegally gained proceeds appear to be legitimate. These proceeds can come from monstrous activities like fentanyl trafficking, for example, but sometimes it is much less nefarious than that. For example, it could be legally earned and obtained money which has been brought illegally into Canada by evading the originating country's arbitrary capital controls.

All of this activity is illegal. Actors become very creative in hiding their trails by creating layers of complexity, but it all follows the same basic process. It is usually done in three phases: first of all, placement; second, layering and third, integration.

• (1655)

Placement is the introduction of cash into the legitimate payment system. Layering is conducting multiple levels of complexity for no purpose other than to hide the paper trail. Integration is working the money back into the legal system. Money properly laundered, and I use the term loosely, can be very difficult to trace.

One of the layering tools that professionals like to use is secret trusts. This is where somebody owns something, but that is the front person. They are the registered owner, but they are not the real owner. They are holding it in trust for somebody who is working in the shadows. The real owner is invisible to law enforcement agencies.

Today we are talking about amendments to the Canada Business Corporations Act to create a share ownership transparency register to eliminate this layering tool that professionals like to use. How can this be beneficial? Let us take a look at what some provinces have done.

British Columbia is really taking the lead. It bears to note that every province in Canada has its own corporate registry, as there is a federal registry, so it is very important that the provinces and the federal government work together. There needs to be a pan-Canadian approach. Otherwise, we would be encouraging forum shopping among professional crooks. They are going to go to the province with the most relaxed and most permissive laws. I am happy to say that Bill C-42 at least attempts to tackle that.

British Columbia has implemented a requirement that all British Columbia-registered companies keep a beneficial owners register at

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their corporate records office. This is an early version of a beneficial shareholder register and it is a good start, but it is not enough, and that is recognized. It is not a very useful tool for law enforcement because it does not allow law enforcement agencies to work undercover. The register is not free. It is not publicly accessible. It is not centralized, and it is too bureaucratic. It is also too difficult for law enforcement agencies to use and therefore it needs to be amended.

I am happy to say that is in the works. By 2025, there should be a centralized register in British Columbia that is readily searchable by law enforcement agents without the police coming to the registered office and saying they want to see their corporate records, which gives too much notice to the crooks. Quebec and Ontario are following a trajectory similar to British Columbia's.

The United Kingdom is really taking the lead with its people with significant control register for all registered companies in that country. It is free, and it is publicly accessible, but so far it is presenting only mixed results in being an effective tool for law enforcement. Bill C-42 needs to go past second reading to go to committee, where it needs to be studied in detail. I hope that we would have witnesses coming from United Kingdom to tell us what is good about their system and what is lacking so we can learn from their successes and their mistakes.

Bill C-42 is the federal government's attempt to tackle money laundering, tax evasion and other illegal activity. The minister, in his speech when he introduced this legislation, said, "Simply put, increasing beneficial ownership transparency will enhance Canada's good international reputation as a safe, fair and competitive place to do business and provide even greater legitimacy to law-abiding Canadian businesses." Those are all very laudable objectives, which I support.

This bill should go to committee where it could be studied in detail. I will be looking there for efficiencies and effectiveness, and how adaptable it would be so that provinces can adopt it as well. As I said, the solution needs to be pan-Canadian.

• (1700)

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Democratic Institutions; the hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap, Carbon Pricing; and the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, Democratic Institutions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I concur with the member in that there are a number of issues related to money laundering and the impact it has on Canadian society, in many different ways. One could talk about that very strong criminal element and how it gets into our communities. Therefore, it is an issue that needs to be dealt with. I am glad to hear that the member is anxious to see the bill go to committee.

Does the member or the Conservative Party already have a sense at this time of some amendments they would be proposing, or are they going to wait until committee stage?

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Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, ultimately, we will be waiting to see what comes up at committee and what the study will be, but a couple of things come to mind.

One is that this system has to be efficient. It cannot be overly bureaucratic. Before I was elected to Parliament, I was practising corporate law. I was talking to my law partners the other day, and they were saying that the rules are just too complicated, making it time-consuming and expensive, as the costs are passed on to their clients, so I will be looking for efficiency.

Also, my understanding is that the threshold for having to register someone as a beneficial owner is 25%. I suspect that is too high. It probably has to be a lower number, like 10%.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-42 is unquestionably an important step forward in terms of greater transparency and in knowing who really owns businesses registered in Canada. However, there are limits to that. Perhaps my colleague could speak about that.

For instance, if a company registered in Barbados, in a tax haven or in any other country in which the laws do not require the same transparency around the beneficial ownership of businesses, transparency ends when there is no transparency. If the business is held in a location where there is no transparency, that ultimately limits the possibility of obtaining all the information.

Does my colleague have any ideas about what could be done to resolve this problem in the future?

[English]

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, the member's question underlines how complicated it can be to tackle the problem of money laundering.

If I understand the question correctly, it relates to money coming into Canada from a foreign corporation that is registered, let us say, in Barbados, which maybe does not have the same transparency rules that we have. However, we have FINTRAC rules, so the money coming in would have to go into a bank, and if it were over a certain amount, the bank would be required to report it according to the FINTRAC rules. It is probably not enough, but we do have something, and this bill is another step in the right direction.

• (1705)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague. The issue with money laundering is severe in Canada. There is an international expression called “snow washing” because Canada is known as a jurisdiction to dump dirty money from the drug cartels, terror gangs, and all kinds of illicit activity. It can be moved through casinos to be cleaned. It is also being used to purchase real estate.

This issue is concerning. We know that, in 2018, there was \$47 billion of illicit money snow washed in Canada, and it could have been as high as \$100 billion, which has an impact on affordability. People cannot afford to buy in the real estate markets of Vancouver, Toronto or Montreal because they are being used as safe zones to hold money.

Does my hon. colleague think we should look at the impact of snow washing and using Canadian real estate as a zone to clean money that should actually be exposed as dirty money, given the fact that people cannot even afford to live in the cities they love?

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question. It goes right to the very heart of what the problem is and what this bill is trying to tackle and remedy.

I agree with the member's analysis that snow washing and pumping money into the Canadian economy is forcing up real estate prices for the people who want to get into a home. We already have a housing affordability crisis. This is making it so much worse, and it needs to be tackled. It is a complex problem, and the solution will be multi-faceted. Bill C-42 is a step in the right direction. We need to deliver this for Canadians.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today as the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap, one of the most beautiful areas in the world at any time of year, and especially as we turn from spring to summer.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-42, an act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other acts. I would like to thank the member for Langley—Aldergrove for splitting his time with me and for his thoughtful intervention.

The government has stated that the objective of Bill C-42 is to protect Canadians against money laundering and terrorist financing, deter tax evasion and tax avoidance, and make sure Canada is an attractive place to conduct business. One has to ask why the Liberal-NDP coalition has taken so long to act, when it has been evident for years that change is needed.

While I believe there is support for the concept of a national public registry of beneficial owners of companies, I also believe we may need to look at extending the transparency of beneficial ownership of other assets. For example, at the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, or FOPO as it is known around Parliament Hill, we have been hearing testimony from witnesses who are extremely concerned about the purchase and control of fishing licences and quotas by foreign entities, and even unknown entities. That is right: unknown entities. Let me take us back in time to explain what I am referring to. In 2019, the FOPO committee tabled a report titled “West Coast Fisheries: Sharing Risks and Benefits”. This report was the result of a study initiated partly out of concern at that time, over four years ago, over the situation of local fish harvesters unable to compete with unknown entities bidding higher prices for access to Canada's fisheries resources, a common property resource for the benefit of Canadians. Now, over four years later, can members guess what is being studied at FOPO, the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans? It is foreign ownership and corporate concentration of fishing licences and quotas.

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I will go back to my earlier question about why the Liberal-NDP coalition taken so long to act. Here we are; it is four years after that report, and even longer into the government's mandate, since the concerns were first raised by stakeholders. Here we are, restudying almost the same issue, hearing that the same issues and concerns still exist, and the government has failed to take steps to ascertain that Canadians are the primary beneficiaries to access to Canada's common property resource, Canada's fisheries. It was somewhat shocking to hear testimony over four years ago, and now to hear similar testimony over recent weeks, that there is no real method of tracking beneficial ownership of fishing licenses, quotas and possibly vessels on Canada's west coast. Although some have tried to track beneficial ownership, in some cases the web becomes so tangled that no one can clearly identify who owns what.

The 2019 report I referred to contained a number of recommendations to the government. In fact, there were 20. However, there were a few key recommendations related to foreign ownership that the government should have acted on, but it has been slowly dragging its feet, with almost no response. I will refer to some of the recommendations quickly, and talk about what should have been done and what has not been done.

Recommendation 2 from the report stated, "That based on the principle that fish in Canadian waters are a resource for Canadians (i.e. common property), no future sales of fishing quota and/or licences be to non-Canadian beneficial owners based on the consideration of issues of legal authority, and international agreement/trade impacts." What has been done on this? Little to nothing has been done. There is nothing that the committee has been made aware of.

• (1710)

Recommendation 4 is somewhat similar. It states, "That, to increase the transparency of quota licence ownership and transactions, Fisheries and Oceans Canada determine and publish, in an easily accessible and readable format, a public online database that includes the following". Has that been achieved? Certainly not.

Recommendation 5 states, "That Fisheries and Oceans Canada prioritize the collection of socio-economic data for past and future regulatory changes and make this information publicly available." Again, there has been no action that the committee is aware of.

Recommendation 14 states, "That Fisheries and Oceans Canada develop a new policy framework through a process of authentic and transparent engagement with all key stakeholders". For example, some of the key stakeholders are:

Active fish harvesters (or where they exist, organizations that represent them) in all fisheries and fleets including owner-operators, non-owner-operators, and crew;

First Nations commercial fish harvesters (or where they exist, organizations that represent them);

Organizations representing licence and quota holders that are not active fish harvesters, including fish processing companies.

The last recommendation was a key one, and there has been very little action by the government that the committee restudying the same issue has been made aware of.

I am going to cut my time a little shorter today to make sure there are opportunities for other members to speak, but I will repeat

what I said earlier. We have heard from some who are most impacted by the potential of foreign investment and foreign ownership of our common property resources here in Canada, yet there has been little or no action with respect to who the beneficial buyers and owners are.

I will close by saying that there is merit in a registry of individuals with significant control of corporations in Canada. If this is done, it must be done in ways that protect personal privacy and also protect the common resources for the benefit of Canadians.

I look forward to following the debate on Bill C-42 as it goes through the process, to see if it accomplishes the stated objectives without unintended consequences.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member, in his concluding remarks, talked about unintended consequences, and at the beginning of his speech, he said it has taken a number of years to get the bill to this stage. One of the reasons it has taken the time it has is so we could do the proper consultation necessary. We need to allow civil servants to do what they do best in terms of ensuring that we have something of substance, in good form, so it can go to a standing committee to see if there are ways we can improve upon it there. Issues such as individual privacy are of great concern; there is no doubt about that.

My question, as I posed to his colleague, is this: Does the member, having looked at the legislation, have any specifics about where he, personally, would like to see some changes?

• (1715)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, as this bill works its way through the process, we may see amendments at committee stage. I look forward to possibly being able to participate.

The issue I raised is that it has taken over four years, and the government is eight years into its mandate. The issues I raised within the fisheries sector have been very clear, but there was little to no action until stakeholders really started pressing the government. We are finally starting to see some very slow, initial steps being taken, steps that should have been taken years ago.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I commend my Conservative colleague. We sit on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans together. We work very well together. It is a pleasure to work with him. He is thorough, skilled and always diligent. I want to take this opportunity to thank him for his work.

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Time is money. Everyone knows that. My colleague mentioned the time it takes to get a reaction from the government. We are studying foreign investments in fisheries, and we hear that there are even people who are asking to testify in camera, which is very troubling.

I would like my colleague to talk about how effectively and quickly we need to act if we do not want to essentially lose ownership of our fishery resources.

[English]

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the kind mention of my work at FOPO. We have heard from witnesses. Some have asked to appear in camera, with their names not divulged, because they were afraid of repercussions. We have heard of other harvesters who are concerned, but, out of fear of repercussions, simply will not testify. It is very concerning to us as members, and to me as a parliamentarian, to hear that there are those kinds of threats and concerns being brought. Sometimes, the only way people and their families feel safe is through back doors. I think it is a bigger issue that we as parliamentarians owe a duty to Canadians to fully investigate, to fully make sure we retain beneficial ownership of Canada's resources for Canadians.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is one thing I want to ask my colleague about. The bill would put the threshold for significant control at 25% or more of the company shares. For it to be truly effective, I think, and a lot of my Conservative colleagues would agree with me, the threshold would need to be lower, like, for example, what is used by the Ontario Securities Commission, which is 10%.

I wonder if the member could comment on that.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, certainly, the threshold of 25% seems to be quite high, especially when tracking of that foreign ownership may not be all that clear in other countries. That 25% threshold, I believe, should be lowered, and we may see that amendment at the committee stage.

• (1720)

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to engage in this debate.

The reason I find this so important is that I am from the beautiful province of British Columbia and from the city of Abbotsford, which is nestled between majestic Mount Baker, at 10,500 feet high, and, on the other side, the mighty Fraser River. We live in a wonderful community in a wonderful region of the country. However, one of the challenges we have had over the years is that Canada, and more specifically British Columbia, has become the locus, the very heart, of money laundering in our country.

Just so Canadians understand what money laundering is, I will note that it is not benign activity engaged in by Canadians who want to avoid taxes or something like that. Money laundering is about taking the proceeds of crime, channelling them into what appears to be a legitimate business or a legitimate asset and trying to make those proceeds seem legitimate. It is a great way for criminals to hide the proceeds of crime. The last thing I believe Canadians

want to do is aid and abet criminals to commit their crimes in our country, yet that is what has been happening for many years.

This legislation is not the be-all and end-all. Bill C-42 is simply a part of the solution. What it would do is establish a beneficial registry, an ownership registry, that would allow Canadians to see who actually owns the companies into which money might be directed from the proceeds of crime. This is not going to solve the whole problem of money laundering. Our police have their hands full in trying to track these criminals down, trying to identify the proceeds of crime and trying to get convictions.

Here is another problem. Money laundering has contributed significantly to the inflationary impacts on prices of land, real estate and homes that Canadians want to buy. These criminals know that if they can get money channelled into a house, it will be less likely for the police to identify that asset as being a proceed of crime. They also channel these proceeds of crime into legitimate businesses, like small and medium-sized enterprises. They channel this money into hard assets. They may be boats or expensive cars. At the end of the day, this costs Canadians big time.

There is another reason this is important to British Columbians. It was in British Columbia that the Cullen commission was established to investigate this very challenging problem to our criminal justice laws and to the broader issue of how much money laundering costs the average Canadian.

The Cullen commission made a long list of recommendations, most of which implicated the provincial government. It called upon the provincial government to act. However, there was one recommendation that stood out, which was that the federal government establish a pan-Canadian beneficial ownership registry for corporations. I believe Justice Cullen really intended for this to cover all companies in Canada. The problem is that the criminal justice law is federal law, so we as a Parliament have jurisdiction over it. Here is the problem: The large majority of Canadian companies are incorporated not at the federal level but at the provincial level, implicating every one of our 10 provinces and our territories.

• (1725)

How do we cobble together a pan-Canadian foreign ownership registry program with all of these different players at the table? The bill would, at least in the immediate term, establish a corporate beneficial ownership registry for federally incorporated companies, which is a good start. However, I believe the Cullen commission's intent was for the Liberal government to engage the provinces and territories to expand this to include the provincial regimes in federal legislation so that we can go after the money launderers in every corner of our country.

There is a reason this has come to our attention as lawmakers. Back in 2016, the Panama papers exposed how vulnerable Canada was to money laundering. Those papers made it clear that Canada was a laggard on the international stage when it came to addressing money laundering and interdicting the criminals who were taking proceeds of crime, filtering that money through legitimate enterprises and assets and then getting away with their crimes.

In 2017, it was the Liberal government's finance minister, Bill Morneau, who said we needed a beneficial registry to help combat money laundering in our market to determine the true source of funds and ownership in the acquisition of firms. He was right at that time, and that was 2017.

What happened in the intervening years? Nothing. From 2016 to 2023, we had eight years of inaction on the part of the Liberal government. This is pretty shocking, since the government, through its finance minister, at the very least had become aware that this was a very important issue for Canadians and nothing was done.

I will say that I am pleased that at least this has now come before us as Bill C-42, and it looks like we will see a beneficial ownership registry passed and implemented in our country. However, as the bill goes through committee review and comes back to the House, we are going to be asking a lot of questions. For example, how will this registry protect Canadians' privacy rights? We want to interdict criminals as they try to undertake their criminal enterprises, but we also want to make sure that the privacy of Canadians is protected.

I do not have great confidence that the government will actually protect our privacy, and here is why. We recently debated Bill C-27 in the House, which is all about privacy rights. We have been asking the government to actually include privacy as a fundamental right in Canada that Canadians can depend on. Sadly, Bill C-27 did not include that, so we have a right to be concerned.

We also want to ask who will have access to the information in the beneficial registry. Is it the police? Is it the ordinary citizen? Is it business people? None of that is clarified in this legislation. We need to know that. Will the bill give law enforcement the necessary tools to combat money laundering and terrorist financing?

To conclude, I believe there is all-party agreement, so I am asking for unanimous consent to request a recorded vote on Bill C-42.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Thursday, June 1, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Private Members' Business

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR EYE CARE ACT

The House resumed from April 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-284, An Act to establish a national strategy for eye care, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-284. As members know, this enactment provides for the development of a national strategy to support the prevention and treatment of eye disease to ensure better health outcomes for Canadians. It also designates the month of February as age-related macular degeneration month.

The preamble of Bill C-284 reads as follows, and I quote:

Whereas vision loss in Canada is associated with a number of causes, including macular degeneration, cataracts, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy;

Whereas millions of [Quebeckers and] Canadians live with eye disease that could lead to vision loss or blindness if not treated;

Whereas it is estimated that vision loss costs [Quebeckers and] Canadians billions of dollars every year, both in financial costs and in loss of well-being;

Whereas the loss of central vision can severely impact a person's independence and quality of life;

Whereas coordination and information sharing between the federal and provincial governments is needed to ensure new treatments are made available, to prevent and treat eye disease and to prevent health inequities among people with vision loss;

It also states, and I quote:

And whereas Parliament considers that it is desirable to be proactive in the fight against vision loss and to implement a national strategy on eye care

In the same vein as many bills introduced over the past few Parliaments calling for autism, cancer or diabetes strategies, this bill calls for a strategy in the form of a report on eye health. Not surprisingly, the bill has the support of the Canadian Ophthalmological Society and the Canadian Association of Optometrists. In the wake of the introduction of the bill and World Sight Day on October 13, these groups published a survey that highlights the lack of understanding among Canadians about this important aspect of our health.

As we know, the strategy proposed in Bill C-284 is built on four pillars:

identify the training, education and guidance needs of health care practitioners and other professionals related to the prevention and treatment of eye disease, including clinical practice guidelines;

promote research and improve data collection on eye disease prevention and treatment;

promote information and knowledge sharing between the federal and provincial governments in relation to eye disease prevention and treatment; and

ensure that Health Canada is able to rapidly consider new applications for treatments and devices used for macular degeneration, cataracts, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy.

Private Members' Business

The Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of the principle of the bill, because eye health is important for people's quality of life.

All in all, the bill itself does nothing. It only forces the government to produce a report that will establish a national strategy for eye care. Furthermore, designating the month of February as age-related macular degeneration month is a symbolic measure.

Although health services, including eye care services, are the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces, this bill gives the federal government a role by funding research and approving medications or devices.

The bill overall respects Quebec's and the provinces' jurisdictions. That is why the Bloc Québécois supports it. However, the Bloc will take the time to study the bill to ensure that the federal strategy is complete and complements the actions of the Quebec government.

In Quebec, optometry services are available to people under 18 or over 65, and emergency services are covered for everyone. There is also a visual aid program, which allows any individual with a permanent visual impairment who is covered under Quebec's health insurance plan to obtain visual aids such as magnifiers, an optical system, a calculator, a Braille typewriter, a white cane, an electronic obstacle detector, night vision goggles, and the list goes on.

The program also offers financial help to get a guide dog, as well as resources for students. Speaking of guide dogs, I am going to talk about a fantastic Quebec organization that does remarkable and indispensable work. I am talking about Mira.

● (1735)

In his childhood, founder Éric St-Pierre developed a passion for raising dogs. He trained dogs on the family farm, following his father's advice. His ease and natural talent with the animals led him to undergo professional training in order to have a career training guard dogs and sniffer dogs.

In 1975, Mr. St-Pierre built a kennel in Sainte-Madeleine. He spent most of his time training dogs. One day, a friend who worked as an orientation and mobility teacher at the Nazareth and Louis Braille Institute asked Mr. St-Pierre for advice about the behaviour of a guide dog from the United States. Back then, there were no francophone guide dog schools in Canada. Éric St-Pierre quickly realized that these dogs were not raised or trained in conditions that worked in Quebec. He realized that there was also a language barrier limiting many people's access to the services of these dogs. He therefore promised the institute that he would train dogs for them, and that is how Mira came to be. It was the first francophone centre for guide dogs in Canada.

Mira was founded in 1981. It is a non-profit organization that provides free guide dogs and service dogs to people with visual or mobility impairments, as well as to young people with autism spectrum disorder.

All of Mira's services and activities are based on the principle of body equality, meaning that what is accessible to everyone must also be accessible to people with disabilities. Within this framework, the organization's mission has the following objectives: increase the autonomy and promote the social integration of people with disabili-

ties through the use of guide dogs and service dogs; provide services freely to all beneficiaries, regardless of their income; improve the mobility and orientation of people with disabilities so that they can move about freely in their daily lives; create an individual intervention plan adapted for each beneficiary that takes into account the beneficiary's level of autonomy, social and professional context, and mobility needs; and promote the benefits of service dogs in public places, in schools and on public transport.

Mira is known for its innovative programs, dog training techniques and fundraising activities. Since it was created, Mira has provided more than 3,700 dogs free of charge to people living with one or more disabilities. Much of this success is due to public support and concern. Without this help, Mira would not be what it is today.

I am now going to talk about two people I knew well and who lost their sight because of macular degeneration and diabetes. When I was finishing high school, a friend of mine found out that in a few years she would lose her sight to a genetic disease, early-onset macular degeneration. Diane Lamarche had a bright future ahead of her. She was a serious student who got good grades in high school. She enjoyed walking, basketball and tennis. She was also an avid reader.

We got to know each other better when we worked together as playground monitors in Lebel-sur-Quévillon. In our senior year of high school, she told us that she was losing her sight and that she was already learning Braille. The news left us gutted. She was so young, and had such a promising life ahead of her as an adult.

Our eyes and vision are indispensable for acquiring information from our external environment. They make it possible to coordinate all our movements, in particular those of our hands. Vision has three roles: perceptual, sensory and cognitive.

Another person who was even closer to me, my uncle Germain Boyer, lost his vision in his 70th year because of his diabetes. I remember that he enjoyed Yule logs so much that he would stock up every year. He has since passed away, but I will always remember his kindness and cheerfulness. I want to send my love to my aunt Denise and my cousins Sylvain and Mélanie in memory of him.

Ultimately, prevention remains an effective way to avoid vision loss, unless it is caused by macular degeneration, poor health or genetics.

If passed, this bill will help ensure better eye health and better vision for Quebeckers and Canadians.

• (1740)

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a great honour to stand in this House today and speak in support of Bill C-284, an act to establish a national strategy for eye care. I am proud to say that New Democrats will be supporting this bill and, in fact, as I will point out in my remarks, this is something we have been championing since the 1960s.

This legislation, in general, would provide for “the development of a national strategy to support the prevention and treatment of eye disease to ensure better health outcomes for Canadians.” The bill states:

The national strategy must describe the various forms of eye disease and include measures to

- (a) identify the training, education and guidance needs of health care practitioners and other professionals related to the prevention and treatment of eye disease, including clinical practice guidelines;
- (b) promote research and improve data collection on eye disease prevention and treatment;
- (c) promote information and knowledge sharing between the federal and provincial governments in relation to eye disease prevention and treatment; and
- (d) ensure that Health Canada is able to rapidly consider new applications for treatments and devices used for macular degeneration, cataracts, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy.

This legislation would also designate the month of February as age-related macular degeneration awareness month.

I want to pause and thank my hon. colleague from Humber River—Black Creek, who has been an energetic, spirited and passionate sponsor of this bill. It would not be right to proceed any further without noting her energy and great work in promoting this overdue policy.

Eye health has been underfunded and deprioritized in Canada for too long. As a result, millions of Canadians are being put at unnecessary risk of vision loss because they lack access to eye care. A national strategy on eye care would ensure better access, better outcomes and quality of life for Canadians. It would also support Canadian leadership in vision research that can be exportable to the world.

Canada's New Democrats believe that our public health care system should cover us from head to toe, and that includes comprehensive eye care. Currently, access to eye care varies widely from province to province, resulting in variable health outcomes and exacerbating inequalities in our health care system. Over eight million Canadians are living with an eye condition that puts them at significant risk of blindness. An estimated 1.2 million Canadians are currently living with vision loss, with many facing a lack of investment in services and supports that impacts their living life to its fullest potential. That number is expected to grow to two million people by 2050. It underscores the need and the appropriateness of acting now so that we can arrest that alarming development.

The leading causes of vision loss in Canada are the following: Cataracts affect some 3.5 million people; age-related macular degeneration, 1.5 million people; glaucoma, about 300,000 people; and diabetic retinopathy, almost a million people or some 800,000.

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Routine eye exams play a crucial role in the prevention of vision loss. If certain eye diseases are diagnosed early enough, they can be effectively managed through different invasive measures and before expensive and more invasive procedures are required. According to a recent report by Deloitte, the cost of vision loss to our economy, both directly and indirectly, was some \$33 billion in 2019. That is projected to grow to some \$56 billion by 2050.

If diagnosed early and if people have access to regular screening and treatment, most vision loss can be prevented: in fact, in about 75% of cases. Seventy per cent of existing vision impairment in Canada is estimated to be correctable with prescription glasses. The sizable proportion of correctable vision impairment is related to the barriers to access to vision care in Canada. Most guidelines recommend having an eye exam once a year for people aged six to 18 or 65 and older, as well as for those with diabetes or with an existing eye disease. For healthy people aged 19 to 64, one visit per two years is considered sufficient. However, this very basic diagnostic health need is not being met.

• (1745)

I will give a few examples. Starting September 1, free annual eye exams paid for through the Ontario health insurance plan will no longer be available to seniors. Manitoba and Nova Scotia currently only insure eye exams every 24 months for every senior, which is twice as long as is recommended. Millions of Canadians without extended health benefits do not have their eyes checked or cared for, due to cost.

As I said, the NDP has been advocating for universal public optical treatment since its founding convention in 1961. I am going to quote from that convention, which reads, “Believing that a country's most precious possession is the health of its citizens, the New Party will introduce a National Health Plan, providing benefits to those who need them without regard to their ability to pay. The plan will cover a full range of services: medical, surgical, dental and optical treatment, as well as prescribed drugs and appliances.”

It is a little over 60 years since that statement was made, and here we are in a G7 country and we are not making sure every citizen can get their eyes checked every year, never mind have the relatively inexpensive correction done that would prevent them, in many cases, from getting vision loss and even blindness. That is a national shame and it is time it was rectified.

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More recently, the NPD's 2019 election platform committed to achieving head-to-toe public health care for all Canadians, and we specifically included eye care. In the 2021 platform, we committed to a long-term path to providing public coverage for eye care, along with other health services. In May 2021, the New Democrat member of Parliament for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksasing, who I note is in the chair today, introduced Motion No. 86. That motion called on the federal government to work toward the creation of a national strategy for action on eye health and vision care. One can see not only that our support for this bill is there because of the need and the overdue nature of this, but that New Democrats have been playing a key role in placing this issue on the national agenda for decades.

I have to point out where the Government of Canada has simply failed to meet its commitments in this regard. In 2003, the Government of Canada made a commitment to the World Health Organization to develop a vision health plan for Canada by 2007 and to implement that plan by 2009. To date, no plan has been developed.

As recently as July 2021, the Government of Canada voted in the UN General Assembly for the first agreement to be adopted at the United Nations designed to tackle preventable sight loss and ensure that eye health is part of the United Nations sustainable development goals. In this resolution, the establishment of a national vision health plan was endorsed again by Canada.

As much as I credit the hon. member for taking this overdue measure, one has to wonder why this had to take the form a private member's bill, why the government is not meeting its own obligations and why it is not actually introducing government legislation using the full force of its control of the Order Paper to meet its own commitments, which it has made not only to Canadians but on the world stage.

It is important to note as well that this legislation has the support of stakeholders across this country. Several organizations, including Fighting Blindness Canada, the Canadian Council of the Blind, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada, Diabetes Canada, the Canadian Association of Optometrists, the Canadian Ophthalmological Society and the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, have all advocated for a national eye care strategy for many years.

I want to pause for a moment to talk about the particular impacts this has on marginalized groups, including its gender impacts. When gender differences limit access to proper eye care services, women are at greater risk of developing eye diseases that are otherwise treatable and preventable. Recent studies published in *The Lancet Global Health* in 2020 revealed that women carry the greater burden of visual impairment globally. More women than men have impaired vision due to cataracts, age-related macular degeneration and dry eye disease. One in four women is at risk of vision impairment, compared to just one in eight men.

• (1750)

I will conclude by thanking the hon. member again for introducing this bill and let her know that the NDP will enthusiastically support it at all stages.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise today to speak in support of Bill C-284, an act to establish a national strategy for eye care, presented by my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Humber River—Black Creek. I know this is something the member has been working on for quite some time and I would like to recognize her extensive work on this issue.

This piece of legislation would not only ensure better health outcomes for Canadians, but also recognize the month of February as Age-Related Macular Degeneration Awareness Month, bringing awareness to the leading cause of vision loss in people 50 years or older.

More than eight million Canadians are presently living with one of the four common eye diseases and more than one in 10 older adults have some degree of vision loss, which places them at serious risk of losing their vision. Vision loss can be harmful to many elements of daily life, impacting the way a person works, participates in activities and interacts with the world around them. That is why it is our duty to take proactive measures to prevent and treat these diseases effectively.

Routine vision care can help to reduce the risks of blindness and vision loss later in life and improve the outcomes associated with eye diseases like cataracts and glaucoma. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic worsened the issue of vision loss in Canada as eye surgeries were cancelled or delayed and wait times to see vision care providers also increased over the course of the pandemic. That is why a national strategy—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Shefford on a point of order.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Madam Speaker, I have a little reminder. The member's notes are touching the microphone, which is making a noise that interferes with the work of the interpreters. Members just need to be careful.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I also noted that.

[*English*]

I would ask the hon. member to ensure that when she is moving her pages, she keeps them away from the microphone because it creates a problem for the interpreters.

The hon. member for Brampton South.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Madam Speaker, I will be careful of that.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic worsened the issue of vision loss in Canada, as eye surgeries were cancelled or delayed. Wait times to see vision care providers also increased over the course of the pandemic. That is why a national strategy for eye care is essential. It would provide a comprehensive road map, laying out a common direction and shared leadership. It would build collaboration among researchers, medical professionals and community organizations to develop innovative approaches to combat eye diseases and preserve sight.

In 2021, the CNIB opened a new centre in Brampton South, providing access to innovative technology and training for Bramptonians with sight loss. It is doing incredible work, and I am confident that Bill C-284 would bring us one step closer to empowering Canadians impacted by blindness with an integrated approach.

As members in this House know, Bill C-237, the National Framework for Diabetes Act, passed unanimously in 2021. I want to touch on how blindness can be a serious complication because of diabetes retinopathy, and I also want to recognize Diabetes Canada's work on this issue as well.

Earlier this year, I met an advocate named Ryan and his dog named Joe. Ryan lives with diabetic retinopathy. He told me about the challenges Canadians with vision impairments face using their insulin pumps. He and many other Canadians are experiencing these hardships, so we need to work together to remove those barriers.

Living with blindness, especially as a result of chronic disease, is an experience that is difficult for people without visual impairment to truly understand. This further underscores the need to have a coordinated strategy so that we can work together with provinces and territories, indigenous peoples and other partners to improve health outcomes. Through this approach, we can proactively identify and intervene in cases of diabetic retinopathy, mitigating the risk of vision loss.

We know that with early intervention and coordinated care, vision loss can be preserved. Of vision loss cases, 75% can be prevented if patients are diagnosed early and have access to treatment. We know that providing hope and better health outcomes for individuals affected by eye diseases is transformational. Already, the Government of Canada is leading and supporting a range of activities related to eye disease prevention and treatment.

I would like to talk about the investments announced in budget 2023 to strengthen our public health care system.

Budget 2023 commits \$196 billion in funding to support our health work force; reduce backlogs; expand access to family health, mental health and substance use services; and modernize our health system. This is to ensure provinces and territories can provide the high quality and timely health care Canadians expect and deserve.

We see the surgical backlogs and the impacts on our systems, and we are addressing that need. Surgical backlogs, including vision-related surgeries, are a key part of this plan and are a health system priority of this government. Budget 2023 includes a \$2-billion one-time top-up to provinces and territories to address urgent pressures in emergency rooms, operating rooms and pediatric hospitals. In addition, Indigenous Services Canada's non-insured

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health benefits program also provides vision care to eligible first nations and Inuit beneficiaries where they are not otherwise covered by other plans or programs.

The government has also made significant investments in vision loss prevention and research. Over the last five years, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research has invested approximately \$61 million in vision-related research. This research spans the spectrum of prevention, diagnosis, treatment and management of various vision-related conditions.

● (1755)

These investments contribute to the evidence base needed to improve health systems and health outcomes for Canadians experiencing vision loss.

Finally, I wish to highlight that medically necessary vision care services are covered by provincial and territorial health insurance plans. Any vision care service that must be performed in a hospital is covered and supported under Canada's public health care system. The federal government is committed to continue working with provinces and territories on our shared health priorities, including those related to vision care.

In conclusion, Bill C-284 would allow the Minister of Health to develop a national strategy to support the prevention and treatment of eye disease. It would facilitate engagement with provinces, territories, key stakeholders and partners to ensure that we are all pursuing common objectives in the vision care space, along with sharing best practices. This bill would complement existing work and research efforts, supported by provincial and territorial governments, and the Canadian Institutes for Health Research.

Once again, I wish to thank the hon. member for Humber River—Black Creek for putting forward this important bill. I know that my residents in Brampton South and, indeed, all Canadians are counting on us to act quickly to prevent and treat eye diseases. I encourage members to vote in favour, as we continue to strengthen our efforts on vision care in Canada.

● (1800)

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today and speak to Bill C-284, put forward by my colleague from Humber River—Black Creek. The question before us today is fundamentally about ensuring that Canadians receive a coordinated response regarding their health care needs, particularly eye care.

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The proposed national eye care framework intends to promote information sharing and knowledge sharing between the federal and provincial governments in relation to eye care disease prevention and treatment, all the while ensuring that both levels of government respect their roles within our national health care system. To quote the bill directly, a key component intends to “promote research and improve data collection on eye disease prevention and treatment”. Doing so would enable eye care health providers a centralized resource to access the status of their own patient base and make sure that they share their expertise across the country, all the while ensuring that only the best and newest technologies are used going forward.

According to the Canadian Council of the Blind, due to an increase in surgery wait times caused by the lockdowns during the pandemic, there has been a \$1.3-billion increase in the cost of vision health over the past two years. All of this is compounded by the fact that 75% of vision loss cases in Canada can be prevented if patients are diagnosed early and have access to treatment. Furthermore, 70% of existing vision impairment in Canada is estimated to be correctable with prescription glasses.

This proposal from my colleague is not only very commendable, but is being put forward at a very timely moment. A national framework would allow all provinces and the federal government, as well as health care practitioners and researchers, to sit down at one table and jointly develop and implement the measures necessary to make sure that all Canadians from coast to coast have access to eye care and the best practices available in a timely manner.

Developing an effective framework is now more critical for the future of our children due to the prevalence of electronic devices. They release blue light, which can reach the retina, the inner lining of our eyes. Studies have shown that this light can damage cells in the retina, leading in some cases to early age-related macular degeneration, a unique concern of the modern age that is far more likely to impact our children. Children may not even know that their phones could be permanently damaging their eyes due to a lack of educational awareness.

Some might resist getting an eye care exam due to the belief that glasses are not “cool”. I will admit that it was hard for me, some 10-plus years ago, to admit that I needed glasses. This is a pressing challenge, as a long list of diseases and health care problems can only be discovered through a regular eye examination. Many eye diseases do not have any preceding symptoms and cannot be treated without a professional assessment.

The concern of vision loss in Canada requires a coordinated response, in both education and organization, between the provinces and the federal government, especially since there is a high percentage of seniors and school-aged children who have undiagnosed eye care issues. Very few children had their eyes tested during the pandemic, and as previously mentioned, many spend a great deal of time in front of a computer screen.

Referring to Canada as a whole and for a better understanding of the gravity of the situation, here are some of the numbers. Over eight million Canadians, or one in five, have some form of eye disease. Some 1.2 million Canadians live with vision loss or blindness. It is estimated by the Canadian Council of the Blind that vision loss

and blindness were likely associated with 1,292 deaths in Canada in 2019. These deaths would have occurred due to factors such as increased risk of falls for the elderly and isolation experienced by those with vision loss.

Vision loss has a profound impact on our society and economy, costing an estimated \$32.9 billion a year, \$4.2 billion of which is attributed to reduced productivity in the workplace. Over half of the cost, \$17.4 billion, is attributed to reduced quality of life, which is primarily due to a loss of independence, especially among seniors.

Many of us have a personal connection to someone experiencing vision loss. My own mother struggles with age-related macular degeneration, or AMD, which is one of the top five causes of blindness. The other four are cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and uncorrected refractive errors. Of these, all but two, AMD and glaucoma, can be prevented through proper care if caught at an early stage, or treated with modern tools such as laser eye surgery and/or prescription glasses.

• (1805)

While glaucoma has no present cure, there are treatment options that, if begun early enough, can prevent an individual's loss of vision. Even in the case of AMD, a healthy lifestyle and regular eye exams can help delay the loss of vision as one grows older. Also, new recent accredited medical devices provide the hope to even reverse AMD, at least temporarily. In the case of cataracts, we have been able to treat this condition, I am told, as far back as the time of ancient Egypt.

There should be no excuse in the modern world to fail to provide Canadians with the knowledge about what treatments they can access in our provincial health care systems. Losing one's vision increases mental, financial and social hardships on an individual. It can lead to a loss of mobility and an inability to live independently, to drive, to read or to participate in physical activity. It can result in a loss of social interaction or even lead to social isolation, which can often lead to depression and other mental illnesses.

Through being proactive and taking preventative measures now, we can not only save individuals and families from a great deal of grief, but also help maintain the solvency of our health care system by helping provinces avoid spending even greater resources down the road in both treatment time and costs. Through proper education and awareness campaigns, Canadians can potentially save themselves from great heartache and financial costs by reducing smoking, having a healthy diet, getting regular eye exams and being informed of family genetics.

It must be stressed, however, that a health care strategy and delivery remain in provincial jurisdiction. The intent behind this national framework is for the federal government to serve as a centralized communication hub between eye health care providers in different provinces and federal regulators, allowing them to share their expertise and knowledge with each other. The requirement of regular reporting should also spur faster responses from Health Canada in reviewing and approving new technologies for the benefit of all.

This program must be a team effort led by professionals, in conjunction with the provinces, with the federal government keeping its involvement in proper scope, namely participating in this national framework. As long as these concerns are respected and decisions on strategies and spending priorities remain within provincial jurisdiction, as stipulated in the Canada Health Act, I can support this bill and look forward to doing so.

By passing Bill C-284, not only can we help millions of Canadians struggling with vision loss, but we can also be proactive and reduce the number of children who could face vision loss in the future. Eye care is but one part of our comprehensive health care strategy in Canada.

In my remaining time, I wish to speak more personally. At some point, I believe we will need a larger discussion on how health care is funded and how accountability in that funding is measured. Both levels of government provide dollars to health care, and it is clear that, while partially federally funded, health care is delivered provincially. The topic of health care funding and delivery comes up often when I hold round tables and town halls in Chatham-Kent—Leamington, where constituents often blame one or the other or both levels of government for the inadequacies in the system they experience.

I am reminded of Saturday mornings two decades ago in my own household. During the week, we had four daughters, but on Saturday mornings, when it came time to take out the garbage, we had five: Alyssa, Carina, Brenna, Kiana and “Not Me”. It was always Not Me’s turn to take out the garbage. Health care accountability often reminds me of those Saturday morning discussions when people point at two levels of government and both levels of government point at each other.

Former provincial treasurer Darcy McKeough, who is in his nineties and still lives in my riding, mused in a biography that the level of government that does the spending should do the taxing so as to be held accountable. That will be an interesting discussion one day, but it is not for today.

Today, I encourage all members of this House to support this legislation put before us by my hon. colleague.

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-284. As my colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou said so brilliantly earlier, the Bloc Québécois will be voting in favour of this bill.

Private Members' Business

I see no reason why we would oppose a national strategy to support the prevention and treatment of eye diseases, just as I see no reason why we would oppose an age-related macular degeneration awareness month.

The Bloc Québécois will be voting in favour of this bill because, and I mean no offence, it is, in my view, an apple pie bill. Indeed, no one could oppose such a strategy, especially since the health services outlined in the bill—as we will perhaps see when it is studied in committee—are more the responsibility of the federal government. Research funding and the approval of certain drugs and medical devices fall under federal jurisdiction. I do not see any problems with jurisdiction either, but we do reserve the right to take a closer look at the ins and outs of this bill in committee.

What concerns me a bit more about having a better strategy to support the prevention and treatment of eye disease is how to do it. A strategy is fine, but it needs to be accompanied by action. That is what I want to focus on as I discuss this topic.

The essential point here is that there is still a lot of work to be done. The work to improve the eye health of Quebecers and Canadians will require more services. For me, first and foremost, the best solution for more services is to have coverage under the Régie de l’assurance-maladie du Québec, which means an increase in health transfers. If we want better services, we need more resources.

Let us look, for example, at new treatments like the Luxturna gene therapy, a treatment that makes it possible to treat Leber congenital amaurosis. That is a significant and very costly illness, with just one treatment costing \$1 million. That is an enormous cost.

In that regard, on March 23, the federal government announced \$1.3 billion over three years to help the provinces cover those treatment costs. We know that gene therapies are treatments that herald small revolutions in medicine and health, but they are very costly treatments. If the past is any indication, we know that the federal government is not always there for health funding.

Now it is clear where I am going. The best way to have the best health care and to fight against eye disease is to combat one of the problems that plague the Canadian federation: I am talking about the fiscal imbalance. I would note that, last week, the mischievous member for Mirabel held a symposium here in Ottawa on the fiscal imbalance to study the phenomenon in depth. It was a non-partisan symposium attended by the Parliamentary Budget Officer—I do not think the Parliamentary Budget Officer is partisan—and Mr. Benoît Pelletier, a former Liberal minister from Quebec, who is not a Bloc supporter, but who came to speak to us about the fiscal imbalance.

Private Members' Business

Why am I talking about the fiscal imbalance? It is to remind members of the demands made by Quebec and the provinces on health care funding. Quebec and the provinces estimated their health funding shortfall at \$28 billion per year. The goal was to increase Ottawa's health transfers from 22% to 35%.

What did the federal government offer? Members will recall that it was far less than \$28 billion. What the federal government offered was \$4.16 billion. The difference between the provinces' demand for \$28 billion and the federal offer of \$4.6 billion is not just about money. The difference between the two means that vision care will never be provided for lack of resources. There is no doubt about that.

● (1815)

For example, in Quebec, year after year, health resources generally represent approximately 42% of Quebec's total budget. That means that there is 58% left for all of the government's other responsibilities such as education, fighting poverty, child care—Quebec was a pioneer in this field, as it created the child care model—infrastructure, roads, public transportation and bridges. There is 58% left for that, for funding municipalities and also for supporting Quebec businesses. If we wait for the federal government to support Quebec businesses, we will be waiting a long time, as we saw again with the announcement that Volkswagen is building in Ontario. Therefore, 42% of the Quebec government's budget goes directly to health care. That considerably reduces its budgetary margin. That is known as the fiscal imbalance.

I can give a very simple definition. It is a definition that everyone agrees on, the definition from the Séguin report. I am talking here about Yves Séguin, the former Liberal minister, not the guy who had a goat. Yves Séguin said that the provinces' spending structure is such that expenditures grow faster than the economy, while those of the federal government grow at roughly the same pace. Furthermore, when the federal government wants to adjust its spending, it can just unilaterally cut transfers to the provinces, without any political fallout.

That is the fiscal imbalance rule.

That means that the federal government can make promises like it did in March when it said that it was going to inject \$1.3 billion over three years to help the provinces with new gene therapy treatments. However, nothing prevents the government from eliminating that funding down the road. In so doing, the government strangles the provinces and the provinces are then stuck having to deliver services that they do not necessarily have the funding for. That is completely objective, ideologically neutral information. Take, for example, the Conference Board, which published a report showing that the Canadian federation is not viable in the long term and that the provincial economies are not viable in the Canadian federation, given the fiscal imbalance. That is also a recurring theme in the Parliamentary Budget Officer's reports, which document how the fiscal imbalance is wreaking havoc, particularly when it comes to health care.

I am saying all of this because, if we want a strategy that will really give us a robust health care system that can provide treatment for eye disease, then we need more funding for health care.

I want to make my colleagues aware of something that happened this week.

On Tuesday, Liberal and NDP members once again joined forces to remove an additional \$2 billion for health care from Bill C-47, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023. The NDP and Liberals got together to ensure that \$2 billion was cut from health care funding. The Liberal-NDP coalition had an opportunity to partially correct the federal government's lack of investment in health care and to take concrete action, which is what people are calling for, to relieve the overburdened and exhausted health care system. They also had an opportunity to offer treatments for eye diseases that met Quebecers' expectations, but they decided otherwise. All they have managed to do is disappoint people.

Liberal and NDP members voted in favour of an amendment to remove \$2 billion in additional health provisions for Quebec and the provinces when Bill C-47 was studied in committee. The amendment was proposed by the Liberal Party and removes additional support for health care in Quebec.

I think we should forget all the fine words and promises made by Liberal and NDP members who claim to be concerned about the state of our health care system. Indeed, when it comes time to invest more, they are nowhere to be found. Worse, they are actually cutting billions of dollars from health care, even when those billions were invested unintentionally.

● (1820)

I repeat, the best way to have better eye care is to have a robust health care system and health care funding that lives up to the expectations of Quebecers and Canadians.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Humber River—Black Creek has five minutes for her right of reply.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to sincerely thank all of my colleagues in the House. All of their comments were so sincerely delivered and so accurate on all of the issues that matter to us in this particular issue that we are trying to move forward.

My colleagues mentioned that our colleague from Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking introduced Motion No. 86 some years back, trying to move this issue, trying to get vision onto the radar screen here at the federal level. Countless times, whether it was 2007 and 2009, we have talked about it, but nothing has been done about it. I can say that I think the closest we have come to it is where we are tonight.

We have reached this point here tonight because of all of the members who are here. From last June, when I introduced the bill, the Conservatives, the Bloc and the NDP were right there, standing together with Liberal colleagues to support something that we knew was important.

One of the things that we heard about tonight was the number of organizations and the number of people who were anxiously waiting for this to happen. Some of them have said that they have been waiting since 2003 for the federal government to take some sort of leadership on this issue. I am glad to have had the opportunity to be able to get it this far.

There are so many organizations that are watching this discussion tonight, including the Canadian Council of the Blind, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, the Canadian Association of Optometrists, the Canadian Ophthalmological Society and Waterloo University, which is doing outstanding work in the area of eye care.

There is a lot of emphasis on what we are doing, and there is a lot of hope. The millions of people who are suffering from various categories of vision loss are counting on us tonight to send this bill off to committee so that the health committee can have a look at it. They are counting on us to ensure that it is not going to end up as just a whole lot of talk by elected officials, as happened before, with nothing delivered.

I think it is imperative that we move the bill over to the committee so that we can truly get some serious work done on something that is way overdue. We all know someone who is suffering from macular degeneration or blindness or various other eye diseases. I, for one, do not want to see them disappointed, and I know none of the members want to see them disappointed either.

The earlier we get the bill to committee and move it along there, the better. Listening to the excellent comments that were made tonight and the speeches from members, who all spoke so well, there is no need for me to reiterate anything. It has all been said.

The question becomes, what do we do with it? Do we waste another two weeks or so? I do not think we need to do that. Time is too valuable in the House. We only have three weeks left. If we could get the bill moved to committee this evening, we could get started doing that work. It would be a sign of hope and of sincerity from all of the members in this House.

I hope members will appreciate the urgency of the need to move the bill along. We do not have six months ahead of us; we have three weeks. It would really be a great bonus to all of those in the vision loss community if we could simply move it over with a voice vote and not have to waste another two weeks of House time, which is very valuable, especially at this particular time.

I thank all of my colleagues who spoke so very well. I appreciate their support. More importantly, the vision community appreciates their support immensely.

I look forward to our finishing off this discussion this evening.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for being the one who introduced this initially, and I thank you for all of your assistance in moving it forward, along with my other colleagues.

• (1825)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion.

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[Translation]

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division or wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[English]

Mr. Dave Epp: Madam Speaker, I look forward to every member having the opportunity to support this bill and would request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 7, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent at this time to see the clock at 6:30 p.m. so that we can begin Government Orders with Bill C-35 at report stage.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Do we have unanimous consent to see the clock at 6:30 p.m.?

It is agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

CANADA EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-35, An Act respecting early learning and child care in Canada, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

[English]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is one motion in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-35. Motion No. 1 will be debated and voted upon.

[Translation]

MOTION IN AMENDMENT

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC) moved:

That Bill C-35 be amended by deleting the short title.

[English]

She said: Madam Speaker, I am going to start by reading what Melissa wrote to me: "I'm a healthcare worker who works long hours, currently have been trying to find childcare since I found out I was pregnant with no such luck. My son is 12 months July 1st, and I am set to return work July 4th, but no luck with childcare so not sure if I'm going to be able to return." This is the reality of thousands of emails and messages I have read about Canadians struggling to access child care.

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Tonight, we are here to discuss Bill C-35, or the universal child care plan, as the Liberals love to call it. In particular, we are speaking to the report put forth by the HUMA committee that studied this legislation. Conservatives are here, in particular, to ensure the voices of parents are heard.

This Liberal-NDP government loves to tell Canadians that it is feminist. In fact, the preamble of the bill specifically says, “gender equality, on the rights of women and their economic participation and prosperity”. How does that help Melissa, the health care worker, in improving her rights, economic participation and prosperity when the choice to go to work is taken from her?

Erin Cullen, who speaks on behalf of ECEs and ABCs in Newfoundland and Labrador, said that there is no choice for families when it comes to child care because there is none available. Erin compared the \$10-a-day child care slogan to the government telling people that they get free groceries, but when they go to the grocery store, there is nothing on the shelves.

The numbers tell the story. A report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, or CCPA, highlights the child care crisis. Of nearly two million kids under the age of six eligible for the program, 950,000 are living in child care deserts. That means that there are at least three children competing for one spot. Ninety-two per cent of families in Saskatchewan are living in a child care desert. Seventy-nine per cent in Newfoundland and Labrador are living in a child care desert. Seventy-six per cent in Manitoba do not have access to child care. It is 64% in British Columbia. The numbers do not lie, and the reality is that these numbers are, in fact, real people, real families and real children who are being left behind.

There is nothing more stressful for a parent than finding quality, reliable, safe child care for their child. Affordability is important, but the reality is that this Liberal-NDP government is failing in all areas to deliver.

I will read some of the testimony we heard in committee about the outrageous wait lists. I asked Sheila Olan-MacLean:

Sheila, could you clarify those numbers you said earlier? I asked about wait-lists. You said that there were 300 per program, but there are 40 programs. That's 12,000. That seems outrageous when you only have 3,300 spaces.

Am I doing the math wrong?

Ms. Olan-MacLean replied, “When you think of a program that may have possibly 100 spaces, or less than 100 spaces, and it has 300 to 400 people—some have 600 people—on the wait-list, yes, that's probably pretty accurate.”

This is the reality of what families are experiencing, and it is destroying their mental health. The reality is that parents can expect years on wait-lists, and there is nothing in the bill to correct it.

The Conservatives put forth multiple amendments calling for choice, inclusivity, access, data and accountability, and members of the Liberal-NDP coalition voted them down. They say they care about access and inclusivity, but their actions speak louder on what they really care about, which is pushing an ideology that will decide what is best for people's children. They believe that the government should decide how people's children are cared for.

Members can listen to this story from Alberta, which was shared by Krystal Churcher, chair of the Association of Alberta Childcare Entrepreneurs, in committee. She said:

I have one child care operator in a rural, under-serviced area of Alberta who has proudly operated a high-quality day care centre for 17 years. She has invested in creating 194 child care spaces for her community. When [she was] asked how she felt [about the program, which is called] CWELCC...she said that she was excited for families to finally have access to more affordable child care and optimistic that it would bring relief to families sitting on wait-lists.

● (1830)

Yesterday she sent a letter to all of her 194 families in her centre, plus 563 families on her wait-list, to notify them that she was closing her centre. After 17 years of successful operation, the viability of her business is gone. With high inflation, fee caps and expansion restrictions on private centres, her centre is financially [blocked]. She has had to make the heartbreaking decision to close a business that she built, because she can't take the financial risk of signing a new lease or investing further into expanding her centre with the unknown of a cost control framework looming. She writes that she is worried that the \$10-a-day goal will be at the cost of quality care for children.

These are the decisions facing operators on the ground right now, who are deciding to walk away from something they have proudly created because they can no longer carry the financial burden or because they simply can't agree with the reduced quality of care to bring the costs down.

Where is the gender parity in this story?

Krystal went on to say:

The bill was introduced without adequate consultation with all industry stakeholders and without respecting how the child care sector has evolved in provincial jurisdictions across the country. What we're seeing is a program that has created a demand without the infrastructure to support it, which is causing wait-lists, a two-tiered system and undue stress to families and operators. Women entrepreneurs are facing bankruptcy and closure of businesses that have now lost all their value. The system is, frankly, not equitably accessible and is failing to meet the promises to parents and families. Operators are asking what the real cost is of meeting this \$10-a-day goal. Parents are losing choice; the quality of programming is at risk; educators are burned out; and women are losing their businesses.

The Liberal government is the first to tell us that it does not support two-tiered systems, yet this bill would do exactly that.

Ms. Maureen Farris, director of Strath-MacLean Child Care Centre, testified in committee and said:

As I've mentioned, there are so many children who sit on the wait-list and do not have a space, and there are operators who have chosen not to opt into CWELCC and can therefore provide or offer spaces to those families. Yes, that would absolutely create a two-tiered system. Families who could afford to pay for more expensive care would be able to do so, and families who can't may get substandard care, unfortunately.

Nothing addresses the labour shortage, frontline staff burnout and mass exodus from this profession. Again the Conservatives put forth an amendment to fix this, which stated that annual reporting must include “a national labour strategy to recruit and retain a qualified early childhood education workforce”, but, surprise, surprise, it was turned down by the coalition.

This bill is supposed to be composed of five pillars: quality, availability, affordability, accessibility and inclusiveness. However, yet again we have proof that the Liberals want to score political points and are more concerned with marketing a sellable plan than actually offering what it is they are selling. The Liberals moved a subamendment in committee that removed the words “availability” and “accessibility”, which are the biggest issues in child care in this country. Why? Why would they do this? The reality is that Bill C-35 is about as likely to help the child care crisis as it is to win the lottery, because that is exactly what the child care system in Canada is like. Getting a spot is like winning the lottery.

The heartbreaking messages shared in Facebook groups, in the media and to us as parliamentarians need to be heard and they need to be addressed. The Liberal government needs to stop promising what it cannot deliver. It has put the cart before the horse, and the reality is it has failed at affordability, the highest use of food banks. It has failed in accessing housing. Nobody can afford a house. It has also failed in public safety. Therefore, why would Canadians trust it with their children?

Conservatives will continue to fight for those left behind and will not stop fighting for freedom and choice for families to choose what is best for their children.

• (1835)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what my hon. colleague said is really important because it is for all of those reasons that we brought Bill C-35 forward. It is because there was a lack of accessibility. It is because child care was extraordinarily unaffordable. It is because we wanted to ensure high quality care, and we wanted to make sure that it was inclusive for all Canadian children. For all of the reasons that the member outlined, we brought forward Bill C-35. We brought forward the \$30-billion commitment over five years to bring forward child care.

I wonder what the member opposite proposes to do without the Government of Canada's involvement and how she would solve any of those issues that existed before Bill C-35, and would be exacerbated and worse without it.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, I think the best answer is to, of course, listen to the people who are on the front lines. They are the ones who are sharing the truth here.

Jennifer Ratcliffe, the director of Pebble Lane Early Learning, said:

The pressure to implement this program so quickly has resulted in overpayments to providers, families double-dipping, and funding methods being overlapped. Parents are stressed and providers feel like they have no help. It is clear that the provinces are scrambling as they try to prove they can do this, but they are ultimately failing. You cannot simply throw money at a problem and expect it to change.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech.

My question will be fairly short and simple. The Bloc Québécois is known to be a staunch defender of Quebec independence, including its areas of jurisdiction. I get the impression that Bill C-35 has been tabled in the wrong Parliament. Nothing related to family

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policies comes under the federal government's jurisdiction. Once again, the Liberal Party is trying to bulldoze its way into the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. This bill shows no respect for Quebec's demands that the federal government stop interfering in its jurisdictions.

Furthermore, the requests of Quebec and the Bloc Québécois were not listened to or respected. When the time came to include Quebec's expertise in the bill, based on its 25 years of experience in child care, all of the other parties, including the Conservative Party, rejected amendments aimed at upholding exclusive jurisdiction and the right to opt out with full compensation.

Does my colleague respect Quebec's autonomy and jurisdictions?

• (1840)

[*English*]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member has hit the nail on the head. We have seen this repeatedly. I touched on this in my speech. There is no respect for anyone who offers any other idea or any other solution than what the Liberal ideology puts forward. They think they know best. They do not believe in choice for families. They do not respect provincial jurisdiction. They do not respect Canadians, period. That is evident by the crisis that our country is in.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague brought up the study from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. She is absolutely right. It is called “Child Care Deserts in Canada”. I agree with her. We have a child care crisis.

One of its key recommendations in the report to address this kind of child care desert was to guarantee decent wages and benefits for child care workers. It did not recommend creating a child care system that was privatized. That was not part of its recommendations. However, it did say that one of the factors that is resulting in child care deserts is the fact that early childhood educators continue to not be afforded decent wages and benefits.

Does my colleague agree that we need to have a very clear workers strategy put in place that ensures all child care workers are paid decent wages and benefits?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, I really enjoy working with my hon. colleague. I know she is fighting for autonomy for indigenous peoples as well, which we support.

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I think what is important here is to say that we absolutely put forward that amendment. When we are looking at recruitment and retention of a labour strategy, there is nothing in this bill. We put it forth in committee, and it was turned down.

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am absolutely thrilled to be back in the House talking about Bill C-35, an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada.

This is another important step on the journey to providing early learning and child care that is affordable, accessible, high quality and inclusive for Canadian children right across the country.

I do want to begin by thanking all of the members of the HUMA, who worked so diligently and so hard to get us where we are today, one step closer to making it the law of the land that the Government of Canada will be involved in early learning and child care from now on. Unfortunately, listening to my hon. colleague from the Conservatives, I really do not know where they stand on this. They seem to be quite opposed to affordable child care and to making sure that Canadians have access to it. I hope that is not the case—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is some noise coming from the outside. Maybe the Sergeant-at-Arms can check it out, see what is going on and ask them to be a little bit quiet so we can really hear what is going on here in the House.

The hon. minister, sorry.

Hon. Karina Gould: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I really hope it is not the case that the Conservative Party of Canada has decided not to support affordable child care for Canadians, because I know that, for the hundreds of thousands of Canadian families for which this has been life changing, it would be so disappointing to know that the Conservative Party of Canada, once again, is voting against and not supporting affordable child care.

We know that, in 2006, one of the very first things the Conservative Party of Canada did when it formed government was to rip up the child care agreements with the provinces and territories. This legislation is particularly important, to make it harder for Conservatives to do that and to make it harder for Conservatives to hurt Canadian families and Canadian children. I am very pleased to say that we have the support of the NDP. I think we also have the support of the Bloc Québécois. We are just not really sure where the Conservatives are.

I will talk about what Canadian families are saying when it comes to affordable child care. They are calling it life changing. I have been across this country, to every province and almost every territory, and what I have heard from Canadian families is that this is a game changer for them. When I was in Nova Scotia, I was talking to a mom in Halifax who said that the 50% reduction in child care fees meant that, when she went to the grocery store, she was not deciding whether or not she could buy chicken. When I was talking to a mom in Toronto, she said that, because of the child care fee reduction, her family was deciding to have a second child. When I was in Vancouver, British Columbia, I was talking to a mom of three who has two kids in child care. She said that she has now put two of her three children into child care, and, because of those fee reductions, she has now gone back to work full time,

which is a huge, meaningful change for her family and her family income. When we talk about child care, we are talking about choice. Despite what the Conservatives say, there is no choice if people cannot afford to go to work and to have someone to care for their child in safety and security.

• (1845)

[*Translation*]

This means, of course, that we are going to make sure there are enough child care spaces, so that every child in Canada who wants a space can get one. That is precisely why we have committed to creating 250,000 more spaces by 2025-26. We have already created 50,000 spaces across the country. That means there are now 50,000 additional spots.

If we had not funded this \$30-billion initiative, those spaces would not have been created. Conservatives talk about families who need a space, and that is exactly why we created this initiative. Without the Government of Canada's intervention, these spaces would not have been created because the current child care market does not meet the real needs of Canadians.

As for Quebec, we signed an asymmetrical agreement because we recognize Quebec's leadership in child care. For 25 years now, Quebec has had affordable early childhood centres and day cares for families in Quebec. This has had an impact on the participation rate of women in the workforce. In Quebec, more women participate in the workforce than anywhere else in Canada. We recognize Quebec's leadership, and we have based our initiative on Quebec's efforts and leadership.

Our bill respects provincial and territorial jurisdictions, and we signed agreements with each one of the 10 provinces and each one of the three territories in this country to ensure that they can establish these child care services. We have common goals and Quebec promised to create 37,000 additional spaces with that money. We are here to support Quebec and to work together.

[*English*]

I will just say that, as of December, every province and territory had reduced its fees by 50% across this country, and several jurisdictions, including Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Nunavut, have already reached the \$10-a-day objective, three years ahead of schedule, which is making a huge and meaningful difference for families in those provinces and territories. Quebec and Yukon had already met that objective, and every other province and territory has been at 50% since December.

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When it comes to quality, we know that quality cannot be achieved without a well-paid, well-respected and well-treated workforce. That is why every single bilateral agreement we have ensures that we are working with provinces and territories to bring forward a wage grid to make sure they are working on a workforce strategy. In fact, this summer, I will be meeting with my provincial and territorial counterparts, and the number one thing on the agenda is a national workforce strategy. Absolutely, our ECEs care for our children. They care for our most precious resource, and we need to be there to make sure they have the supports they need. That is all factored into Bill C-35, which would commit the federal government to making sure that we have that accessible, affordable, high-quality and inclusive child care system right across the country.

I will talk about the final pillar. When we talk about inclusion, one of the things that, as a parent, is very challenging is having a child with special needs or special requirements. Not only is it difficult to find a centre that will take their child; it is also difficult to find a child care space that has the requisite supports they need to thrive. One of the key pillars of our child care initiative, and it is here in Bill C-35, is making sure we are building inclusive child care spaces. I have had the opportunity to visit the GRIT program in Edmonton and a program here in Ottawa that have built and created space that is ensuring that children of all abilities and all neurodivergences can be there, can be safe and, most importantly, can thrive.

That is what is exciting about Bill C-35 and its complementarity to the work we are doing in early learning and child care.

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

I would like to say one more thing. We are a feminist government. Our government is committed to everything we have done for gender equality. We are seeing the results.

This year, we have the highest female participation rate in the workforce in Canada's history. That is due in part to our day care and early childhood centre program. We are seeing the results.

Yes, there is a lot more work to be done. Of course a system cannot be created overnight. However, we are working on it, and I hope to be able to count on the support of every member of the House. It is one of the most important and transformative socio-economic initiatives to be undertaken by a government, by Canadians.

[*English*]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think real leadership is not choosing to see what one wants to see, but seeing the truth and acknowledging all of that, and this is so insulting to the families. I am going to look to Saskatchewan right now, where 10% of families have access to child care. That is 90% that do not, so it is not true that it is wonderful, great and life changing for everyone. I guess what we are looking for is what the plan is, because this is not working. So many families are being left out, and the data says that.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will remind members that I am sure the minister can answer the questions; I do not think she needs any assistance.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Speaker, that is so typical from the Conservatives. They are saying, "Things are not perfect, so let us just do absolutely nothing." On this side of the House, the Liberals say that, if we see a challenge, we should go forward and fix it. We should work with Canadians and their energy, and we should make sure we can do all of those things. If the member wants to see the plan, it is all public on the website. The Government of Canada has published its bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories. Saskatchewan, for example, has a great action plan. It is looking to expand child care across the country. Instead of saying we are not going to do anything and it is a problem, we are saying we are going to invest, bring forward legislation and fix it.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, it was a pleasure working with the minister on the bill, and with other members of the House trying to improve the bill. One of the concerns I brought forward, and continue to bring forward, is about workers. I was an early childhood educator, as I have indicated in the past. Workers are fighting the same fight. We are not going to have a national child care strategy unless we have a worker strategy. Unions representing child care workers have called for the government to develop a workforce strategy to address staffing shortages in the sector. We know this is something the CCPA commented on: the child care deserts. It is not about creating spaces; it is actually about having people who will work in these spaces.

Does the minister agree we need to develop a child care workforce strategy now if we are ever going to achieve a functioning national child care strategy in this country?

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her collaboration on this. I am absolutely thrilled we are here, continuing to advance early learning and child care and putting it into legislation, so I thank her for that collaboration.

Yes, we do need to address the workforce challenges. In each of the bilateral agreements we have, we encourage and work with provinces and territories for them to bring forward recruitment and retention strategies, and some provinces have done great work in that regard. B.C., for example, has done a \$4-an-hour wage top-up for all workers within child care. Manitoba has brought forward a pension and benefits plan. The Yukon has put forward a minimum wage for ECEs, starting at \$30 an hour. There is good work going on, but yes, we need something much more national in scope. That is why at the FPT meeting I am hosting this summer with my provincial and territorial counterparts, the number one item on the agenda is workforce, because we are not going to be able to maintain or create those spaces without that workforce.

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● (1855)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for her speech. I also thank my colleagues who participated in the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

However, it is apparent that our requests were completely disregarded. In fact, Quebec's expertise was not even recognized.

I would like the minister to explain why her government did not rely on the expertise and the model that we have in Quebec when it comes to child care.

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Speaker, on the contrary, we recognize Quebec's leadership. We used Quebec's experience as a foundation for our child care and early learning program.

I worked hand in hand with my Quebec counterpart on getting this bill through. We respect provincial jurisdictions.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-35.

The minister began by commending the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities for its work. I want to commend the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou for the excellent work that she did on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, which took many hours. I also want to commend the other committee members for their work. My colleague did a great job, and she asked a very insightful question.

I will digress from the subject of Bill C-35 for a moment to talk about the most recent budget. In its latest budget, the federal government decided to make the child care program a federal project that would encompass all of the provinces except Quebec. I will come back to that.

At that point, there was already talk about Quebec's leadership, our model and our early childhood education services. I want to specify that we are not just talking about basic child care services but about educational services. It seems as though the other provinces rely on Canada to ensure their social progress, whereas, in Quebec, these are societal choices that we made 25 years ago or more. Quebec made this societal choice to give all children an equal opportunity and to incorporate the early childhood education services policy into an ambitious family policy.

I am hearing talk of how it does not work that way in Saskatchewan and Alberta, and that we need a national strategy for workers. I can see why we are proud of our Quebec model. It has been recognized by the OECD. I myself went on a mission to the OECD regarding child care services and, at the time, Quebec attended with the minister. Indeed, Quebec as a society has chosen social progress. In our opinion, this bill meddles in provincial jurisdictions, and it is the provinces that should be responsible for implementing these social programs. It is not up to the federal government to tell them what to do and come to their rescue.

That said, we can only hope that all children will be offered truly equal opportunities. Education and learning are the responsibility of Quebec and the provinces. The government cannot regulate all the social choices made in other provinces. We have taken care of ourselves.

I am especially proud of the early childhood education services. The minister talked about leadership. The Quebec model has been recognized, but my colleague is right: If that model was used then why not include it in the bill? I was a witness in some respects at the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. Several witnesses in committee witnessed the implementation of the program in Quebec. That is the case for Pierre Fortin, a brilliant economist who worked on this to demonstrate to us that working on equality of opportunity for our children was not an expense, but an investment.

I do not understand why this was not indicated in Bill C-35 even though there has been verbal recognition of Quebec's work on child care services, as the international community did in 2003. I am talking about the OECD. In the study it did on child care services in Canada, it mentioned that it is "important to underline...the extraordinary advance made by Quebec, which has launched one of the most ambitious and interesting early education and care policies in North America."

As many people know, Quebec is already investing \$3 billion in early childhood education services. There are over 200,000 reduced contribution spaces. This is a public service. It is not a blend of public and private services. Early childhood education services are public services, and parents' contributions are reduced. The cost is even lower than the \$10 that will be charged under the federal program. Currently, the contribution in Quebec is \$8.85.

● (1900)

When early childhood education services were first introduced, the parental contribution was \$5. More than 25 years later, the contribution is a symbolic \$8.85. The contribution is the same, whatever the parents' income, because the condition of these services for the zero to five age group is to enable all children, whatever the parents' social status, whatever their socio-economic conditions, to have access to educational services. This is an important difference. Children are not simply being warehoused while their parents work. Children are learning in these environments.

This was definitely helpful in the context of a family policy that saw an increase in the number of women returning to the workforce. It was astounding.

It is all well and good if the provinces or other territories can benefit from this agreement. Everyone agrees on that, and the bill simply confirms it.

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The bill should have mentioned Quebec's leadership and its model and followed that model more carefully, not just haphazardly. The government also should have recognized that this bill will not apply in Quebec, not just for the next five years, but for always, because Quebec is the model. Quebec has a no-strings-attached agreement for the next five years. There were not a lot of Bloc Québécois amendments in this model.

The government also should have recognized Quebec's leadership and the fact that the agreement provided for transfers with no strings attached. How can the government impose conditions on Quebec when it is using Quebec's program as a model for its own? That is a big deal for us.

There has also been talk about a national strategy for workers. With all due respect, I can understand. If we want to provide quality early childhood education services, then training for staff, pay and working conditions are all very important, but those are not things that fall under Ottawa's jurisdiction. They are provincial responsibilities. I do not see how the federal government can include training and qualification requirements in salary policies. I understand that the government is making agreements so that the provinces are able to provide as many child care spaces as possible at 50% of the cost in the first year and then eventually at \$10 a day. That is the goal. I think that the number of child care spaces that the government is looking at in the rest of Canada is the same as or less than the number we already have in Quebec. I think that the government should have recognized that Quebec inspired the federal program. That must be recognized and it should be recognized in the bill.

We understand that the bill is there to ensure that this is not undone by another government, but it will be up to each Parliament to decide. As soon as the model is put in place, I think this will indeed contribute to reinforcing these services elsewhere. If the government's financial contribution can help provinces define or develop child care policies, so much the better. However, what I can say is that in Quebec, even though we have been using this model for 25 years, the federal transfers or the federal policies on family benefits or allowances have never offset Quebec's fair share of child care costs.

Before entering politics, I was a union leader. I was proud to be there 25 years ago when the education services were implemented. This was done in the spirit of a social dialogue in Quebec. The employers, the departments, the government, the social milieu and civil society were all involved in this big project. I am proud to say that it was the work of the first woman premier of Quebec, Pauline Marois, as minister at the time. This accomplishment is a source of great pride for us.

- (1905)

That is what it takes in social policy.

However, a fundamental question remains. While the federal government has social programs—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry to interrupt the member. I tried in vain to signal the member several times.

Questions and comments.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my Bloc Québécois colleague for her speech.

[*English*]

I have enjoyed working with her and also other colleagues in committee as we go through this process. I could not agree with my colleague more. Quebec is the model that we looked to in being able to create a system that would include all the provinces and territories, and that is why we embarked on this with so much consultation with Quebec. As a matter of fact, I enjoyed really fruitful conversations with the centre of excellence for early childhood development in Sainte-Justine.

We know that a public system is the right system. It is a high-quality system, yet my colleagues in the CPC keep insisting on private care. I would like to know the member's thoughts on why a public system is the right system for our children.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, it is because we put children first and we based this family policy around them. I remind members that this policy had two objectives: equal opportunity for children and work-life balance for parents.

If we want to have a quality system, we need quality training for all educators working with our children. To achieve excellence, we must consider training conditions and teacher-educator ratios.

Many elements were taken into account so that it would be a public system. The private child care system does not meet those objectives. A private system is there to make a profit. We know that early childhood day care services help children with their education and learning for their entire lives. When we think of children's rights, we need to invest in quality services. That is the choice we made.

[*English*]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think there is a lot to unpack. In Quebec, there are still 70,000 kids on a wait-list. I think it is great to look to Quebec because, as I say, it is the DeLorean. We can go back to the future and learn from it.

In terms of the private sector turning a profit, I find it interesting. If we have women entrepreneurs who are just putting money back into the system, is that not what the public system is doing?

How is Quebec closing this gap of 70,000 without accessing that? How is it addressing the labour shortage?

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• (1910)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, I would say that Quebec has always been a victim of its own success. The number of spaces has always been an issue. There are more than 200,000 spots, yet we still come up short.

There are also certain concerns. For parents, it is important to have a space in a public child care centre precisely so they do not have to go to the private sector, where the regulations and objectives are completely different. We need to strengthen the public network by creating spaces. I think it is a decent challenge, and the model is a success.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the benefits of the Quebec child care system is that more women are able to participate in the workforce.

Does the member agree that access to affordable, quality child care is a gender equity issue?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, I would say that it is first and foremost a question of equal opportunities for children. Of course, it contributes to women's participation in the workforce. If quality child care is not an option, women are likely to leave the workforce in order to care for their children, but it will not be by choice.

Public child care has offered vibrant and stimulating environments for children and has allowed women to return to the workforce or not lose their careers. Some may see it as an expense, but it is an investment because it is a win-win situation.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about Bill C-35, the Canada Early Learning and Child Care Act.

Let me take this opportunity to first of all thank all of the advocates, experts, parents, child care providers, workers, unions and others who took the time to make presentations or write submissions to the committee. Their passion and their knowledge about quality, affordable and accessible child care shone through and helped us make the bill better. There are too many people and organizations to name, but I am so grateful for their advocacy and guidance.

I am proud that we have emerged from the committee process with an improved piece of legislation. As a result of amendments put forward by the NDP, the bill includes stronger reporting requirements for greater accountability and transparency; more inclusive language that reflects the needs of children with disabilities and those from official language minority communities; recognition that the conditions of work affect the conditions of care; and an amendment to uphold the right of indigenous peoples to free, prior and informed consent on matters pertaining to their children. This acknowledgement is historic, and it is the first time since the passage of Bill C-15 that it has been enshrined in federal legislation.

This builds on other important provisions included in the original bill, including an explicit prioritization of non-profit and public child care for federal funding, something the NDP fought for and won. Witness after witness made it clear that the research overwhelmingly agrees that non-profit and public child care delivers the best outcomes and the highest quality of care for children.

I hope that after Bill C-35 becomes law, we no longer see federal money being used to expand for-profit child care in Canada, as we saw several months ago in Alberta with the federal government announcing support for 22,500 new for-profit spaces. Public money should be used to expand public and non-profit child care. Public monies need to be invested in public institutions. It is better for workers and it is better for children.

The NDP supports this bill, and I urge my colleagues from all parties to pass it unanimously to show our commitment to supporting children, families, workers and child care providers. This is an important step towards building a permanent national system of \$10-a-day child care.

I want to focus my remarks today on a theme that emerged time and time again in committee: We have a child care workforce crisis in this country. Child care workers receive wages that are not livable and benefits that are not adequate. They often endure difficult working conditions. Unless we address these issues, we are putting the success of a national child care system at risk.

Who are these workers? Well, more than 98% of them are women; one-third are immigrants or non-permanent residents; and child care workers are more likely than workers in all other occupations to be racialized. They perform some of the most critical work in our society, providing education during the years most crucial to a child's development, and yet they are treated as disposable.

The wage floor for early childhood educators in Ontario, for example, is just \$19 an hour. It is just \$19 an hour for providing essential work. Do members know the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Toronto? It is \$2,500 a month. This is outrageous. We are asking people to take on the work of looking after and educating our kids, and then we are not paying them enough to provide for their own kids. It is no wonder that people who trained as early childhood educators are leaving the profession to take better-paying jobs in other fields, or that many people are discouraged from entering the profession in the first place. More than any other factor, this is why we have a shortage of child care spaces across the country.

I know that the fee reductions we have been seeing as a result of the bilateral agreements with the provinces are having a huge and positive impact for thousands of families. I want to acknowledge that; I want to acknowledge that it is making their lives more affordable, but far too many others are stuck on wait-lists and cannot access the benefits of more affordable child care.

• (1915)

We can build all of the new spaces we want, but that means little unless well-trained, well-paid workers are put in place to staff these new centres.

I have often heard the situation in the child care sector described as a worker shortage, but let us be clear: This is not, in fact, a worker shortage; it is a wage shortage. It is a respect shortage. It is a dignity shortage. This shortage of dignity and respect is contributing to the shortage of affordable spaces.

Last week the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives released a report showing that almost half of younger children, which means those not yet attending kindergarten, live in “child care deserts”, where there are more than three children for every licensed child care space. In Saskatchewan, the number is 92%, and in my own province of Manitoba, it is 76%.

One of the key recommendations the report offers to address this situation is to guarantee decent wages and benefits for child care workers. We need immediate federal investments to provinces and territories to improve the wage grids of their child care staff. We also need this government to put in place a workforce strategy that ensures livable wages, better benefits, retirement security, adequate working conditions, and education and training opportunities.

I want to address the argument I often hear from my colleagues, which is that this is provincial jurisdiction.

We are building a national child care system. Without federal leadership to address this workforce crisis and improve pay, benefits and working conditions, this system will not be sustainable. It is not just workers who suffer from poor compensation; their working conditions are kids’ learning conditions. They are directly tied to the quality of care

The federal government can and must use its spending powers to raise the bar for workers. The Liberals know that they can do this. In fact, in 2021, during the 2021 election, they promised a wage floor of \$25 an hour for personal support workers, an area that is also within provincial jurisdiction. Why can they not make the same promise of livable wages for child care staff, who perform different but equally essential roles in society?

We do not have to choose between \$10-a-day child care and raising wages for child care workers. We can and must have both if we are going to have a successful national child care strategy. We can and must have both to ensure that kids get the best quality of care and that we are recruiting and retaining the workers we need to create more spaces so that parents can access affordable child care in the communities where they live.

I do not want this generation and the future generations of early childhood educators to have to make the same choice that I made: leaving a profession that I loved because I wanted to pay my bills. I

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want to live in a country where the work of early childhood educators is valued just as highly as the work of doctors, lawyers, engineers and all other professions.

The government cannot wash its hands of this responsibility. It has a leadership role to play in ensuring that every child care worker in Canada is treated with respect and dignity.

I ask this today of all of us in the House: Let us pass this bill. Let us ensure that the people who are at the heart of the national child care system that we are trying to build, without whose labour there would not be any system at all, are no longer an afterthought.

• (1920)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member has accurately captured the essence of what this legislation is doing. It is in essence establishing a national program. It does not matter, ultimately, where one lives in Canada; individuals will have access to, or potential access to, \$10-a-day day care. It speaks volumes in terms of how legislation can change the future of Canadians, in particular for families that have young children, in such a positive way.

I am wondering if the member could provide further comment on the significance and the benefits of a program that is national.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I am happy we have a \$10-a-day national child care strategy being put into place, but it will not be a successful program. It will not be rolled out properly without a comprehensive workforce strategy, which includes ensuring that early childhood educators are paid livable wages and benefits and have some sort of income security in retirement. If we do not respect the workers who are looking after children, how do we expect the national child care strategy to ever get off the ground properly?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her intervention. I enjoy working with her at committee and in the process of listening to witness testimony.

An amendment was put forward by the member to add “free, prior and informed consent” with respect to indigenous peoples. This amendment is very similar to what Conservatives believe, which is that parents should be able to choose what is right for their children and family. The Liberals voted against that motion.

My question for the member is this: How can she trust the Liberals when they voted against that very amendment that allows indigenous peoples to choose what is it right for their children?

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, it goes back to legislation. We need to negotiate a piece of legislation to enshrine it into law.

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This is about law. I was very happy to see support from the Conservatives, the Bloc and members of the Liberal Party, in fact, for my amendment to include “free, prior and informed consent” on all matters relating to the children of indigenous peoples, something we know historically has not been done. It is fundamental to self-determination, and in fact it is in the framework agreement.

That is why we are pushing for legislation. That is why we need to vote for this legislation and put it in place. We need to make sure that it is enshrined in law going forward.

• (1925)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her endless important work in this area.

I wonder if my colleague can clarify this. We all know of the dismal pay that child care workers are receiving, despite a lengthy education and working so tirelessly to support our children and future generations. I wonder if the member can share with us today what her thoughts are around what needs to be done to ensure that qualified individuals will be placed in these vital positions for our children as we move forward.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I think it is very simple. It is very clear. Certainly the sector leaders like Child Care Now and all the major child care organizations have been very clear that if we want a successful national child care strategy, we need to ensure that we have a strategy for workers. That includes ensuring that early childhood educators are provided with livable wages and benefits and have income security in their retirement.

We also need a strategy to train new workers entering the field, one that provides education to become qualified early childhood educators.

The solutions are there. The government just needs to listen.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what a pleasure it is to rise and speak to such important legislation. I suggest that what we are talking about this evening is historical legislation. If we take a look at it from the perspective of the Canada Health Act, the Canada Health Act has ensured that we have the health care system we have today. That is the way I look at Bill C-35.

Bill C-35 is a very powerful statement. It is a statement to all Canadians, no matter where they live from coast to coast to coast, that says the government recognizes child care is of the utmost importance. Having a national program will make a difference in a very real and tangible way.

Bill C-35 would put into place an act to ensure early learning and child care is there not only today but for future generations. It ensures that the federal government recognizes that it has a very important role to play. Not only will it be providing money, but there will be a higher sense of public accountability and transparency. It will ensure there is an affordability element to child care, no matter where one happens to live in Canada.

This is something that I believe will make a positive difference, and we have already seen some early results. When the minister

talked about the bill an hour or so ago, she talked about the number and percentage of women in the workforce today. There are record numbers in North America. We have more women entering into the workforce than we ever have. That is going to continue to grow. We know that, because we can look at the province of Quebec to see how successful its program has been. We have taken what has happened in the province of Quebec and amplified it to apply across the country. Everyone wins.

I do not quite understand the Conservative Party's position. It was long ago when we attempted to do this before. That would have been 20 years ago. Unfortunately, the first thing the Harper government did was rip up the idea, the agreements and the thoughts on this. As a result, it set back a generation or two of people who would have received good-quality child care, not to mention what I suspect would have been better wages and resources for child care workers. Because there was no legislative component to this, Stephen Harper had a very easy time destroying it.

Let us flash back to just a couple of years ago, when there were 338 Conservative candidates running around in the federal election. What was the Conservative Party saying then? We did not have full agreement from all the provinces at that time, but even at that point, less than two years ago, the federal Conservative Party was saying that it did not support this and that it would also rip it up. If we contrast the Conservatives with us, it is night and day. They do not support affordable, quality child care.

What we have done since the election is accomplish an agreement with all of the provinces and territories, along with indigenous communities. That means provincial and territorial parties that are not only Liberal. They are Conservative and NDP. When I say “Conservative” I mean Progressive Conservative. I should qualify that because the current Conservative Party is a very far right Conservative Party.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member who is laughing understands exactly what I am saying. One only needs to read her comments.

• (1930)

I think it is a positive thing that we have been encouraged by the Conservative Party to bring in this legislation. However, from my personal perspective, even if the Conservative Party was supporting the concept of affordable, quality child care, I would still be advocating for legislation of this nature because it is good legislation.

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If the Conservative Party was not so far to the right, I would be advocating for it, but with today's Conservative Party, it even becomes more important to have this legislation. I listened to the shadow minister. We do not call them critics; we call them shadow ministers. It is kind of scary when we stop to think about how the Conservatives are going to vote on this legislation. If we listen to the critic, we would think they are going to be voting against it.

I look at that, as I know many of my colleagues do, and ask who they are actually listening to. Obviously it is not their constituents. Instead, they try to give a false impression that this is broken. They then go on to talk about all the day care and child care problems, being very critical of the provinces, which have the responsibility of providing child care systems. I wonder if they have the support of the provinces to rip up things of this nature that we are proposing. I wonder if the provinces are aware of just how critical the Conservative Party of Canada is in regard to the performance of provincial governments across this country and those in the territories, because that is who its members are criticizing. We finally have a federal government, a national government, that has a vision of progress, of moving Canada forward on child care, yet we have a Conservative Party that has an attitude of “No, not here in Canada”. It does not want money being spent, which we hear constantly coming from the Conservative Party.

Yes, there is a cost to this. I recognize there is a cost going into the billions of dollars, and I think that is what offends Conservative Party members at the national level. However, let me suggest that if they open their eyes and try to get a better understanding of both the social and economic impact of a progressive policy of this nature, maybe they will do one of their traditional flip-flops, support the legislation and go against what they campaigned about on this issue. We all know the flip-flop they have taken on the price on pollution. Here is another good flip-flop for them, but a flip-flop in a positive way, where they would be supporting a national child care program. That would be encouraging to see the Conservative Party do.

Let us think of the economic advantage. We would have more people in the workforce. We would be making a more equal playing field. Many more women would be able to plan a career and not need to worry about the cost of day care, child care or early learning. These are the advantages. When they get into the workforce, they will be paying taxes, taxes that in all likelihood they might not have been paying because they did not have affordable child care. It is healthier for the economy.

There are parents who have their children in \$10-a-day child care. We talk about other issues in Canada, things like inflation. This is helping families today in a very real and tangible way by putting thousands of dollars in their pockets, yet the Conservatives do not like the idea. They need to really start thinking about how society would benefit. It is not just the family who would benefit; it is everyone. All of us benefit when we have programs of this nature.

Bill C-35, in essence, ensures we will continue to have a national child care program and a national commitment to financing and contributing to the care of children. That is a good thing. I hope the Conservatives will flip-flop on this issue and support it.

• (1935)

I see the member is already standing to ask a question. I hope she will give a commitment to support the legislation. That is the question I would pose to her.

An hon. member: Bring it home.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I love to hear the Liberals say the Conservative slogan “Bring it home”. It is great to hear them say it.

I received a message this morning from Melissa. Melissa wrote to me and said that she has not been able to find child care since she moved to Peterborough in August. She is looking for before-and-after care for her two kids. The wait-list is crazy. There are 75 kids on the wait-list. She was lucky enough to find a job that allows her to work during the hours her children are in school, but she had to cut down on working full time due to a lack of availability of child care.

I am curious what the member opposite would say to Melissa.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would say to Melissa that the Conservative Party has no ideas. It does not even want to contribute. It does not understand and appreciate what a national program is.

For the very first time, we have a national government demonstrating that it wants to contribute to addressing the issue of child care. That has been a long time coming, and part of the fear is that the Conservatives might try to get rid of that step forward.

I would suggest to Melissa that she might want to consider voting for any other political party but Conservative. Otherwise, child care would be going backward, and that would not be a good thing.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. However, he was very critical of the Conservatives.

The Liberal government also deserves some criticism for not taking into account the fact that Quebec is a model.

On top of that, the contract is for a period of five years. What is the government going to do after that? I think it is looking for a fight between Quebec and Ottawa.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member will recall from the comments I made that we looked at how successful the program in Quebec was and saw Quebec is leading the country on the issue. We knew if we took the idea from Quebec and applied it universally from coast to coast to coast, we would see some very positive results, like affordable, quality child care and more women being engaged in the workforce. We are already witnessing that. A number of provinces are already at \$10-a-day day care, and we have the highest percentage in North America of women engaged in the workforce. This is just the beginning, recognizing that Quebec has led the way.

One of the nice things about being in a federal system is that when one province does something and excels at it, Ottawa has the opportunity to promote, encourage and, in this case, take specific action so that future generations will benefit, as with the program that was introduced by the Province of Quebec. I love the fact that the Province of Quebec brought in the program.

- (1940)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have sat in the chamber listening, and the Conservatives have put up speaker after speaker claiming they care about child care and talking about the urgent need for child care. They also stand in this House and talk about the very real crisis that most Canadians are finding themselves in economically. However, what are we debating in the House tonight? Anybody watching this should know that we are debating a Conservative motion to delete the short title of the bill on child care. They have 15 Conservative members speaking to their motion to delete the short title of a bill on child care. If that does not speak to a disingenuousness in getting to the real issues facing Canadians, I do not know what does. Talk about a waste of this House's time.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague can comment on that. What does it tell him? The Conservatives say they really care about child care and want to deal with the real economic issues facing Canadians, but does he think the Conservatives putting up 15 speakers to talk about deleting the short title of the bill is consistent with that?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I recognize right up front that in a minority situation it has been good to see progressive policies where the NDP and the Liberals have been able to work together so that we can ensure that this important legislation ultimately will be able to pass. The member highlights a situation that is very obvious. The Conservatives are putting up this number of speakers, because ultimately they like to delay legislation and prevent it from passing.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is funny, because I have this speech that I wrote, which I am very passionate about, even though I am Conservative. I am a mom who needed child care, and I do not even know where to begin on this, because I am listening to the men across the room telling us what it is like to be a mom and how difficult it is to seek child care. I am listening to men across there.

I am looking at a member from Saskatchewan. I have great respect for her. She is a mom who has come here and had children while on the job, but not in the chamber. She has been able to raise

her children as a member of Parliament, and I just want to start by correcting the record by saying to please delete the last 15 minutes of what has happened in the House of Commons, because if we want to look at absolute mistruths, we can maybe look at the speech from the member for Winnipeg North. I am sorry about that.

I think that comes, because I just listened to him talk about a woman from Peterborough who he advised.

Maybe they can stop having their conversations over there and listen to women speak.

I was trying to talk about the fact that the member talked about a woman from Peterborough and went against my colleague, who is one of the strongest members of Parliament I have seen here. He told her that her constituent should maybe vote for somebody else if they really want to care about women and everything else. I would like to say to the members I am looking across at to please recognize the work we have done and to recognize the women who are sitting in this House and the work we have done. The only reason we are here is that we are strong women. The member will please stop trying to deflate us and stop trying to mansplain to us. We get it. We are leaders who have been voted for by our communities, and not just by women.

That is why I want to share with everybody that when we are bringing these things forward, it is because our constituents do not agree with what the Liberals have brought forward. In my case, 128,000 people elected me. That is about 50%, which is happy, joyful and great for me. I am listening to them. Not everybody voted for me, but I do try my best to represent everybody there.

My opinion may be different, but I want to remind members that the people I was elected by are different as well. They are different from other constituents. They have different needs in different regions. They may have different socio-economic values. They may be new immigrants in communities. They may have started in Newfoundland and ended up in Vancouver for trades jobs, and we have to recognize that people in Canada are different.

As I was listening to speeches, I understand where the heat gets up. It is disrespect for the women in this place that I have listened to, and after eight years, I am tired of listening to it.

Let us get to my speech. Let us get to the fact that the reason there are women in this place is that we do see we need child care, and the reason I am here today is that I was able to have child care. To the New Democrats, it was important to me when I needed child care, so they should stop saying that it is already in—

An hon. member: Then quit delaying it.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: It is already in place. The provinces already signed the agreement.

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Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I am all good. I do not need anyone to continue to yell. Perhaps I will remind the member from the NDP sitting in the back corner that the reason they are in the back corner is that their policies are not votable by all Canadians. The fact is that he is yelling that this is being delayed. As I look across at the minister, she is proud of all of these agreements she has signed with our provinces and territories, so members can stop telling us we are delaying a bill and hurting children. It is not hurting children. The minister has said herself, time and time again, that she has signed the agreements, and the only reason we have the legislation is so that Conservatives do not get into power, which we will, and get rid of it.

The reason I said this is very important is that they are—

Mr. Angelo Iacono Get rid of it.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: That is exactly what I am coming to. They continue to put words in my mouth. I thank the member for Alfred-Pellan for continuing to put words in my mouth. As I have said, Conservatives are worried about child care, and I am going to continue.

I have never seen such rudeness. Were members drinking or something? Is that why they are being so inappropriate? Angelo, were you drinking?

• (1945)

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

The hon. parliamentary secretary is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, from the moment the member stood up, I have not said a word. I have sat in my chair and I have been listening respectfully to the member opposite. I do not think it is appropriate to be accusing members of drinking inside the chamber. I think she should withdraw that particular comment, and continue on with her speech.

The Deputy Speaker: I will also suggest to members that we are here for debate. Let us have a debate, rather than just yelling at each other across the way. I think all issues that come before this House, regardless of what they are or who they are for, are important to Canadians. Let us have the debate that is on the docket for tonight, and let us be respectful of one another.

The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, I would like to withdraw that comment. Perhaps we could have some more dignity and respect in this place.

As I have indicated, women have been increasing their presence in the workforce over the past few decades. According to Statistics Canada, in 2020, 47.1% of the Canadian workforce are women. That is something we should be very proud of. We know that the reason that women are in the workforce is because there are people who are able to support them.

I was very fortunate because in my own world I had parents and I had a husband, who, unfortunately, was unable to work because of a disability, who were able to care for my children. I also put them in a day care for a number of years. With five children, I have used a mix of different sources, also due to the income I had. Our fami-

ly's base income was \$45,000, combined, at the time that I had five children. If anyone wants to talk about children and parents struggling, \$45,000, five children, it is tough.

That is why I am talking about it today. Not only is it tough, it is tough when women are trying to get in the workplace and there is no spot. That is exactly why we are bringing this, talking about it at third reading and talking about it at report stage. The problem here is that a labour strategy needs to be connected to this, and there is not a labour strategy.

The Liberal government has been here since 2015, and in 2017, when I was doing this, we talked about the wages and recognized that at \$22 an hour, people were leaving this type of work because they were not able to pay the bills. At \$22 an hour, there was not enough income for them to pay the bills.

People were leaving, and we know there is a retention issue. That is one of the greatest challenges. Until we have a labour force that can fill these spots, Canadian parents are being sold a bill of goods. It is important that we have sustainable child care. It is important that we have quality child care. It is important that we have choices in child care, whether it is Milestones child care, which is private, or the not-for-profits in our community, we need it all.

We need to have an entire selection, a cornucopia of different strategies so that we can deal with this. There need to be the options for parents who may be living in Toronto or my town of Sparta.

I have one constituent who wrote to me and indicated that it is a 35-minute drive for her to get child care. Getting to child care is very difficult, especially if one is looking at having almost two full hours of their day, driving there and back, and there and back again for pickup. These are the types of things that we need to consider. Accessibility for parents is one of the most important things.

Another constituent wrote to me, and I am just going to read parts of it, due to privacy, I do not want people to know her name. She was given notice to resign if she failed to return to work by the end of the next week. She had been trying to explain her situation to the manager, who was very reluctant. The issue for her was that the closest day care in her neighbourhood, the only day care in that area, had enough space for eight more children, but due to short-ages of day care staff, they could not take any more children.

These are the problems. When we are talking about this, I have heard that Conservatives do not support child care. We support child care, but we want child care to be more universal. We understand that the cost of child care is exorbitant. When I said I was making \$45,000 a year, \$1,200 a month was going to child care. I understand when money is tight. I understand what it is like to feed bagels to my kids because I did not have a lot of money. I really want members to stop banging on us for being Conservatives.

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I had another constituent talk about day care, saying there is a serious supply issue for the current demand for licensed child care access for families. Their son is nearly two years old and they have still not been offered a space in a day care facility. They put his name on the list in September 2021, for infant programs. It was clear that there will never be a spot.

Another said that her son has been on the wait list since March 2022, and he is 50th on the list. That is another email. I talked about the person who was 35 minutes away from day care. I have another person saying that there are no, spelling no with about 25 “o”s, spots in licensed centres or homes.

This is the problem here. It is great to have this program. I believe in child care. I always have believed in child care. However, there needs to be something that works for parents.

• (1950)

This is where I am going to put my mom hat on. For years, I always said “It is up to the family.” We just went through COVID and the fact is that, like every mom in this place, every daughter and every sister, we know a lot fell on the shoulders of women. That is why I will fight to ensure that we have a child care program that works for families and especially works for women.

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hear the passion that is there and I appreciate my hon. colleague's support for child care. Every single one of the issues that she raised is why this legislation is important and why this program is important. All of those issues would be in place if we were not moving forward with it.

In fact, the Conservative plan has been to provide tax credits. Those do not build spaces. Those do not increase wages. Those do not build a system. I hear that the member is saying they are not here to delay. In fact, we are at report stage and the amendment proposed is to delete the short title, so I do not really understand how that amendment to this legislation is addressing any of the issues that the Conservatives are putting forward.

Will the hon. member be supporting Bill C-35? Will you put your words on the table that you support access to child care and actually do it?

The Deputy Speaker: Of course, members need to make sure that they run their questions through the Chair and not ask a question directly to the member.

The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, finally we are getting to more of a discussion and that is part of the problem here: It has become so politicized. I have listened to speeches time and time again that are just about political wedges. I want this to be about parents and I want this to be about the children and the quality day care that they get.

I have just heard from the member from Peterborough that a child care facility that had been operating for 17 years just closed its doors to the 168 or 172 children or families who are serviced. We can do better. I just believe that the government put the cart before the horse and, unfortunately, we do not have the skills that will

support this, but we do need to have a child care program that works.

• (1955)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as a mother, as well, for me this is a very important discussion that we are having today. As someone who raised her children on a low income, child care is vital.

I am trying, with all due respect, to understand: Why are we here today debating an amendment to the short title of the bill when we could be debating at third reading this very important bill and actually seeing families receive the child care that they need and deserve? I am just trying to understand and to offer an opportunity for my colleague to clarify. Why are we not getting this done and why are we seeing delays from the Conservatives?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, the first thing is that when we talk about delays in this House, we have to understand the process. We know that these agreements have been signed, so the impact of this is not to the children and families whom this bill is connecting with. That is probably one of the key things that I want to point out.

We also recognize that this bill is very flawed. As I indicated, when we know that two in three children are on waiting lists and one in three children get spots, we talk about that lottery. We are discussing this because we really want there to be more of a discussion, more of what I did not see here 20 minutes ago and more of where I am seeing people want to talk about this. A lot of times, we just have too much ideology instead of more practicality.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what an amazing speech that was to hear, from a woman who has so much lived experience, has worked on this file, has been a parliamentarian and who knows that balance and knows how challenging it is to find quality, reliable child care and affordability.

What we have seen repeatedly is that the reason we are here is that we are trying to ensure that all voices are heard, but, based on the amendments that were put forth through committee by the Conservatives, they were not. Therefore, it is very important that we read into the record and people hear the stories, like that of Melissa, that we have talked about and the stories that seem to be ignored. Saskatchewan is a child care desert, where 90% of families cannot access child care.

What are the member's thoughts, based on what we have seen tonight? Does she really believe that this is just a political wedge? We have heard from the minister that this is all an anti-Conservative bill, and I am curious to hear her thoughts on that.

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Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, that is exactly how I see it as well. I see that there are intentions in this bill that are very positive because child care is necessary for families, to be able to go to work and provide for their families. Absolutely, I would not disagree with that at all. However, when I listened to the speeches, with respect to the minister because I know how hard she works, I counted the number of times she said “Conservative” in the first three minutes and it was a lot more than the number of times that she said the word “child”. Therefore, I recognized that we were not talking about children; we were talking about Conservatives. I was wondering what this was about, and so those were some of my questions there.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House tonight to talk about, really, such an important topic for me, for the minister and for so many colleagues in the House, including my colleagues across the way. This topic is affordable, accessible and inclusive early learning and child care.

This is a powerful driver of economic growth and social equality. We have heard that from many here tonight. We all know that affordability is a top-of-mind topic, so let us consider early learning and child care through that lens. We have talked about a lot of other lenses until now. I would like to lean into the affordability discussion.

Before I get to that, I just want to take a moment to recognize my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities for their tireless work and contributions to this bill. The discussions in committee were certainly fulsome.

Before the early learning and child care agreements with all provinces and territories were finalized, daily child care fees ranged from \$20 to \$48 a day per child. Those dollars could go a long way in the grocery store, in keeping children active or in other activities. In the year and a half since the first early learning and child care agreement was signed, child care fees have been dropping across Canada, and we are continuing to work hard with our provincial and territorial colleagues to meet our March 2026 goal of \$10-a-day, on average, fees for children under the age of six in licensed child care. We are already seeing the results. British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador have achieved 50% in fee reductions.

What does affordable child care mean? It means hundreds of dollars every month in the pockets of Canadians of all income levels. It means money for nutritious meals on the table, as the prices at grocery stores remain high. It means money for clothing and other necessities, which are so important for families.

Carolyn Ferns, the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care public policy and government relations coordinator, put it perfectly. She said, “Affordable child care is life changing for families and for our communities.” She also said, “It is great to see the collaboration between the federal and provincial governments making that a reality for Ontario families”. Of course, it is not just a reality for Ontario families. Rather, it is also a reality for every family in Canada with

young children, regardless of who they are, where they live and what their income level is.

I will share just a few of the testimonials parents have taken the trouble to write as they realize the financial relief that affordable child care is bringing to them. One wrote, “My daughter on Vancouver Island found out yesterday that her daycare will be charging \$10/day. This is huge for families! Thank you to the federal and provincial governments for collaborating on this excellent legislation. It truly puts families first.” Another said, “Just paid our January daycare fees. Under \$500!!!! This is a 55% reduction from last year. This is going to make such a huge difference for so many families.”

Another parent shared, “Our infant's daycare fees have dropped \$500 (FIVE HUNDRED) per month, and on the 26th at her 18monthiversary it will drop an ADDITIONAL \$200 (TWO HUNDRED!!) per month. Probably one of the largest pieces of legislation to personally affect me in my lifetime.” It is about that personal impact. We have heard a lot of discussion here, but let us talk about the parents and the families who are talking about what this legislation and these agreements mean to them, family by family, across the country.

Another parent wrote, “I won't benefit from this as my kids are grown and I remember paying \$650/month for day care on a salary of \$1,200/month back in the 80s. But I'm so very, very happy that young families are benefiting from this.”

I have just one more to share: “It was absolutely surreal to see my daycare fees drop from a high of \$167.25. As of January, we will be paying less than 50% of that, on a path to \$10 a day.” That is going from \$167.25 a day to \$10 a day. It is life changing.

It is clear from these and many other social media posts, interviews and commentaries that families in Canada are actually truly thrilled and, in many cases, astonished that affordable early learning and child care is finally here. The Government of Canada has made a historic investment of \$30 billion over five years to build a Canada-wide early learning and child care system. We have done so in collaboration with provincial, territorial and indigenous partners, all of which deserve enormous credit for their willingness to work together, and I emphasize “together”, to give every child in Canada the best possible start in life. In so doing, they will bring real financial and emotional relief to millions of families from coast to coast.

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● (2000)

By the end of last year, child care fees were reduced across the country. By 2025-26, the average fee for regulated child care spaces across Canada will be \$10 a day. As families across the country are realizing, there are no losers here. It is a financial win for families, regardless of their income level.

Since 2015, the Government of Canada has delivered real improvements to make life more affordable for Canadians. There is no better example than the progress we have made on this new ELCC system. As of 2025-26, a minimum of \$9.2 billion will be provided every year, on an ongoing basis, for affordable early learning and child care, as well as indigenous early learning and child care. The return on this investment for families with young children is obvious, and it is backed by evidence. Of course, we can look to the overwhelming success of the Quebec early learning and child care system, which is now ingrained into the social fabric of that province, and we have much to learn from it.

When we speak about affordability, it is perfectly appropriate to ask whether the country as a whole can afford it. To that, I say the answer is a resounding yes. Actually, we cannot afford not to do this, because this is a plan to drive economic growth and make sure that our families and their children have the best start in life. It is a plan to increase participation in the workforce, especially among many young mothers who want to pursue professional ambitions or further their education to get better-paying jobs. It is one of the many investments the Government of Canada remains committed to; such investments increase our economic growth, the quality of life of Canadians and, frankly, women's equity in the workforce.

Independent studies show that our early learning and child care system could raise the real GDP by as much as 1.2% over the next two decades. Furthermore, a range of studies have shown that for every dollar spent on early childhood education, the broader economy receives between \$1.50 and \$2.80 in return. That would be a huge return on our ELCC investment. This is money well spent, with the data showing strong social returns from investing in our families and our children.

We are hearing loud and clear how thrilled families are that their governments have joined together to bring them significant financial relief. Doubtless, many are beginning to wonder why we waited so long. It is another fair question.

As other colleagues have said, in passing this legislation, we will be promising the best possible start in life to future generations of children in Canada. We are on the brink of making history, of cementing together these wonderful provincial and territorial agreements into an enduring testament to our commitment to caring for Canadian children, their families and our collective future.

I urge all our colleagues to give a quick passage to Bill C-35.

● (2005)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech; I work with her on HUMA, listening to witness testimony.

One of those testimonies was from Jennifer Ratcliffe, the director at Pebble Lane Early Learning, who said:

We are already finding that we are struggling to expand, and when opportunities arise, we have to turn them down. We are simply not able to move forward, because of the lack of funding. We've had to turn down thousands of spaces, me and other providers I know. We're just not in a position to accept them, because we can't access the new spaces funding and we are having to operate under the fee caps.

At a time when the wait-lists are outrageous, and there are child care deserts across the country, what would my colleague say to Ms. Ratcliffe?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Mr. Speaker, I would say that this is where partnership is key. I had the pleasure, just this past year, to be in Manitoba with the premier to announce spaces in rural Manitoba. The province, together with the federal government, was ensuring that 1,650 new spaces, if I am not mistaken, would be created just from that tranche of all levels of government working together, including indigenous spaces in that part of Manitoba. I would say that there is every opportunity for child care facilities to work with the province and to work with us to build the spaces, because we know that we need them and that provinces and territories want to build them.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been nice working with the member across the way.

I know I am insistent on this, but we do not have a workforce strategy in this plan. Early childhood educators deserve respect. I remember how much I loved being an early childhood educator but how disrespected I felt. I was only making eight dollars an hour, yet I was with kids from morning until night. I was doing noble work, but I had no benefits, lousy pay and no opportunity to even advance my education because I did not earn enough to pay for training.

Can my hon. colleague commit to a workforce strategy that provides provinces and territories with the funding they need to ensure that workers or ECEs are paid livable wages and have benefits, income security as they become seniors, and training opportunities?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for Winnipeg Centre for really being a true ally in getting this legislation moving forward.

I would point out that, in the member's own province of Manitoba, there has been a commitment by the provincial government there to place spending forward from the funding it received towards training, strong wage grids and moving forward. Some provinces have put in solid wage grids. Yukon is doing \$30 a day. We see across the country that provinces and territories are stepping up. Do they need to do more? Of course they do; that is why the minister is going to be doing FPT meetings this summer specifically on the workforce strategy.

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We continue to be committed to working collaboratively with provinces to ensure that early child care workers are getting paid for the incredible work that they do.

• (2010)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very interested in my colleague's comments around affordability, because while I am no longer in the business of child care, as a Quebec resident, I certainly benefited 25 to 30 years ago from the child care that we had available at that time. That was on a needs basis only, but it permitted me to go back to school, earn an MBA and become a citizen earning a higher income to more than repay and contribute back to the system that helped me in that way.

Could my colleague comment on how not only is this program affordable for those who use it, but also, in fact, it pays for itself?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Mr. Speaker, the data speaks for itself. We have numbers ranging from \$1.80 to \$2.65 for every dollar we put in as a return on investment, which is good money well spent.

However, I would emphasize that I asked my Quebec colleagues this: How did this happen in Quebec first? Who made it happen? It was women who made it happen.

This is a feminist government committed to making sure that the choice women make is not between child care and a career. Instead, they can choose the path they want to carve out for themselves while enjoying being both a mother and an excellent part of our workforce.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that child care is a principal concern for moms and dads across the country. Bill C-35 would establish an aspirational vision for a national child care program in Canada. Unfortunately, that vision is narrow. Child care solutions are not universal for all families. We know that parents rely on diverse forms of care to meet their own family's unique needs, just as all families should have access to child care solutions. It is also important that parental rights and choice remain at the core of our debates and the development of policy in this area.

The rejection of amendments that would have established a vision that was more inclusive and realistic of the child care landscape in our country confirms that this legislation is a marketing tool. It does not bring forward solutions to meet the existing gaps in the system. In fact, the Liberal government intentionally designed the bill to exclude and discriminate against certain child care providers. It would single out public and not-for-profit child care providers, disregarding and devaluing licensed home care providers and small business entrepreneurs. Many of them are women. It would do this despite the reality that these child care providers are critical to achieving universal access. My colleague, the member for Peterborough—Kawartha, brought forward an amendment to the committee that would have included all types of child care. It was a change that would have better ensured access to child care and that would have better supported parental choice. Unfortunately, the Liberal-NDP coalition struck it down. It really is a shame.

The reality is that, while affordable and quality child care is great in principle, if a parent cannot access it, then it simply does not exist for them. If access is really a core principle, then limiting al-

ready limited resources does not make sense. Across the country, we know there are shortages of child care spaces. As members of the HUMA committee, we repeatedly heard from witnesses about the need for child care spaces across the country. We heard about the long and growing wait-lists to access the existing spaces. The director of Pebble Lane Early Learning, Jennifer Ratcliffe, told the committee, "Wait-lists across the country are growing by the thousands each month, and families are left with no one to help them. Parents need to work and if they don't have care, their only option is social assistance....Affordable child care is an empty promise to parents if it is not accessible." Maggie Moser, director of the Ontario Association of Independent Childcare Centres, told the committee that her child care centre had 147 spaces and 24 half-time spaces. That centre was at full capacity and had 600 names on the wait-list. Sheila Olan-MacLean, CEO of Compass Early Learning and Care, told the committee that each of its centres had about 300 families on its wait-list. Those are just a few examples we heard at committee. The demand far outweighs the need across the country, but we know that in some areas, like those deemed child care deserts, it is even greater. With the existing resources beyond capacity, it defies common sense to limit the program and then create an uneven market that will then only create greater demand at the child care centres captured by the child care agreements.

It is also difficult to understand why the government is so intent on punishing child care providers that fall outside the public and not-for-profit sectors. Entrepreneurs and small businesses are the backbone of our economy and our communities. I again quote Maggie Moser at HUMA committee, who said, "Our...members are mostly women who took a risk and opened up a child care centre. They took out loans and mortgages on their houses. It's very expensive. We're talking hundreds of thousands, going into the millions, to open a centre." Maggie Moser then went on to say, "Realistically, child care has been needed and it has been provided by these women entrepreneurs who took the risk and stepped up." Not only does the NDP-Liberal coalition want to ensure these entrepreneurial women are excluded from the development of a national child care program, but it also wants to ensure they do not have a voice at the table.

Government Orders

● (2015)

Another amendment put forward by my Conservative colleague, the member for Peterborough—Kawartha, would have ensured that the national child care council included representatives from private and home-based providers, alongside public and not-for-profit providers. This was a very reasonable amendment. It acknowledged the important role all child care providers have played and will continue to play in the development and provision of child care in Canada. The national child care council should be representative of Canada's child care landscape. The refusal to have fulsome representation at the table undermines the work and legitimacy of the council, but the NDP-Liberal coalition again struck down this reasonable amendment.

We also saw the rejection of an amendment that would have directed the national child care council to support the recruitment and retention of a well-qualified workforce, and another that would have required an annual report on a national labour strategy. We heard from witnesses just how dire the labour crisis is in this sector. Labour shortages remain a major obstacle in achieving access to affordable child care spaces. Witnesses were clear that there is a need for a specific workforce strategy and a need for better data and tracking of recruitment and retention efforts. In the rejection of these amendments, it is further made clear that this legislation is not designed to provide tangible child care solutions. The bill would do nothing to address the fact that the current programs are not targeted to supporting lower-income families; in many cases it is lower-income families that are on the outside looking in. Families who already had a child care space in public or not-for-profit care are now getting subsidized care, but everyone else is on a wait-list. If this bill passes, they would still be on a wait-list. This bill would not address the labour shortages in the child care sector. It would not direct the minister or the national advisory council to develop a plan to strengthen the workforce, and it would not present a viable path to creating the necessary child care spaces to create universally accessible and affordable child care spaces.

Like most of the policies and bills we see come forward from the government, Bill C-35 would have winners, but it would also have losers. Some moms and dads would get a boost, and others would get nothing. It is truly disappointing that the government is so unwilling and is resistant to trying to address those inequities. In fact, with the agreements already in place with the provinces, the national advisory council is already formed. What about the refusal to ensure more equitable access? This bill would really only be serving to reinforce the Liberal government's narrow vision for a national child care program and to create divisions. It is disingenuous for the Liberal government to pat itself on the back for creating accessible and affordable child care, when that is not the reality for most Canadian families and there is not a clear pathway to that becoming a reality.

● (2020)

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will note what I felt was missing from my colleague's speech today when she talked about what was missing from the legislation. She did not seem to mention that licensed private child care providers are actually grandfathered into the agreements in terms of

accessibility. In addition, what she admitted when she talked about all child care providers was that they proposed faith-based care, au pairs, nannies and unlicensed home child care. The MP for Battlefords—Lloydminster asked why we could not consider au pairs from Europe. Are Canadians really okay with public dollars going to faith-based care? With all the complaints, my colleague has not really offered a plan. We do have a plan and we are implementing it. Will the Conservatives support Bill C-35?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, I guess the parliamentary secretary missed the point that these agreements are already signed and in place. They are already being used. The importance of parents needing to have choice was reinforced at committee with our NDP member, with free, prior and informed consent, when we passed this. I will mention that only one Liberal voted for it and the rest voted against it, but it would not have passed if that one member had not voted for it. We believe that parental choice is important, and narrowing that option for choice is doing a disservice not only to the workforce but also to the children who then do not have access to spaces.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. Once again, I thank all my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities for this bill.

I have a question for my colleague. We know that this bill does not provide full compensation for Quebec. However, outside Quebec, Ottawa is seen as a force for social progress.

Is my colleague concerned about the trend towards centralization when, in Quebec, we reject all forms of interference?

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

[*English*]

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, I definitely believe that provincial jurisdiction is something that should be respected.

I am on record saying in this place that the government does not have a good track record when we look at carbon tax 1.0, and now carbon tax 2.0 coming in. Government members do not care what jurisdiction it is; it is their way or the highway, and if we do not agree with them, we hate everything and are opposed to everything, which is just blatantly untrue. However, the government needs to do a better job at respecting jurisdictions, specifically those of the provinces.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed working with my colleague on the HUMA committee, as a visitor.

Government Orders

I agree that we have a child care desert, but I have been asking the same question over and over again tonight. We have what the CCPA called a worker shortage, caused by poor wages, no benefits and no pension plan. We are not going to have a national child care strategy if we do not have a worker strategy that ensures dignified working conditions for early childhood educators.

I wonder if my colleague would agree with me that, in order to have this system work and to see this plan succeed, early childhood educators must be paid livable wages, must be given benefits and must be given a retirement plan.

● (2025)

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, I also enjoyed working with the member on that committee. I thought we worked well together, especially as opposition.

There was an amendment brought forward that would have directed the National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care to support the recruitment and retention of a well-qualified workforce. Again, that was struck down. The NDP voted against it.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate the opportunity to come here to this House of Commons and speak on behalf of the people of Calgary Midnapore.

Of course, I am very proud to say that I am a proud hockey mom in the riding of Calgary Midnapore, and I certainly like to have conversations with the other mothers at the hockey rink. We do that. We wait for our kids to get on the ice or wait for the practice to end, and we have conversations, and certainly we have conversations about child care. There is no doubt about it. A lot of families require child care. A lot of families are not so fortunate as to have a parent stay at home, as two incomes are required, but we also have conversations about why that is so, and we have conversations about the cost of living.

My truth, and the truth of the hockey moms I talk to, is that the words from the government about making life affordable for Canadian families are a lie, and day care is just a part of that lie. It is a cycle that the government has created.

First of all, there is inflationary spending. We have seen that excessively. We have seen excessive taxation, so there is inflationary spending and excessive taxation. This drives up the cost of living for Canadian families as well as costs for Canadian businesses. I have mentioned often in this House that I come from a small business family, so taxes on small business are very important to me and to my family.

As a result of the cost of living being driven up, Canadian families are driven into poverty. Businesses have to close and lay off workers, and Canadian families cannot afford to eat, cannot afford rent and certainly cannot afford child care.

What the government does after it has created this nation of poverty is throw little scraps out to the Canadian public, and this day care program is just a marketing plan. It is just one of those scraps.

The government threw out the rent subsidy. They said, “Here is \$500 this month; I don’t know what you’re going to do next

month, but here is \$500.” The grocery rebate was \$234, even though groceries are going to cost an additional \$1,000 for a family of four.

The government makes life unaffordable for Canadians, and day care is just another example of what it is doing. It is creating a cycle of continuous poverty for Canadians, whereby Canadians are reliant upon the government instead of on themselves and the common sense of the common people, as we talk about. This day care scheme is just another example.

I talked about inflationary spending. We saw in budget 2023 an additional \$69.7 billion that is going to be spent. This will cost each Canadian household an additional \$4,200. I just came from the operations committee, where we had the president of the Treasury Board, who just added another \$1.3 billion to the tab of Canadians for the recently negotiated agreements, which the Treasury Board failed to do two years previously. In a hurry to get things done, it has now finally completed these agreements. I thank goodness, because services were suffering for Canadians, but it is for the price tag of \$1.3 billion.

The government has to bring down inflationary spending and excessive taxation so Canadians can have a chance. We see an escalator tax on beer, wine and spirits of 2%. Let me say that the hockey moms and I sometimes could use a nice glass of wine at the end of the day, but it is 2% more now, as a result of the government and its creation of a life that is not affordable for Canadians.

We see an increase of 40% in the cost of food with high inflationary spending, with 1.5 million Canadians visiting food banks in a single month. We have talked about these numbers a lot in this House. One in five Canadians are skipping meals, and as I mentioned, the grocery rebate is just \$234, but groceries are going to cost an additional \$1,065.

Day care is a part of this lie of affordability that the Liberals say they are creating for Canadians, when really they are just making everything more expensive.

● (2030)

The cost of shelter has doubled. Mortgages have doubled from \$1,400 in 2015 to \$3,100 in 2023. Rents have doubled from \$973 to \$1,760, and that is for a single bedroom. Life is not affordable. Again, it is a result of what the Liberal government is doing. It is taking all this money and handing out little bits, little scraps, like this fake day care plan.

The housing minister could not say what rent was in Kelowna when the member for Kelowna—Lake Country asked last week. That is an example of how out of touch the government is.

Government Orders

The government is raising payroll taxes on workers in small businesses. A worker who is making above \$66,000 will now need to pay an extra \$255 to CPP and an extra \$50 to EI, and of course we have the carbon tax. The carbon tax went up 14¢ a litre on April 1. We know that the carbon tax is driving up the cost of gas and groceries, as I indicated. Those groceries have to get to the super-market somehow. They go through vehicles, which use gas, so there is a double taxation there.

Then there is home heating, something that all Canadians need, yet the government has called Canadians “polluters” in the past. It called grannies in the Maritimes “polluters” when really Liberals are creating the cycle of poverty to make people dependent on them. An average family will spend between \$402 and \$847 a year more on the carbon tax.

I have talked about all of these other things. I have talked about how the government needs to reduce inflationary spending because the cycle that it is creating drives up the cost of living for Canadians and drives them down into poverty, and then Canadians are forced to accept these scraps, like this \$10-a-day child care.

This \$10 day care is an illusion, because if it cannot be accessed, it does not exist. It does not help thousands of families and children on the wait-lists or the operators who do not have the staff or the infrastructure. It has been said that in the future there will only be one space for every three children who need it and that a shortage of 8,500 child care workers will exist in this country by 2026. Perhaps the government could use a pink seal program, something very similar to the blue seal program that our leader has put forward for the trades. In B.C., 27% of child care centres turn away children due to a lack of staff. In Ontario, by 2026, 38% of kids will not have a space.

The thing about this is that the Liberal government has the audacity to think that it can do things better than the common people, better than Canadians. Where have we seen the failure of this? We have seen it with passports, from the very minister who is responsible for this program, and with the immigration backlog, and with the inability to negotiate a public service deal over two years.

Also, what does this say about mothers? So many moms would rather just stay home with their children, but they cannot. They cannot because the Liberal government has made us into a country of two-paycheque families. Two paycheques are needed to keep a family functioning, to keep a roof over their heads and to keep them fed.

As well, what does it say about the women who operate these day cares? They are closing them down, taking away income from families, and often it is new Canadian families.

In conclusion, the Liberal government's talk about making life affordable for Canadians is a lie. Inflationary spending and taxation drive up the cost of living for Canadians and for businesses. It drives Canadians into poverty. They cannot eat, they cannot afford rent, and businesses close. I will not even get into the natural resources sector.

The government throws scraps at Canadians. This day care program is one of the scraps. “Making life affordable for Canadians” is a lie. This day care program is one of them.

• (2035)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope Canadian women heard that speech, because the hon. member basically said that \$6,000 a year in their pocket is scraps. She said that women want to stay home with their children. If they want to, that is their choice, but there are actually a lot of women who also want to have a career. I am sorry she has such an archaic vision of women in this country. I find that incredibly disappointing.

The Conservatives have gone from calling child care a “slush fund” to now calling it a “marketing tool”. I do not know if the member has spoken to the families who are benefiting from this, who are saving thousands of dollars a year, who have called this “life-changing”. The Alberta government has now created 5,500 new spaces since we signed the agreement.

Everything the member opposite said is simply false, but what I really want to know and what I think Canadian families want to know is whether the member is going to support Bill C-35? Will the Conservatives support Bill C-35 and work with us to deliver affordable, high-quality, accessible, inclusive child care for Canadians?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Mr. Speaker, what this minister failed to mention is that from my meeting with Albertan operators, I know that 67% of them cannot use this program. It is absolutely true.

This is what the Liberals do: They perpetuate this false narrative. They tax us to death. They increase inflationary spending. They drive families into the ground. People cannot get homes. People cannot get day care. As I said, people have to work because they need two incomes. That is why a lot of families have to work.

If women want to work, that is fantastic. I am a poster child for that. I had an incredible career before I got here. I am happy to be here and be a mom and do both, but families cannot do that. What this minister is doing is perpetuating that lie.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I appreciated the member's animated intervention. I am a bit confused about what is going on with the debate, because we all know how important child care is and how much poverty there is in our communities, yet at this point we are debating a minor procedural matter.

I wonder if the member can explain why we are debating this minor procedural matter when we could be debating other more important ways to address poverty and ensure that children are getting the care that they need.

Government Orders

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Mr. Speaker, that is the whole point. We should be debating ways to find efficiencies within the government to lower taxes and to lower spending. Instead, we are wasting our time here in this House, creating programs to make the government look good and to pretend to Canadians that it is doing something.

I absolutely agree with the member that we should be doing things that actually benefit Canadians, like decreasing inflationary spending and decreasing taxation so that Canadians can buy whatever they want in the grocery store, so that Canadians can actually purchase a home, and so that Canadians can make the choice for a parent to stay at home if they want.

The Liberals are perpetuating their lie. That is what they are doing, and Canadians are catching on to it.

● (2040)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's passion. As a mom, I know that she knows this. What is interesting is we have heard so much tonight in the chamber, and the reality is—and we have the testimony—that this bill would actually hurt the most vulnerable, the most marginalized and the poor, which the member for Nunavut mentioned.

However, one of the things that came out of the CCPA child care deserts report, the report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, is that it is most often rural areas that are more likely to have child care deserts in comparison to urban areas with a population of over 100,000 people. It really speaks to the question of whether this is purely a political tool. Because of where all of the seats are that the Liberals win, they continue to just disregard rural areas of Canadians and not treat them fairly. I would like to know what the member thinks of that.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Mr. Speaker, what really comes to my mind is the tag line we saw from the Liberal government in the first years that the Liberals were in power: the middle class and those hoping to join it. Frankly, I have seen lots of people from my riding go from the upper middle class to the middle class and even the lower middle class, so congratulations. The Liberals are doing a great job of having people join the middle class. That is what I would say about that.

Again, it is this cycle that I am talking about. They spend too much. They tax too much. They create poverty for Canadians. People get unemployed, cannot buy houses, cannot buy food and are driven into poverty. The Liberals come along as the saviours with these scraps to save them, so hurrah for them. Good job.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me start by saying something from my heart, something I think we all agree on in this place: Canadians deserve and need access to affordable, quality child care. This is important for so many reasons, particularly for gender equality. While our country has made gains in various measures of gender equality, we know that women still bear the disproportionate labour costs of child care. Providing access to quality child care, and, more importantly, valuing the labour of child care are what we need to do as a society to move towards true gender equity.

The other principle that we need to understand in achieving gender equity and quality child care in the context of Canadian pluralism, and not just Canadian pluralism but also a regionally diverse country, is that we have to respect and value the labour of child care when it happens in multiple different modalities.

What I mean by that is that while it is very important to ensure that there are quality child care spaces that are affordable and available to Canadians, we also need to understand that some people may want to access child care in a private home. They may want to raise their children in a nanny share, or they may want to raise their children by bringing in parents and grandparents who perhaps currently reside in other parts of the country. Perhaps they are sharing child care duties within their own family, which is unpaid labour, because they are on shift work or because they have chosen to do things that way. The reality is that child care is not homogenous in our country, because we are not a homogenous country. We have so many different ways of raising children, and I think that is part of the beauty of our country.

Our child care policy has to be reflective of that in order for it to be equitable in our country. This bill creates a certain type of child care space. I know that there was a lot of committee testimony that said it is a step in the right direction. The concern that I have with the bill in the current format and with us having a very dogmatic debate on this issue is that we are missing that heterogeneity, that variety of child care that we see in our country, that Canadians want and need in order to raise their children in a way that both makes sense for them and also reflects their living reality.

Some of my colleagues have raised the issue of rural child care. I think this is really important. This bill does not adequately reference rural child care. I also think that it perhaps does not speak to, and the government should find ways to speak to, valuing other forms of child care, particularly unpaid labour within extended families or within a nuclear family itself.

I also think that we need to realize the fact that sometimes, in communities, there is a day home, a private day home on a street. That is not addressed in this bill.

I would just implore the minister and the government to say that perhaps more needs to be done, that while this is a step in the right direction, the concerns that have been raised in this place need to be addressed by the government.

The other reason I think it is so important to get this right, beyond gender equity, which is so important, and beyond looking at child care policy that reflects the wonderful diversity of our country, is a fact that I want to raise because it is such an important issue and I do not think it has really been raised in Parliament: Our country is facing a fertility issue.

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Many other countries around the world are as well. This is such a sensitive topic to talk about, because it raises a lot of questions about the cost and benefits of bearing children, in both a societal context and in very personal contexts. It is something that we as legislators have to be seized with. The reality is that around the world, not just in Canada, the global fertility rate is dipping almost to the point of being below replacement levels. That is across the world.

● (2045)

In Canada, we do not replace our population. We rely on immigration to do that, but at some point in the future, based on current trends, immigration is not going to replace our population in Canada, and that has very broad impacts, both on the economy and on social policy.

One might think that people are not having children out of choice, but there have been studies done internationally that show, particularly in the G7 context, that people want to have kids, but are choosing not to because they are not attaining certain life goals. That is where the concept of overall affordability comes into child care.

When people are choosing not to have children for the express reason that they feel they cannot afford to have children, that is a deeply personal societal problem that we all as legislators have a duty to talk about in a respectful way and come up with public policy for. We also have to ensure, though, that the legislation in front of the House right now reflects this fact, as well as reflecting the fact that it is not just people who are choosing not to have children, but people who have children now and cannot afford to make ends meet. It is not just about child care in general.

I have a very diverse riding in north central Calgary. There are a lot of new Canadians. I think about women who cannot get language acquisition classes because they cannot afford or access child care. While this bill is a step in the right direction, it does not address some of the issues that my colleagues have been talking about, like the labour gap, actually getting enough people to fill the jobs, like shift work, like trying to bring parents and grandparents into the country, like valuing the labour of a broader family.

I think about my own situation. I have a stepdaughter who has a son. She had my grandson at a very young age, and raising him has been an effort of extended family, but that labour has not been valued. That is really where we get to the heart of gender equity.

I hope that the minister and the government are not so dogmatically entrenched in just what is in this bill that they keep being reluctant to acknowledge some of these issues, which I think are being brought forward in good faith and out of compassion for Canadian families, and the need to recognize that the labour of child care looks very different in many different contexts in this country. One homogenous solution, sure, might be a check in the box and a step in the right direction, but we are not there yet, and this bill does not get us there.

Solutions I would like to see proposed include a lot more emphasis on fixing immigration wait times to ensure that people who want to bring parents and grandparents to this country on things like super visas can do so a lot more quickly. I would like to see

really innovative policies on how we value the unpaid labour of extended families, be it through tax breaks or other programs. That is something we should be debating here. I would like to see the government recognize that in rural Canada it is really hard to get child care, and that might mean private homes or nanny shares. Even in urban Canada, we know that happens. The government should be acknowledging that and trying to address it. The other thing I would like the government to do that it has not done with this bill is have a specific strategy to address the labour shortage in child care.

My fear is that if we do not do these things, in 10 years' time we are going to be facing such a fertility gap in this country that everybody is going to be in competition for immigration to replacing aging populations. If we have not addressed this broader suite of services, particularly ones that are related to labour shortages, we are going to be in a big societal crisis in this country, because we all know what happens when there are issues around women producing children. It is not a pretty place to be.

If the government can get ahead of these issues, acknowledge that they are problematic and deserve solutions, and perhaps add to what is being done here, I think we would have a lot more consensus and also acknowledge that our diverse, beautiful country deserves a diverse, beautiful child care solution. That is what I would like to see. All ideas should be on the table, and all issues should be acknowledged.

● (2050)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her thoughtful speech. She put a lot of thought into it.

I want to correct the record on a couple of things, though. The first is with respect to what child care is included in this legislation, as well as the agreements. There seems to be a misconception on the part of the Conservatives that for-profit or home day care is not included. In fact, it is, as long as it is licensed, and that is important to note.

The other part that my hon. colleague brought up that I think is important to clarify is with regard to rural child care. Manitoba and Saskatchewan are doing some really amazing work at announcing new spaces, particularly in rural communities, and we know that child care is not just an urban issue but an issue for families right across this country. I agree with my hon. colleague that this is something that needs to happen, and in fact it is.

Given her support for child care and saying that this is a step in the right direction, I would like to know if she will be supporting Bill C-35.

Government Orders

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, first of all, with regard to the for-profit licensed child care spaces, the bill does not recognize the fact that there might be a grandma, a retired person or an aunt who stays at home specifically to care for children and who takes in other children in the neighbourhood. They may not have the means to go through the licensing process, but they are providing quality child care. It is discriminatory to value the labour of licensed people as opposed to people who are providing a valuable resource to society in these other situations. I hope the minister acknowledges that. This bill does not acknowledge that situation. That is why I find it inequitable.

The second component is this. The reality is that rural communities in Canada have a hard time retaining population and attracting labour and newcomers writ large. This bill does not address the reality of child care deserts.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her comments, but I still have questions. I think there is a reality that she describes well: the issue of home-based child care services.

When the public early childhood education services network was implemented in Quebec, both home-based and institutional child care services were accredited, for those who wanted that, in order to participate in the same mission, the same regulations of early childhood education services.

I do not understand how a program could support child care centres without a permit if we agree that the objective is early childhood education and not just the child care services that many people can offer.

• (2055)

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, this bill will not meet all child care needs. What we should be looking at when it comes to child care is valuing the labour of child care no matter how it occurs, because if we do not use that as a principle, we are not as a Parliament respecting the diversity of our country, nor are we creating equity in how we value child care. That is the wrong message to send to Canadians.

I understand there will be different preferences and different scenarios, and this is one piece of the pie for sure, but if we cannot figure out how to value child care in all of its forms in a regionally, ethnically and culturally diverse country, we will not achieve gender equality, or universality in child care, or quality child care.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member, to whom I always listen attentively, as she speaks so eloquently and makes a real contribution in the House of Commons.

I understand the point she is making, but what she has not really addressed is the fact that, ultimately, this bill provides more accessibility to child care, which is fundamentally important. I note that, in terms of child care accessibility in this country, Alberta ranks last. That is something, as I know the member is aware, that played out in the Alberta elections this week, when the New Democrats

swept Edmonton and won most of the ridings in Calgary, in part because of the lack of accessibility to services.

The member has been eloquent in making her points, but will she admit that this is an important step in the progress that is so important for families in Edmonton, Calgary and right across the country?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, of course creating more child care spaces is important, as is creating equity in how child care is valued in all of its forms. I just wish we could have our cake and eat it too with this bill.

I will say that perhaps the NDP and Alberta's prospects would have been better if they understood that rural Alberta matters, too, because they sure did not do well there.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise this evening to speak to Bill C-35, labelled as an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada.

The Minister of Families, Children and Social Development was reported as saying that the bill would enshrine the “principles that provinces and territories agreed to in the funding agreement [with Ottawa], including [the pledge] to cut parent fees and create more spaces.” I want to emphasize “create more spaces”, which we all know are currently lacking.

The Liberals promised to introduce the legislation by the end of 2022 in the confidence and supply agreement that would see the New Democrats support the minority government through 2025. Conservatives support affordable, quality day care. It is critical. However, if it cannot be assessed, it does not exist.

Bill C-35 does nothing to address accessibility. Bill C-35 is good for families who already have a child care space, but it does nothing to address the thousands of families on child care wait lists or the operators who do not have the staff or infrastructure to offer more spaces.

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James and Leah are a young married couple who just had their first child. As new parents, they were both excited and anxious about welcoming their new arrival. They tried to do their due diligence to ensure everything was in place and ready for their new little arrival. Their friends and family advised they start looking for day care immediately. When Leah was just a few months pregnant, they began the search. They quickly realized that there was, on average, a two-year wait list. They continue to look and hope something will become available for them before Leah's maternity leave is over and she needs to go back to work. How does the Liberal government expect more women to go to work when there are no child care spots available?

Bill C-35 increases the demand for child care but does not solve the problem of access to more spaces. Families, like James and Leah, are on wait lists for years. Ontario's financial accountability office projects that by 2026, there will be 602,000 children under the age of six whose families will want \$10-a-day child care, and the province will only be able to accommodate 375,000. That is a shortfall of 38%, or 227,000 children. The term "child care desert" is often used to reference a lack of or inequitable distribution of child care.

A report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives released just this month found:

...child care deserts to be widespread: there were an estimated 759,000 full-time licensed spaces for younger children across Canada in centres and family child care homes in 2023. Of the 1.97 million younger children who might be using those spaces, 48 per cent live in child care deserts.

That means that almost half of younger Canadian children (defined as not yet attending Kindergarten) live in a postal code that has more than three children for every licensed child care space.

● (2100)

The report also examined child care coverage in 50 major cities across Canada and found:

Most Canadian cities have a coverage rate below 20 per cent, meaning that in those cities, there are at least five infants for every licensed infant space. St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, the Ontario cities of Barrie, Guelph, Hamilton and Brampton, and Saskatoon scored particularly badly, with low availability of infant spaces compared to their population of infants. In those cities, there is less than one licensed space for every 10 infants.

We have heard time and time again that this bill does nothing to address long wait-lists. Bill C-35 is just another in a long list of Liberal promises that they cannot deliver on. This bill does not address the labour shortage. This bill increases demand, but does not solve the problem of frontline burnout or staff shortages. There are not enough qualified staff to keep all existing child care centres running at full capacity, let alone to staff new spaces.

The government itself projects that by 2026, there could be a shortage of 8,500 early child care workers. The minister stated that she plans to build 250,000 new spaces. Accordingly, 40,000 new child care workers would be required in order to accommodate this. Over the next 10 years, it is reported that more than 60% of the workforce already employed will need to be replaced, meaning around 181,000 will need to be replaced. Once we add those two figures, over 200,000 workers will be required. Currently, 27% of child care centres in British Columbia are forced to turn away children due to a lack of staff.

The committee heard from one child care director who oversees 13 child care programs with 350 spaces. They said, "In the past two years, we've had to close programs temporarily, whether it's for a day or two, or shorten hours for the week ... in order to meet the licensing regulations". Conservatives know how vital affordable, quality and accessible child care is, not only to family life but also to the growth of our nation. That is why we listened to providers and those on the ground.

My colleagues listened when Dr. Susan Prentice, a Duff Roblin professor of government at the University of Manitoba, stated the following: "One thing I would like to see, for example, would be the national advisory council assured of the kind of information and data it needs, so it can track, for example, progress on strengthening the workforce."

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of British Columbia wrote to the committee stating, "We strongly recommend the National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care must...provide an annual publicly available report to the Minister on the work of the Advisory Council in meeting the goals set out in the Act". Therefore, at committee, my colleagues sought to amend the function of the National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care to include supporting the recruitment and retention of a well-qualified workforce, conducting regular engagement, and a specific mandate call—

Mr. Speaker, I cannot hear. I keep hearing another conversation, and I am losing track of my speech.

● (2105)

The Deputy Speaker: I just want to make sure people in the gallery sit down when they come to visit us. I see one of our members is giving a bit of a tour. I would ask him to sit down.

The hon. member for King—Vaughan.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Mr. Speaker, my Conservative colleague also put forward an amendment to the reporting clause of the bill to include the Minister of Labour in the annual reporting, and the annual reporting must include a national labour strategy to recruit and retain a qualified early childhood education workforce. This supports witnesses' testimony on the importance of a strong national labour strategy dictating the success of a national child care framework.

Our Conservative Party believes in affordable child care, but we also believe that we need to ensure that child care comes in many different avenues, and we need to make sure that we provide that for all Canadians.

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Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her speech because it reinforces why Bill C-35 is important when it comes to creating affordable child care, creating accessible child care and creating more spaces.

I know that, when the Conservatives see a big challenge, they just throw up their hands to say, “We should not do anything”, but this government is different. We say, “There is a problem. Let us try to solve it.” We are going to create those 250,000 spaces. We have already created 50,000. We are getting the job done, and we are helping Canadian families.

I have two questions for my hon. colleague.

The member mentioned at the end of her speech that we should support child care in all of its diversity. Her colleagues before had talked about supporting unlicensed child care. I am wondering if she can clarify if they do in fact mean that they want to subsidize unlicensed child care that has not gone through the regulatory process.

Also, the member just said that they support affordable child care. Does that mean they are going to support Bill C-35? Right now, we are just debating an amendment to the short title.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Mr. Speaker, I want to share an experience. I was a child of immigrants, and I had the pleasure of being raised by my grandparents. They taught me values that I still live with today.

I have seniors in my community who have had to go back to work because they cannot afford to live on their pension. For whatever reason, they are now looking for work, which they cannot find because of their age, as they are being discriminated against. However, what an opportunity it would be to have children raised by their grandparents, who will teach them the love and the tradition of what they were raised with. Why not allow that type of child care with every grandparent who has the opportunity to raise their grandchild?

• (2110)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank our colleague for her presentation.

That said, I would like to hear the Conservatives speak a little more about shared jurisdictions. The last time I read Canada's Constitution, which, I would remind members, Quebec never signed, it stated that education, including family policies, were not a federal jurisdiction.

The Bloc Québécois will of course vote for the bill for the sole reason that it allows for the right to opt out with compensation, and this seldom happens, or happens too little with centralizing policies and bills. Quebec is exempt for five years. That is the only reason we support it, but we do not do so enthusiastically.

In committee, why did the Conservatives vote against the Bloc Québécois amendments, which mentioned Quebec's invaluable contribution to family policies?

[*English*]

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Mr. Speaker, I believe that it is a provincial jurisdiction. I also believe that parents have the right to choose what child care fits their child.

As a young widow, I had no choice but to find child care outside of the licensed child care because I did not have a nine-to-five job. My job related to different hours and different shifts, and I needed to find support for my children.

Yes, it is a provincial issue, and yes we should not cross that line, but we need to diversify to ensure that the individuals who are willing to go back to work to continue their careers have the opportunity to choose the right child care for their children.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member's speech was very thoughtful.

Child care is an important issue. My own daughter is struggling to find child care for her daughter, my granddaughter.

We are here until midnight debating the bill. Actually, we are debating the Conservative amendment to the bill, which is something I assume Conservatives think would improve it, and that is to delete the short title of the bill. I am just wondering if the member can tell me, without looking, what the short title of the bill is and what Conservatives find so offensive about it?

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Mr. Speaker, we are here because we are parents. We are mothers, and we care. We need to make sure that the bill works for every mother and child in this country.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House for the second time today, this time to speak to Bill C-35, an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada, which was introduced by the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development on December 8.

From the work that we did at the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, it is clear that the demands of the Bloc Québécois and Quebec were not heard or respected. Throughout the study of the bill, we heard witnesses talk about how important affordable, quality child care is for early childhood development, for better work-school-life balance, for the emancipation of women and for return on investment in the economy.

Government Orders

Throughout the study, Quebec was lauded as a model. Although it is not perfect, the Quebec model was mentioned many times as the model that should be emulated. However, at amendment stage, when it came time to include Quebec's expertise in the bill, the other three parties dismissed that reality out of hand. The same thing happened with our amendments to include wording allowing Quebec to completely opt out of the federal program with full financial compensation.

The only sign of any degree of openness was when a reference to Quebec expertise was included in the preamble, the only place where these words ultimately have no real impact on the law.

Although Quebec will not get the option to completely withdraw from the program with full compensation, an agreement to this effect had already been reached between Ottawa and Quebec. Senior officials who worked on the bill also repeatedly stated, when questioned on the subject, that while nothing would prevent the federal government from imposing conditions as part of a future agreement, the bill had always been designed with the asymmetry of Quebec's reality compared to Canada's provinces in mind.

The various members of the Liberal government who spoke on the bill also repeatedly said that the Liberals intended to continue working with Quebec on this issue. The current agreement also appealed to Quebec, since it did not interfere in any area of jurisdiction and left the Quebec government free to spend the money wherever it wanted.

With the current agreement between Ottawa and Quebec, and with the government's expressed willingness to continue that collaboration, it appears that Canada does not intend to preach to Quebec on the child care issue, especially since it has consistently praised Quebec's model of early childhood centres. We therefore believe that another bilateral agreement would be possible, probable and necessary, since the government is taking its cue from Quebec.

I presented six amendments in committee that, as I said earlier, would have made it possible to include Quebec's expertise in the bill. I wanted clause 7 to be amended by adding, among other things, the following:

(3) Having regard to the special and unique nature of the jurisdiction of the Government of Quebec relating to early learning and child care in Quebec society and despite any other provision of this Act, the Government of Quebec may choose to exempt itself from the application of this Act by giving the Minister written notice to that effect, in which case that province may still receive the funding under section 8.

The purpose of this amendment was to incorporate a clause that recognizes the expertise of Quebec in the guiding principles of the bill. The adoption of my amendment would have allowed for the recognition of Quebec's jurisdiction and guaranteed Quebec a right to opt out of this legislation with full compensation. The idea is to avoid disputes between Ottawa and Quebec by recognizing from the outset what everyone here knows: Quebec is a pioneer when it comes to early childhood education and must continue to have sole control of its policies in this area.

We know that Quebec adopted a forward-thinking family policy more than 25 years ago. This policy, which can be described as progressive and feminist, has enabled thousands of women and fami-

lies to benefit from better work-life or school-life balance, specifically through the creation of a network of early childhood centres. This model is an asset and a source of pride for the entire Quebec nation. In fact, it is the inspiration for this bill.

The adoption of this amendment would have confirmed the special and unique nature of the Government of Quebec's jurisdiction over education and child development by giving Quebec a right to opt out completely with full compensation.

● (2115)

Furthermore, this is an exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces, and we believe that this amendment, like all the amendments that I moved, would have prevented squabbling between Ottawa and Quebec in the next round of federal investments in this area.

With respect to the same clause of the bill, I moved that the following be added:

Quebec retains sole responsibility for implementing, evaluating and adapting its early learning and child care policies and programs in Quebec, and therefore the Council's functions do not extend to early learning and child care, or any other related activity, in Quebec.

This amendment would have reiterated Quebec's sole jurisdiction in this area. Quebec has no desire to be evaluated or monitored by some council that answers to Ottawa, seeing as Quebec is a pioneer in this area, which falls under provincial jurisdiction. This came at the request of the office of Quebec's Minister of Families.

I also wanted the preamble to recognize the unique and leading-edge expertise of the Government of Quebec in the development and implementation of accessible and affordable educational child care services, that government having developed an innovative child care model in 1997 as part of its comprehensive family policy designed to give Quebec families a better work- or study-life balance, access to generous maternity and parental leaves, and services that are suited to self-employed workers and those with atypical hours of work.

This change in the text of the bill would have been important in guiding actions and interpretations of the bill. My amendment would have enshrined Quebec's historical capacity and expertise in its jurisdiction and family policy in the bill.

Continuing with the preamble, I wanted to read that the Government of Canada recognizes that, because of the special and unique nature of the Quebec government's responsibility for early learning and child care and the fact that Quebec developed educational, accessible, affordable and quality child care services as part of the family policy it adopted in 1997, the Quebec government need not adhere to the multilateral framework, as it intends to retain the exclusive responsibility for this matter in its territory.

Government Orders

The amendment that I presented was important because it would have recognized all the work done by Quebec on family policy and early childhood education over more than 25 years. The Quebec government declined Ottawa's invitation to participate in meetings to develop the multilateral early learning framework for a very simple reason. Quebec is responsible for its areas of jurisdiction and takes full responsibility for its family policy and educational framework. In this regard, it is not accountable to the federal government for its decisions.

As I said at the beginning, when it came time to include Quebec's expertise in the bill, the other three parties dismissed the idea outright. As I have said many times, Quebec is a champion in this field and a model, a model repeatedly cited by several witnesses we heard from at committee, and a model long envied by other provinces and territories.

However, Quebec does not appear once in Bill C-35. If Quebec's expertise and recognition had appeared in this bill, it would have garnered greater support from the Bloc Québécois. That said, we still support Bill C-35 in principle and will be voting in favour of it.

• (2120)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech. I also thank the Bloc Québécois for saying that it is in favour of this bill.

I want to confirm that this bill respects the jurisdictions of the provinces and territories, including Quebec's jurisdiction. The agreement we signed with Quebec is an asymmetrical agreement that recognizes its leadership on this file. I want to emphasize the fact that we see Quebec's leadership and we prepared the bill and the bilateral agreements based on the experience in Quebec, which is a leader not only in Canada, but around the world.

As far as my hon. colleague's proposed amendments are concerned, members voting against them is not the reason they were not adopted. It was decided that they were not in order because they were outside the scope of the bill. Nevertheless, we commend the leadership of Quebec and we respect its jurisdiction.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her question. All of my committee colleagues and I worked really hard.

What always surprises me is that Quebec is trying to be a model and, because we are a model, it seems as though we are inconvenient. I do not understand because, when it comes to day care and early childhood education, we have been demonstrating since 1997 that children do well in day care when women go back to work. It is also about work-life balance.

I know that the minister is a trustworthy person. However, since words fade away but written statements endure, I would have liked to see it set out in writing that Quebec is a model and has special expertise in this area.

[*English*]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague. I enjoyed working with her in committee on this bill.

Tonight, this has been brought up a lot: Why are we here? What are we doing? That is important.

These agreements have been signed already by provinces and territories, but there are alarm bells being rung across the country by providers and parents. Every day, we are seeing articles in the media about the concern over this crisis that say this child care bill would not meet the demand.

Does my colleague understand the importance of this? If this is going to be as big as the Liberals say it is, forever and generational, is it not important to spend as much time on it as possible to make sure we get it right?

• (2125)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I think it is important to mention that, despite everything, this bill is very important for families. It is a matter of learning and development for young children. It is also a matter of well-being for both children and families.

I think that this is a step forward in creating a day care or early childhood education program in Canada. Of course, we can always do better. Let us look at what has been done over the past 25 years in Quebec. However, what is important is that we have taken the first steps toward a national child care program.

[*English*]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I wonder if the member can explain how this bill would support the great work of the Kativik Regional Government in Nunavik. Will it be better supported through the implementation of this important bill?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. There are indeed similarities. These are important communities in our ridings, after all. They also need support in terms of day cares. I think this bill will make things easier for the communities. The important thing is to always listen to the communities and their needs.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague said, fortunately there is the right to opt out with compensation. However, when I read that a “Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework” would apparently fall under the federal spending power, I admit that concerns me.

Am I right to be concerned?

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. Yes, we do have some questions, and there is good reason to be concerned.

Government Orders

We have to remain vigilant when it comes to this bill and future legislation. There is room for improvement, so we are going to pay very close attention to what happens with this bill.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to the next speaker and I run off, I want to make sure that everybody prays for a bit of rain for Nova Scotia.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are all hoping and praying for rain, and sending our best, in support of all the first responders who are responding to the tragedy.

It is an honour for me to stand on behalf of my constituents and speak to Bill C-35, the legislation currently before the House. This is a bill that would enshrine in legislation essentially the deals that the federal government has already signed with provincial governments.

It is important, right off the bat, for people listening to know that the debate tonight, no matter how long it goes today or in the coming days, does not actually affect the real-time outcomes among the different levels of government. That is something I wanted to get on the record right away, anticipating some of the concerns and phony outrage that might be manufactured in a few moments from some members from other parties.

I want to start off by pointing out the fact that I have five children. I often get asked what it is like having five children, especially when we went from four to five. Having that fifth child is nerve-racking. Many of my friends and family said four was a lot, asked how we went from four to five and what it was like as a family to experience that. The great Jim Gaffigan, who also has five kids, by the way, summed it up best. He said if people want to contemplate what it is like going from four children to five children, they should imagine themselves drowning and then someone throwing them a baby. I can attest that there is a lot of truth to that.

The difference between a first child and a fifth child is very different psychologically. When my wife and I had our first child, we had all the bells and whistles, the baby monitors and that special mat that monitored everything. At the slightest sound, we would run in and check on Thomas. When the fifth child comes along, it is a little different. Parents are a little more mellow and have experienced more. When I was asked how it was going with baby number five, I would say it was pretty good, that we were getting through the night. We would put the baby down, turn on a fan on in the baby's room and close Mary's door. We would go into our room, close our door and turn our fan on. When people would ask if she was sleeping through the night, we would say we did not know, but we were. That is kind of half the battle being a parent.

I tell these stories because, for those of us who have been blessed with the opportunity to have and raise children, it is a lot. It is incredibly rewarding, but it is, at the same time, incredibly stressful. People go through all the normal difficulties of life with bills, jobs and managing different relationships in their lives and then they have this being that is 100% dependent on them as parents. Every moment parents are away from that child, they worry about him or

her. They ponder whether they have left their child with the right sitter, if their mother-in-law is going to forget the thing she was told about the medicine at the right time or if their dad is going to think to do the other thing. All those thoughts that parents think of are always stressful.

Child care, of course, is a major preoccupation for parents from all walks of life, from all backgrounds, from all different corners of our wonderful country, so it is not surprising that, as the Liberal cost of living crisis continues, child care costs are one of the stress points in families. As the Liberal government has devalued our paycheques by robbing us of our purchasing power, as it ballooned the money supply, washing \$400 billion of new money through the system, completely devaluing the dollars that we work so hard for, it is not surprising that one of the stress points is child care, because it is so intrinsically linked.

For many families, the ability to work, to go out and earn a living, is dependent on the ability to find someone to watch their children, to make sure their children have the care they need while they go out into the world and earn a paycheque. Sadly, under the Liberal government, more and more Canadian families are having to work more and more. They have to pick up extra shifts. I know many people in my riding who have second jobs, who work a full 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and then pick up maybe an 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. shift at a restaurant or hotel, and they are doing that just to offset the purchasing power that the government robbed them of.

● (2130)

I think back to my science classes when I was going through high school. Every once in a while we would kind of look at the fallacy around a perpetual motion machine, something often seen in tropes in science textbooks when talking about conservation of energy, entropy and things like that. It is pretty much an accepted fact that we could never have a perpetual motion machine. What does a "perpetual motion machine" mean? It means the machine itself provides the energy to power the movement of the machine which then creates the energy that goes back into creating the movement. There is a perpetual loop that the energy created by the machine powers the machine to create the energy in the first place.

Government Orders

One does not have to be a fourth-year graduate student to understand that there is no such thing in the real world as a perpetual motion machine, but in politics there can be. That is the perpetual motion machine of government justifying its continued intervention in the economy or in people's lives. The government taxes families more and more. It devalues the paycheques of the people who pay those taxes, which creates stresses in our society. We are seeing 1.5 million Canadians visiting a food bank, a staggering number in 2023 in a developed G7 country. We all hear heartbreaking stories of families who have had their utilities cut off because they could not pay the increased costs as the carbon tax takes a bigger and bigger bite out of their paycheques and, of course, we see it with child care costs as well. More and more of those take-home dollars have to go to pay the child care providers.

The government comes along after taxing and after devaluing paycheques and says it is going to tax more and spend more to help alleviate the problem that we ourselves have caused. When I say “we” I mean the Liberal government; it is not actually the Conservative government. The Liberal government has caused this dynamic. This is what I mean by the perpetual motion machine. It is continually creating problems through government action and intervention. Then to alleviate those problems, it comes along to tax more and spend more, which creates more problems and unintended consequences down the road. Who could have predicted today in 2023 that some of those terrible Liberal policies of 2015-16 would lead to these massive inflation numbers that we see today, accompanied by staggering interest rate hikes?

The Liberal finance minister finally acknowledged that inflationary deficits cause higher interest rates. Seeing the numbers from the last little bit, we know that in April the inflation rate for Canada went up even after the Bank of Canada took all kinds of measures to fight inflation by increasing interest rates; forcing Canadians to pay more and more of their mortgage payment to the bank for interest, instead of actually paying down the principal. After that kind of news and knowing what the U.S. federal reserve has done raising interest rates, experts are predicting that there are going to be future interest rate hikes coming to Canada this summer.

The reason why I mention all of this is because this might look like it is going to help Canadians. There may be many Canadians looking at this legislation, looking at these child care deals and thinking, okay, my child care costs are getting more and more expensive but at least the government is coming along to help me with that. The point is that the unintended consequences of massive amounts of new spending requiring new taxes to pay for it or driving up inflation will undo any of the benefits that the Liberals are claiming to have today.

I also want to very briefly point out how unfair this is to so many Canadians, so many women across the country who would prefer to raise their own children, to look after their own children, and with the entrepreneurial spirit that they have, decide to become a day care operator and open up their own home, maybe finish their basement or put on an addition to their house so that they can look after children in neighbourhoods in what is being called “day care deserts” which, according to data from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 92% of Saskatchewan is in a day care desert. Rather than facilitate and enable women to become entrepreneurs,

to start businesses in their communities, the government has decided to fund one narrow form of day care. That is why the official opposition is raising these kinds of concerns and we hope the government takes these concerns seriously.

• (2135)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a lot of us can relate to what it is like to have a baby and that feeling of being overwhelmed, which is why child care is so important and it is so important for families to know they can send their child somewhere that is safe, that is going to provide quality development and education and that their child will be well cared for.

I need to correct the record. The hon. colleague ended by saying that if one has a home day care one is not eligible to participate in this program. That is simply false. In fact, in his own province of Saskatchewan, that is one of the ways it is increasing access to child care, through licensed day homes, particularly in rural areas.

This is typical of the Conservatives, who I am not sure have actually read the legislation or read the agreements, so they do not actually know what we are debating tonight, which in fact is an amendment to the short title of the bill. I have asked every single Conservative colleague here if they will be supporting Bill C-35. I have yet to hear a clear response.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, the minister is highlighting the importance of report stage debates because she is claiming the bill does not discriminate against entrepreneurs who want to start a business in their communities to address this.

Let me read her bill. Maybe she can go back to her department and quickly file some amendments or maybe withdraw the bill and come up with something else.

Under “Guiding Principles”, paragraph 7(1)(a) reads:

support the provision of, and facilitate equitable access to, high-quality early learning and child care programs and services — in particular those that are provided by public and not for profit child care providers —

Therefore, that is excluding all those examples I just mentioned, such as people in smaller communities—

Hon. Karina Gould: It doesn't say not not-for-profit; no, it doesn't.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: The minister is shaking her head and saying that it does not.

We will grant unanimous consent right now. If she wants to withdraw this part of this bill, we will agree this second.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind members they are not to have cross-debates.

Government Orders

On a point of order, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

● (2140)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I believe if you seek it you will find unanimous consent to allow the minister to respond to that last comment.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is no unanimous consent.

On a point of order, the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, just to clarify, the invitation was to amend the flawed bill that contradicts what the minister just said. The minister has already had lots of time—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please. This is debate and not a point of order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the things I am always a bit concerned about is the fact that the Conservative Party members seem to believe, on the things we are all trying to fight for for Canadians, these are things they are entitled to but that Canadians are not entitled to. I have to say it is on the public record the Conservative Party of Canada actually paid for this member to send his children to a private school with a tuition of \$18,000, and yet he is in this House saying that single moms and Canadians across this country, Canadians who are struggling with the cost of living, should not have access to even child care for their children while he is able to send his children to private school. How does he square that circle? It seems extraordinary to me that he thinks that is reasonable.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague is making a massive confusion. Not only is it comparing apples to oranges but it is talking about what allows Canadians to have access.

The point I am making in my speech is about when the government does more and more and defines how support is going to be given out. It has created a child care program that is so exclusionary. What I am fighting for is more access, more Canadians to be able to access affordable child care. This myth that if government does not do it that it does not get done is just false. The entire course of human history in terms of innovation and a higher quality of life comes from free market competition, other kinds of non-government solutions. That is the point that was being made.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, I love hearing stories about my hon. colleague's children and the great comedian Jim Gaffigan.

When we are looking at the Matthew effect, this is one of the criticisms that has been made of Bill C-35. For those people who do not know, the Matthew effect is where increasing public provision ends up advantaging higher-income rather than lower-income groups. That is what we have seen with the way this legislation is currently written. What does the member have to say about that?

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, that is a great point, and I want to congratulate my colleague, who has really quarterbacked

the bill for the official opposition. She has done a phenomenal job doing research and getting witnesses together to tell the story about all the flaws that are in the bill.

The member is absolutely right. There are many parts of the country where Canadians are forced to live because of low income; they are in areas where there is just not that type of access. People who live in a fancy part of Toronto or Vancouver, where there are a lot of government day care spots, may be a big winner from this, because they have the ability to live in those parts of our country. However, there are many Canadians, the vast majority of Canadians, who are going to get absolutely nothing.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just want to start out my speech tonight by talking about something that is related, although perhaps not directly on point, if I could have the indulgence of the House.

An incredibly sad story came out of my riding in recent days. Vienna Rose Irwin, age two, was discovered in an open well outside of a day care in my riding. She had obviously passed away. I just want to take this moment to pass on my greatest sympathies to the family and to all the people who knew her. To quote, "She was the most beautiful and sweetest little girl and in her short time here on Earth touched so many." While not directly on point, I appreciate the indulgence to send that sympathy to her parents. She passed away just outside of a day care some days ago. I send my deepest sympathies and regards, and I am sure those of all members, to her parents and all those who knew and loved her.

We will start there. I am sorry for choking up a little. I think of my own kids. I have a seven-year-old and a nine-year-old. I heard the official opposition House leader talk about having five kids. I have only two; I am not as ambitious as the Conservative House leader. I can say that certainly even with two, some days it feels like we are drowning. I love this job. I love being here, and it is certainly my choice. However, the hardest days are always on Sunday nights or Monday mornings, when I have to leave them, knowing that I will not see them for four or five days. I am very pleased to serve the people of Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Child care is a challenge in our family, just as it is for millions across Canada. The Conservatives have raised some concerns and objections, and I think we have done it in quite a constructive way. Of course, Conservatives recognize the challenges of raising children in today's society. In fact, in a lot of ways, those concerns have been heightened over the past eight years, with the cost of inflation driving up the cost of housing and food. Food bank usage has doubled or even tripled. What is scary is that we are in fact seeing more and more employed parents having to use food banks. We recently heard testimony that it used to be that about 15% of folks using food banks would identify themselves as employed. That number is now 30%, and a lot of them are parents.

Government Orders

I just want to go through some numbers. In 2011, the average full-time day care cost for a child aged four or younger in Ontario was \$677 a month. Even at \$677 for child care, I am sure that that is not easy for many parents. Today, for parents living in Toronto, it costs more than \$1,000 a month to have an infant in day care. This is an increase of 67%.

Child care costs in Ontario are among the highest in the country, and I would venture to say, some of the highest in the world. In Toronto, a full-time spot for a toddler costs around \$1,600 a month, or \$19,000 a year. This is just one of the costs that have risen for parents; no doubt, it is an extremely challenging one.

There are also many other issues with respect to the expenses for child care. I just want to talk a little bit about the marginal effective tax rate and participation rate for parents. I know that, in the past, when I have raised this and stated the numbers, Liberals have sighed or rolled their eyes in disbelief. However, these numbers are all cited. These numbers have all come from the C.D. Howe Institute, a respected think tank and institution, and all their math is here too. If anybody wishes to challenge it, I cannot raise the report, because then it would be a prop, but I am more than willing to table it.

• (2145)

One of the numbers they talk about is the participation tax rate. I will just read this to make sure that we have it correctly on the record:

[It] is the cumulative effect of all income taxes, other contributions, payroll deductions and loss of tax benefits on the entire prospective earnings from work.

For a stay-at-home parent, it represents a financial penalty that must be paid out of total derived income.

I just want to give a scenario in which we have a mom who earns \$30,000 a year. The total family income is \$30,000. The mother will pay federal income taxes and CPP and EI contributions, with no Alberta income tax, for a total of \$1,985. The dad is now considering going back to work. He has been at home with the kids, and he is deciding to return to the workforce.

By the way, I have not heard anyone in this House say it, but I have heard it said from time to time in the community. I hate it when they say that “stay-at-home parents are going back to work.” Members can trust me: It is a vacation doing this job compared with taking care of my kids. I am first and foremost my kids' dad before I am the member of Parliament for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

We have this situation. We have a mom who is working and earning \$30,000 a year. The dad wants to go back to paid work. We would think that \$30,000 more in income should increase the family's disposable income by \$30,000, especially as a low-income earner. Do members know how much their income would actually increase? The family's disposable income would increase by \$13,350. That is all. Their participation tax rate for the dad's return to work is 56%. It is in here. I am happy to table the report.

• (2150)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the hon. member not to point to the report.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: I know.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): If he knows, then he should not be doing it.

The hon. member.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Can I have unanimous consent to table this after my speech?

An hon. member: No.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Exactly.

Madam Speaker, I just want to walk members through a couple of the actual numbers. Let us say that we have a parent who is earning \$45,000 and a second parent who wants to go back and earn \$20,000. Their participation tax rate, as I outlined it earlier, if they live in Newfoundland and have one kid, is 38%. I have a lot of these, but I am just going to go through and pick a couple of them. In Ontario, their participation tax rate, if they had two kids, would be 54%. If they had three kids, and they were in the beautiful province of Quebec, their participation tax rate would be 66%.

If the government wants to enable parents to return to the workforce, it just simply has to stop taking their money. It is tens of thousands of dollars through the participation tax rate. I can show members the numbers, and I am happy to walk them through the numbers. That money would do a lot more than the Liberals' child care program ever would, and the parents would have the ability to spend that money how they want to.

I heard laughter when one of our members talked about grandparents raising people's kids. I have great respect for grandparents, and if it is their decision to watch their grandchildren, then God bless them. I think that is a great decision. The government should not be getting away from grandparents spending time with their grandkids. The government should be supporting grandparents.

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to join my voice to my colleague's in sending condolences to the Irwin family and to the member's entire community. I cannot imagine the pain they are going through right now.

The member ended by talking about grandparents taking care of grandkids. There is nothing in this legislation that would prevent a family from making their own child care choices. There is absolutely nothing that would change that. However, what I can say is that some of the people whom I have spoken to who are most excited about this legislation are grandparents. They love their grandchildren, but it is a lot to ask them in their golden hour to take care of little kids. When I travelled around this country, not only were parents excited, but grandparents were absolutely also excited about the affordable child care initiative.

Government Orders

I am still not sure. I have asked every Conservative member who has spoken tonight. We are just debating a spurious amendment right now. Will the Conservatives be supporting Bill C-35?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I thank the member, first off, for extending her sympathies. I appreciate that, and I appreciate a lot of the member's response, but I just want to address a couple of points.

One is that we want to enable and empower grandparents, and there is nothing in the legislation, to be clear, that would stop them from looking after kids, but if we were able to reduce the cost of living; reduce the marginal effective tax rates, which for seniors collecting GIS is always over 50%; and reduce the participation tax rate, we would empower and enable seniors to make their own decisions. Certainly we do not want to be forcing anyone who does not want to extend child care, but we also want to empower and enable those who do.

• (2155)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I would also like to send my condolences to the family in the member's riding.

I really appreciated the member's intervention, because he seems to be taking Bill C-35 seriously and not talking only about the motion about the short title.

The bill is especially important for Nunavummiut. I do not know if members have read the Auditor General's report published on May 30 about Inuit children's and youth's rights being infringed. There are many children and youth who are in care, but who also who do not need to be in care. Preferably, Bill C-35 would help make sure that families are able to get the supports they need to use day care, rather than having their children stolen by governments.

What I do appreciate about the bill as well, and I thank the member for Winnipeg Centre for her great work, is that it includes the importance of upholding indigenous rights, because of the inclusion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the implementation of UNDRIP. I wonder if the member agrees that it is absolutely necessary that we pass Bill C-35 so indigenous children's rights can be upheld.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I think that was a fantastic and fair question, and that is why we supported the amendment put forward by the NDP. We will continue to support that. Obviously, the residential schools and the stealing of indigenous children are absolutely beyond the pale, so inclusive of that or exclusive of that, Conservatives believe entirely that children should be raised as their parents and their culture want. I have had many discussions with the great chiefs of the Hiawatha First Nation and the Alderville First Nation, whose nations are located within the boundaries of the riding of Northumberland—Peterborough South, and every single indigenous child deserves to be raised with an indigenous upbringing and culture. Parents in general deserve the ability and the right to raise their children as they see fit, not how the government sees fit, through the residential schools or otherwise.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to address the amendments we brought forward on the Canada-wide early learning and child care system.

I addressed this many times going door to door in Calgary Centre. When we speak to people who are trying to access day care in Canada, we get an illustration of exactly what the myriad problems are that we encounter, as a society, in making sure we have this service available for Canadians. It is important that we have this service available for Canadians. I remember meeting somebody who had a three-year-old child, and she was also pregnant with her second child. She was looking at the options. She looked at how the various political parties were assessing what the solution would be. She also had friends who had day care operations in the neighbourhood, and they had different input than what she was getting from various political parties. Depending on where someone is, and the input they get on this subject, they have various degrees of understanding. They have various degrees of how they are going to access this system, how they are going to pay for the system and, effectively, how it is going to work.

One of the things in this bill that I was quite curious about was something the minister said when introducing it in December 2022. When introducing this bill, she said, and this struck me as odd, that the government must protect what we have built and make it harder for any future federal government to cancel or cut child care and undo all that we have achieved for children and families. That is interesting, because we live in a democracy, and every one of these policies we put forward in Parliament, which we hope to sustain, has to prove to be effective. At the end of the day, we are getting toward more effective policies. We try to get better with each iteration. To be stuck on something that might be difficult to amend, move forward with and progress in our society is not where we want to be. I was surprised by the minister's comments on that.

Going back to the woman I met who was assessing the child care, she also said that we need to make sure we adapt and continue to adapt, as a society, to the needs of the people who require child care.

I also looked at the issue of women's participation in society. This is the nub to me, because I belong to a generation of Canadians in which women traditionally took some seven years off, or sometimes it was nine years, as it was with my wife, to raise a family before going back into the workforce. This held them back in their career. These people are in the prime earning years of their lives and advancing their careers, and we can think about the choices they have to make because of the child care choices they have. Effectively, we see more executives at senior levels who are males because of the limitation on the years of experience women get when they choose to take that time off because of the limited options they have for child care. An effective child care system is going to advance a lot of social progress by making sure we have a balance of men and women at senior levels in both our private sector and our public sector organizations going forward. I think it is laudable goal. I think we need to achieve it.

Government Orders

One of the things I have always noticed about the government's bills is that they are long on narrative. We can put a big stamp in the window that says, "free \$10 day care", yet, at the end of the day, we have to execute that plan. That means boots on the ground. That means understanding where the bottlenecks are and where the hurdles are that we have to get over in order to get that done. One of the big bottlenecks in the child care system, of course, is the access to labour. That continues to be one of the main problems we have in terms of accessing day care in Canada. Where is the labour going to come from? Right now, that labour does not exist. CUPE, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, actually came up with a stat that said there is one space for every three children who need it. That is not because of physical space, like the rooms and buildings, but that is because of the access to workers. The workers are the bottleneck. We must make sure we have enough workers in place and a sustainable system that allows those workers to deliver the services that society requires of them at an optimal level.

• (2200)

Those are not there, because, frankly, the financial incentives are not there to make that system work better and draw more people, more entrepreneurs, into a system that provides a great service for Canadians, one that is going to achieve these laudable goals I spoke about earlier in my speech: access to child care for everybody and access for women to re-enter the workforce and participate fully in executive ranks as they progress their careers, as their husbands have done for the last generation. This needs to be fixed. Making sure that bottleneck of the labour shortage gets addressed is key in addressing this. That is what I talk about when I say that execution is different from narrative.

Accessibility is, of course, number one. I have met many people through my career who were not as advantaged, financially, as many people in society. I recall the accessibility of day care. They would actually take public transit from one end of the city to the other in order to drop off their kids. They would take public transit back downtown, and this is in Calgary, where there is a good public transit system. That, in effect, is an hour at the beginning of their day and an hour at the end of their day, in order for them to take their kid somewhere safe and then get them at the end of the day and take them home. That is a big chunk of time out of one's day. That is because of what, I have learned in this process, are called day care deserts. There is no accessibility in certain areas where these people actually need this service, close to their work or close to their home. They have to go a long way out of their way in order to get the service they require.

We have to revisit this and think about who is most affected by this. It is not people of means; it is people without means. The people who are looking for those spaces are in the more marginalized sectors of society, the more marginalized economic sectors.

The ability to access this, of course, if one is of means, is going to be better than if one is not of means. We continue to have deserts of day care. We continue to have an accessibility problem all the way through. The sister of a very good friend of mine was in the same boat. She was a day care provider and she took public transit from south Edmonton to north Edmonton every day in order to deliver the service, again, because of the day care desert. There was no day care available in the very south end of Edmonton where she

lived. She was one of the day care providers, and her skills were supportable only in the north part of Edmonton at that point in time. That, again, is a one-hour commute, half an hour at each end of the day. That is a long time to add on to what one is putting in every day.

There is an issue about inclusivity. We have to make sure that this inclusivity is not just for the public and non-profit sector but also includes those people who are putting together day care spaces in our communities and getting rid of the so-called day care deserts so that we can actually have publicly funded \$10-a-day day care available in the communities where it is needed, set up by the entrepreneurs who are actually willing to train the people, get the funding and get the system up and running so they can serve the clientele that lives close to where they want to provide the services. These are all types of child care we are talking about here. This is backed up, of course, through the testimony at committee, by the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario.

I think most Canadians are trying to access this day care, which is a benefit. This is going to be a low cost. We want to make sure we get this into people's hands but it is not going to be available. This is an accessibility problem. It has to be addressed first and foremost in this bill. We have to get the boots in the ground and make sure we have the ability to get people into positions before we start pretending we are delivering a service, or say we are delivering service, and not being able to execute.

Having something in the store window and being able to deliver to people are two entirely different things. That is the issue here. We have to make sure we have a system that works for the people we intend to serve via that new system.

• (2205)

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague from Alberta and I have many great conversations here in the House. I was thrilled to hear that he understands how child care is really a great contributor to social growth and the advancement of women. It is certainly something I value.

He talks about spaces, and even in his province of Alberta, 1,800 new child care spaces were created under the program, through the non-profit system. He also leaned into the issue of private care. That is why the Province of Alberta, determining where it had desert spaces, committed to another 5,500 spaces, going forward.

There is a system that needs to be built. The system is being built, and I would like to know if my hon. colleague will support Bill C-35 rather than debate the title of the bill itself.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, there was a lot packed in there, and I think we addressed that a bit.

Government Orders

We talked about my home province of Alberta. It is a growing province. If we think about 1,800 day care spaces in a province that has had a migration influx of 50,000 people over the last year, we are talking about a need that is largely unmet. I referred in my speech to day care deserts. At the end of the day, 61% of those accessing day care in Alberta are in a day care desert.

We have problems and hurdles to overcome in order to deliver this to people. That is one of the reasons we want to make sure the bill we are talking about today addresses the concern of how it is going to meet the needs of Canadians.

● (2210)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, for me, in Vancouver East, the issue with access to day care centres around three things. One, it is about affordability, so \$10-a-day day care will make a difference for families. The other issue, of course, is about access to spaces and the creation of spaces, which is also critical, because there is a long wait-list of people trying to access day care for their children.

Last but not least is a point the member raised. It is the issue around the attraction and retention of child care workers. The key to doing that centres around wages and working conditions. My colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, worked really hard to bring forward amendments to the bill to address this critical issue.

My question for the member is this. Would he agree that, in order to attract and retain quality child care workers, we must ensure fair, livable wages as well as good working conditions for them?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question. Indeed, my colleagues on the committee informed me that they put forward these amendments to make sure there were caveats built into the system for the adjustments to labour that we talked about.

Colleagues should think about it from a supply and demand perspective. If there is no incentive to get into this business, for example through the provision of a service that is going to make sense for people, we are not going to have people entering it as a career or setting up a day care. That is why we are trying to expand access. It is to make sure it is available to all people and that the impetus is there, that motivation, to provide the labour and allow people to make a choice about what labour they are going to have so they see themselves fulfilling this career for the rest of their lives. That has to be part of this, because otherwise we are just putting words on paper one more time. Let us get something executable.

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks. I appreciated his economic, financial and, frankly, social analyses.

Both he and I represent urban ridings. One of the things I think we both face is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to stop the member there for a second. There seems to be a sound coming through. I am not sure if the hon. member has something on a screen or a phone. Maybe we could try again.

The hon. member for Spadina—Fort York.

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks. I appreciated his economic and social analyses.

Both he and I represent urban ridings, and, like him, I have heard the challenges around the labour shortage. There is no point in affordable, high-quality child care if there are no spots available. I would appreciate if you could expand on the labour workforce strategy, or perhaps the lack thereof.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The sound is still there whenever we open mikes, so maybe we will have somebody check that out, because it will be problematic for the interpreters.

Also, I want to remind the hon. member that he is to address all questions and comments through the Chair, not directly to members.

The hon. member for Calgary Centre can give a brief answer.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for that question. I have always been impressed with his economic analysis of these matters. He and I share a view on this about how we motivate people in society to get into where the gaps are. There has to be an incentive, which we talked about, from both a labour perspective and a space perspective. In the day care deserts, we have to make sure there is a motivation to provide that. That is why it is not only the not-for-profits and the public that are going to work here. It will have to be available for all the people who want to provide these spaces in the established day care deserts. There is a reason they are being served by other people right now, and they are jammed, so let us get those impetuses out of the way, those hurdles cleared and those bottlenecks broken. Let us get on with it.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise in this late evening to once again speak about some incredibly important work to ensure that all families in Canada have access to affordable child care.

First, I want to acknowledge the work of so many in our communities who have tirelessly worked to ensure the successes and movement that we are seeing today in the right direction to provide child care.

The NDP has been carrying this torch for generations, fighting alongside families, local organizations, unions and members of our communities to bring forward legislation that finally ensures families have access to the care they need. As a matter of fact, in the 40th Parliament, prior to me having the honour of being an elected member of Parliament, NDP member of Parliament Olivia Chow introduced a child care bill. Following her, my current NDP colleague, the member for London—Fanshawe, put forward another bill on child care.

Now, in this 44th Parliament, my NDP colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, has been working tirelessly to apply the pressure needed to see movement by the government. After years and years of consecutive Liberal and Conservative government inaction, the NDP was able to push the Liberals to commit. Now we need to see the delivery for all across Canada.

Government Orders

In order to move forward for families that have been waiting for too long, we need to see the bill before us move forward and not continue to see delays. I fail to understand, which I was asking about earlier in questions, how hours of debate tonight about the short title of the bill, and not continuing on the debate at third reading, will help us move in the necessary direction. It is disheartening to say the least.

Regardless, I take delays like this quite personally. I am a single parent of two, one now an adult and the other a teenager. I am not quite sure how that happened so quickly. I worked multiple jobs and returned to school as a mature student to build a better future for my family.

One ongoing barrier I experienced was a lack of affordable, accessible child care. Even with the provincial subsidies at the time, many of the options remaining for my children were still unaffordable. To make matters worse, there were multiple examples where I had to choose subpar child care, which is often less reliable, and in more than one instance had outright horrendous child care options. The stresses surrounding child care meant that my children and I struggled. My hard-earned but low income directly impacted the quality of child care made available to my children.

• (2215)

All children need access to quality child care. Children living in low-income families should not be the exception to this rule. All I wanted, which is what everyone wants for their children, was to have the peace of mind that my children would be cared for. I could not afford to stay home with my children and I could not afford for them to go to child care. What an impossible situation this is for anyone to be in.

Unfortunately, these struggles continue to be felt by those raising children today. Constituents in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith continue to reach out, struggling to find quality child care and affordable child care. I am disheartened to have to share with these constituents that we are seeing delays in moving this bill forward to ensure that \$10-a-day child care is made a reality.

However, none of this will be made possible without a workforce strategy. Child care workers are specialized professionals in our communities. Many undertake four-year bachelor's degrees, for example, in child and youth care. In order to earn this bachelor's degree, students pay for unaffordable tuition fees, as well as the high cost of books and supplies. Despite taking four years away from the workforce to invest in a quality education and to develop the skills required to contribute endlessly to our communities and the future of our children, these qualified workers are offered positions that pay meagre wages. I am perplexed how those who provide the care for our children, those who shape future generations, would be so undervalued and disrespected in their field.

This is another example where we see a vital field of work over-represented by women being severely underpaid. As a matter of fact, of those who work in the child care profession, 98% are women and one-third are immigrants or non-permanent residents. Also, those working in the field are more likely than workers in all other occupations to be racialized.

As my colleague from Winnipeg Centre so eloquently said, “This is not...a worker shortage; it is a wage shortage. It is a respect shortage.” Those who choose the honourable profession of caring for our children need to be paid fairly to do so, to have access to a safe working environment and to know they will have access to a retirement income and medical benefits. Where is the incentive for individuals who enter the field of child care if they cannot be assured, at the very least, that a livable income will be provided? We will never see any increases to the workforce under these conditions. We need to see the government follow through with a clear strategy to ensure an increase of those working in child care. Without them, we will never see improvements for generations to come.

Prior to the pandemic, child care was already the second-biggest expense for families after housing, and many people caring for children were forced to delay their return to work because they could not find or afford child care. Before COVID, there were only enough licensed child care spaces for one in four children under six. With COVID-19, women's participation in the workforce dropped to its lowest point in 30 years. This staggering, unacceptable fact demonstrated the dire need for child care. Businesses, child care experts and economists agree that people caring for children cannot go back to work without safe, reliable and affordable child care.

Accessible and affordable child care is also an issue of gender equity. Women are more likely to be caring for children and are therefore more impacted when quality care is not made available. Everyone should have the right to decide what is best for their families, and child care is an essential piece in providing those options.

This bill is not only about the care of children today. It is setting children up for success moving forward. We know that when children receive quality care, they are better set up for success once they enter school. These early years are vital to the future of children and child care, and for many, they are key in early learning and child care.

Child care needs to not end once a child enters school, as we all know. There are endless examples where child care remains necessary once a child enters school, like before and after school and during school breaks. In my prior role as a school board trustee for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, my fellow trustees and I worked to incorporate and embed child care opportunities, in partnership with the Province of B.C., directly into the existing public school system, and we have seen successes of exactly this in Nanaimo—Ladysmith public schools as a result.

Government Orders

• (2220)

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the incredible work and advocacy of the Canadian Union of Public Employees to make possible affordable public child care, such as what we are seeing in Nanaimo Ladysmith. It makes so much sense to provide child care where the children already are, operated in-house by already qualified staff, with fewer transitions and improved care for children.

Quality care must uphold human rights, including the rights of indigenous people. This is why it was essential that this bill include the amendment to uphold the right of indigenous people to free, prior and informed consent on matters that pertain to their children. We all know the disgraceful history of residential schools, where children were kidnapped from their parents, without consent, as well as the continued abuses against indigenous families in the sixties scoop. Now we see more indigenous children in care than there were at the height of the residential school history. If we are to reconcile in this country, we must acknowledge this truth while respecting the rights of indigenous people, including the rights of indigenous families and children.

I have said this before in this House, and I will continue to say it: We need to see public money going into public services. We need to listen to experts in the field, who reiterate that public child care is the best way forward, with affordable, high-quality and accessible child care for families who need it. We also know that public child care provides better wages and working conditions for staff.

My hope is that we can stop the delays on getting this bill to move forward, so that we can see affordable child care made accessible for everyone across Canada.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just want to reiterate that there is no holdup. These agreements are already signed with provinces and territories.

What is important now is a lot of what the member has brought up. There is no labour strategy, something that we put forward in committee. It was actually voted down by the NDP and the Liberals. We know how important this is.

The other issue that I know the NDP cares deeply about, and I support, is those who are less fortunate, those who are living in poverty. This bill has been criticized by many people for having a Matthew effect. The Matthew effect is basically when the government intervenes by increasing public provision, but this ends up advantaging higher-income rather than lower-income groups.

Does the member feel that the bill needs to be strengthened to ensure that those living below poverty also have access to child care?

• (2225)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her work in this area. I know she has been working hard in this area as well.

I am happy to answer questions around access to quality child care and income not being a barrier to accessing that child care. This is exactly the root of why my NDP colleagues and I have been pushing for publicly funded child care. We know that, through publicly funded child care, we see increases in access to child care and

better working conditions for those who are working in the field. Ultimately, this helps to ensure that we have equitable opportunities for all children, regardless of income.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech with great interest. I think sharing stories about our own experiences, particularly those of us who have been single mothers, is very valuable.

Comparing her situation with mine, I was a single mom in Quebec, where I had access to quality low-cost day care. This permitted me to go back to school and improve my situation. It was excellent-quality, publicly funded day care. Could my colleague comment on why she had such a difficult experience? Why did her province not have a similar system?

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Madam Speaker, I am always happy to hear from other parents and women who have raised children or are raising children in this House. We definitely need to see more representation. I am happy to hear that the member had such a positive experience.

I think this really highlights the need for a national approach. We see differences across Canada in what is being made available to families. Quite frankly, the experience of many is that they are not being provided with the options at the cost that is required for them to access the care they need.

If we saw the federal leadership in place with the investment required, all provinces and territories would be better able to provide the care options that meet families' needs across the country.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith brought back to mind something that my colleagues in this place might find incredible.

In 1992, when I was a single mom making \$24,000 a year as a self-employed contractor and executive director of Sierra Club Canada, I hired a babysitting firm. I was able to hire a caregiver for \$1,000 a month. Since she made only \$1,000 a month, she had 100% subsidized child care for her children while she looked after my daughter. None of it made any sense to me.

I would like to see this legislation through. I would like to make sure that every child in this country has access to high-quality early childhood education and learning and child care.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Madam Speaker, I so agree with the comments that were made by the member. It really speaks to the fact that we need to be working with all those who are invested in this important work, including unions, non-profits, our public schools and the provinces. We all need to be on board with this work to move forward. I really reflect on the important work to integrate child care within the existing schools that is happening in my province of British Columbia, alongside school districts. This is essential to ensure that children have the care that they need before and after.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this place and contribute to this debate on Bill C-35.

The Liberals claim that their goal with Bill C-35 is to provide affordable child care to Canadians. However, what is the point of creating a system of so-called affordable child care if Canadians cannot access it? Since this bill was introduced, we have heard from many individuals, many stakeholders, that the major issue with child care is that Canadians do not have access to it. This bill does nothing to address the issue of accessibility. It is disappointing to families across Canada that, despite the two to three decades of planning to nationalize child care, the government has come up with such a flawed piece of legislation that will do nothing to address the real issues that Canadian families are facing.

My home province of Saskatchewan, for example, has very few child care spaces. Only 17.8% of children from zero to five years of age have access to full-day or part-time child care spaces. It gets even worse when we include children from the ages of six to 12, as only 10% have access to full-day or part-time day care spaces. This bill will not create spaces to address this shortage. As a mom and a grandmother of 11, I understand the importance of having access to quality day care.

While this could have been an opportunity for the government to put forward thoughtful measures to help Canadian families get access to quality child care, the Liberals have failed to do this. Perhaps that is the issue when the elites believe they understand the problems that average Canadians face.

This bill was introduced as a part of the confidence and supply agreement, which sees the New Democrats support the Liberal minority government through to 2025. Despite the ongoing issues plaguing the government, the New Democrats have declared that they will stick by the government through thick and thin, while claiming to hold it to account. It is as though someone were telling people to put out a fire while simultaneously pouring gasoline on it. The bill was a priority for the confidence and supply deal, and it continues the government's culture of mediocrity and ineptitude. If the government had bothered to speak with average Canadian families about child care, again, it would know that the biggest issue is accessibility. We could make child care free, but if people cannot access it, it might as well not exist.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees currently reports that “in many communities there is only one childcare space available for every three children who need it, and waitlists are long.” The lack of spaces in child care is underscored by labour shortages, which we have heard about, and staff burnout. Many child care fa-

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cilities do not even have enough employees to fully staff existing child care centres, let alone new spaces.

Government estimates also suggest that, by 2026, there could be a shortage of 8,500 early childhood workers. We also found, through my colleagues' work at committee, that the government and its NDP allies are not really interested in helping families to access these child care spaces. At committee, Conservatives introduced an amendment to include all types of child care to ensure that the program was inclusive and reflected parental choice, not political ideology. Of course, this was defeated by the Liberal-NDP coalition as it sought to force an Ottawa-knows-best solution on Canadian families across the country.

Another Conservative amendment sought to amend the national child care council to have representatives from private, home-based providers alongside public and not-for-profit providers. This was supported by testimony from Julie Bisnath, program coordinator for the Child Care Providers Resource Network, who stated, “Championing home child care as a central part of CWELCC would increase access to a diverse array of child care options.”

• (2230)

Despite being a common-sense amendment to address one of the major issues regarding child care in this country, the Liberals and NDP voted it down. One is left to believe that they are intent on imposing their views on Canadians instead of allowing Canadians to live freely and make their own choices for their child care needs.

It seems to me that we may be seeing a pattern here that the NDP-Liberal coalition is not interested in actually addressing the labour shortage, which is the biggest hurdle, as I have already stated, to providing more child care spots to Canadians.

There was another amendment put forward by Conservatives that would directly address the labour shortage. This amendment sought to amend the function of the National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care and includes supporting the recruitment and retention of a well-qualified workforce and conducting regular engagement. It includes a specific mandate calling for maintaining and understanding available child care spaces, the numbers on waitlists and the progress made to reduce wait-lists for families. It makes sense. Additionally, this amendment would have required the council to provide an annual report on its progress. That also makes sense if one is serious about addressing the real issues.

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Another Conservative amendment sought to amend the reporting clause of the bill to include the Minister of Labour. What a novel idea when looking at addressing labour shortages to include the Minister of Labour in the annual reporting, and that the annual reporting must include a national labour strategy to recruit and retain a qualified early childhood education workforce. This supports witness testimony, which was again heard at committee during the study on the importance of a strong national labour strategy dictating the success of a national child care framework.

Bea Bruske, President of the Canadian Labour Congress, stated, “That would absolutely be an amendment we would support because we know that we need a robust workforce strategy to make sure that we can address the recruitment and retention issues in the sector.”

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of British Columbia, in a briefing note, wrote, “We strongly recommend the National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care must...provide an annual publicly available report to the Minister on the work of the Advisory Council in meeting the goals set out in the Act.”

Those two amendments, again, were both voted down by the Bloc, the Liberals and their NDP coalition partners. It is concerning that they may have voted against them just because they were brought forward by the Conservative members on the committee or it could be that the NDP members have forgotten that they are supposed to be holding the Liberal government to account to put forward meaningful and effective legislation. Whatever the reason, voting down these common-sense amendments shows how out of touch their Liberal coalition partners are. Canadians will be stuck on wait-lists for child care for years, if they ever get a spot at all.

Ontario’s Financial Accountability Office projects that by 2026 there will be 602,000 children under six whose families will want a \$10-a-day care program and the province will only be able to accommodate 375,000 of them, leaving 227,000, or 38%, without access.

For a government that claims to be feminist, it is not considering the significant impacts that its policies are having on women with young children. Families are diverse and have different needs depending on their circumstances and a rigid, Ottawa-knows-best approach is not going to help them. The lack of spots will have an effect on women in the workforce as they will tend to be the primary caretakers if there are no available child care spots.

This bill does not address the major issues in the child care system that Canadian families are facing across this country and certainly not in my province. Despite Conservative efforts to improve the bill, it is obvious the NDP-Liberal coalition is not interested in seriously addressing these major issues.

● (2240)

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Saskatchewan for her comments tonight. However, I would encourage her to actually read what is available in the public data record on agreements online. Her own province, in 2022, created 1,800 new spaces and 409 new licensed child care spaces in 41 communities. What was a

child care desert continues to be an issue, but without this work, without these agreements, those spaces would not have existed. Even more so, by the end of 2023, there will be 4,000 new spaces in 31 urban and rural communities.

The member talked about inclusion. The Conservatives seem to be redefining “inclusion”, but inclusion is very clear. It is about who receives care: those with vulnerabilities, children with disabilities and so on. However, should taxpayer dollars be paying for private entrepreneurship? I do not think so from the public purse. I would like to know, if those issues are addressed, as I have clearly explained, will the Conservatives support Bill C-35?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, it is an interesting question: if those issues are addressed. However, they are not. The bill does not address the very issues that many other members in the House have highlighted: affordability, accessibility and a labour strategy to ensure that we have a robust workforce to provide the services that Canadian families are calling for.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, many members of the Conservative Party have stood up tonight, despite the fact that this is simply a debate on the title, to talk about affordability for Canadians. However, one of the biggest challenges I have is that we see time and time again Conservatives voting against those things that would make life more affordable.

I am wondering if the member could speak a little bit about the fact that things like dental care make life affordable for Canadians and things like support for housing make things affordable for Canadians. Could the member talk about those things that would make things more affordable for Canadians and perhaps tell us, as much as she says that she likes child care and that she believes in child care, why she would not want the bill to go forward even in a flawed form knowing that it would provide child care to so many Canadian families?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, it is not that I like child care. I mean, that is diminishing the importance of child care to say “Great, she likes child care.” Child care is important.

As a mom and a grandmother, I had to access child care. I have children who have to access child care, and when they are getting close to their maternity leave being finished, there is anxiety created, because they do not know where they are going to find child care so that they can go back to work to provide for their families.

Under this government's policy, with the support of the NDP, Canadians are struggling to pay their bills and put food on the table. Having to worry about access to child care is not something that we should be supporting by introducing a bill that would not address accessibility, affordability or a labour strategy.

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Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked a lot about accessibility, and that is very important. I represent a very large rural riding, and there are folks there who require child care for their children as well. They have been creative and found solutions through family, friends and community members, but they are not licensed day cares and so they would get punished by this government with this policy by not getting \$10-a-day child care. I am wondering if my colleague thinks that is fair.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, families across Canada are in need of flexibility when it comes to child care. They will have different needs depending on their circumstances, particularly families, as he has pointed out, who have needs outside of standard hours of operation.

My suggestion is that this government go back and take a look at this legislation that it has introduced, review the testimony that its members have heard, and really seek to address the issues that families all across this country have highlighted to be inherent with this piece of legislation.

• (2245)

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is great to rise in this House to speak about Bill C-35. In fact, what we have been discussing today, with very lively debate, is an act representing early learning and child care in Canada. What we have heard in this debate has a lot to do with affordability, and the Liberals and New Democrats have been talking about this a lot. I find it interesting that, despite child care being promised since about the 1990s, the Liberals have finally made a move on it, driven in large part by the affordability crisis that is hitting Canada.

We have first-time homebuyers who are having a very difficult time getting into the housing market, buying a home and starting a family and starting that Canadian dream. We have those who maybe have a house who are struggling to eat. We see that food bank usage is up pretty much everywhere in this country. One alarming rate that was in the news not too long ago was that first-time food bank usage was up, and that is a very startling statistic, when we think about those going to the food bank for the very first time. That is the desperation that is being felt across Canada.

Now we are discussing a child care bill that really would not do anything with affordability. I will kind of explain why I believe that is and articulate, and maybe build on, some of the arguments that were made here tonight in our speeches.

We still have the issue of the labour shortage in the child care spaces, so that is the one part of this very important puzzle that really is not addressed in the bill, and we see that labour shortage is starting to affect many other sectors of our economy. It can be in health care, child care and pretty much anywhere. I think anywhere an employer is, they are probably looking for workers. We need to address that, and it is not being addressed.

We also are looking at the ability to just access spaces that are there. In the bill, priority would go to the public and not-for-profit spaces. There is no room for those private sector spaces that are being created to help alleviate the crises, both affordability and access to spaces. Of course, if we had more choice of public, not-for-profit and for-profit in a competitive marketplace, we would actually find

more options. When we have more options we have better choices to make, because competition makes everything better. We would get a better product at a better price with a better service. Everyone tries to improve with that model.

We can even go a bit further with this, in that child care spaces in a competitive market could be flexible to the very unique situations Canadians find themselves living in. Work schedules are not always nine to five. We have shift workers, students and a myriad of challenges that parents have to juggle with, and when we really limit the choices for parents, they basically get what they are given. Whether they like it and whether it works for them, it does not matter, whereas if there are more options and more choice, maybe there would be a day care, and I am sure there are many, that would adjust to the needs of very flexible schedules.

When there is abundance, there is peace. When there is abundance there is choice. The more abundance there is in any society, the happier the population. The less choice there is, the grumpier the population.

When we have the contracting of the economy and we have a space where there are shortages, we always see conflict, and that is why I think we raise this quite often. In all our speeches that I have been listening to tonight, the same points get made. We are hearing from our constituents these exact concerns over and over again, and once the government gets involved in providing a service, other competitors find themselves at a disadvantage. They have to compete against a subsidized environment, and then we start to phase out those additional spaces that are provided by the private sector, leaving only the government option, which as I mentioned just a few moments ago, is rarely flexible and often does not properly service rural communities.

• (2250)

Do not get me wrong. There are lots of providers in my community, and many others across the country, who are absolutely doing the best they can. I have yet to meet a child care professional who does not give their all each and every day. They are some of the best people I have ever met, and they do so because they love their community, they love their job and they want to see young ones grow up and be the best they can be. However, if people cannot access the child care spaces, it is hard to get that learning going.

It has to also be flexible. When the government oversees this level of control where only a certain selected few are getting funded, then basically it is just a proxy of government.

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Money will be spent. Results will not be achieved like they could be. When we have a competitive market, we get rapid innovation. Let us think about what has been achieved over our lifetimes and those before ours and the economic prosperity that has been achieved. Things that were once only accessible to the very rich have become very affordable to the vast majority of Canadians, and that is a good thing. That is a great thing. We look back to when people used to wash their clothes by hand. Now, I believe pretty much everyone has a washer and dryer. That is a good thing because entrepreneurs, inventors and creators started to make the things that, at one time, only the rich had and made them affordable for the vast majority of people.

The same can be said for child care. When we have different ideas and different people doing different things, going back to abundance, and abundance equals peace, we can start to have a myriad of differences in the child care space. Again, that is a very good thing.

However, when the government continues to pick winners or losers in the marketplace, we get slower innovation. We see that in the energy sector and we see that in growing sectors with the government picking winners and losers in industries and expecting a better result.

I do not think there is any Canadian who is very happy with the telecom industry. There is no competition in the telecom industry. We sometimes like to pretend there is, but there really is not. People basically get what they are given, whether they like it or not. How is that working out for Canadians? We have some of the highest rates anywhere in the world. Again, when we talk about child care, it needs to include everything.

We talk about our energy industry. The government is contracting that. It has been punishing our oil and gas sector for years, and our mining industry. Forestry is hurting. The government is contracting the energy market, leaving what is available to obviously go up in price. One way it could lower energy costs is to strip away the tax. The other is to add supply. When we add supply to anything, it lowers the price. That is including food and day care too.

Since I am from Ontario, I will read this statistic out here by Ontario's Financial Accountability Office. It projects that by 2026, which is not too far away, there will be 602,000 children under six whose families will want \$10-a-day day care, and the province will only be able to accommodate 375,000 of them, leaving about 38% without access. This is a major issue. Going back to what I first mentioned at the beginning of my speech, the labour part of this conversation is left out of this bill.

● (2255)

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we seem to have delved into the energy sector when we are supposed to be talking about child care.

Nevertheless, I would like to remind the member that the bill reinforces the agreements. The Premier of Ontario signed their agreement. He was the last one to sign, and since signing that agreement, 33 new child care spaces have been created. It is one of the provinces that actively grandfathered in private child care operators

and continues to work with them to ensure that there is growth, choice and flexibility within the province.

I do not seem to understand how we have gone from a bill that is aspirational to ensuring that we continue with this, considering the Conservatives ripped up the previous agreements from this time. Now that we are here, there are agreements and Bill C-35 is here, will the Conservatives support Bill C-35?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, just to answer the member opposite's first part, I was talking about the energy sector. My point was that, when we have abundance, that equals peace. When we have excess in spaces, we are able to lower the price and provide a range of options. When one includes public and not-for-profit as well as, yes, for-profit day care centres, it gives Canadians choice. It gives them the opportunity to go with what works for them.

Of course, we have students with flexible schedules. We have shift workers. Unfortunately, the government plan does not address that.

There is also this report here that is talking about child care deserts in Canada. It is affecting nearly 50% of younger children. It is a very concerning report talking about the lack of spaces in this country.

There was a part of my speech during which I talked about the labour part of it. That is not addressed in this legislation. I would like to see the Liberals start to focus on the whole range and take into account what we have been saying here tonight.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was just reading a report done by CCPA called *The Harper Record*. It says:

Giving financial incentives to businesses to create spaces has been tried before and failed. It was such bad policy that even members of the minister's hand-picked advisory group raised objections and was roundly criticized when the government's policy folks conducted cross-country consultations on how it could be made to work.

The report goes on to say, "The fallout from Harper's child care policy will be felt for years to come. Federal transfers specifically designated for early learning and child care were reduced by almost 37% in 2007-08...In 2006, only 19.3% of children five and under had access to...child care".

The NDP and my colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, had pushed the government and drove the agenda to get \$10-a-day child care nationally. This bill before us would address some elements of accountability with reporting, so we can have—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I do not think the hon. member was listening to my speech. I was actually talking about how we add to the supply, and that adding is always better than subtracting.

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If I heard correctly, I am pretty sure that the member from Vancouver said that she is against giving public money to companies. Does that mean she is against the billions given to Volkswagen? Do I understand that correctly, or is it just for those that the member from the NDP agrees with?

When we are talking about this child care issue, we want to see more spaces rather than fewer. That means more choice for parents because more selection and more choice equals a better product, service and price.

● (2300)

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is wonderful to join my voice to the debate tonight in speaking to this important bill, but first I want to take a moment to thank all the first responders and firefighters who are working so hard to keep people safe. I especially want to give a big thanks to all the volunteers who have opened up their hearts and homes, and all of the people who are sharing their time, talent and treasure to make all of those who have been displaced by fire feel welcome.

To get to the matter at hand, as people have probably realized, families look different across our country and across so many different spaces and places. This is such a challenging spot because there is not enough child care. While this bill has some very lofty goals in it, it has not necessarily created the child care spaces, which has created some unique challenges.

Coming from Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, I have had the opportunity to speak to a number of families that have a different type of work environment than many. I have had the opportunity to meet a lot of shift workers, a lot of moms who are nurses while the dad is a firefighter, or they both work up in the oil sands in a variety of spaces and have shifts that cross every so often.

One of the biggest pieces I heard from that was that the standard Monday to Friday, nine-to-five child care just does not fit their families. They need child care three overnights a week, or they need child care six days a month because, between their shifts and their spouse's shifts, they can mostly be home with the kids, but the rigidity of the Monday to Friday, nine-to-five, Ottawa-knows-best child care, which works well in some locations, does not work well in all locations.

This is part of the problem. In the community of Cold Lake, I get to chat with so many amazing Armed Forces members who serve our country so diligently, going on deployments all around Canada and the world, not only protecting us but also standing up as part of our NATO allies and protecting peace in the world. That Monday to Friday, nine-to-five child care especially does not work for them. It makes it that much more difficult. I was chatting with one woman just last week, and she was explaining to me how they had delayed having a family, not because they could not afford it but because they were not sure how they would physically make it work, as both she and her husband serve. They were asking how they would piece this together to do something when the availability is not there.

In the past, many parents and families would have relied on perhaps a nanny or a live-in caregiver of some sort, but because of the

extensive delays in immigration, that path is not as available or accessible as it had been in the past.

That is one of the overwhelming pieces I have heard in my role as the member of Parliament for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake. For a lot of parents who I chat with, a lot of my friends and people in my communities, their number one ask is for flexible child care. They want to see some innovation. They want to see something that serves their family unit, understanding that it looks a lot different than perhaps the average or what used to be.

This does not seem to be addressed in this bill. I think this is part of the problem because the Liberals are solving a problem for what the average family might have looked like 30 years ago. That is not what today's families necessarily look like. That is something that I think we can and should do better on.

I am participating virtually, and I am addressing this chamber for the first time in over a month because I had a baby. The fact that we have flexibility in our Parliament to allow people to participate and still be full members, giving speeches, asking questions, giving member's statements and participating in committees virtually, allows more women to be able to participate.

● (2305)

If we are going to continue allowing child care to just fit into this box and say that it has to be a certain way, that having a grandma look after her grandkids or having a trusted neighbour fill that role cannot be part of someone's solution, then I do not think that necessarily gets to the space.

While I was trying to prepare for this speech, I decided to call some child care operators I know. One of the child care operators I called is a friend of mine. Her name is Kyla Penner, and she owns KPSquared here in Fort McMurray. KPSquared is an amazing child care facility that has innovative child care, and it is actually expanding to have 24-hour child care. One of the coolest pieces about its child care model is that it really focuses on the family unit. It has the availability for parents to select when they need the child care. If they only need six days a month, they can pick those six days a month. If they need overnight care, very soon, they will be able to pick overnight care. This gives flexibility to a lot of families, and it is something that works for a lot of families.

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Before the child care deal came into place, KPSquared was very sought after in our community, and it had a wait-list of approximately 300 people. Today, I asked Kyla how many people were on the wait-list. She said over 625, but she would need to look to get a more precise number than that. It is not access to child care if the length of the wait-list is 625 people. I talk to so many parents, and I see so many Facebook and Internet forums that talk about the fact that the reality is this: Parents are going and putting their kids on every single wait-list they can possibly find because they just need child care, and they have been promised it.

They have been told that, somehow, there is \$10 child care, but we have not actually put the infrastructure into place to make this work. We have not spent the time talking to parents or child care providers to hear where some of those bottlenecks are. The bottlenecks that I have heard about are the fact that we do not have enough early childhood educators to be able to meet the demands so that we can have the staffing. We do not have enough people in those positions, and we do not have a system or a plan in place on how to educate people enough to be able to meet those needs. We also have not figured out that not all parents pick child care based on price. A lot of them pick child care based on flexibility, the proximity to work, how convenient it is for the family unit, or religious or linguistic requirements.

I have heard from many families who picked one child care space over another because they valued being able to have their children in a francophone day care, because that was very important to their family. This is all important. It is something we should value. We should be trying to see how we can expand to let a grandmother assist.

I heard the minister say earlier that it is a lot of work and that grandparents should not be expected to do that. I am not saying that grandparents should be expected to do it. That is not an option in my family. Both my parents are gone. My dad passed away this last year and my mom a dozen years ago, so that is not even an option. However, I have friends whose parents get their joy from being the primary provider of care for their grandchildren. They retired early specifically to be able to make that work for their family. For those families who have that as an option, I do not understand why we would not be supporting that.

That is going to be part of how we get enough spaces, so that the families who do not have that as an option, or do not want to use that for a variety of very good reasons, have the space available to them. What I am saying is that families look different. I am going to continue stressing this, because I think it is so important.

We need flexibility in our child care. We need innovation. We need more people like Kyla and KPSquared, because that is how we are going to solve this problem, not by creating an Ottawa-knows-best, one-size-fits-all solution.

• (2310)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I have to say what a joy it is to see our colleague again. I congratulate her on the birth of her son. I know it was earlier than expected. It is a lovely thing to be joined this evening by one of the newest babies in this Parliament family.

I want to say, with all respect, that Bill C-35 does not require that anybody give up on such options as having family members look after their babies. It just makes an opportunity available across Canada to have affordable child care. It does not demand that people accept it.

Does she have any thoughts on that?

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, it is wonderful to participate and see this innovation in this place.

No, it does not actually explicitly say that we cannot have that as an option. Some of the families I have talked to are paying their parents because they retired early. If they could have some funds to offset that cost and have the same amount of resourcing available to them, it would make a big difference when it comes to the feasibility of this. However, this is the part where the bill does not allow for enough innovation to allow families to have the space to make the choices that are best for them.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague on her new family addition.

I have been talking a lot about workers. We are talking about a crisis, a child care desert, which came from the CCPA. It was very clear about what this was about. It did not say to privatize day care and put more money into private spaces. It said that we have a worker shortage, and the way to deal with it is to pay fair wages and benefits and ensure that workers have retirement savings. We know that low wages in the child care sector are gendered. We know that 98% of employees are women.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague would agree that in order to ensure more spaces, we have to develop a very clear workforce strategy that puts the rights of workers at the centre.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, one of the interesting and amazing things I found when I was chatting with Kyla from KPSquared was that it has a really high retention rate when it comes to child care workers. Part of that is because it pays better than average. However, that is a decision KPSquared made for business reasons, and it is seeing a lot of success from that.

Something we see when we empower people to make choices is that good decisions can be made. We absolutely have to support this industry, and we have to find ways of making sure that we are not leaving people behind. However, I do not think an Ottawa-knows-best strategy for this is necessarily going to get us that solution. I think we need to empower women so that we can see more women in these positions of power making these decisions.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her new arrival. We corresponded a bit by email, but I am happy to see her on the screen and joining us in the House.

I would like to ask my colleague about the Alberta agreement, since she is from Alberta. It provided for an additional grant for operating flexible overnight child care, which is exactly what the member alluded to in terms of flexibility. In light of her comment about Ottawa knowing best, this was a case where the province decided what was best and worked with Ottawa to make that happen.

Is it really an Ottawa-knows-best priority? It seems to be driven by the agreements themselves, and the bill would simply be a framework to reinforce our commitment to child care going forward.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake can give a brief answer.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, that is a very complicated question to give a brief answer to.

Effectively, this was something the Government of Alberta had to fight very hard with the federal government in order to get done, even though it was absolutely in the best interests of Alberta families. However, I do not think it is unique to Alberta families. It could probably help families to have innovative, overnight child care available from coast to coast to coast. Frankly, the fact that it is restricted and only allowed in Alberta is a problem, and I want to see that fixed.

Why are we pitting provinces against each other? That is exactly what the federal government chose to do, because it decided that it knew best and it was going to do this. Frankly, I do not think that is going to serve all the families across the country well.

• (2315)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am speaking today about Bill C-35. The bill is called “an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada”. I will spend most of my time speaking about children, but I want to start with a few words about this bill.

This bill would do absolutely nothing for early learning and child care. The government has, in fact, already implemented its child care policies. Bill C-35 comes after the fact. The bill contains statements of principles and a declaration, but nothing would be changed legally or in terms of funding by putting these generic statements of opinion into legislation. Bill C-35 is a bill that simply states the government's views with respect to its own approach to child care. The bill itself would have no material impact on families and no material impact on the operations of the federal government, save for one thing. The one material change that would be brought about by this act is the establishment of a child care advisory council. This council would be paid and would consist of 10 to 18 members, with all members appointed by the government. Although the legislation says the council should reflect the diversity of Canada, it does not define what that means, and it certainly says anything about this council reflecting a diversity of opinion or experience. This council would not be elected and would thus have no democratic legitimacy. It would simply be a tool for the minister to appoint her friends, who would receive government largesse and give her advice, which would no doubt be consistent with her pre-existing opinions.

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Instead of hiring and paying a council of the minister's good friends to reaffirm the things the government already believes, perhaps it should send these 10 to 18 people out to offer child care services to the many, many parents who still do not have access under its plan. That would be a much better use of resources than yet another Liberal advisory council.

On the substance of the child care issue itself, this is a subject that is deeply personal for me. I have five children, who range in age from 14 months to 10 years. Ten years ago, when Gianna was born, when I first met my daughter, I remember three overwhelming impressions. First, I have never felt the complete onset of love for another person so quickly. In most situations in life, love grows incrementally over time, but when one becomes a parent, a wall of love hits one in the face and overwhelms one completely. Second, I felt an overwhelming sense of responsibility. Bringing my daughter home, I was struck by the realization that this child had no other parents with whom we simply could drop her off when we got tired or did not know what to do. She was fully our responsibility, and for good. Third, as the weeks went on, I began to wonder what in the world I had done with all my free time before this child was born. Before having kids, I thought I was busy, but when she born, I realized I had had no understanding of what busy meant. Parenthood for me began with an overwhelming sense of love, responsibility and loss of time.

Children are expensive in terms of time and in terms of money. In a, sadly, too busy and too materialistic civilization, we count everything in terms of time and money, but these are not the things that really matter. It goes without saying that every minute and every dollar we have spent on our five beautiful children has been worth it. What, after all, could I possibly rather be doing? Children are amazing, and the measure of a good society is most fundamentally the degree to which it values and respects children, so, recognizing the immutable dignity and value of young children, the important question tonight is how a good society ought to provide for the care and education of children.

Parenthetically, it seems a lot of the government's discourse on child care starts from a different premise. When its members talk about child care, they start from what they think will be good for the economy or what they think would lead to increased workforce participation. These are fine things to talk about, but it seems to me to be starting at the wrong end. They always start by talking about what they think is good for adults instead of by asking what is good for children.

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As I described, and as I think any parent will identify with, one naturally feels a deep and fierce unconditional love for one's children, which leads parents to want to sacrifice for whatever they think is best for their children. As such, I believe we should build systems of early learning and child care, and of education more generally, that always err on the side of deferring to parents and that leverage the deep, natural love parents have for their children. Do parents make mistakes? Absolutely. Parents get things wrong; I do especially, but in virtually all cases, we can count on parents to have a rectitude of intentions and a willingness to sacrifice for the sake of their children.

Many parents, myself included, choose to involve other people in the process of caring for their children. We involve grandparents, trusted friends and public and private institutions. There are very good reasons for parents to involve other people in the care of their children. Such care allows parents time to earn family income and to have necessary periods of rest, but it also exposes children to other people, experiences, ideas and role models.

● (2320)

I am not here to say what kind of child care or mix of approaches is best, but I would say that parents should be the ones making these decisions with sincere reference to their own consciences and with a love-driven evaluation of what is best for their children and their family. I trust parents to make these decisions. Therefore, I want to build a society and a child care model that allows parents to action the choices that they see are best for their children. If parents cannot access any external child care then we have limited the range of parental choice. If parents cannot afford to have one parent opt out of the workforce then we have also limited the range of parental choice. Right now we actually have both of these problems. We have parents feeling they need two incomes and not able to find desirable child care services.

We should be trying to build a society in which parents can freely make child care choices across the broadest range of options that reflect their own sincere evaluations without any kind of direct or subtle economic coercion to choose one option or another. Let us remove the child care gatekeepers and make it easier for parents to make the choices that they believe are right. A choice is not an end in and of itself but, given the diversity of children in families and the love that parents have for their children, letting parents make unfettered and uncoerced decisions is the best way to provide for the optimal outcomes for children.

While Conservatives have always championed choice in child care and have advocated different kinds of policies towards that end, Liberals have long preferred the one-size-fits-all model of state-subsidized and controlled traditional day care. Their approach has been to fund out-of-home day care centres, while regulating the fees that they can charge but, importantly, the Liberals have actually underfunded their own preferred model. The money cannot keep up with the big promises, even as out-of-control deficit spending already drives up inflation. Since the money cannot keep up with the big promises, we now have a situation in which some families have seen a short-term reduction in child care costs, but many families cannot access funded spaces and also, as a result of the regulated rates, many child care operators cannot afford to do the upkeep or expansion that is required.

Effectively, the government's approach has been to promise an increase in child care as a result of public funding, but instead they have pushed existing providers to lower prices without sufficient replacement funding and are thus, in the long term, undermining the operations of child care providers and threatening even the existing child care supply. The cost pressures that private child care operators are now facing will create a ticking time bomb in terms of actual child care availability as over time they will not be able to grow to keep up with demand and some will have to close.

Notably, there is no means testing associated with this Liberal program. While some parents are better off for now because they have access and some are worse off for now because they do not have access, we do not have any way of knowing if those who have the current access are the ones who needed the access the most.

This program is very poorly designed and even families who see themselves as benefiting in the short term should know that their child care access is at risk in the long term if operators are not able to access the capital that they need. A better alternative to this system would be to empower families and emphasize choice and flexibility without economic coercion, without funding some things and without using tax dollars from other families making different choices to fund families opting for traditional day care.

I just have one additional point I want to make before I wrap up.

Canada's child care policy should reflect the emerging technological reality. When my parents were raising us, my mother faced a sharp and essentially binary choice. Given the nature of her work, she could either continue to work at or near full time, or she could become a full-time stay-at-home parent. The binary of that choice was very harsh but, fortunately, today a smaller and smaller proportion of families face that kind of sharp binary. Technology has allowed an explosion in work-from-home and flexible work arrangements. It has also allowed the dramatic growth of so-called "mompreneurs". My wife runs a web-based family medicine practice, offering appointments at the same odd hours that are most likely to be convenient for the women she serves. This would obviously have been unheard of a generation ago.

Workers and employers naturally have to assess the effectiveness of these kinds of flexible arrangements, but such arrangements do provide many obvious advantages, especially from the perspective of family life. People today still need child care, but they are more likely to want it in different places, at different times and in different ways, in accordance with evolving work relationships and their own considerations of the best interests of their children.

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Work and work-life balance will continue to change, I believe, as technological developments continue and are deployed in different ways. The nine to five out-of-home child care model still serves some families, but an ever-declining proportion of the whole. That is why, more than ever, we need choice and flexibility today. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, built for a different technological reality, let us focus on empowering parents in 2023 to make choices that are best for their children and their families.

• (2325)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was most impressed by my colleague's presentation this evening and the number of choice areas that he spoke of.

Could he elaborate on the accountability and accessibility of the types of day care that we have today and how they could be improved?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the most important relationship of accountability for day care providers is to parents, in terms of whether they are meeting the needs of the families they are serving. If we are able to strengthen choice and flexibility and make sure parents have the resources they need, then we will have strong mechanisms of accountability in place.

As I said in my speech, we are seeing increasing diversity of the work-family balance that people are pursuing and that they are able to pursue because of all the technology. Let us put families in the driver's seat, recognizing that parents have love for their children and that they will make choices that fit with their situation and their kids.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned the national advisory council, and the way he spoke about it, it was almost as though he was belittling it. The people who will be part of this advisory council are going to be the leading advocates for child care. To have them at the table is absolutely critical to make sure that we stay on the right path in ensuring that accessible, affordable, quality child care is made available to all Canadians.

My question for the member is this: If the experts should not be at the table, then who should? Should it be the Conservatives themselves?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, that question clearly exposed the massive philosophical gulf between Conservatives and New Democrats. New Democrats think that child care decisions should be made by a 10- to 18-person council, with no democratic legitimacy, appointed by the minister. She has confidence the minister is going to choose the best experts.

I think the best experts are parents. We should let parents be their own child care advisory council for their own kids and make their own decisions. We should focus on empowering parents to make such decisions.

The member is now heckling me about the Harper plan. The Harper plan was fantastic. We gave money directly to parents, and parents had more resources—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. Members may have an opportunity to ask another question, so I would ask them to wait until such time.

I will ask the hon. member to finish his thought, so we can get another question in.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the universal child care benefit was so popular and so successful that the Liberals renamed it, claimed it was their idea and ran on it in every election that they have been remotely successful in.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, that could not be further from the truth, because the reality is that the universal child care benefit that the Conservatives brought in gave cheques to millionaires. He talks about a one-size-fits-all approach. Nothing more clearly defines that than the universal child care benefit that literally gave the exact same amount of money to absolutely everybody, even those making half a million dollars a year. Of course, a Conservative would think that is a great program, because they are giving—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The ones who talked about the heckling are doing the heckling on this side now. I would ask members to please hold off. I know the hon. member is able to answer that question.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

• (2330)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, of course a Conservative would get up and say that Stephen Harper's plan was by far the best, because it was, as they clap right now, the plan that literally sent cheques to millionaires.

Congratulations to the member opposite. He is absolutely right. That is a program that Stephen Harper would love, and I can definitely understand why the Conservative Party of Canada would get behind that program.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, this member is from the party that gave millions to Loblaws to buy new refrigerators; the government loves sending money to the rich and famous.

The Conservative government introduced a universal child care benefit that was taxable, which meant that those who had higher incomes had to pay higher levels of tax on the money they got. We can quibble about the amounts or the proportions—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. We still have debate going back and forth, and it is not the time for that. I only recognized one individual, not two or three.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Why give it in the first place?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary knows better. He should be setting an example in the House.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

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Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I must say that I am immensely enjoying this. I wonder if there is unanimous consent to extend my questions and comments for another five minutes.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

The hon. parliamentary secretary has a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the rules of the House do not allow, after six o'clock, I believe, for you to accept unanimous consent motions.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is right, so the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan has 12 seconds.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the members opposite may want to quibble about the proportions, but the point is that in 2015, when the Liberals formed government, their policy was to re-name and adjust the proportions on a universal direct-to-parents subsidy. They took our policy because it was so popular.

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate this evening on Bill C-35, the Canada early learning and child care act. I believe this issue is non-partisan because it concerns the most important element of our country: its children. I want to begin with a quick level set just so that we are all working from the same fact base.

This bill sets out the vision for a Canada-wide early learning and child care system and its commitment to ongoing collaborations with the provinces and indigenous peoples. The bill also delineates principles where public and not-for-profit entities are exclusively called out for a focus that guides the ongoing federal investments established by the National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care, as announced by members of the council on November 24, 2022. Additionally, the bill notes a realization of the right to benefit from child care services, as recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and it contributes to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Canadian parents have long hoped for the availability of affordable, safe and stable child care. To that effect, the government brought in a national child care program that proposed to cut day care fees by an average of 50% by the end of 2022 and down to an average of \$10 per day by 2026. Earlier this year, the minister stated, per the National Post, that Bill C-35 would “enshrine the principles that provinces and territories agreed to in funding agreements with Ottawa, including the pledge to cut parent fees and create more spaces.”

The government had promised to introduce the legislation by the end of 2022 in its supply and confidence agreement with the New Democratic Party. While I wholeheartedly agree that affordable quality child care is critical, it becomes moot if people cannot access it or it simply does not exist. I am concerned that Bill C-35 does not address accessibility, and I am concerned that the government is embarking on a promise that it will not be able to deliver on. Moreover, I am concerned that \$10-a-day child care does little to address the serious, real child care labour shortages and the lack of child care spaces.

I suggest that Bill C-35 would be good for families who already have a child care space, but it would not help the thousands of families on child care wait-lists or the operators who do not have the staff or the infrastructure to offer more spaces. Additionally, the bill would increase the demand for child care but would not solve the problem of frontline burnout, staff shortages or access to more child care spaces. Simply put, there are not enough qualified staff to keep all existing child care centres running at full capacity, let alone operating new spaces. The Canadian Union of Public Employees has reported that “in many communities there is only one child care space available for every three children who need it, and waitlists are long.” That is a very sobering statistic.

Bill C-35 is also discriminatory. The majority of child care operators are women, yet the language and intent of this bill would prevent any growth in opportunities for privately run female child care operators. Also, how does the government expect more women to be able to go to work when there are no child care spots available and with wait-lists being years long?

The Financial Accountability Office of Ontario projects that by 2026, there will be 602,000 children under six whose families will want \$10-a-day child care. However, the province will only be able to accommodate 375,000, leaving 227,000 children, or almost 40%, without access. That is two in five families that will be unable to access a spot. Government estimates also suggest that by 2026, there could be a shortage of 8,500 early childhood workers. This is another staggering statistic.

In British Columbia, 27% of child care centres turn away children due to lack of staff. One child care director, who oversees 13 child care programs with 350 spaces, stated, “In the past two years, we've had to close programs temporarily, whether it's for a day or two, or shorten hours for the week...in order to meet the licensing regulations”.

● (2335)

What then are worthy policy options to consider? I have three that I hope the government will seriously think about.

First, we must enable families of varying incomes to benefit. Based on the guiding principles of the child care framework, the government should support families that need child care most, based on their income, which in many cases is outlined within the individual provincial agreements. As well, the government should not be subsidizing child care of wealthy families that can already afford it.

Second, we should address the so-called “Matthew effect”. This is the increasing of the public provision that actually ends up advantaging higher-income families rather than lower-income groups. Even in the Quebec model, despite the gains in access, quality levels remain low when compared to the rest of Canada, with lower-income children in lower, rather than higher, quality settings.

Third, we should resolve the labour shortage. There are not enough qualified staff to keep all existing child care centres running at full capacity, let alone operate new spaces. I think that is a point that is important to reiterate. The reality is that we cannot create new child care spaces without staff. Not enough students enter the ECE programs across Canada to support any growth, and it remains difficult to retain staff without the financial incentive to work in the field. The reality is that in British Columbia in 2022, 45% of employers reported losing more staff than they could hire, and 27% reported turning away children because of a lack of staff.

The lack of child care spaces across our country is considerable. In Ontario, the percentage of zero to 12-year-olds for whom full-day or part-time day care space was available was 25%. For children zero to five years, it was 21.3%. There are also so-called “child care deserts”. This is where there is a lack of, or inequitable distribution of, child care spaces or an FSA, or postal code region, with a coverage rate of less than one third of the child population. According to a Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives report that was published in May 2023, 48% of children live in child care deserts, and the percentage of children living in child care deserts in Ontario is a considerable 53%.

What are the financial implications?

The 2021 budget pledged \$30 billion over five years on a national child care system with an additional \$9.2 billion annually coming after that period. The bill before us is about children, the future of our country, and we owe them a duty to ensure that we are getting the best value possible for them when it comes to our hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

In terms of stakeholder considerations, the major comments coming from child care providers suggest that Bill C-35, while a step in the right direction, is however too generic. The bill does not go into specifics. Additionally the private sector is cut out of the equation. There are also significant major labour shortages, with the majority of those who are working being overworked and understaffed. Bill C-35 would be good for families that already have a space but not for workers. The bill also would do nothing to address the long wait-lists for care across the country.

There are ways that Bill C-35 can be improved. In my province, the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario suggested the following four amendments. First was to make the bill more inclusive by deleting the reference to public and not-for-profit child care providers. Second was to consider an addition that provides some guidance to advisory council members about avoiding potential conflicts of interest or the appearance of impropriety arising from their involvement on the council. Third was that advisory council members may also require guidance about avoiding any paid consulting or volunteer work related to political parties or candidates during their term on the council. Finally, fourth was to add additional specificity surrounding the composition of the advisory coun-

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cil with respect to regional representation as well as representation by female entrepreneurs and those involved in the direct delivery of licensed child care services.

● (2340)

In conclusion, I hope that Canadian families needing reliable, safe and affordable child care are able to access a national system that provides a viable program for generations to come.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member and his critique of the bill.

I am wondering whether he is supportive of the bill or whether he will be voting against it. We know the Conservatives are very critical of it, but they will end up voting for it at the end of the day because they kind of have to and they know that. I am just curious whether this member would follow suit and still vote for it, despite his critique, or whether he will actually vote against the bill.

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, it is interesting that the focus of the question is not on how we can make the bill better and on the very many constructive recommendations we have heard this evening from Conservatives, NDP members and many individuals who spoke, but instead focuses on what is, unfortunately, so partisan.

This is about an issue that is about our future, which is children. I wish it were not a partisan line of attack that the member is trying to take here.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have heard so much in the House this evening, and the member brought up so many great points. I know he could probably share some stories, and he did, about his own riding.

I have four reports here from the last few weeks about people ringing the bells, alarm bells, on this disaster. This is one from Matthew Lau, and it says, “Government-funded media details government-funded child-care disaster”. He goes on to say, “Canada’s child care sector continues to go poorly. This should not surprise anyone familiar with Canada’s government-run health-care system (which is a shambles), Canada’s governmental management of agricultural output (which deliberately creates scarcity) or the track record of government economic control in general.”

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My question to the member would be, how can he trust the Liberals to manage child care when they cannot manage housing prices, affordability and public safety?

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my Conservative colleague for her question. She does raise valid points.

I want to use this opportunity to actually discuss the previous point of the member who had spoken before me, with regard to the council. I think one of the best indications of one's future actions is how they have conducted themselves in the past. I think about the housing council, which was immediately dismissed, along with recommendations by the housing minister, when it was no longer politically convenient and in alignment with what the government wanted.

That is a point of concern. I am worried about whether or not the Liberal government would truly listen to experts and their advice, and I think that is something many Canadians are worried about.

• (2345)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned, several times in his speech, the critical shortage of staff as one of the reasons people cannot access child care in Canada.

When I talk to child care advocates in my riding and elsewhere, what comes up again and again is that staff need to be properly paid, with decent wages. Many of these staff workers are well-trained early childhood educators, yet they are not paid wages that reflect that and they are not allowed time for professional development.

Would the member not say that this is something that should be part of this agreement: that staff must be properly paid in order to retain them and grow the industry?

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague. I think one of the big gaps right now is the lack of a labour workforce strategy to ensure not only that there are staff to take care of the children, but also that they are compensated appropriately for the important work they do.

That is why one of the comments I focused on, in terms of my remarks, was that, given the labour shortage, the government should not cut out the private sector. I ask the government to please look again at section 7(1)(a) of Bill C-35 and ensure that it is inclusive of the private sector and the many female entrepreneurs operating in the child care sector.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are here tonight discussing Bill C-35. I would like to recognize the member of Parliament for Peterborough—Kawartha and her team for all their work on this bill, as well as for reaching out to parents and child care providers across the country.

I would like to thank the Conservative members of the HUMA committee for their work on this legislation, as well as all those who have spoken tonight at this very late hour. I would also like to thank all those who provide child care to our children for the very honourable work they do.

To be very clear, the government went ahead and signed agreements with the provinces before developing legislation. This is

quite unusual, as legislation would most often be developed by government and go through all the parliamentary processes to ensure that it is as good as it can be. There would be committee testimony from those affected, industry experts and perhaps academia. Everyday Canadians could write in submissions to be considered. There may be amendments that receive full debate at committee; the legislation then goes back to the House of Commons for debate again, and the whole process is repeated at the Senate.

However, for this child care funding legislation we are discussing here today, the government has done it backward. There has been no parliamentary involvement, no oversight and no debate. We have not heard from those affected, from experts or from the general public. The government developed policies away from Parliament and signed provincial agreements, which have been implemented.

This is happening at a time when the government is pouring fuel on the inflationary fire, making it much tougher for families. Inflation is high, interest rates are high, housing has doubled, and taxes have increased and will continue to increase. There is carbon tax 2 coming soon to a family near us, all because of policies of the government that are squeezing families. One in five people is skipping meals, and food bank usage is up over 30% in my community. I know this is very consistent across the country. Affordable, quality child care is critical, but if people cannot access it, it does not exist.

Bill C-35 does nothing to address accessibility. It is not a child care strategy. In British Columbia, a 2019 survey found that, in the greater Vancouver area, there were only enough child care spaces for 18.6% of children in the metro Vancouver region. In many rural regions in Canada, large child care centres do not exist at all or may be very far apart. This bill offers rural parents, for those who need it, no flexibility; it really does not offer them anything. It chooses to ignore the simple fact that low-cost child care is not possible if child care resources are not accessible to begin with.

I spoke to many child care operators in my community of Kelowna—Lake Country, who said that there have been unintended consequences. As a reminder, this legislation is coming after agreements have been signed by the provinces. We are not talking about hypotheticals here, but results that have already been implemented.

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Yes, some families are being helped and have some form of child care now. However, I have been told by providers in my community that there are many scenarios playing out. One, in particular, is where high-income families are paying for spaces while pregnant, because it is so inexpensive to hold the space for their family. The lower-income and middle-class families who need the spaces are not getting them, and the whole format of waiting lists has changed. There is serious concern about the lack of focus on ensuring that child care spaces go to those most in need instead of creating advantages for the already well off.

Conservatives recognize that Canadian families should have access to affordable, quality child care, and they should be able to choose the child care providers best suiting their family's needs. The government's focus in the child care bill on not-for-profit and government spaces, which is how it is worded in the legislation. Let me lay this out in a very practical way, on a very small scale.

For example, how would a large child care facility add 200 child care spots very quickly? Many times, these are large not-for-profits that do really good work taking care of our children. No one is disputing that. However, they are not the only kind of child care provider. They would need physical space and to have parking. They may perhaps need to move or expand. If they move, they have to ensure the local bylaws are met before building a new building. It is not that easy. Smaller, independent organizations are much more nimble. If anything, this is where the focus should be, or it should be on par with governments and not-for-profit providers, at the minimum.

Once again, the Liberal government has not considered small businesses as a priority. This legislation lists what the government's priorities are.

- (2350)

Small, independent businesses are once again an afterthought of the government. They are not included in the national advisory council being created by the government.

It is really a shame that, as part of this child care legislation, small business owners have really been demonized. This is how many of them feel. We saw this at committee with the way the Liberals and NDP representatives spoke about small business child care providers. One local independent small business child care provider in my riding told me how awful they thought it was that the government was making it sound like they were printing money. Those are their words. She said that they would not have opened if they were not-for-profit. She considered this years ago, however, looking into it, banks would not provide a loan to get her started. She had to open a company.

Most of these small business child care providers are women. Most of them are looking after their own children while helping other families.

What quality child care is for a child should be defined by the parents, not by the government. As a working mom myself, I knew the importance of quality child care. As well, I know kids who have not done well in large child care settings. Their parents had to pull them out due to their child's personality, anxiety or special learning needs. It is not that larger facilities could not provide good care.

The kids, just like adults, are all different. Many feel more comfortable in a smaller, intimate environment. There is no right or wrong.

Instead of giving parents freedom to determine what child care works best for their children and their work schedules and their lives, the government has opened the door for a two-tiered framework of child care. We heard testimony on this at committee.

This legislation does not treat all kinds of child care equally. Conservatives brought forth a motion at committee, which was not supported. It was voted down. It was to be truly inclusive and accessible and would have allowed parents to make the best decision for their family.

The amendment read, "facilitate access to all types of early learning and child care programs and services regardless of the provider—such as those that are provided through traditional day care centres, centres with extended, part-time or overnight care, nurseries, flexible and drop-in care, before- and after-school care, preschools and co-op child care, faith-based care, unique programming to support children with disabilities, home-based child care, nannies and shared nannies, au pairs, stay-at-home parents or guardians who raise their own children, or family members, friends or neighbours who provide care—that meet or exceed standards set by provincial governments or Indigenous governing bodies and respond to the varying needs of children and families while respecting the jurisdiction and unique needs of the provinces and Indigenous peoples".

As I said, it was not supported. It would have addressed the argument between licensed and unlicensed, because it refers to meeting standards of provincial governments or governing bodies, which is quality care.

Bill C-35 is good for families who already have child care space but it does not help the tens of thousands of families on child care wait-lists or the operators who do not have the staff or infrastructure to offer more spaces.

Bill C-35 increases demand for child care but does not solve the problem of frontline burnout, staff shortages, staff training or access to more spaces. The Canadian Union of Public Employees currently reports, "in many communities there is only one child care space available for every three children who need it, and waitlists are long."

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In British Columbia, 27% of child care centres turn away children due to lack of staff. We have had centres in my community reduce spaces due to staffing. This child care legislation does not address staffing or training in this legislation to meet the 40,000 workers needed now.

It is unfortunate that the government signed provincial agreements without Parliament's involvement and without hearing from the public, as we did at committee, and was so close-minded when looking at amendments that would have provided better access to child care for families across Canada.

• (2355)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the things my colleague mentioned in her speech tonight was about the lack of discussion and the lack of dialogue that the government had with the public or with others, even the provinces, which were only given one choice when they were forced to basically sign on to this type of program.

I would like to give my colleague an opportunity to expand on her thoughts on that whole idea of the lack of choice and the lack of discussion that the federal government had on this important issue.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, this is exactly what we saw at committee. At committee, we had a lot of testimony but also a lot of written submissions, an extensive number of written submissions. They were not all by the large groups that are quite often represented. We heard from individual child care providers from across the country. We also heard from parents. We heard about very specific, real situations that are playing out in families' lives. That is the type of input we need when we are developing legislation so we can develop the best legislation possible, try to capture the different situations and maybe try to mitigate unintended consequences.

This is a gap that happened before the government signed all of these agreements. It went ahead and signed the agreements without all of this input from parliamentarians and the public.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, there are a couple things that I really appreciate about Bill C-35: the inclusion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as requiring informed consent, as accorded in UNDRIP. Those two provisions, in and of themselves, are very important to supporting Bill C-35, and I wonder if the member agrees with my statement.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, yes, and we supported that at committee. In addition to that, as I mentioned during my intervention, we put forth a motion that would have captured all different types of child care providers, but unfortunately that was not accepted. Part of that did include different cultural and indigenous-type providers, but unfortunately our motion was not accepted by the other members of the committee.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, it was great working with my colleague on the HUMA committee and listening to so much testimony.

I think the take-home message tonight is that Canadians are seeing, realizing and speaking up, and it is being covered in the media. This bill is promising something the Liberals cannot deliver. We

have seen it time and time again. It is not just us saying that. Everybody is now coming forward.

I would like to know my hon. colleague's position on this in terms of her own riding. Does she have a story she can share about how people cannot access child care?

• (2400)

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, I will give one example. During one of our last constituency weeks about a month ago, someone from my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country met with me. She was taking about a family she is familiar with that wanted to immigrate to the area. Both parents are doctors. They have actually gone through the process and it is all working really well. However, they are having a tough time deciding whether they are going to come to Canada and come to my region, because they realize that they cannot access child care. Here we have two potential doctors who might come into my area in Canada, and they may choose not to come because they have realized there is no child care available for them.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to speak about the Trudeau Foundation. It is timely that this question has come up because Canada has been rocked by this foreign interference scandal. The Trudeau Foundation has been at the centre of it, and the public accounts committee, of which I am a member, has been trying to get to the bottom of what happened, but has been repeatedly stonewalled by the Liberals and their friends at the foundation.

To set the stage a little bit, as Canada has been rocked by this foreign interference scandal, a foreign government interfering repeatedly in Canadian democratic elections, Liberals have repeatedly tried to cover this up by turning to so-called independent people to investigate this, such as people from the Trudeau Foundation, not just once but twice. The government asked people from the Trudeau Foundation to investigate the problem of foreign interference, even though the Trudeau Foundation itself had been subject to foreign interference.

The Trudeau Foundation received a massive donation from a CCP-affiliated individual, who we know about, and it said that it had returned the money, even when they had not returned the money. Conservatives on the public accounts committee said that we needed to get to the bottom of what happened to the Trudeau Foundation, the foreign interference that it had been subject to, even while the government asked people from the Trudeau Foundation to investigate.

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The call for an investigation from the public accounts committee responded to particular problems created by the structure of the Trudeau Foundation, which is a Frankenstein hybrid between public and private. It is a public institution in many respects. It is tied in with the Trudeau family. The Prime Minister remains a member of the foundation. At the same time, it is organized in a sense as a private organization. It is both public and private, and this creates big problems for holding it accountable. The Auditor General has said that she cannot study private donations that go to the Trudeau Foundation, as it is not part of her mandate. The CRA was asked to investigate, but it cannot talk about any of this.

Liberals opposed our motion initially in the public accounts committee to investigate it. Eventually, they agreed to allow two meetings on this, but the public accounts committee continues to be stonewalled. We have had virtually no witnesses agree to testify. Conservatives have tried to summon witnesses who will not appear, and that includes David Johnston, but Liberals have tried to block that. We have tried to request additional documents from the CRA that would allow us to do our work, but Liberals have been, for an extended period of time, filibustering our request for documents.

At the core of this is the fact that David Johnston will not testify. David Johnston, the Prime Minister's good friend and ski buddy, has been named the so-called special rapporteur for foreign interference and is affiliated with the Trudeau Foundation. He has written a report on foreign interference that, surprise, surprise, makes no mention of the Trudeau Foundation. Supposedly, he is looking into foreign interference, but there is no mention of the Trudeau Foundation, of which David Johnston was a part. He should testify, and he should explain that.

We have a situation today where David Johnston, the Prime Minister's special rapporteur, who refused a request by a majority of the House of Commons to resign, is refusing to appear before the public accounts committee. The reality is that David Johnston has shown a dangerous disdain for our institution. When Parliament asks a person to resign from a public position, the least they could do is show up to testify about what their activities have been. The Trudeau Foundation has been involved in foreign interference, and it has been subject to foreign interference, but it is not mentioned in his report.

• (2405)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would start by noting the original question asked in the House that has produced this follow-up at this point had nothing to do with David Johnston despite the fact the member has suddenly introduced David Johnston into the topic. He had a great display there. I am sure it will turn into a good fundraising opportunity later on.

However, let us just reflect on what is really going on in this scenario. We have the Prime Minister's last name attached to a foundation, a foundation that was created in the name of his father. It is a foundation that accepts donations, and those donations are utilized for the following.

This is straight from the Trudeau Foundation's website, which states:

Through its Scholarship, Mentorship and Fellowship programs, the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation focuses on the leadership development of our Scholars.

The Foundation's leadership program aims to empower Scholars to have meaningful impact in their institutions and communities. It does so by equipping Scholars with key leadership skills, instilling in them values crucial for Engaged Leaders, such as engagement with a plurality of perspectives, service to the community, audacity and innovation.

This is an organization that the Prime Minister has not been involved with in over a decade. Conservatives know that, but Conservatives also know there is an opportunity to jump on here in that the Prime Minister's last name is also referenced in the Trudeau Foundation.

The Conservatives would like to paint a picture that the Trudeau Foundation is some fundraising arm for individual donations, political or not, that somehow make it into the Prime Minister's own personal bank account. That could not be further from the truth. What they are trying to do here is cloud the issue and try to suggest there is some form of personal benefit to the Prime Minister, which quite frankly is not true. Everybody knows that, everybody who can look at the facts in a manner that is unbiased and does not come from this cloud of conspiracy theory we see from the other side of the House.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, that was the kind of unmitigated nonsense the House has come to expect in this situation, unfortunately.

I would submit to the member he should read the annual report of the Trudeau Foundation, which notes the membership of the foundation and which notes that the Prime Minister remains a member of the foundation. It is in the last annual report. There are fewer than 30 members. A substantial number of those members are appointed by either the Trudeau family or the Minister of Industry, and this foundation received \$125 million from the government.

I do not dispute the foundation aspires to provide scholarships to students, but the member should not dispute the fact there was a massive injection of foreign donations to the foundation when the government took office, and that there was a close ongoing relationship between the government, the Trudeau family and this foundation.

The core point I raised in my original question and will raise again is the following. If all this is great work, then why the secrecy? Why will the people from the Trudeau Foundation not show up? Why are Liberals filibustering our motion to try to get documents? If it is all above board, why the secrecy?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, his question goes to exactly my point. He is trying to suggest that somehow this side of the House or the government could possibly answer that question. Unless we had actual involvement in the Trudeau Foundation, it would be impossible to answer that question. Nobody on this side of the House has anything to do with the Trudeau Foundation. Sorry, one person might be—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You are filibustering on public accounts.

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

Adjournment Proceedings

I just want to remind the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan he had an opportunity to ask the question and an opportunity to listen to the answer. I know he is a lawyer by trade, and he knows the court of law would not allow this to happen either, so I would just ask the hon. member, who may not like the answer, to listen.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

• (2410)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, somebody might be a member of an organization but certainly not in a role to make any decisions, and that is the point that has been made repeatedly. Conservatives would like to paint the picture that the Prime Minister is involved.

He asked the question of why they will not come to committee. How on earth could I possibly answer that question when I am not involved in the Trudeau Foundation nor is anybody on this side of the House?

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am here tonight, after midnight, for this adjournment debate as a result of another non-answer from the government side. When I originally rose in question period, the government member's response to the question at that time was some non-answer about much money people in the member's province were going to get back of the money that his government had previously taxed from them, and then some incoherent words about conspiracy theories and cryptocurrency.

Since I posed that initial question, we have learned that the minister plans to add carbon tax 2.0 to the backs of Canadian taxpayers. This new carbon tax will add an additional 17¢ per litre to the current tax, and with the sales tax on the carbon taxes, it will mean up to 61¢ per litre as a result of carbon taxes, another burden that Canadians are being forced to bear to pay for the government's overspending habit. The second carbon tax will cost the average Canadian household \$573 per year, without any rebate, costing some families in some provinces as much as \$1,157. These numbers are from the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

I want to put this into perspective. It has been 15 years since a carbon tax was implemented in B.C., a tax that initially started at 2.41¢ per litre. It originally started out as a revenue-neutral tax; the revenues would go directly toward reducing personal income taxes. That was until an NDP government decided the B.C. carbon tax would no longer be revenue-neutral, but would instead go into general revenue to help pay for the NDP government's overspending habit. I think the members listening will see the similarities here in establishing a small tax initially, gradually turning up the heat, hoping people would be distracted by other crises, and then using those tax dollars to pay for bad spending habits. Once more, we have evidence of the indistinguishable ideologies of the Liberals and the NDP, as such, the NDP-Liberal coalition we are currently dealing with, which is making Canadians pay for the government's bad spending habit.

I am sure the Liberal member will come back with some comment about how the carbon tax and carbon tax 2.0 are somehow go-

ing to prevent wildfires or flooding, but they have yet to show how that is going to be accomplished. The government has failed to meet any emissions targets, and instead of facilitating the export of cleaner Canadian natural gas to high-emissions countries, they have left those countries to seek out coal and other dirty energy sources from countries with poor environmental and human rights standards, a poor, if not failed, record at best.

Will the government take control of its bad spending habit, stop pushing higher taxes on Canadians, who are already struggling under its inflationary policies, and cancel the planned tax increases?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member brought up the Liberal-NDP coalition. Normally, I would say that there is a Conservative coalition with the Bloc Québécois, but not even on this issue does the Bloc agree with the Conservatives. As a matter of fact, every other party that is represented in this House agrees that putting a price on pollution is the right thing to do.

The member said that the question was not answered during the debate or during question period when he asked, but it actually was. It goes to the heart of what the member neglected to mention in his speech and, indeed, what Conservatives continually neglect to mention. The answer was this:

...as much as the Conservatives would like to deny it, climate change is real. What else is real? Those cheques that are arriving in people's mailboxes beginning April 14. In my home province of Manitoba, people will receive \$250 a quarter, over \$1,000 a month.

The interesting thing is that I would have thought that when the member was getting towards the end of his question, he would have said that I would have come back with some line on the rebate. However, he did not even do that. He should have been able to predict that I was going to do that. Instead, he said something about how I was going to try to justify that this stops wildfires or whatnot.

No, what I have been saying all along, and what we have been saying all along, and what the Conservatives have missed all along is the fact that people are getting money back. This rebate has always been there. The whole point of the price on pollution was not to put money into the general revenues, as the member said. The point of the price on pollution, or the carbon tax, as Conservatives like to call it, is to put a price mechanism on carbon, to put a price on pollution. In that way, people have to actually make a choice. In making that choice, they might be incentivized not to pollute and, instead, to try to find an option that does not pollute as much.

Again, I would remind the member that I will answer the question the same way that the parliamentary secretary did during question period. This is to say that Conservatives continually neglect the fact that there is a rebate that comes back, because it does not suit their narrative. However, it actually is a reality.

• (2415)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, I am glad the member pointed out that there is going to be money going back to Canadians, because that is what it is.

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It is money going back to Canadians who have already paid it out. They have paid it to the government. That is the only way the government has money to give to Canadians, by taxing it out of Canadians' back pockets. Therefore, the parliamentary secretary has pointed out the major flaw with what they are doing here. The Liberals are simply taking taxpayer dollars to run their bad spending habits, then giving a little of it back. It just does not make any sense.

Why has the country not taken real, concrete steps to export our clean natural gas to countries that are burning coal and other dirty fuels?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, he is right. We are giving it back. He asks why, and I actually just told him when I was answering the initial question he posed. The answer is that this has never been about trying to collect revenue for the government. This has always been about incentivizing choice in the marketplace. When a price is put on something, it changes people's behaviour in terms of how they make their decisions on purchases.

In terms of his point that people are just getting a little money back, that is not true. The majority of Canadians get back more than they end up paying. If someone is extremely wealthy, has many vehicles and a very large home that takes a lot of natural gas to heat in the winter, perhaps in that case, they will end up paying a little more than they get back. However, the vast majority of Canadians, in particular the middle class, will get more back than they are putting into it.

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, we are here this evening past midnight to debate a vitally important matter. We are here this evening again because we see the blissful ignorance of the government in permitting Chinese state-owned enterprises to acquire control over Canada's mining industry. It is more unconscionable when it is impossible for Canadian companies to acquire mining land claims or control over any Chinese company, especially involving critical minerals.

According to Guy Saint-Jacques, Canada's former ambassador to China, "There's no level playing field for foreign companies in China, and many sectors remain closed to them, or access is similarly limited." When appearing before a parliamentary committee, he added, "China does not play by international trade rules." No kidding. It is quick to complain about perceived injustices of other countries toward it, but not so quick to provide fair treatment to foreign companies trying to operate in China.

Like with foreign interference, Canada has again been reduced to being a doormat for China. Canada has given China free rein to do whatever it wants under pathetic oversight from Ottawa.

The Globe and Mail reported in August 2022 that three years ago, Sinomine Resource Group Co. bought the Tanco mine in Manitoba. Tanco was one of the world's few sources of the critical mineral cesium. The mine previously produced lithium, a battery metal used in electric cars. The government had the authority to block the acquisition on national security grounds, but instead of blocking it, Ottawa did nothing. Later, the Tanco mine was acquired by China and started producing lithium to ship back home.

Sinomine also secured an offtake agreement guaranteeing it all of the lithium, cesium and tantalum produced by Power Metals Corporation's Case Lake critical minerals property. Offtake agreements are just as good as ownership and do not create irritating media stories. The government also approved the sale of Canada's lithium development company Neo Lithium Corp. to a Chinese state-owned company, and in its infinite wisdom, the government decided not to order an advanced security screening of the deal.

Mr. Jeffrey Kucharski, a former assistant deputy minister of Alberta's Department of Energy, stated before a parliamentary committee, "How can Canada build a lithium supply chain, or any other critical mineral for that matter, when it allows the assets of Canadian companies to be acquired by a country that seeks to cement its dominance in this sector?" Beijing supports its state-owned enterprises by providing subsidies, access to cheap capital and tax breaks that are much greater than anything that a western government can offer. While Canada has welcomed legitimate Chinese investment, there is little or no reciprocity, as I alluded to earlier with the comments of former ambassador Saint-Jacques.

China uses its dominant position in critical minerals to exert leverage over other countries. What has been Canada's response? It claims to want to scrutinize foreign takeovers. That is great. However, over the past five years, fewer than 1% were subjected to security reviews.

Canada should look to Australia for a road map. It has a tougher stand on proposed Chinese investments, and its government has rejected several transactions on national security grounds. Australia even strengthened its oversight by introducing a new "last resort" power, whereby it has the authority to review a previously approved transaction when national security risks emerge after the fact.

Canada may need China to bail out financially struggling mining companies, but that does not mean we have to give up complete control over our vital resources. Sadly, that is exactly what has been happening.

● (2420)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, land claims are under provincial jurisdiction, and Canada continues to work with its provincial counterparts to further Canada's national interests in this area.

Adjournment Proceedings

Canada welcomes foreign investment as a means to stimulate economic growth, create jobs and increase innovation, competitiveness and long-term prosperity. However, the government also ensures that significant foreign investments by non-Canadians encourage economic growth and employment opportunities in Canada and that all foreign investments are consistent with Canada's national security.

Foreign direct investment supports Canada's trades, skills and innovation ecosystems by expanding trade, advancing environmental co-operation, linking firms to global value chains, increasing access to global markets and attracting talent. In 2020, foreign-controlled multinationals contributed directly to Canada's long-term prosperity by being responsible for 20% of the jobs in Canada's corporate sector, 25% of the capital investment in 2019, 59% of the merchandise exports and 24% of global GDP of the corporate sector.

Foreign direct investment is critical to the success of Canadian mining. It provides access to capital for natural resource projects and infrastructure; helps diffuse technology, knowledge and intellectual property; increases innovation through competition; and opens global value chains to domestic firms. Canada's abundance of natural resources, clean energy, global market access, as well as its commitment to emission-reducing technology, make it a prime investment location for forward-thinking companies in the minerals and metal sector.

The mining industry is an important employer of indigenous peoples, providing jobs to over 16,500 individuals. Indigenous people account for 12% of our mining labour force, among the highest representation by industry. Canada is committed to advancing opportunities for meaningful engagement on potential projects at the earliest possible stage, in a culturally aware manner, among industry, indigenous peoples, and federal, provincial and territorial governments.

One of the priority themes under Canada's critical minerals strategy, launched in December 2022, is advancing reconciliation with indigenous peoples. Another priority under the strategy is enhancing global security in partnership with allies. This includes efforts to strengthen the global supply chain resiliency, recognize that critical minerals are a strategic asset and contribute to Canada's prosperity and national security.

When it comes to China, Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy clearly outlines the government's understanding of China as an increasingly destructive global power. We are not blind to China's pattern of using large-scale investments to establish its presence globally and tip the scales in its favour, creating dependencies in supply chains. This government has made it clear that Canada will always unapologetically defend our national interests. Canada's interests come first, and this applies to foreign direct investments as well.

Canada has a robust foreign investments review process under the Investment Canada Act. It requires prior approval of significant foreign investment for likely economic net benefit. More importantly, it also calls for a multistep review of all investments by non-Canadians that could be injurious to Canada's national security. Certainly, types of investments, such as those in critical minerals, receive special scrutiny in accordance with the current policy.

On October 28, 2022, the Government of Canada issued a policy to provide additional clarity regarding the application of the ICA to investments by foreign state-owned enterprises and private investors assessed as being closely tied to, or subject to influence from, foreign governments.

● (2425)

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, this is a vitally important issue for our country, and I am really troubled that the parliamentary secretary would say mining is a provincial jurisdiction, so I want to use this opportunity to remind him of legislation and frameworks that are federal and apply to mining. There is the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, the Canadian minerals and metals plan, the chemicals management plan, the Explosives Act, the Extractive Sector Transparency Measures Act, the Fisheries Act, the Impact Assessment Act, the Indian Act, Indian mining regulations, inter-provincial movement of hazardous waste regulations, metal and diamond mining effluent regulations, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. That is to name just a few.

The parliamentary secretary talked about the Investment Canada Act and national security reviews. I want to remind him that, over the past five years, fewer than 1% were subjected to security measures. This must be acted upon, and I implore him to please ensure the government acts to protect Canada's sovereignty and its industrial plan, which hinges on an integrated strategy and a supply chain with critical minerals.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, if the only thing the member took from my previous comment is that land claims fall under provincial jurisdiction, it means that he did not listen to everything else that I said. Everything else that I said specifically spoke to what Canada does and what our federal government does to ensure our national interests are protected.

I can assure the member, with respect to his plea toward the end of his follow-up, that we are always looking out for the best interests of Canadians, we will always take Canadian sovereignty seriously and we will always defend Canadian interests, at any cost.

Adjournment Proceedings

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopt-

ed. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:29 a.m.)

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