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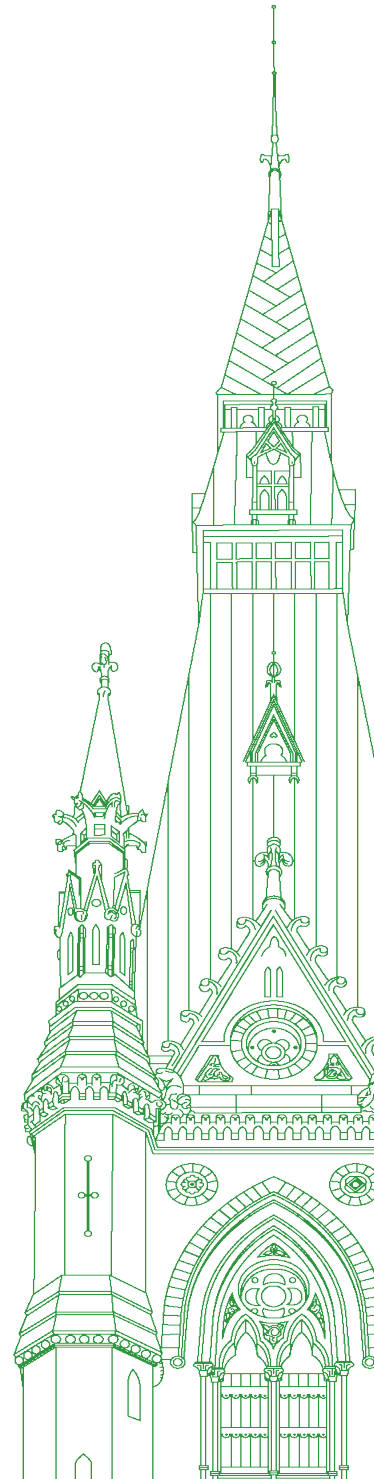
House of Commons Debates

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Thursday, June 8, 2023

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 8, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1000)

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for clarification, I often stand to table documents, and I have been asked what happens when I say that a document will be tabled in an electronic format. To answer that question, by tabling a document in an electronic format, members are afforded the opportunity to receive the response to the petition through email.

Pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 13 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format. That is why I provided the explanation.

* * *

AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has taken note of the recommendations made by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in its 20th report, entitled "Future of Hybrid Proceedings in the House of Commons", presented to the House on Monday, January 30, 2023. In accordance with the government's response to the report on May 30, 2023, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the proposed amendments to the Standing Orders, which aim to enshrine hybrid proceedings as a permanent fixture of the Standing Orders.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Official

Languages, entitled "Government Measures to Protect and Promote French in Quebec and in Canada".

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each member of the committee, who went above and beyond to produce a fine report. We heard from tons of witnesses and read many reports and briefs. I would also like to thank those who are often overlooked: the analysts, the clerks, the interpreters and the translators. Basically, I thank the whole team. It is an excellent report.

* * *

● (1005)

[English]

COMPETITION ACT

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-339, An Act to amend the Competition Act (efficiencies defence).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to present my first private member's bill.

Competition is a myth in Canada. Canadians pay some of the highest prices in the world for a lot of different monopolies that dominate Canadian marketplaces: cellphones and Internet, banking, airlines and even beer. What a travesty that is. Why? The culprits are many, but a lacklustre and surprisingly pro-monopolistic Competition Act is among the biggest reasons.

My private member's bill would eliminate the most glaring anti-competition section of the act, section 96, the efficiencies defence. Canada is the only G7 nation to include the efficiencies defence in its competition laws, and it currently allows an outdated Competition Act to fulfill its most glaring anti-competitive mandate to allow companies to merge, no matter how bad the merger may be for competition, if they can find efficiencies. Most of the time, those efficiencies are as simple as job losses.

This was created at a time when Canada embraced an industrial policy in the 1960s. It was not at a time with free trade but when we wanted companies to get as big as possible to compete internationally. It is a relic of the old. This deletion will not alone fix competition, but it will go a long way to start.

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I am happy to bring this bill and the debate on competition to the floor of the House of Commons, and I want to thank the member for Abbotsford for seconding it.

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

* * *

PETITIONS**CLIMATE CHANGE**

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am tabling a petition that was spearheaded by the incredible team at Ecojustice, an organization that continues to show amazing leadership in our collective fight to protect the planet.

The petitioners call on the government to implement a total ban on thermal coal exports. They draw attention to the fact that coal power plants produce more greenhouse gases and subsequent warming than any other single source, yet the Liberals continue to allow Canada to mine and export thermal coal to be burned overseas. They note that during the last election, the Liberals promised to phase out thermal coal exports by no later than 2030. It is now two years later and nothing has been done to support this commitment. Emissions do not know borders, and coal burned anywhere in the world contributes to a climate crisis that affects us all.

The petitioners are calling on the government to show real climate leadership and ban thermal coal exports.

JUSTICE

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise for the eighth time on behalf of the people of Swan River, Manitoba, to present a petition on the rising rate of crime.

The common people of Swan River are demanding a common-sense solution to repeal the Liberal government's soft-on-crime policies, which have fuelled a surge of crime throughout their community. People used to travel around the town freely and safely in Swan River, and now they fear leaving their own homes.

The people of Swan River demand that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on-crime policies, which directly threaten their livelihoods and their community. I support the good people of Swan River.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is timely that I table this petition on behalf of youth from Qualicum Beach in my riding. They cite that children born in 2020 will face, on average, two to seven times more extreme weather events than their grandparents. Clearly, we are on the higher end of that. In a 2021 report in *The Lancet*, 83% of children worldwide reported that they think people have failed to take care of the planet. Those most affected by climate change are the youngest generation, as they will live to see the worst effects of this crisis.

Youth discussion has proven crucial to successful climate action and policy creation. However, dozens of climate-related decisions are made without input from youth. Statistics around the world show that if youth were making these decisions, the representation in Parliament outcome would be different. Children under 18 are

not legally allowed to vote and are therefore without legal voice or action.

They are calling on the Government of Canada to require all members of Parliament, regardless of party line, to consult with secondary or elementary school leadership, a student council or an environmental youth group in their ridings before Parliament holds the second reading of any bill that directly affects Canada's greenhouse gas emissions. The purpose of the consultation will be to listen to the viewpoints of those directly affected by the specified bill who do not already have representation in Parliament.

● (1010)

SENIORS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I table a petition signed by the residents of Winnipeg North. They are calling upon parliamentarians to advocate for and promote senior activities and different types of seniors programs. They cite specifically the importance of the guaranteed income supplement and OAS, and want members of Parliament to look at ways of being ongoing advocates for and supporters of programming and supports for seniors from coast to coast to coast, in particular, obviously, for the residents of Winnipeg North.

* * *

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. 1420 to 1422, 1426, 1427, 1430 and 1432.

[Text]

Question No. 1420—**Ms. Elizabeth May:**

With regard to the funds allocated for future Arctic offshore oil and gas development in budget 2023 and the 2016 moratorium on oil and gas activities in Canada's Arctic waters: (a) what are the details of the proposed funding; and (b) are future Arctic offshore oil and gas developments and an end to the moratorium being considered?

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), funding announced in budget 2023 will support evidence-based oil and gas decision-making in the Arctic offshore to ensure that any future oil and gas development in Canada's Arctic waters is consistent with the highest safety and environmental standards and with Canada's national and global climate and environmental goals.

The funding will support the co-development of a five-year climate and marine science-based assessment of Canada's Arctic waters. The climate and marine research projects will complement the science-based research carried out as part of the initial five-year science-based review. The Government of Canada will commence work with northern partners to identify gaps in climate and marine-based research in the Arctic offshore, with a focus on climate change impacts across the region. The funding will also support work with northern partners to prepare a final report on the findings of the science-based assessment for consideration by the Government of Canada in respect of whether to maintain the moratorium.

With regard to part (b), the Arctic offshore oil and gas moratorium announced in December 2016 is indefinite and will remain in force until such time as it may be repealed.

Question No. 1421—Mrs. Laila Goodridge:

With regard to the report in the Washington Post that the Prime Minister has told NATO officials privately that Canada will never meet the military alliance's defence spending target: (a) what did the Prime Minister tell NATO officials about whether Canada will meet the spending target; and (b) when does the government anticipate it will reach NATO's spending target of at least two percent of the GDP on defence?

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada remains committed to maintaining the defence budget increases that were set out in Canada's defence policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged". This will increase Canada's total 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.

For capabilities more specifically, Canada will begin exceeding the 20% guideline on military equipment spending in 2023, reaching approximately 33% by 2026.

In addition, Canada continues its steady and reliable commitment to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO missions, operations and activities. Canada has been leading enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup Latvia since its inception, and working on a significant expansion of it, in line with the commitments made in Madrid. Canada has recently led one of the Standing NATO Maritime Groups. Canada will host a NATO Climate Change and Security Centre of Excellence in Montreal. Halifax had been proposed as the location for the North American regional office of NATO's defence innovation accelerator for the North Atlantic, DIANA.

Annual reports on defence expenditures of NATO countries, including Canada, are published in March of each year, and can be

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found at the following web page: 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. 1422—Mr. Brad Vis:

With regard to the legislative review of the Cannabis Act launched by Health Canada in September 2022 and the related online questionnaire: (a) how was the online questionnaire advertised to the public; (b) over what time period did each of the advertising methods in (a) take place; (c) how many individuals provided feedback through the questionnaire; and (d) what is the breakdown of the responses to each question in the questionnaire?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), the online questionnaire was first communicated to the public on September 22, 2022, when Canada's federal health ministers, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, announced the launch of the legislative review of the Cannabis Act at an in-person event alongside the chair of the independent expert panel.

As part of this launch, the opportunity to participate in online engagement was announced, thereby commencing the 60-day online public engagement period. On this day, Health Canada published two discussion papers online, one for the general public and stakeholders, including a supporting questionnaire to receive feedback, with a closing date of November 21, 2022, and the other one specific to first nations, Inuit and Métis communities, which originally was slated to also close November 21, 2022 but was extended to January 15, 2023, due to requests from indigenous peoples that they required more time to provide feedback. Announcement activities were supported by a news release, social media and the launch of a dedicated web page that included links to participate in the consultation and provide feedback to the questionnaire. Emails from Health Canada were also shared directly with stakeholders and indigenous partners, inviting them to participate in the online engagement process.

With regard to part (b), social media was issued frequently throughout the duration of the engagement period, including a push near the end of the consultation period to remind Canadians to participate in the consultation prior to its closing date.

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As per the response to part (a), on the day of the consultation launch, September 22, emails from Health Canada were shared directly with stakeholders and indigenous partners, inviting them to participate in the online engagement process. Emails reminding these same groups to participate were also sent midway through the consultation and just before the closing date.

The consultation was also posted on the “Consulting with Canadians” page on Canada.ca.

With regard to part (c), the public engagement gathered feedback from more than 2,300 individuals, organizations, and other stakeholders. A total of 2,158 individuals responded to the questionnaire. Additionally, a total of 211 email and mail submissions were received.

With regard to part (d), the questionnaire consisted of 17 open-ended and 11 closed-ended questions, nine of which were demographic questions. The results of the online public engagement, including responses to the questionnaire, are being analyzed and will be summarized in a report and published online in 2023.

Question No. 1426—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:

With regard to national sport organizations (NSOs) with contribution agreements with Sport Canada (SC), and that have or had non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) with athletes: (a) is SC monitoring which NSOs have NDAs with athletes; (b) for each NSO, what are the details of each NDA, broken down by the year or years in place; and (c) for each NSO in (a), has the agreement ever been used, and, if so, when, and for what purpose?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), Sport Canada, through the athlete assistance program, reviews agreements between athletes and national sport organizations to ensure they are inclusive of specific references as required by the athlete assistance program policies and procedures. Sport Canada is not monitoring which national sport organizations have non-disclosure agreements with athletes. However, in her May 11 announcement to foster a safe and sustainable culture change in sport, the Minister of Sport reiterated that non-disclosure agreements or non-disparaging clauses should never be used to prevent athletes and other sport participants from disclosing maltreatment they have experienced or witnessed. To this end, all national sport organizations shall use the text of the athlete agreement, developed by Athletes-CAN with input from national sport organization leaders and legal experts, and recently revised, which states that under the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, UCCMS, athletes’ rights cannot be restricted. Consistent with national efforts to this end, Sport Canada, through its funding agreements with national sport organizations, will prohibit any national sport organization contract, policies, procedures or actions that restrict participants’ rights under the UCCMS.

With regard to part (b), since Sport Canada does not monitor non-disclosure agreements, it is not able to confirm which national sport organizations might have them and what the details might be.

With regard to part (c), as per the answer to part b) above, these details are not available.

Question No. 1427—Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:

With regard to the Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB) and the funds provided for energy retrofits: (a) what is the amount provided, broken down by (i) number of

units, (ii) province, (iii) type of recipient (Real Estate Income Trust, private corporation, non-profit, etc); (b) what measures are taken, and what assurances are required from recipients, to prevent renovations as a result of these funds; (c) does the government track evictions triggered by renovations supported by these funds, and, if so, how many evictions have been recorded; and (d) for the evictions in (c), what measures are in place to ensure that tenants (i) have alternative accommodations with the same rent, (ii) are informed about the progress and completion of renovations, (iii) are able to return to their home with the same rent once the renovations are complete?

Ms. Jennifer O’Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the CIB and the funds provided for energy retrofits, the Canada Infrastructure Bank’s building retrofits initiative, BRI, provides financing for energy retrofit projects. With buildings currently accounting for 18% of Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions, modernizing these assets is critical to meeting Canada’s climate change goals. The BRI invests in the decarbonization of buildings to finance capital costs of retrofits, using savings from energy savings, efficiencies and operating cost savings for repayment. The private sector under the BRI includes privately owned commercial, industrial and multi-unit residential buildings. The CIB’s financing is eligible for projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions from buildings through decarbonization retrofits, including energy efficiency; fuel switching, such as electrification, renewable natural gas or hydrogen; on-site renewable energy and storage; and electric vehicle, EV, chargers. The CIB’s financing is not available for building renovation projects that are not decarbonization retrofits. Ultimately, savings from energy savings, efficiencies and operating cost savings are passed on to building owners and tenants.

With regard to part (a), the CIB has made one investment towards building retrofits to multi-unit residential buildings to date. This investment with Avenue Living Asset Management, Avenue Living, an owner and operator of properties primarily in Alberta and Saskatchewan, will enable retrofits at approximately 95 properties in their portfolio consisting of 240 buildings to optimize energy performance in more than 6,400 residences. The CIB’s investment commitment is in the amount of \$129,871,754.71. As of this date, no funds have been transferred to Avenue Living in accordance with the terms of the credit agreement.

The CIB does not track evictions triggered by building renovation projects and, therefore, does not have a response with respect to parts (b), (c) and (d).

Question No. 1430—**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:**

With regard to security cameras and closed-circuit video equipment in use at bases and facilities operated by the Department of National Defence (DND) or the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF): (a) is any such equipment manufactured in China, and, if so, what are the details, including, for each, the (i) location, (ii) description, (iii) manufacturer, make, and model; and (b) for the equipment in (a), has DND or CAF received any warnings, including from our Five Eyes partners, about the use of such equipment due to China's National Intelligence Law, and, if so, what are the details of the warnings and what was the response?

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), for large-scale infrastructure projects that require security cameras or closed-circuit video equipment, Public Services and Procurement Canada, PSPC, or Defence Construction Canada, DCC, act as the contracting authority and enter into a service contract with a company on behalf of the Department of National Defence. In these instances, the company awarded the service contract is responsible for the procurement and installation of security equipment, including security cameras or closed-circuit video equipment, based on the technical standards set out in the contract.

The security requirements of a project are assessed through the security requirements check list, SRCL. Any company that enters into a service contract for a large-scale infrastructure project must meet and adhere to the security requirements, such as the level of personnel security level that a company and its employees require as applicable. The installation of security systems in sensitive areas would require a higher security clearance, up to and including secret. The SRCL is validated by security authorities.

For small-scale purchases of security cameras or closed-circuit video equipment, including those used for Canadian Armed Forces, CAF, training purposes, National Defence may procure equipment directly from a vendor that meets the technical and security standards of the requirement.

National Defence does not centrally track the manufacturer origin of security cameras or closed-circuit video equipment in use at bases and facilities operated by the Department of National Defence, DND, or the CAF. A manual search of individual contracts, in concert with other implicated government partners, would be required and could not be completed within the allotted time.

With regard to part (b), National Defence works closely with Five Eyes partners on a range of defence and security issues; however, further details cannot be shared for operational security reasons.

Question No. 1432—**Mr. Pat Kelly:**

With regard to environmental assessments of natural resource projects submitted under the Impact Assessment Act: (a) how many submissions have been received since June 21, 2019; (b) how many submissions has the minister approved since June 21, 2019; (c) how many submissions have been made but later withdrawn since June 21, 2019; (d) how many projects whose submissions were approved since June 21, 2019 have commenced construction; (e) how many projects whose submissions were approved since June 21, 2019 have completed construction; (f) what was the shortest processing time for a submission which was approved since June 21, 2019; and (g) what was the longest processing time for a submission which was approved since June 21, 2019?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, timelines for project decisions are predictable based on the requirements in the Impact Assessment Act. The act indicates that the impact statement phase conducted by

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proponents is up to three years. Government planning and decision-making is approximately one and a half years, which includes the planning phase, impact assessment phase and decision-making.

Project timelines are often contingent upon the timing, quality and sufficiency of the information and studies provided by proponents throughout an assessment process, including the project descriptions and the impact statement.

It is possible for the entire process to be closer to three years, and experience has shown that when proponents invest in the front end, in the pre-planning and the planning phase, it helps save time later.

The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada has searched its records since June 21, 2019.

With regard to part (a), the Impact Assessment Act, IAA, came into force on August 28, 2019, and since that date the Impact Assessment Agency has accepted initial project descriptions from proponents for 17 natural resource projects, mining or oil and gas.

With regard to part (b), one natural resource project has completed the impact assessment process under the Impact Assessment Act since coming into force. On March 15, the government announced that the project was determined to be in the public interest by the minister and is allowed to proceed.

With regard to part (c), one natural resource project was terminated by the proponent.

With regard to part (d), zero.

With regard to part (e), zero.

With regard to part (f), 1273 days, or 3.5 years.

With regard to part (g), 1273 days, or 3.5 years.

* * *

[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 a revised response to Question No. 1283, originally tabled on April 17, and the government's responses to Questions Nos. 1423 to 1425, 1428, 1429, 1431, 1433 and 1434 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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[Text]

Question No. 1283—Mr. Gord Johns:

With regard to federal contracts awarded since fiscal year 2015-16, broken down by fiscal year: what is the total value of contracts awarded to (i) McKinsey & Company, (ii) Deloitte, (iii) PricewaterhouseCoopers, (iv) Accenture, (v) KPMG, (vi) Ernst and Young?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1423—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to legal fees and expenses incurred by the Canada Revenue Agency in relation to court cases involving registered charities, since January 1, 2016: what are the details of all cases with legal fees exceeding \$25,000, including, for each case, the (i) name of the case, (ii) total legal fees and expenses, (iii) internal legal fees, (iv) external legal fees, (v) current status, (vi) outcome, if applicable?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1424—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to Old Age Security (OAS) payments: (a) how many OAS recipients have a gross income of over \$60,000 in total, broken down by \$5,000 salary increment levels between \$60,000 and \$150,000; (b) what was the amount paid out for each of the salary increments in (a) during the last fiscal year; and (c) for each part of (a) and (b), what is the breakdown by age 65 to 74, and those over 75?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1425—Mr. Dan Albas:

With regard to government requests to censor information, since January 1, 2016: (a) how many requests has the government made to social media companies to censor information, including any article, post or reply; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by social media platform, year, department, agency, Crown corporation or other government entity that made the request; (c) what are the details of each request to a social media company, including, for each (i) the date, (ii) the platform, (iii) the description of the post or reply, (iv) the reason for the request, (v) whether the information was censored and how it was censored; (d) how many requests has the government made to traditional media companies to censor information; (e) what is the breakdown of (d) by media outlet, year, department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity that made the request; and (f) what are the details of each request in (d), including, for each, (i) the date, (ii) the media outlet, (iii) the title of the individual who made the request, (iv) the description of the content subject to the censorship request, (v) whether the content was censored and how it was censored?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1428—Mr. Colin Carrie:

With regard to the procurement of COVID-19 rapid test kits: how many kits were procured during the 2022-23 fiscal year, and what is the value of those kits, in total, broken down by (i) month acquired, (ii) supplier from which they were acquired, (iii) provincial or territorial government, federal department or other entity to which they were provided?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1429—Mr. Scot Davidson:

With regard to reports of "March madness expenditures" where the government makes purchases before the end of the fiscal year so that departmental funds do not go unspent, broken down by department, agency or other government entity: (a) what were the total expenditures during February and March of 2023 on (i) materials and supplies (standard object 07), (ii) acquisition of machinery and equipment, including parts and consumable tools (standard object 09); and (b) what are the details of each such expenditure, including the (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) date of the expenditure, (iv) description of the goods or services provided, (v) delivery date, (vi) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1431—Mr. Pat Kelly:

With regard to Prairies Economic Development Canada, and its precursor Western Economic Diversification Canada, between December 2015 and December 2022 inclusive: (a) how many recipients were still in business (i) one year, (ii) three years, (iii) five years, after receiving funding, broken down by funding stream; (b) how many of the positions created by recipients continued to exist (i) one year, (ii)

three years, (iii) five years, after receiving funding; and (c) how many new inventions, discoveries, or innovative processes have been brought to market by recipients?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1433—Mr. Pat Kelly:

With regard to the procurement commitments, in "Strong, Secure, Engaged" (SSE): (a) how many full time equivalent employees at Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) and the Department of National Defence (DND) are tasked with work to complete each of the following tasks as their primary responsibility, using SSE's internal numbering system, 29. Recapitalize the surface fleet through investments in 15 Canadian Surface Combatants and two Joint Support Ships, 30. Acquire five to six Arctic Offshore Patrol Ships, 31. Operate and modernize the four Victoria-class submarines, 32. Acquire new or enhanced naval intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems, upgraded armament, and additional systems for current and future platforms allowing for more effective offensive and defensive naval capabilities, 33. Upgrade lightweight torpedoes carried by surface ships, maritime helicopters and maritime patrol aircraft, 34. Acquire ground-based air defence systems and associated munitions capable of protecting all land-based force elements from enemy airborne weapons, 35. Modernize weapons effects simulation to better prepare soldiers for combat operations, 36. Replace the family of armoured combat support vehicles, which includes command vehicles, ambulances and mobile repair teams, 37. Modernize the fleet of Improved Explosive Device Detection and Defeat capabilities, 38. Acquire communications, sustainment, and survivability equipment for the Army light forces, including improved light weight radios and soldier equipment, 39. Upgrade the light armoured vehicle fleet to improve mobility and survivability, 40. Modernize logistics vehicles, heavy engineer equipment and light utility vehicles, 41. Improve the Army's ability to operate in remote regions by investing in modernized communications, shelters, power generation, advanced water purification systems, and equipment for austere environments, 42. Modernize land-based command and control, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance systems, 43. Acquire all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles and larger tracked semi-amphibious utility vehicles optimized for use in the Arctic environment, 44. Replace the CF-18 fleet with 88 advanced fighter aircraft to improve Canadian Armed Forces air control and air attack capability, 45. Acquire space capabilities meant to improve situational awareness and targeting, including: replacement of the current RADARSAT system to improve the identification and tracking of threats and improve situational awareness of routine traffic in and through Canadian territory; sensors capable of identifying and tracking debris in space that threatens Canadian and allied space-based systems (surveillance of space); and, space-based systems that will enhance and improve tactical narrow- and wide-band communications globally, including throughout Canada's Arctic region, 46. Acquire new Tactical Integrated Command, Control, and Communications, radio cryptography, and other necessary communications systems, 47. Recapitalize next generation strategic air-to-air tanker-transport capability (CC-150 Polaris replacement), 48. Replace utility transport aircraft (CC-138 Twin Otter replacement), 49. Acquire next generation multi-mission aircraft (CP-140 Aurora maritime patrol aircraft replacement), 50. Invest in medium altitude remotely piloted systems, 51. Modernize short-range air-to-air missiles (fighter aircraft armament), 52. Upgrade air navigation, management, and control systems, 53. Acquire aircrew training systems, 54. Recapitalize or life-extend existing capabilities in advance of the arrival of next generation platforms, 55. Sustain domestic search and rescue capability, to include life extension of existing systems, acquisition of new platforms, and greater integration with internal and external partners, 56. Operationalize the newly acquired Fixed-Wing Search and Rescue aircraft fleet; (b) for each task in (a), how many person hours did employees of PSP and DND devote to the respective procurement projects in (i) 2019, (ii) 2020, (iii) 2021, (iv) 2022; and (c) for each task in (a), when was the task completed or when is the estimated date of completion?

(Return tabled)

*Business of Supply*Question No. 1434—**Mr. Bob Zimmer:**

With regard to the Translation Bureau: (a) how many translators are assigned to (i) reports and other documents for committees of the House of Commons, (ii) other parliamentary assignments, (iii) other assignments; (b) what turnaround times are required and estimated for translating the items referred to in (a)(i), (i) in each fiscal year since 2016-17, (ii) for the remainder of the current fiscal year, (iii) for the 2024-25 fiscal year; (c) when did the backlogs begin; (d) is the Minister of Public Services and Procurement supplying additional resources or re-assigning translators working on assignments referred to in (a)(iii) to reduce the current turnaround times, and, if so, what are the details; (e) if the answer to (d) is negative, why are additional resources not being added or re-assigned; (f) what is the government's explanation for the current turnaround times; (g) has the Minister of Public Services and Procurement addressed the backlogs with the Chief Executive Officer of the Translation Bureau, and, if so, on what dates did this occur and what commitment, if any, did the minister receive; (h) what is the Translation Bureau's policy on working from home and how has it changed, since 2016-17; and (i) what percentage and how many translators were working from home as of April 21, 2023, broken down by the assignments referred to in (a)?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I request that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ) moved:

That the House:

- (a) stand in solidarity with and express its support for all those affected by the current forest fires;
- (b) acknowledge that climate change is having a direct impact on people's quality of life, and that it is exacerbating the frequency and scale of extreme weather and climate events (floods, tornadoes, forest fires, heat waves, etc.);
- (c) recognize that the federal government must do more to combat climate change, prevent its impacts and support communities affected by natural disasters;
- (d) call on the federal government to invest more in the fight against climate change, which is at risk of becoming increasingly expensive for both the public and the environment; and
- (e) demand that the federal government stop investing in fossil fuels and develop incentives, while respecting the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces, to promote the use of renewable energy and public transit.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît is rising on a point of order.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, I would like to indicate that, pursuant to Standing Order 43(2)(a), all of the Bloc Québécois' speaking slots for today's debate on the business of supply will be divided in two.

The Speaker: Thank you.

We will now begin the debate.

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my speaking time with my esteemed colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé, who will be displaying the excellence we all strive for.

Quebec and Canada are grappling with unprecedented wildfires. As we speak, we could even say it is a—

The Deputy Speaker: I must interrupt the hon. member because there is apparently no interpretation yet.

I will speak in French to check whether it has started, which now seems to be the case.

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly may continue.

• (1015)

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, right now, in Quebec, we are seeing a level of devastation roughly 11 times greater than the average for the last 10 years. We have not even begun to assess the dramatic economic impact of these wildfires.

Over the next few years, we will likely experience many phenomena that will dramatically worsen the impact of climate change. This is very worrisome. The seasons conducive to extreme events, whether they are tornadoes, extreme tropical storms that have an impact in our area, heat waves, droughts, wildfires or floods, will get increasingly longer, begin earlier and end later. The likelihood of extreme events will increase. The intensity of these events will also increase.

These droughts, heat waves, floods and storms will have a very significant impact on Quebec. They will also affect people around the world. These people will have to try to protect themselves and prepare for the situation. One possible way for them to adapt would be to move somewhere else because the waters will rise, deserts will grow and lands that were once fertile will no longer be. We, the countries that can do so, will be responsible for receiving climate migrants. That will put additional humanitarian pressure on migration issues.

On a billionaire friend's yacht, people do not feel the water rising. At sea, a glass of champagne in hand, they rise with the ocean. However, when the water slowly rises or suddenly rushes over banks and shorelines, entire villages are destroyed, in places where people were unable to protect themselves. It is in places that could, in theory, protect themselves—such as major cities around the world—that massive and extremely costly infrastructure is needed.

To a lesser extent, Quebec will face similar pressure. Every storm and every event slowly and irrevocably changes and adds to the misery in the world.

Ecosystems are unable to adapt to this climate change. Animal species are more mobile, of course, but they are dependent on plant environments. Plant environments cannot move along with climate change. Plants cannot migrate fast enough to new areas with a climate that is conducive to their growth. The Observatoire régional de recherche sur la forêt boréale at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi is studying these phenomena.

Business of Supply

The entire biodiversity of vast regions of the planet, and also of Quebec, is affected. We cannot naively say that the forest will move north, that we will have more space with potential for plant life to grow. It simply does not work that way because things are changing too fast. Within the space of a few decades, we are provoking what has historically taken thousands and tens of thousands of years through changes that others would have us believe are still natural, even today.

The loss of biodiversity is also having an impact. The destruction of economic models comes with this destruction of ecosystems. There is still a massive share of the global and Quebec economies that rely on the growth of plant and animal life. I am talking in particular of fishing and agriculture, and also forestry.

● (1020)

The forests in Quebec are in many ways a resource that is comparable in importance to petroleum resources in western Canada, aside from one small detail: They are a renewable resource. Not only is it a resource that does not contribute to climate change, but it is also a fundamental resource that is still the best way we know to capture carbon naturally and to reduce the phenomena that lead to climate change.

Still, despite the importance of the forests for our economy, for the regions of Quebec, for our very identity as a people and a nation, today we see the effect of climate change. This effect is not direct. Let us not claim that science says certain things that it has not said. We cannot associate the 11-fold increases over the last 10-year average with a particular climate event, but the probability is increased to such a degree that science would never dare to deny again.

This has an even more significant impact because Quebec's money, which should be invested in a much greener and much more sustainable economy for Quebec, is going into western oil, in the form of tax credits, direct subsidies or nonsense such as costly carbon sequestration or, worse, the hypocrisy of wanting to use nuclear energy, which is not a clean energy, so as not to use oil to extract oil.

All of this sends us into a spiral of destruction. Is it not time to put an end to it? Is it not time, given the evidence of the damage caused by climate change, to put an end to all funding of fossil fuels, to rather use this money, especially in Quebec because that is our strength, to ensure a sustainable economy, and to explain to people that environmental challenges are not restrictions on what we can do, but a wealth-creation model that is not only different, but the bearer of increased wealth, especially in Quebec?

As I have said before, we are open to having the necessary amounts that are now invested in oil but that would be invested in the green transition, stay in western Canada, which really needs to engage in this energy transition.

We need to use this money immediately to fight forest fires, help communities in distress, support research to mitigate the consequences of climate change, which, even if we stopped everything tomorrow morning, would continue to exist, and finance municipal infrastructures to meet the challenge.

We must, however, resist the temptation to make this a political instrument for centralization. We are starting to see that when people say that the Canadian military should be the main resource for fighting forest fires. Quebec has the institutions and the expertise needed to fight the forest fires. What do we not have? Because of the fiscal imbalance, we do not have money. It is the tried and true tactic of saying that, since the provinces do not have money and the federal government would like to take over their jurisdictions, everything will be taken over by the federal government, and the provinces will have to rely on the federal government.

That is not what we want. We want our share of the money needed to adapt to the situation to go to Quebec and the provinces. Given the government's moral collapse, this may be an opportunity to give more meaning to the concept of state and to ensure that people actually see that our institutions, democracy and parliaments can still serve the common good with dignity, honour and respect.

By voting this way, we will be taking action.

[English]

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank the members of the Bloc Québécois for the motion they have introduced in the House today. I want to congratulate them on bringing forward a motion of substance that genuinely calls on the government to do something meaningful within its realm of possibility.

I want to express that I plan to vote in favour of this motion, not only because it is well crafted, but also because it is a motion on something we should be calling upon the government to do.

When we talk about the government investing in fossil fuels, I think it is important that we do not invest in the creation, exploitation or extraction of fossil fuels. However, I believe there is still work for the government to do with dealing with abandoned oil wells, for example.

Could the leader of the Bloc confirm that the motion is attempting to distinguish between investing in fossil fuels from an extraction perspective and dealing with abandoned oil wells and other impacts from previous fossil fuels extraction?

● (1025)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the reality is one of investments in the form of tax credits or assistance for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the process of extracting petroleum resources.

The only petroleum resources that are safe to develop are biofuels and biogas. They exist, but that is not what we are talking about.

The suggested approach is not really useful. If the industry were able to lower its emissions per barrel, it would only produce more barrels. Our money would then be used solely to maintain the level of greenhouse gas emissions. We need to go a step further and transition away from oil.

[English]

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I note that in the first item in this motion the member is calling on the government to express consideration for the people affected by the wildfires.

I would like to bring the Bloc caucus up to speed on my private member's bill, Bill C-365 from the 42nd Parliament, which sought to consider the theft and vandalism of firefighting equipment as an aggravating factor in sentencing. The entire Bloc caucus voted against it. I would like to ask the member why.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, there is not much I can say, because I am not familiar with the bill in question. It has not been on my radar for a long time.

However, in the past few days, I have heard statements that have made it rather hard to differentiate between the positions of the People's Party and the Conservative Party, both of which basically claimed that wildfires are a ploy by environmentalists to make people panic. I was a bit alarmed by that. Today, we all have the opportunity to act reasonably for the good of the planet.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the leader of the Bloc Québécois for his excellent speech.

He talked about the disasters that are occurring in many regions of Canada, including Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, where I learned to speak French, and Abitibi-Témiscamingue, where I spent a lot of time. Of course, our thoughts are currently with the volunteer firefighters and emergency workers who are working in those areas and in other regions of Canada.

The member reminded us that the government is spending billions of dollars on fossil fuel subsidies. We need to make the transition to clean energy. Other countries have already done it. What is the best way for Canada to make that transition and make its contribution to climate justice?

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, a number of suggestions come to mind.

As I recently said in the House, we need to walk the talk. In this case, that means that we need to do whatever it takes—even if we are hogtied and gagged—to prevent a government partner from spending billions of dollars on measures that support the oil-related economic chain. That in itself would be a major contribution.

• (1030)

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was mesmerized by my leader's speech. The hon. member for Beauce—Chambly is a hard act to follow. I always listen to him attentively, because I find him very inspiring.

Business of Supply

At the end of his speech, he mentioned something that I think we should all focus on today: the sense of state. Today's motion by the Bloc Québécois is not a partisan motion. It is not a motion that points a finger at the bad guys and the good guys, but a motion that states a fact, that expresses an important problem we have for the most part ignored: the sense of state.

I will begin by expressing our solidarity with the people affected by the terrible forest fires raging across Quebec. I am originally from Abitibi-Témiscamingue, and having lived for many years in Northern Quebec, I know many people who have been evacuated and who are not sure their homes will still be there tomorrow. I understand their distress. This is a situation of unprecedented magnitude. We must, of course, acknowledge the work of the people on the ground who are trying to put a stop to this horror and those who are taking care of people who have been displaced.

I would also like to acknowledge our colleagues in the House who are directly affected in their ridings, who are on the ground and have been over the past few days. The hon. members for Abitibi—James Bay—Nunavik—Eeyou, Abitibi-Témiscamingue and Manicouagan are doing a remarkable job by being there for their constituents.

This motion expresses our solidarity. Climate change exists. We are not here today to say that the forest fires are caused by climate change. However, there is something that we do know, and that all the scientists are telling us: Climate change exacerbates the conditions that cause dramatic events like the ones going on today by extending the wildfire season and the number of extremely hot and dry days.

Scientists tell us that, even now, during heavy rainfalls, since the ground is very dry when the rain begins, it is unable to absorb the water. This causes erosion, the ground dries out again very quickly, and the next storm will likely spark another fire. That is one of many examples. I could talk about floods. We could talk about a lot of things. It is important that we realize what is going on.

It is also important to recognize that the federal government has the greatest financial resources at this time. Our leader raised the issue earlier in referring to the infamous fiscal imbalance. There is an urgent need to stop investing in oil energy and allocate the funds to the right places, to the right resources, in order to trigger a fair and equitable energy transition for all regions of Quebec and Canada.

I am addressing my Conservative colleagues from western Canada in particular. They constantly promote the oil industry. Today's motion is not a motion against the people in their ridings. It is a motion for the future of our entire population. We are telling them that we want to invest funds in their region to start the climate transition. It has to start sometime. That is the problem.

Business of Supply

The final point of the motion states that the federal government must stop investing in fossil fuels and start investing in renewable energy and public transit. That is not always the federal government's responsibility, so that also implies significant transfers. We need to revise our adaptation plan from two angles: first, mitigating climate change, and second, preparing the public for climate change. That is another crucial challenge.

• (1035)

Currently, our municipalities are being left to deal with climate change on their own, even though they already have very little revenue for their development. It is important to decentralize these funds. It is important for our communities to be able to invest in their infrastructure, such as sewer systems or municipal wastewater treatment, because they know it better than anyone. Underground infrastructure is not very popular in the world of politics. There are many communities where various people in power failed to invest in basic infrastructure. It is important that funds be released for this purpose.

The current wildfires are a natural phenomenon, of course, but their impact is exacerbated by climate warming. In 2022, the cost of the damage caused by climate change around the world was pegged at \$275 billion. I am not just talking about fires, but about all extreme events related to climate change. This can include floods and ice storms, which are more and more frequent.

Moreover, the cost of insurance directly affects ordinary citizens. Insurance companies are not charitable organizations. I assume that my colleagues have shopped for insurance at one time or another. I am sure that they feel the same way I do: that we often pay a lot for what we get. These companies assess a risk. Unfortunately, that risk is growing. That means that costs are going to go up and up until the insurance companies are no longer prepared to take the risk of insuring us. Eventually, they are going to tell us that they will no longer insure us, because the risk is too high. Who will the responsibility fall on then? It will fall on us and the government. That is why it is important to act quickly.

The Bloc Québécois has made constructive suggestions. We introduced a bill on climate change accountability, which would have made major changes. After COVID-19, we had the good sense to consult the people on the ground and propose a recovery plan based on a change of direction for government measures aimed at fighting climate change. We wanted to make something good out of this bad situation. There are two ways to handle difficult situations: we can either wring our hands, or we can figure out how to turn the situation to our advantage.

We were willing to make major investments. Unfortunately, the government did not follow our recommendations. Right now we are proposing solutions that promote green finance to force the financial industry to stop investing in fossil fuels. I do not know if anyone here has ever tried keeping fossil fuels out of their RRSP or other investment portfolio, but it is not easy. Investors need to be careful and read all the fine print. I think I succeeded, but it was not easy.

What we are telling the government today is the same thing the IPCC and everyone else is saying. Earlier, I said that we could have invested after the COVID-19 pandemic, but that we missed the

boat. COVID-19 showed us that governments are capable of stopping everything at once, making investments and taking extraordinary measures. Just look at what is happening in Quebec and Canada right now. It is time we realized how urgent it is to act.

The government is the strongest tool we can collectively use to make major changes, so let us use it. Right now, the government is saying things that seem to be positive, but there is nothing concrete. They are announcing either amounts that have already been announced or amounts that are available for the oil and gas industry to help it hang on a little longer. That is not acceptable anymore.

Every scientist in the world is telling us that the first step in a just, fair and equitable green transition is to stop investing in oil and gas. That is the first step. Today, the Bloc Québécois's motion acknowledges the situation, expresses our solidarity with the people who are suffering, and tells the government that it is time to take action, take that first step and finally end all fossil fuel subsidies.

• (1040)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the last clause of the motion specifically speaks to incentivizing renewable energies, and Quebec has an incredible track record in terms of its renewable energy program.

Some initiatives that have come out of Quebec relate to using government tools and resources to properly incentivize the renewable energy sector. Could the member comment on initiatives from Quebec that the rest of the country can benefit from?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his question and, in particular, for announcing his support for today's motion. That is very important.

I am pleased that he brought up the issue of resource allocation, because that will allow me to wrap up my point. At present, we are seeing how resources are being wasted at federal level. Money is being given to the biggest global warming offenders.

My colleague asked me to give examples from Quebec. I am very proud to be able to point out today that Quebec is the first government in North America to have announced it was ending oil exploration. It is a significant gesture, and I invite Canada to do the same. It is all well and good to announce investments in clean energy. There is a certain nuance in that wording. When Quebec talks about clean energy, we are not talking about oil that is less dirty. We want to turn to something other than oil.

We want to turn to wind power and solar power, for example, which are renewable.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Berthier-Maskinongé for his very good speech.

He talked about subsidies. We spend billions of dollars on fossil fuel subsidies. We know full well that other countries are in the process of making investments and building networks for clean energy such as electricity grids. I am thinking in particular of the grid that links Scandinavian countries to Germany.

This Nordic grid allows the export of clean energy. In the United States market, for example, states and cities are increasingly demanding that they be supplied only with clean energy. The market is incredible and the potential is there.

Does my colleague agree that we really need to make investments to create an electricity grid that allows us to export energy throughout North America?

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, electric power is definitely an energy of the future.

Still, investments need to come from the right level of government. There has to be fairness in federal investments. We must not forget that. I could talk about past injustices.

As for the importance of investing in the right energies, I would say that, according to experts around the world today, for every dollar invested in oil, \$1.7 is invested in renewable energies.

However, that is not what is happening in Canada. This year, investments could reach \$40 billion. That is 11% more than before COVID-19. Production in Canada is expected to increase until 2040. We are going off course. We need to steer the ship in the right direction, towards a real energy transition and renewable energies.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our colleague did a good job of explaining that, although forest fires have certainly always existed, climate change is making conditions worse and far more conducive to these types of fires and many other disasters that will keep making headlines. Over the past few days, the air in Ottawa was absolutely impossible to breathe and the sky was totally grey. It was terrible here, even though the fires are raging in Abitibi and on the north shore.

I wonder why people have a hard time understanding this. The government always makes big announcements about money it is spending to fight climate change, but it is also spending billions of dollars on the oil industry, which completely undermines those efforts. Sooner or later, expenditures from this line will have to be put on that line. Why do people not understand that?

• (1045)

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, once again, the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot has shown us how intelligent he is and how thoroughly he understands the issues.

What he said was exactly right. We have to take the money that is being given to fossil fuels, move it to a different line in the budget and invest it in renewable energy and in the transition.

Business of Supply

I said something earlier that I may not have emphasized enough. We need to invest in the transition, but also in helping people prepare and become more resilient. Unfortunately, it is too late to completely stop global warming, and we are already seeing the consequences. That is why we need to invest in both of those things.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to speak on this important issue today. I thank my hon. colleagues from the Bloc Québécois and commend them for their activism on this issue. I do not doubt their commitment to the issue of climate change for a single second. Unfortunately, I cannot say the same for all the members of the House.

Forests all over Canada are burning. We are facing what will very likely be the worst forest fire season in the history of our country. Families have lost everything, thousands of people are risking their lives to keep Quebeckers and Canadians safe, and I would like to tell everyone affected by the wildfires that our thoughts and the government's thoughts are with them.

[English]

Climate change is real, and we are seeing and living its impact every day. In the last year alone, we have seen record-level atmospheric rivers creating havoc in British Columbia; Fiona, the most powerful hurricane we have seen in the Atlantic Ocean; and now, fires raging from the east coast to the west coast and all the way to the Northwest Territories. Everyone in the House needs to acknowledge that.

[Translation]

Canadians are concerned about the impact of climate change. Tens of thousands of people have been displaced this year, sometimes twice or even three times. Some families have lost everything. Millions of people, both young and not so young, cannot go outside because of the poor air quality. People are worried and so are we.

Across the country, the public can see how climate change is exacerbating the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. As U.S. President Joe Biden recently said to the House, these days, a good plan for the economy is also a good plan for climate change and a good plan for security.

Business of Supply

The deterioration in air quality due to the forest fires is so bad that smoke plumes can be seen and smelled as far away as New York. The air quality index was worse in our national capital this week than in cities like Mexico City, Jakarta or even Kolkata. We know that this is the worst fire season on record for Nova Scotia and Quebec, and in Alberta, 2023 is about to surpass the summer of 2016, one of the worst seasons in the history of that province. There are currently more than 2,000 forest fires burning across Canada, and nearly four million hectares have burned, which is 10 times the Canadian average for the same date.

Now I would like to talk about Parks Canada's role in this issue.

[English]

Parks Canada is the only federal organization that can provide firefighting equipment and trained professionals in response to requests from provinces, territories and international partners when they need help fighting wildfires. Parks Canada has a dedicated team of firefighters across the country. It also maintains national incident-management teams composed of personnel from field and business units across the country. These teams are dispatched to manage complex fire situations and other incidents.

Parks Canada has many wildfire mutual aid resource-sharing agreements in place at the local, provincial, national and international level, such as with the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico and South Africa. It also works with communities and partners within or near national parks on initiatives to reduce wildfire risks. Its fire management program is focused on prevention and response measures for wildfires that originate in, traverse through or otherwise threaten lands administered by Parks Canada, as well as adjacent communities.

● (1050)

[Translation]

I would like to thank the team at Parks Canada for all its work and for its amazing services to the public.

Last weekend, the Quebec government asked the federal government for help to deal with the catastrophic wildfire situation in the province, and we instantly said yes.

We are working in close collaboration with all provincial and territorial governments, as well as with indigenous peoples. Non-governmental organizations, like the Canadian Red Cross and the United Way, are also providing support to evacuees and other people affected by the forest fires. Members of the Canadian Armed Forces have been deployed to areas across the country, particularly in Quebec, to keep our communities safe.

Climate change is already here, and its effects will continue to be felt. The impact is very real. Climate change is taking a major toll on our communities. That is why our government, unlike the official opposition, is committed to doing more and doing it faster, both to reduce our climate pollution and to better prepare Canada and Canadians to deal with the consequences of climate change.

Let me give a few examples.

A little over two years ago, we enacted the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act, which requires the Government of

Canada to set emission reduction targets for 2030, 2035, 2040 and 2045 in order to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. The act provides for consultations with the provinces, territories and indigenous communities, as well as public participation when the government is establishing or amending targets or plans. This must be done openly and transparently.

The act requires governments to plan to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 at the latest, to table their plans in the House and to make any corrections necessary. It also establishes the net-zero advisory body, which is responsible for providing independent advice with respect to achieving this goal.

The government's role is to create incentives and to make regulations that send clear, long-term signals to the markets to foster the reduction of emissions in a flexible and economical manner.

That is also why we implemented carbon pricing in 2019. Our approach is recognized worldwide. It is flexible, because it allows the provinces and territories, including Quebec, to develop their own system or to opt in to the federal system. It also sets minimum national standards that must be met to ensure that all the provinces and territories are comparable and that they contribute equitably to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Our approach is one of consistency and fairness for all Canadians. It also aims to cover a wide range of emissions and to ensure the effectiveness of the carbon markets.

[English]

Its goal is both to reduce pollution and to support Canadians in the transition toward a cleaner and greener economy, which is why all direct proceeds from the federal system remain in the province or territory they came from and are used to keep life affordable while taking aim at climate pollution.

Wherever federal fuel charge proceeds are returned directly to households, eight out of 10 families get more money back through the climate action incentive rebates than they faced in increased fuel costs. This is particularly true for low-income households, which come out significantly ahead. Households can use these funds however they see fit. As households take actions to reduce their energy use, they will come out even farther ahead because they will still receive the same amount in climate incentive rebate.

[Translation]

If any members of the House of Commons have not yet read the 2030 emissions reduction plan released last year, they should.

It is the most comprehensive, detailed, and transparent plan in our country's history. It charts a course to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 40% to 45% by 2030. It continues and enhances support for the deployment of market-ready renewable energy technologies to drive the decarbonization of electricity grids. It sets an interim target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% below 2005 levels by 2026. This plan has been welcomed by organizations such as Greenpeace, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Climate Institute of Canada.

We also introduced the clean fuel regulations, which are part of a very significant approach to reducing Canada's greenhouse gas emissions. These regulations replace the former renewable fuels regulations.

They seek to drive innovation in clean technologies and expand the use of cleaner fuels throughout the economy. The regulations are based on initiatives in other jurisdictions, such as British Columbia and California, that have directly contributed to the growth of the clean-tech sector and the supply of cleaner fuels.

These regulations will reduce the carbon footprint of gasoline and diesel sold in Canada. They will also encourage investment in clean energy, thereby helping to reduce the country's greenhouse gas emissions by at least 26 megatonnes by 2030. Following the announcement of these regulations, more than \$2 billion in investments have been announced over the past few months in the hydrogen and renewable fuels sectors in Alberta, Quebec, and Newfoundland.

I would now like to talk about faster and further: Canada's methane strategy.

This strategy relies on Canada's progress and current commitments, including the 2030 emissions reduction plan. It provides a path for further reducing methane emissions, a very powerful greenhouse gas, throughout the entire economy. I will give a few examples. The oil company Cenovus reduced its methane emissions by 40% over the past two years. Saskatchewan reduced the methane emissions of its oil sector by 60% between 2015 and 2021.

• (1055)

Still, we need to bear in mind that all the initiatives I have mentioned so far are just the highlights and do not exist in a vacuum. It is the combination of initiatives that changes everything and our plan is beginning to bear fruit. Between 2019 and 2021, our greenhouse gas emissions decreased by 53 million tonnes in the country. That is the equivalent of removing 11 million cars from the roads in Canada, or more than half of all the emissions in Quebec. In 2020 and 2021, Canada had the best performance in the G7 when it comes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Many environmental groups have said that they are seeing overwhelming evidence of progress. For example, Climate Action Network Canada says, "The [report] released...by the federal government shows that...greenhouse gas emissions fell by 8.4% below 2005 levels". That is what economists call a decoupling of emissions from the country's gross domestic product, with emissions intensity from the entire economy down by 42% since 1990.

Business of Supply

Since 2015, our government has committed over \$200 billion to implementing more than 100 measures to support climate action. Canada has bent the curve downward even as our economy continues to grow, creating well-paying jobs.

Earlier, the leader of the Bloc Québécois talked about fossil fuel subsidies. Here are a few encouraging facts about this issue.

[English]

The federal government is hard at work on delivering its G20 commitment to phase out fossil fuel subsidies. We are preparing a rigorous framework to identify what is a fossil fuel subsidy. This will apply across all departments in the government.

We are proud to lead ambition on the global movement of fossil fuel subsidies. Canada has accelerated its G20 commitment, from 2025 to 2023, and we are on track to deliver on this accelerated timeline. We are also calling on peer countries to accelerate their timeline. When we come forward with the fossil fuel subsidies framework, this will be a first-of-its-kind approach to phase out fossil fuel subsidies. No other country has published its methodology for so transparently identifying fossil fuel subsidies. This is the second of a three-part commitment on the financing of the fossil fuel sector. The first was international financing of the fossil fuel subsidy, which we delivered on last December, with widespread acclaim from think tanks and environmental organizations. The second commitment is on domestic fossil fuel subsidies, which we are on track to complete shortly, and the third one is on domestic public financing of fossil fuel subsidies.

[Translation]

Several organizations, such as Equiterre and Environmental Defence, have publicly highlighted the progress made on this issue while indicating that there is still work to be done. The NGO Oil Change International has published a report showing that, among G7 countries, Canada and Great Britain are at the forefront on issues of international funding of fossil fuels.

We also need to be better prepared to face the impacts of climate change. We must ensure the health, security and well-being of the population and communities across the country. A good adaptation strategy is also a good economic strategy and will help minimize the costs of the impacts of climate change, which have already been assessed at several billions of dollars per year.

Business of Supply

Those are our main objectives in collaborating with the population to develop Canada's first national adaptation strategy. Part of this work focused on the approach needed to build resilience to the impacts of climate change. This approach includes, among others, a framework to measure progress made across the country so we ensure that our measures remain effective as the climate continues to change.

The following are a few reactions to the release of the Government of Canada adaptation action plan.

● (1100)

[English]

The Insurance Bureau of Canada said, "Canada's first National Adaptation Strategy is brave and ambitious. No other country has proposed such a comprehensive suite of adaptation targets." The Federation of Canadian Municipalities said that the National Adaptation Strategy is "a critical framework that will help to better protect Canadian communities from the effects of extreme weather events made more severe by a changing climate." Finally, Climate Proof Canada said, "Climate Proof Canada applauds the Government of Canada on world-leading National Adaptation Strategy", and that this "represents a bold step forward by delivering a strategy with world-leading targets and clear goals that will drive necessary progress on adapting to the worst impacts of climate change."

[Translation]

Climate change is a global problem, and Canadians want real climate action. The government owes it to them to be responsible and bring in policies that are known to be the most efficient and cost effective, which is what we are doing.

However, it is important to remember that the federal government cannot meet Canada's objectives for climate change and adaptation on its own. A concerted effort is needed from all governments, economic stakeholders and Canadian society as a whole. Each sector has a role to play and a responsibility to reduce climate pollution.

[English]

Action on climate change has become the driving force for economic opportunity in the 21st century. Countries and businesses across the world are moving rapidly toward net-zero emissions.

[Translation]

With the initiatives we have already introduced, and many others that are still to come, we are taking action today to ensure not only that Canada is not left behind, but that we actually become a leader in the global low-carbon economy.

We must continue to fight climate change. We recognize that we need to do more to tackle climate change, prevent its impacts and support communities affected by natural disasters. We must continue to work together and do more. However, in order to do more, we need the support of all parties.

[English]

It is unfortunate to see that, in 2023, we are still having to try and convince the Conservative Party of Canada that climate change is

real, that it is happening now and that it is costing Canadian lives and dramatically impacting our society.

[Translation]

There are forest fires burning all across Canada right now. People are risking their lives to ensure Canadians' safety and protect the environment. However, the Conservatives are trying to block everything we try to do to fight pollution.

Last week, we saw the member for Red Deer—Mountain View rise in the House and tell Canadians that climate change is normal. Pretending it is normal is irresponsible and it is disrespectful to Quebeckers or Canadians who are fighting for their lives against raging wildfires.

[English]

It has been 271 days since the leader of the Conservative Party was named leader and still no plan to fight pollution, no plan to support the economy of the 21st century and no plan to support Canadians.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke for four hours last night in the House, but did he talk about the linkages between the devastating forest fires and climate change? Did he talk about his plan to fight the climate crisis or even how he would work to help Canadians face those impacts? He did none of those things, because, like his party, he denies the very existence of climate change.

Rather than investing their time in debating carbon pricing or blocking everything we are trying to put in place to fight pollution, perhaps the Conservatives should invest that time toward writing a real plan for our environment, for the future of our kids and grandkids, and for the future of the economy of this country.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister alluded to his having prepared the country, that we know climate change is here. I would like to ask the minister this. I had a cabin burn down in northern Ontario. The firefighting force up there told me it was short water bombers.

If we look to the CL-215, the government could have procured more water bombers. The president of Viking said yesterday that if a Canadian province ordered a water bomber, it could not even begin construction until 2030 now. All the orders are from Europe. Europe knew what was coming and it reacted. Our Canadian military now cannot get helmets. We have the new Airbus A-330s. They are going to have to go out and procure fuel tankers.

The government has not prepared the country, so I would like the minister to comment on the water bomber situation.

● (1105)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, I think the member almost recognized the reality of climate change. For that, I am extremely grateful.

As I said, we have presented Canada's first-ever national adaptation strategy. No other government did that before we did. That strategy has been applauded by many stakeholders in this field. I also recognize that we need to do more. We are not ready to face the impacts of climate change. To get Canada ready to face the impacts of climate change, I guess the Conservative Party would have to recognize that climate change exists.

We are on it, we are working, but I recognize more work still needs to be done.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have often heard the Minister of Environment boast in the House about 2021, saying that emissions reached record-setting lows that year. This is hardly surprising, considering there was a pandemic going on. Although he denied it, I remember that the vast majority of Quebecers had to comply with a curfew for half the year, which says a lot about the strict lockdown in effect at the time. Needless to say, planes were grounded, and teleworking meant that cars stayed in the garage.

What did not increase during that lockdown year, but that certainly made up for it in the inflationary year of 2022, were oil company profits. What did not decrease were the billions of dollars that Ottawa supplied to oil companies.

Given that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has shown that 80% of oil must remain where it is, underground, can the Minister of Environment promise us that there will be no more new oil development projects?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

First, I would like to remind him that, in 2021, Canada's economic growth was the strongest in the G7, at 5%. Economic growth in Canada leads to increased greenhouse gas emissions.

Second, despite the global pandemic, we had the best record of any G7 country of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The pandemic affected not just Canada, but the entire world. As I said in my speech, we eliminated international fossil fuel subsidies last year, and we will eliminate domestic subsidies this year, in 2023. That is two years earlier than all our G20 partners.

Third, I think that my colleague and the Bloc Québécois would be the first to object if the federal government encroached on provincial jurisdiction. The use of natural resources is a provincial jurisdiction. Where we can make a difference is on pollution, and that is exactly what we are doing.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, right now, as forest fires are raging across the country, from Nova Scotia to Vancouver Island, what are the Liberals doing? They are building pipelines and subsidizing oil and gas.

While the Liberals are patting themselves on the back, right now a fire is burning in my riding, and not just anywhere. It is at Cameron Lake Bluffs, on the doorstep of Cathedral Grove, of the ancient rainforest in my riding. This is in early June.

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We need the government to step up and take action on climate change, but also to ensure that there is a separate firefighting agency in Canada to support provinces when there are surges. We also want to ensure that the government has people's back when it comes to mental health supports and climate infrastructure.

Right now, as I said, Highway 4 is cut off. I cannot even get home this weekend. Thirty thousand of my constituents are trapped on the other side of Cameron Lake. Seniors cannot get to their doctor appointments. People cannot get to work. The indigenous communities are greatly impacted.

Will the government have the backs of people in my riding, and across the country, if my province asks for help?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his advocacy on this issue. He talked about the forest fire situation in Canada. It is likely going to be the worst year for forest fires.

The federal government is supporting all the provinces and territories, as well as indigenous communities that have requested help from the federal government. I have spoken personally to some indigenous leaders. Parks Canada has been working with some of them, either to evacuate or to support their communities in their forest firefighting exercise.

I am the first one to recognize that we need to do more. The member spoke about fossil fuel subsidies. He knows that when it comes to eliminating international fossil fuel subsidies, we are the best performing country in all of the G7 countries. That is not me saying that; I am not patting myself on the back. The member can look at reports from Oil Change International or at what organizations like Environmental Defence have said.

● (1110)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, climate change is the challenge of this generation and of these times.

In my community of Windsor—Tecumseh, we had two devastating floods in 2016-17 that put thousands of homes under water. It was absolutely devastating. Today, we see a blanket of smoke covering our community.

At the same time, our community of Windsor—Tecumseh will be leading the transition to a zero-emission economy. We will be building electric vehicles in Windsor. We will be building batteries at the Stellantis plant in Windsor.

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Could the minister speak to how the goals of environmental support and protection are not mutually exclusive to economic development, when in fact they are reinforcing goals to both the economic and the environmental aims?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for all his work on these issues.

As I said in my speech, in the economy of the 21st century, there is an international race to attract companies and investors in the green economy. Ten years ago, there was 10 times more investment in fossil fuels worldwide than there was in renewable energy.

In 2022, it is the opposite. Smart money is moving toward clean technologies, renewable energy and electrification, like the projects he mentioned. We are transforming Canada's auto sector. The investments we are seeing in electrifying our auto sector are the most important investments in the history of Canada's auto sector.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives are opposing every single investment we are trying to make to help Canada have its share of this international race for a greener and cleaner economy.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my first question for the minister is one that I have been trying to get answered for a while now. It is about giving an update to Canadians on the Liberal government's commitment to plant two-billion-trees. How many have been planted to date?

Second, could I get the minister's commitment to help make the program more efficient? It is very bureaucratic. I know conservation groups and municipalities have tried to apply to the program. They find the bureaucratic process too complicated. They cannot seem to meet the requirements.

My final question, based on discussions with Liberal MPs and members from all parties, is on the idea of getting help to plant more trees to help combat climate change around the world. Could we maybe allocate a number of these trees to every MP in the House of Commons, if members choose to do that, and work within their constituencies to get more trees planted?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for mentioning climate change, which, unfortunately, on that side of the House, does not happen very often.

To answer his first question, we planted 30 million trees in 2020 and 60 million trees in 2021, which is up from eight million trees in 2019. To get to two billion trees by 2030, we need to get to a cruising speed of planting 300 million trees per year. I agree that we are not there yet.

We can do better with the partnerships he has talked about. Conservation organizations and municipalities are essential. I would be happy to work with the hon. member and any member in the House who is interested in working on this project.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

As we know, the former speaker of the House of Representatives, Tip O'Neill, said, "All politics are local." I am going to focus on what has been happening in my community, my district, in the last two weeks.

At 3:30 p.m. on Sunday, May 28, two weekends ago, first responders in Halifax arrived in the Westwood Hills subdivision in Halifax. This is in my district, 10 minutes from my house. They were responding to reports of a house on fire. They were there in minutes. The fire was driven by winds of 40 kilometres an hour, and it was spreading rapidly through the house and moving to other homes in this family suburban neighbourhood. It was engulfing homes and hopscotching from house to house. It was missing some, burning others and skipping and bouncing over streets. Cellphones screamed with an alert for residents to immediately leave their homes. Over the next hour, as the wind drove the flames across neighbourhoods along Hammonds Plains Road, more than 16,000 people were evacuated.

Many, not knowing what to do, went to the homes of friends and family outside the evacuation zone. Others went to the comfort centres, which were set up quickly by volunteers. Some were set up within an hour, such as the ones at the Black Point fire hall and Black Point & Area Community Centre on St. Margarets Bay and the Canada Games Centre in Bayers Lake. They were set up by volunteers, such as Janet Fryday Dorey, who opened the Black Point comfort centre and kept it open from then until this day.

The volunteers at the centres were and are remarkable. They put their lives and families on hold to provide comfort, food, clothes, a place to sleep, a person to talk to, a place to help find accommodation and a place to regroup in this trying, confusing and emotional time. There were volunteers like my neighbour, Peggy Pippy, who ran food and clothing drives for victims.

To give some idea of the desperation of the evacuation, I want to share an experience. Captain Kevin Corkum and firefighter Conor Scott were working at the firefighting command post on Hammonds Plains Road in Halifax on that Sunday when an emergency call came in. A family could not get to their elderly father, who has dementia and was at home on Yankeetown Road. This was inside the evacuation zone, where the fire was raging.

Fire crews had retreated from the area because of the speed of the fire, which was making it unsafe for them to battle the intensity of the flames. Captain Corkum said, "When the 911 call came in [saying] that there was a person in the house, we knew that fire conditions were going to be bad on that road.... But that's what we do. We're the fire service. Our main objective is life safety."

Captain Corkum said that he and firefighter Scott, wearing only basic personal protective gear, and with no oxygen equipment, jumped into the chief's pickup truck to attempt to save the man. Firefighter Scott said, "There were moments when it felt like we were driving through a wall of fire". Captain Corkum reported that "as they travelled toward Yankeetown Road, day turned into night, and visibility was zero." They could not see the civic numbers and ended up passing the home twice before they found the driveway. "As we pulled up, everything around the house was on fire. There were trees on two sides, maybe 20 to 30 feet away, and everything was on fire," the captain said. Captain Corkum was driving and instructed firefighter Scott that he had 30 seconds to check the house for the man. Both doors were locked, so Scott ended up kicking in the front door.

Captain Corkum said, "The elderly gentleman was in his chair unaware of what was going on, unaware of the danger [around him]." Corkum and Scott grabbed the man, lifted him up and carried him into the truck, with only minutes, maybe even seconds, to get out, and "Captain Corkum said it was one of those moments that 'you're there doing what has to be done.'" "It's the first time," he said, "in my 22 years that I'm looking around...and I'm like, 'I really don't know that I'm 100 per cent going to get out of this'".

• (1115)

According to Captain Corkum, "Luckily...they were able to make it through the smoke and embers to get the man to the command post, where he could be assessed by paramedics." After, Scott said, "My heart grew a little bit. I was very, very happy when we passed him off".

He continued:

And then it was just moments later before we're on to the next task. But there was this brief, beautiful moment where we knew he was going to get back to his family.

Corkum and Scott "then went on to help evacuate a home in Upper Tantallon, where a family was still packing items" and could not escape.

Captain Corkum said to the media, "It was an unprecedented fire for me, just with the speed and the forward momentum that fire had and just the sheer amount of fire". He went on to say, "I've never seen anything like it in my 22 years, that's for sure."

According to Brendan Meagher, "even though the pair knew it was dangerous, they kept going." He stated:

They kept going, they got to the house, they got in and they got him in that truck and...they got out of there and they saved his life.

I believe, as do most Nova Scotians, that what they did was remarkable and heroic.

According to Captain Corkum, this was only one story of those told during these devastating fires. I'm sure there are many people with many stories of real heroism that we will hear from in the coming days.

I would like to share with members another experience I had during this time in my riding last week. The next day after that fire, Monday, May 29, after attending the morning news conference with the Halifax deputy fire chief, I drove two hours south to the

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town of Shelburne. I went to the fire hall and command centre, which was managing the fire for the municipality. I met with Fire Chief Locke. He and his crew had just arrived back from Clyde River, where they were battling the spread of the Barrington Lake fire. It was quickly becoming the largest fire in the history of Nova Scotia, with 65,000 acres on fire. In Clyde River, the fire had jumped the highway, as it had jumped across the lake a few hours earlier. Chief Locke told me that the freight train speed and the power of the fire overcame the firefighters, who had to abandon their hoses and gear and jump into their trucks; they barely escaped with their lives.

He has been a firefighter for 50 years, and he had a hard time with his emotions as he described what his team faced. The flames they were battling reached 200 feet high and whirled around them. This happened time and again to crews battling this beast.

Half the county was evacuated. Yesterday, the fire was only declared held; it is not growing beyond the 65,000 acres. More than 200 kilometres of the area has been destroyed. The Halifax fire is now 100% contained.

The two fires incinerated more than 300 private property houses and buildings, destroying homes, dreams, family treasures, vehicles and everything dear to these families, and to us, including pets, dogs and cats, that were lost in the flames. The job of rebuilding for these families is immense. It is going to take time before everyone can return home safely. Knowing that the fire cannot resurface and restart is essential.

The 190 professional volunteer firefighters who have kept the Barrington Lake fire out of the towns of Barrington and Shelburne are exhausted. They worked 18 hours a day. A member of my constituency team, Tyson Ross, is one of these firefighters; he slept in his own bed for the first time two nights ago. However, they know the work is not done. They need to get the 65,000 acres secure and fire-free before residents, who simply want to go home, can do so safely.

They left their jobs to save their communities. They left their families to risk their lives to save others. They left their own evacuated houses in the fire zone to save the houses of their neighbours and strangers. The words "thank you" seem desperately insufficient for what they have done for our province and these communities, given what we owe them.

Nonetheless, I will conclude by thanking the volunteer firefighters who fought and controlled the fires at Beech Hill Road and Pubnico. I want to send an enormous thanks to the hundreds of firefighters who fought, and got under control, the Halifax fire, and who have enabled all but a few thousand of the 16,000 residents to return home. From the bottom of my heart, I thank the 190 firefighters who have fought, and continue to fight, the largest fire in the history of our province, known as the Barrington Lake fire, and the Lake Road fires in Shelburne County, over the last 14 days.

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• (1120)

The Deputy Speaker: While I have the floor for a second, I just want to echo that. This was in a neighbouring riding, and one of those fires was in my community as well. My thanks go to the fire-fighters, who responded from all over southwest Nova Scotia.

Questions and comments, the hon. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

• (1125)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member quoted a number of people who have fought the forest fires in his communities in Nova Scotia and spoke at length about how the forest fires are unprecedented. They have never seen such intense forest fires.

One of my colleagues and I spoke about the linkages between the extreme forest fires we are seeing and climate change. There is abundant scientific evidence out there on these linkages. The member for South Shore—St. Margarets said, “You are lying. And for you to lie using the tragic situation of my community that have lost their homes because of human set fires is despicable.”

According to the member, he seems to have evidence that none of us have about the fact that all those forest fires would have been set by humans. Could the member elaborate on that?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, as an MP who understands his riding and was on the ground during these fires and talking to fire-fighters, I know what started the fires. The reason I wrote that is because the Halifax fire was a fire in the suburbs. The minister should know this, but he apparently does not. It was not a forest fire. It ran through houses. Sixteen thousand people were evacuated, not in a forest but in a suburb.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have always wondered if my Conservative friends are not just a little bit jealous of the Liberals.

They always criticize the Liberal government for its inaction and its lack of leadership in dealing with the oil industry, but in 2022, the Liberals invested \$40 billion in it, including \$11.5 billion directly in the Alberta oil sands. They just invested \$30 billion in the Trans Mountain expansion. I do not understand why my Conservative friends are criticizing the Liberals; the Liberals are world champions in fossil fuel investments.

I do not get it; are my Conservative friends jealous?

[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member did not listen to my speech, or maybe he was having too many conversations. I did not criticize the government once during my speech. My speech was about a tragedy that is happening in my community. People are losing their houses and will not get back to their lives for years. That is what my speech was about. The member should have listened a little more to it. I did not speak about oil and gas. I did not criticize the government.

In fact, I have been very public and very vocal in thanking the Minister of Emergency Preparedness for being so helpful and responsive in working with the provincial government, with me and

with local representatives to fight this fire with the resources Canada has.

Perhaps, in future, before a member asks a question, they should actually listen to the speech.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank the member for South Shore—St. Margarets for highlighting the devastating and horrific forest fires that are impacting his riding, as well as my riding in British Columbia and Canada as a whole.

Interconnected with this, today is also World Oceans Day. We are seeing our oceans warming at record levels along the coast of the member's riding in Nova Scotia, as well as in British Columbia. This is having detrimental impacts on marine ecosystems and coastal communities.

I am wondering about the importance of addressing the climate crisis and acknowledging that we need to do everything we can to stop the warming of our oceans and ensure that we do not have additional pollutants going into our waters, such as plastics and the pollutants from open-net fish farms, derelict vessels and container spills, just to name a few. Could the member share his thoughts on this?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith and I served together on the fisheries committee, and she is very passionate about the fisheries issues, as am I.

I am surprised she did not ask me about Bill C-365 from the 42nd Parliament, which was introduced by our colleague on the fisheries committee, the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap. His bill sought to amend the Criminal Code to establish specific penalties related to the theft of firefighting equipment. It also would have created an aggravating circumstance for sentencing if the mischief involved firefighting equipment. Finally, it would have established sentencing objectives in relation to the theft of such equipment.

Rather than expressing support for the firefighters, which the member had a chance to do, the Bloc and the Liberals at that time, although I know the member is of the class of 2021 and was not there, all voted against the bill that would have penalized people for stealing firefighting equipment to help us fight these fires.

• (1130)

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, It is always a pleasure for me to speak. I consider myself truly lucky, and even honoured, to be in the House and to be able to represent my fellow Canadians. We have the power, as members of Parliament, to propose solutions and make decisions to improve our country, Canada, and to help it prosper. I am often called on to speak on hot topics in the news, but I am always thankful for every chance I have to speak out against what I see as unfair and to debate important issues. However, I would prefer to talk about something other than today's topic.

Of course, it is with grave concern that I will be making my speech today. I have been very worried for the last few days and I still am. I do not always sleep soundly because residents in my region are living in fear of losing their homes and seeing their towns entirely wiped out. I hope we do not reach that point. Of course, I am talking here about the wildfires that are burning across Canada, fires of immeasurable violence that have been a hot topic in the news for the last few weeks now.

The Government of Canada has never seen wildfires this early in the season, and they are far from being the last. These numerous fires are having unprecedented effects. If this unfortunate trend persists, the record for the most fires ever recorded in Canada could very well be broken. All Canadians are worried about these wildfires, but also about what we will learn from them and what will remain. The fires are raging across the country and the situation is critical.

I would like to talk more specifically about the regions of Quebec, like Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean and Abitibi, that are currently experiencing the most severe effects of the wildfires. There is an article that shows that Abitibi—Témiscamingue is the most affected region in Quebec. The second most affected area is mine, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. Most of the fires are in my colleague's riding in Lac-Saint-Jean. I can assure the House that partisan allegiances are left by the wayside in times like these. We are all in the same boat and we must work together to get through this crisis.

I would like to begin my comments by noting the regional figures for Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. At this time, there are 4 fires that are under control, 2 that are contained, 2 new fires and 22 that are out of control. Clearly, this last figure is the real problem. Twenty-two fires are out of control.

What gets me right in the heart is seeing images of my beautiful region burning. It is seeing communities being reluctantly evacuated. I am thinking in particular of the indigenous community of Oujé-Bougoumou, whose village is threatened. They had to seek refuge in Chicoutimi. I want to reassure the member for this community, my colleague from Abitibi—James-Bay—Nunavik—Eeyou that her constituents are being well taken care of by the city of Saguenay. This is the time for solidarity, and the people of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean are there for them.

I have always known that we had a very close bond with Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean and it is during situations like these that we can really prove it. Just this morning, an article mentioned that large numbers of city of Saguenay residents showed up at various

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shelters with food, while others have volunteered to help. It is precisely for reasons like these that I am proud to represent my constituents. We are good people in Saguenay. We are welcoming and helpful, and this gives us comfort in these kinds of situations.

The Chicoutimi CEGEP opened its doors to the indigenous community I just mentioned. It is very difficult for people to leave their homes not knowing when they can return, but many places were prepared to take in the victims. There is the Chicoutimi CEGEP, the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, the Centre Georges-Vézina and the Pavillon de l'agriculture. I must also congratulate the City of Saguenay for promptly taking charge of the situation and providing services in such a short time. Officials were informed that they had to find 1,000 places for those affected by the disaster, and they found them in no time at all.

• (1135)

In addition, we were able to count on invaluable partners, such as the Red Cross, which provided camp beds.

Of course, I must mention the complete evacuation of Chibougamau the day before yesterday. Two fires in the area—one covering 50,000 hectares and the other 12,000 hectares—have forced the evacuation of thousands of residents. These fires are 20 kilometres from Chibougamau. Residents were told on Tuesday evening that they had just a few minutes to pack their bags and leave town. Some 7,500 residents had 15 minutes to leave for their temporary home in Roberval.

I was in touch with the mayor of Roberval, Serge Bergeron, yesterday morning to get an update. I must say that the mayor is doing an extraordinary job and has the situation in hand. He mentioned that 450 evacuees are currently at the Benoît-Levesque arena. There are shuttle buses from the arena to various locations, such as pharmacies, so that people can access their medications. Even the grocery stores are doing their part. They are using delivery trucks to send food to shelters. The Bagotville base is also ready to welcome people. If Chapais has to be evacuated, the town of Saint-Félicien will be ready. When I say that we stand together in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, it is because we have a reputation that is second to none.

SOPFEU is doing everything in its power to stop the spread and save the town of Chibougamau. In partnership with Chantiers Chibougamau, SOPFEU is building a trench around the town to protect it as much as possible.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention the situation in my riding, Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, and the exceptional work that has been done. Two fires were brought under control thanks to the great work of forest firefighters and SOPFEU. The first fire to break out in my constituency was in Ferland-et-Boilleau. As luck would have it, it started the day after celebrations for the 60th anniversary of the local forestry co-op. What a coincidence. This small municipality is surrounded by trees, which put the residents particularly at risk. In all, 40 homes had to be evacuated because the situation had become too dangerous. Families were left homeless for several days. It is all very stressful for parents and children.

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The second major fire took place in Rivière-Éternité, near the Montagne à Adrien, a few days ago. Once again, the forests in this small municipality fell prey to the flames. Approximately 30 residents were evacuated. Furthermore, Marie-Médiatrice elementary school had to close for a few days for safety reasons. Four water bombers and a number of forest firefighters battled the fire for several hours. The fire was on the side of the mountain, so it was hard to bring under control, but today the residents of these municipalities can rest easy.

Fortunately, there has been no loss of life reported from the forest fires burning at the moment. That is due to the excellent work of the forest firefighters. I would like to commend them for their bravery and their extraordinary efforts. Of course I would also like to thank SOPFEU, whose mission is to protect the forest as well as infrastructure. I would also like to once again thank all the personnel who provide assistance to disaster victims and ensure that citizens feel safe, despite the conditions. I want to thank the volunteers and civil authorities who are coordinating the effort, as well as police officers and forestry workers. They are essential and indispensable in these times of crisis.

Not only do fires devastate the vegetation and the wildlife, but they also mess up the air. Air quality in much of the province will be affected. Many schools are having to close their doors, because the situation is critical.

I want to remind the House and Canadians across the country how important it is to refrain from going into the woods unnecessarily. Everyone needs to remain aware of the danger, and pull together in tough times like these.

• (1140)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that my colleague from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord talked about the people who are currently giving it their all for the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region and the fact that people are tightly knit over there. That is indeed the case.

As members know, there are two kinds of people: those who are not willing to pay the price, as my colleague from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord would say, but also those who dedicate themselves. I would like to thank him for his speech and for pointing out that people help each other a great deal in the Saguenay, Lac-Saint-Jean and Abitibi regions.

Perhaps there is one part of the Bloc Québécois's motion, however, that he did not talk about. I would like to know whether he thinks we should stop all subsidies to the oil and gas industry, just as we in the Bloc are calling for. I think that climate change is currently caused by the largest polluters in the world, which Canada is subsidizing with the taxes of our fellow citizens. At some point, we have to ask ourselves where we are going with this situation.

I would therefore like to thank him for pointing out that we are helping each other, but I would also like him to comment on the fact that we are subsidizing oil and gas companies, which are responsible for climate change in particular.

Mr. Richard Martel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean.

I think now is the time for solidarity. We have to be very careful, we have to make sure that people are safe, but also, and this is what we will be looking at later, whether the resources and equipment are adequate when situations like the one we are experiencing now arise, and whether the staff and firefighters have all the necessary resources.

Once again, I would like to thank my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean, and I am sure that he will also be working hard in his riding in the coming weeks.

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just came from a meeting with the company that invented and makes the buckets that helicopters use to fight forest fires around the world. Armed forces around the world use these buckets to fight forest fires in their countries, and the Royal Canadian Air Force is one of the few that does not.

In the face of a fire season like this, would it not be a good idea to have a dedicated air squadron of bombers and helicopters to help provinces across this country, or at the very least train and equip the air force with Bambi buckets, to really hit these fires hard and early so they do not explode into the catastrophic situations we have seen so much over the last weeks?

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague because that is a very good question.

We know assessments will also be carried out after these events. Since I do not think this will be the last time we will face these kinds of forest fires, sadly, we will really have to make sure the equipment is up to par and that we have the proper airplanes and trained personnel, but we also need to know what the Canadian army can do in the future.

It is a good question, and it would also be a good thing to think about. Since these are major events, we will have to put politics aside, pull together and have productive discussions later on.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank my hon. colleague for recognizing the efforts made by the Bagotville military base to help during this crisis.

I have a question for him. Can the federal government do something else to help his region?

• (1145)

Mr. Richard Martel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We can definitely always do more. The federal government must have a good relationship with Quebec, serve Quebec and ask what it needs. I say that because these forest fires are also happening in Quebec. The federal government must listen and do everything it can to provide what Quebec needs.

I think that is a very good question, and that we again need team work and co-operation. It is in times like these that we need to feel that everyone is on the same page.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

I will take a moment to paint a picture of what we are up against. Often when there are problems around the world and around our country, it is hard to imagine what it is like unless we experience it ourselves. What we saw over the past couple of days in Ottawa was a little glimpse into the reality of thousands of Canadians, particularly those in indigenous communities, who were among the hardest hit. Here in Ottawa, for the first time in anyone's memory, the forest fires were so bad in the surrounding regions that the smog was covering the city of Gatineau when we looked over the river. The air was filled with smoke. Yesterday, it was so bad that we could smell the smoke in these chambers. People were told not to go outside. Children were at risk if they were outside, and people with young children were particularly worried. I have a young daughter who looks forward to going outside. She was staring out the window, but we told her that we could not go outside that day.

In reality, this is just a glimpse of what so many communities face every forest fire season, and we got a bit of what that is like in Ottawa. We saw the sky obscured with smoke, and it was difficult to breathe. People's eyes were stinging and they were coughing. This is a small example of the reality for so many people and the reality of the climate crisis.

In a crisis like this, where we cannot even breathe the air and eyes are stinging, when we cannot see the sun and cities are clouded in smog, the reality is that it is clearly 100% the result of a hotter and drier climate. This means earlier forest fire seasons, and longer and hotter seasons. We are seeing a clear trend in the face of what is clearly the result of a climate crisis, which is exacerbating an existing problem and making it a lot worse. However, in the face of this, we have the Conservatives who cannot even agree whether or not there is a climate crisis at all. They cannot even come to an agreement that it is actually a problem. Then we have a Liberal government that continues to talk a lot about the problem, but does nothing really concrete that meets the urgency of what we are up against. What we are up against is urgent, with people evacuating their homes or stranded across our country. Our country is really burning.

We have massive numbers of forest fires that are uncontrollable, and we have communities hit that have never been hit before. In the Atlantic region, I spoke with the mayor of Halifax, and he said that this is the first time he recalls forest fires within the municipality of Halifax. The Atlantic region is a very rainy region pretty much year-round except maybe for part of the summer. It is a very rainy region, and for there to be forest fires close to or in the municipality of Halifax is not normal. Also, we have forest fires early in the season. Summer has not even officially begun, and we are dealing with what looks like a horrific record-breaking year of forest fires.

However, it is not just the Atlantic region, not just here in Ontario and not just in Quebec, but across the prairies, northern communities and in the west that we are seeing forest fires raging, and there are a lot of people wondering what our leaders are doing. While the country is burning, what are parliamentarians talking

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about? Are they taking this seriously? Are they taking steps? Sadly, the answer is no, they are not taking this seriously. The government of the day and the official opposition both are still trying to figure out if they can just talk about it, if that is good enough, or try to argue that it does not exist. Neither approach is going to deal with this problem.

What we are proposing is a two-pronged approach. First of all, we know that we have to do more to protect our planet. We have to reduce emissions. We have to fight the climate crisis, because it is absolutely contributing to worsening conditions for forest fires. There is no doubt about that; the science is clear. On top of that, we need a better approach to firefighting. My colleague just shared some ideas about what we could be doing. However, we need a national response that acknowledges that forest fires have become so severe that every year we call for support from around the world, and provinces call on neighbouring provinces and others in the country to send in supports.

Our firefighters are incredible, and they do an incredible job. I want to acknowledge them and our first responders. However, they are tasked with an impossible job. How can they contain what is becoming worse and worse every year, when they need to rely upon so many other supports, and when international firefighters have to come?

● (1150)

New Democrats are calling for a better approach at the national level. We need to train up a national firefighting force that has the training and the equipment to deal with what has now become more of a reality. We know with forest fires, they literally only take a matter of days to spread. If we can catch a forest fire early and respond with enough vigour and a strong enough response, we can contain it early, but if we miss the opportunity and that window, the forest fire becomes uncontrollable.

We need a better approach. We need better forest management, we need a national team of firefighters who are properly trained and we need to make sure we have the equipment necessary. Sadly, many of our communities are fighting forest fires with inadequate, outdated equipment that is not up to the task. They are still doing a heroic job, but we have to make sure that we are better prepared.

New Democrats are calling for a national investment in an approach to forest management, having a team that is trained, prepared and equipped to deal with forest fires so they do not have to rely on international volunteers and communities giving us their support and so that provinces do not have to scrounge to find ways to deal with this. We need a national team that is prepared to do this work.

[Translation]

I also want to talk about what is happening in Quebec. In Chibougamau, the mayor had to ask people to leave with as few belongings as possible. She even recommended leaving pets behind. People across the country are afraid, and rightly so.

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However, the current problem with the climate crisis is that, on one hand, we have the Conservative Party and its leader who do not believe in climate change, and on the other, we have the Liberals who talk the talk, but do not walk the walk. They are not doing what is necessary to win this fight. The government has always alternated between these two parties.

I simply do not accept that this is the best we can do. Once again, the Liberals acted too slowly, which, as I said earlier, is inexcusable in the case of wildfires. This is frustrating because, every year, the number of wildfires increases and the Liberals learn nothing from it.

The federal government does not always have to wait for a crisis to occur before it takes action. The government has a vital role to play when it comes to prevention, preparation and protection. Rather than subsidizing big oil and spending \$30 billion on a pipeline, the Liberals could invest to strengthen preventive measures and expand the national Firesmart program. They could train, equip and assign more initial fire control teams to deal with fires before they get bigger; stockpile emergency firefighting equipment, including planes; develop a process to deliver additional resources to high-risk wildfire areas before fires break out; renew the existing fleet of air tankers, many of which are 30 years old; and modernize and repair the infrastructure to support those aircraft.

There are solutions. The government just needs to have the will and the courage to take action.

[English]

It is clear that we have solutions. We know it needs to be done. It is really a question of whether or not the government is prepared to do what is necessary. We cannot continually be in the cycle of just responding to a crisis. It is not good enough to say that we stand with communities when we could have prevented the worst from happening. The federal government has an important and vital role to play. It is too often that a crisis happens, we are scrambling to respond and communities are left devastated.

Let us take this crisis seriously, let us respond to the climate crisis with the seriousness and urgency that it requires and let us invest in a better national approach to deal with forest fires.

• (1155)

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I take some exception to the leader of the NDP saying that members of this House are not taking this seriously.

A month ago, I was on the front lines and visited the government operations centre for the fires around Parkland County. I know the member for South Shore—St. Margarets just came from the front lines in Nova Scotia and the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord came from the front lines in Quebec.

Can the leader of the NDP tell us whether he has visited any of these wildfire sites and, if so, what were his experiences on the front line?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, we had an emergency debate on the forest fires given how serious they are. In that emergency debate, not a single member of Parliament in the Conservative Party from Alberta showed up despite how serious the matter was.

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order from the hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Mr. Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, I raised this with one of his colleagues as well. I would ask for a retraction of that statement, because I was in this House well into the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: I want to remember members not to note whether people are in the chamber or not. We need to be careful of that.

The hon. member for Burnaby South.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I should clarify. One member of the Conservative Party from Alberta was there. I retract saying that no one was there. There was one person there out of many Alberta MPs.

The matter is serious—

The Deputy Speaker: I just want to remind folks again that we cannot say who is here and who is not here, now or in the past.

The hon. member for Burnaby South.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, it is serious that we are still faced with a Conservative Party that does not accept that a hotter and drier climate is directly contributing to worsening forest fires. We have to tackle the climate crisis if we truly want to make sure communities are safe. The Conservatives are still struggling to understand that concept.

The Liberals talk about that and have the power to actually do things but are not doing them. They have the power to make things better, the power to end fossil fuel subsidies, invest in clean energy and reduce emissions, but they are not doing that.

On top of that, we have the power to have a national response with proper funding and training to equip a national forest firefighting team and that is not being done. That is what we are up against.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am a fan of podcasts and one of them is a Canadian podcast called *The Hurly Burly Shakespeare Show!* A few months ago, the guest on the show was a so-called well-known NDP adviser to both the federal and provincial NDP. The first question the host asked was, “What do you think the Liberal government will be remembered for?” The famous NDP adviser to the federal NDP and many provincial NDP parties said that it will be remembered as the first government in Canada to take climate change seriously.

I would ask the member to comment on that.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, sadly, as I mentioned, the only two parties that have been in power in Canada have been Conservative and Liberal. The bar has been set very low for the Liberal government to be the government that has done the most. That is not a compliment to the government.

It is a testament to how poorly governments in the past have responded that the government's inaction and lack of real urgency are considered the most aggressive approach to the climate crisis. That is a sad state of affairs. That is a sad testament to where we are. We have to do a lot better.

As I said in my speech, this cannot be the best that our country can do. The inaction from the Liberals and disbelief from the Conservatives that we even have a climate crisis cannot be the best that our country has to offer. I believe we can do a lot more and we need to do a lot more.

• (1200)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, in budget 2023, the Liberal government promised to invest \$80 billion to prevent global warming, but that funding is available to the oil and gas industry. I would like to know how my colleague feels about that. Where does he think we should urgently invest those funds?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, I do not agree with the Liberal government giving billions of dollars to oil companies that have made huge profits, record profits, in fact.

We must force the government to invest more to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We must invest more money to encourage clean energy and invest in businesses that are tackling the climate crisis. We must not give money to oil companies that are making record profits. We must force the government to do what is necessary.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think it is very important to rise in the House to speak on this extremely important issue. I have the pleasure of following the leader of the NDP, who gave a truly inspiring and highly informative speech. I think that it should be shared with all parliamentarians and all Canadians and Quebecers as well.

We are currently seeing, experiencing and feeling the impact of the climate crisis and climate disruption. For days, the country has literally been on fire. We can smell it. This week, the air in Ottawa smelled like smoke, like a campfire. The impact of the wildfires burning in the Prairies, Alberta, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec has major repercussions on our communities and our societies.

In Quebec, nothing like this has ever been seen before. Yesterday, there were 140 out-of-control fires. People on the north shore and in Abitibi had to be evacuated. Entire cities, including Chibougamau, are at risk. Tens of thousands of Quebecers are being forced to leave their homes and seek shelter elsewhere because the planet is literally burning. It is no longer happening in Australia, Siberia or somewhere else in the world. It is happening here, in our own backyard.

People are seeing the real effects of climate disruption. They are seeing the effects of greenhouse gas emissions being so high that some areas get too hot, while others get colder, and that some areas get a lot of rain, causing flooding, while others do not get enough, causing drought. This climate disruption has an impact on our ecosystems and living environments and on people everywhere.

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With the smog in Montreal and the smoke in Ottawa, people in frail health, seniors and people with respiratory conditions like asthma are suffering right now, and they will keep suffering in the years to come because it is not over.

Unfortunately, it is not over because previous governments, both Conservative and Liberal, did not do what needed to be done to significantly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and pollution. That is why, today, Canada is lagging way behind the international community, at the back of the pack in terms of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. We are not an example of what the rest of the world should do. Instead, we are an example of what not to do.

Obviously, we cannot say that a particular forest fire is directly attributable to climate change or climate disruption. For years, however, the IPCC, the UN and all the scientists have been telling us that disasters such as forest fires, floods and droughts will become more frequent. There will be more and more of them, and each event will be more serious. We can therefore conclude that forest fires growing in number and intensity are a direct result of climate change. All the scientific reports and all the IPCC reports have been telling us for years that this is what is coming, that it will happen and that we have to prepare for it or change how we do things.

Unfortunately, we did not change how we do things. We still act according to the old economic model of natural resource extraction and pollution. Canada has been doing this for years and has not changed.

Canada ranks 39th in the world in terms of population. Of course, there are China, India and the United States. However, in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, we find ourselves in the top 10. We are the 10th-largest greenhouse gas emitter in the world, when we are 39th in terms of population. I realize that it is cold and that we have to keep warm. Everyone agrees on that. However, we are not the only northern country. Scandinavian countries are also in the north and need to keep warm, but they are not in the same ranking.

There is the Paris agreement; we can hope, but I do not think we will get there. In order to limit global warming to 1.5°, every human being on the planet would need to emit an average of two tonnes of GHGs per year.

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● (1205)

Right now, the average Canadian emits 17.5 tonnes of greenhouse gases, when the goal is to reach two tonnes. So when people tell us that Canada is not an important player, that things are not so bad, that we should wait for China and the United States to act, I say no. We have a collective responsibility as Quebeckers and as Canadians because we are major emitters of greenhouse gases. This is due in part to our lifestyles. We buy very heavy cars that consume a lot, even for electric cars. Indeed, due to the materials needed to manufacture an electric car that weighs 2,000 kilograms, we still emit a lot of greenhouse gases.

In addition, Canada is an oil and gas producing country and the Liberal government uses public funds to encourage, subsidize and pay for increased oil and gas production. That is entirely inconsistent with the Paris agreement, which Canada signed and agreed to. At some point, there must be consistency in our actions.

The official opposition tells us that climate change happens, that the climate changes all the time regardless, and that production must be increased. The Conservatives tell us that it is enough to reduce the carbon intensity per barrel of oil. The Conservatives' plan for years has been to reduce the intensity per barrel of oil.

It is like telling a smoker that the amount of tar in each cigarette will be cut in half so they will have less impact on their lungs. That is great news, but if they smoke two packs a day instead of one, that will have no impact. There will be just as much tar in their lungs before and after. Still, that is the Conservatives' plan. They advocate the use of technology so that each barrel of oil is a little bit cleaner, but two or three times more will be produced. The result is the same; absolutely nothing changes.

For their part, the Liberals say that we really need to reduce pollution. They believe that putting a price on carbon will solve the problem. It is all well and good to put a price on pollution and a price on carbon. However, if, at the same time, we buy the Trans Mountain pipeline, which is a bottomless financial pit, with tens of billions of dollars of taxpayer money, pretty words and a carbon tax will not change much. If the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, who was previously an environmentalist and an activist, signs a ministerial order to approve the Bay du Nord project, to approve a new operation that will produce billions of barrels of oil near Newfoundland, the carbon tax will not change a thing. At the same time, we are doing something completely contradictory that does the opposite of what we are trying to achieve.

In an article published in *La Presse*, Patrick Lagacé tells us about the Bay du Nord project, which the Minister of the Environment has authorized. If we took 100,000 motorists and put them on bicycles tomorrow morning, that would not be enough to offset the environmental impact of the Bay du Nord project. The project was postponed for three years, which was not the Liberals' decision. However, the Liberals authorized the project, which will still begin later.

In addition, the government is subsidizing oil and gas companies time and again, which fully contradicts our international commitments and the urgency of the situation. I repeat, the urgency of the situation is staring us right in the face. It is before our eyes, in our mouths, in our noses and in our lungs. Today, people must take

their suitcases and leave their villages to flee forest fires, while the Liberal government is not doing enough to fight climate change and is being completely inconsistent.

I had the opportunity to represent the NDP at two COPs, the international climate change summits. During the last COP in Egypt, the Liberal government invited oil companies to join Canada's pavilion to talk about climate change. That is where the Liberals are today. They must take responsibility for their decisions.

● (1210)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, to have these conversations, we need to find common ground and we need to deal in facts. For example, I find common ground with NDP members when they talk about not subsidizing the fossil fuel industry. I think perhaps we need to more aggressively implement those reductions. I also think we have to accept the facts, and some of the facts the NDP is presenting are slightly misleading. The reality is that GHG emissions in Canada went down by 9% between 2019 and 2021. That is second best in the G7. It also happened, and this is very important, while our economy continued to grow, as we may get comments that there was a pandemic at that time.

I am wondering if the member would like to reflect on the fact that we are making serious moves forward. Our GHG emissions have gone down, and we have been second best in the G7 over the last two years despite our economic growth.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, it is pretty funny to hear the Liberals tell us that greenhouse gas emissions went down in 2020-21. Something happened during that time: the COVID-19 pandemic. The economy slowed down to roughly zero. Of course greenhouse gas emissions went down. There was no economic activity.

Now that the pandemic is over and economic activity has resumed, greenhouse gas emissions have increased. That is what needs to be said, contrary to what my Liberal colleague is saying.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am hearing members who are trying to continue to participate even though they were not recognized. I would ask them to wait to be recognized.

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

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I addressed that fallacy in my question.

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

[Translation]

The hon. member for Drummond.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is unbelievable. I was sitting pretty close to the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, but I could barely hear what he was saying because the other member was shouting so much. That being said, let us move on to more serious matters.

I very much appreciate the NDP's position on today's motion. Its approach to the climate emergency is quite similar to the Bloc's. I am pleased to see that we have common ground. However, the NDP is supporting the government's budget, which commits billions of dollars to the oil industry.

I understand that the NDP is getting something out of it, including dental care, and they are very proud of that, but is that not a high price to pay to support a budget that once again allocates billions of dollars to this industry we are denouncing today?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Drummond for his extremely relevant question.

The NDP is indeed proud to have secured gains that will benefit Quebecers, such as dental care for seniors and teenagers and housing for indigenous communities. We are making progress on these fronts, but we are also continuing to put pressure on the Liberal government and to condemn oil subsidies. Under the agreement that we negotiated, we will be able to reduce oil subsidies and invest in renewable energy. The two are not mutually exclusive. We do not necessarily want to trigger an election, because we have achieved real gains for people. However, at the same time, we are able to criticize the government and ask it to do more on climate change and to invest in renewable energy.

• (1215)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed listening to my colleague. Like him, we recognize that climate change is real and that action is needed. Humans played a role in creating climate change, and so we have a role to play in turning the situation around. Everyone agrees that we need to reduce pollution. The path that these people are taking is different from ours. I respect it, but it is different.

The government has been in power for eight years, and it wants to increase the carbon tax. We have to wonder whether this will produce any real results. According to an analysis by UN scientists at COP27, Canada ranks 58th out of 63 countries when it comes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Why continue down this path that does not take us to the top, but instead places Canada among those countries at the bottom?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

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It is quite true that Canada, under the Liberals, ranks 58th out of 63 countries when it comes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. I agree with him that this is an admission of failure.

However, we cannot blame this solely on the carbon tax or the price on pollution. It is a good tool, a market-based tool, that provides incentives to pollute less. When it is the only tool we have and we do things that are inconsistent and contradictory, we end up with a failure and an increase in greenhouse gas emissions. The problem is that I still do not see what the Conservative Party's plan is for achieving better results.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, first of all, I must say that, for the past week, my thoughts have mainly been with Quebecers and all the communities in Canada that are suffering due to the forest fires. I would also like to highlight the poise, courage and invaluable work of all the firefighters battling the forest fires in Quebec and all those who have come to lend them a hand to get through this ordeal.

However, we cannot say we are surprised by what is happening. Climate events are increasing in frequency and intensity, confirming the forecasts published by experts from all over the world. We need only think of the historic floods in Quebec, mainly in the Lanaudière and Charlevoix regions, the ice storm a few weeks ago, the repeated heat waves, such as the ones that left 60 people dead in Montreal in 2018, or the violent storms that hit Ontario and Quebec a year ago, killing nine. There is a long list of examples, but I want to use my time to also talk about the cost of climate inaction.

The economic and human costs are closely intertwined. According to the Canadian Climate Institute, climate impacts will be slowing Canada's economic growth by \$25 billion by 2025. It is almost 2025 now. One of the researchers, Mr. Bourque, said that it is really the public who will pay the highest price and that they will be hit from different sides, either by higher insurance premiums or by direct costs that are not covered.

Extreme weather events have high economic costs. In Fort McMurray in 2016, they cost \$3.8 billion. According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, in 2022, these costs reached \$3.2 billion in Canada. Worldwide, in 2022, the cost was \$275 billion. What will the current fires cost? More important, however, are the direct effects on people's lives. People who are currently affected will find shelter and refuge, but when they go home, heartbroken, what will they find? Some have also lost their jobs. With the EI system on its last legs, what will happen to those who lose their jobs because out-fitters are burning down?

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Severe weather also affects mental and physical health. The World Health Organization says that climate change is the greatest threat to health in the 21st century. It is not the first time that I have said this here in the House. On several occasions, I have presented the House with Canadian statistics on the economic impact of health problems caused by air pollution. This week, we are breathing air as bad as the air in cities like Jakarta and Mexico City, and there are not tens of millions of people here.

The health effects of climate change include increased rates of cardiovascular, lung and kidney disease, as well as increased cancer rates. Research has found causal links with the deterioration of the environment: contaminated water, air pollution, soil contaminated with toxic substances, all against the backdrop of constantly rising mercury levels. This amounts to a cost of \$34 billion per year for the health care system.

It would be a mistake to think that the problems affecting people on the other side of the globe have little or no impact on us. Let us not forget the forest fires in Australia a few years ago. According to a study that was published in the May issue of *Sciences Advances*, the smoke from those fires may have even changed weather patterns. What happens at one end of the globe affects everyone.

Here is another example. This week, the UN informed us that the warming of the oceans is causing unparalleled cascading effects, including ice melting, sea level rise, marine heat waves and ocean acidification. The ocean's capacity to absorb CO₂ is also diminishing. This shows that there is a connection between extreme weather events in the world and the global weather system, regardless of where the initial trigger event occurred.

The government needs to do more. That was well put, was it not? It shows decorum. However, what I would really rather say is that the government needs to get its head out of the sand and stop making matters worse. It is as though we are standing on the side of the highway and we see a big tractor trailer heading our way at full speed and we just stand there. The truck drives past, the wind from it pushes us back and we fall and hurt ourselves. I think that metaphor accurately describes the government and Canada as a whole.

● (1220)

If we are to be proactive with respect to extreme weather, we have to call a spade a spade. We must stop downplaying the dangers and the impacts of the climate emergency. What is the government doing in response to this challenge? It is continuing to subsidize the oil and gas industry. That is what it is doing.

I will give two examples. I talked about this at the beginning of the week and I am talking about it again today. Billions of dollars have been invested in the Trans Mountain pipeline and its expansion. Costs have skyrocketed, going from \$7.5 billion to \$30.9 billion, even though the Minister of Finance promised not to inject public money. No, she is using the Canada account instead, but that comes from taxpayers.

A few years ago, the Prime Minister proudly said that the profits from the TMX project would be invested in the fight against climate change. We knew that there would be no profits, and today, it

has been confirmed. Trans Mountain is the costly crowning touch to the Liberals' failure to fight climate change.

Another example of subsidies is found in budget 2023. Subsidies, or tax credits, which are the same thing, are being provided for false solutions such as carbon capture and storage and blue hydrogen produced from natural gas, which is a fossil fuel. These are fossil fuel subsidies by another name. We must call a spade a spade.

The government has powerful mechanisms at its disposal. It has legislation, which is binding. It can provide disincentives in the form of taxes. It can also provide incentives in the form of subsidies.

Canada will pay a heavy price for believing that subsidizing the industry that is fuelling the climate crisis is the right path to take. The federal government is not focusing enough attention on the green technologies that are ready to be deployed to support an energy transition guided by renewable energy. People we meet with have told us that they do not have access to the Canada growth fund.

There is no ambiguity on what constitutes renewable energy, right? However, the government seems to be a bit confused about this, even though it is easy to understand. Let me explain it again: The incentive has to be tied to solutions to the problem, not to funding the problem.

The hydrogen tax credit should be available only for clean hydrogen. The allegedly miraculous technology of carbon capture and storage makes me laugh. It is rather pathetic. The oil industry has infected governments and earns obscene profits, yet it is looking for a handout for technology to optimize its production. Come on. It could take care of that itself. The industry has known for 60 years how much CO₂ it was going to generate.

However, the industry understands all too well how things work. It is adapting its government and corporate relations in light of global net zero targets, with the aim of taking full advantage of energy transition subsidies. The industry is very savvy.

The government gets to keep its hands clean. It has given the industry permission to export its infernal reserves of fossil fuels. Carbon capture and storage technologies are very popular with the government, but they only serve to scrape to the very bottom of the deposits. Believing that this can save anything is a pipe dream of the saddest sort. Manipulating citizens by presenting false solutions is dishonest and dangerous. These technologies are immature, expensive, energy-intensive and ineffective. That is the admission of a government that consents to maintaining the dependence on fossil fuels it has created with taxpayer money. Moving to carbon capture and storage only proves the government's submissiveness to the oil and gas lobbies.

I have not even mentioned the drilling in a marine refuge off the eastern coast of Newfoundland. I do not have enough time to call out everything, so let me end on a more positive note.

With today's motion, the Bloc Québécois is calling on all parliamentarians and the Government of Canada to change course. The investment approach currently being pursued is not working. We missed an opportunity in terms of the postpandemic economic recovery. Our climate targets are for 2030, seven years from now. It is time for a paradigm shift to trigger the real transition.

• (1225)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague and friend from Repentigny for her speech. She is an extraordinary activist.

This is my first opportunity to speak this afternoon. I would like to thank the Bloc Québécois for raising this issue today. It is a good opportunity to have an important debate. I completely agree with the Bloc on this. The Green Party will obviously be voting in favour of the motion.

I would like to briefly ask my colleague whether she agrees with the Green Party that the federal government needs to state very clearly today that it is not open to allowing new oil development projects anywhere in Canada.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her kind words, but I think she knows a lot more about it than me. She is a long-time activist.

Like her and many others, we lament the fact that Canada is an oil-producing country. Sooner or later, it will have to take the leap, change direction and engage in a meaningful transition. I have lost track of the number of years we have been talking about a transition. It is time to stop talking and get started on the transition.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

The reality is that we are seeing other countries make the energy transition. Canada has vast potential, whether in terms of solar energy or geothermal energy. At the same time, we know that the U.S. market is increasingly closed to fossil fuel exports. However, U.S. states and cities are becoming increasingly open to clean energy imports.

The NDP considers it important to create an electrical grid like the one in Europe to facilitate clean energy exports. The member just discussed this topic very eloquently. Would she agree that upgrading the electrical grid is important to permit such exports?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. He seems very optimistic about what is happening in the United States. It could change completely, depending on who is elected next. I, for one, am not that optimistic.

Now, there was a word missing from his question. He talked about electrifying transportation, but we need to talk about public transportation. That is what is important. That is what is lacking in this country. There is almost no public transport. I once came here by train from Vancouver, and we had to keep stopping to let the oil through. That is not public transportation. Frankly, it is a bit ridiculous. We need public transportation for people who have to travel, and we need to stop always thinking about oil. Of course products and goods have to get through, but it should not always be to the detriment of those who take public transportation.

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• (1230)

[*English*]

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, I asked a question earlier this morning to one of the Bloc members, and they had no idea of the bill I was speaking about, so hopefully they have had some time since then to research it a little. The bill I was speaking about is my private member's bill from the 42nd Parliament, Bill C-365, which sought to increase the recognition of the significance of theft and vandalism of firefighting equipment.

The leadoff statement in the motion today is to show solidarity and express support for those affected by the forest fires. Why did the Bloc members, en masse, vote against the bill that would have seen increased recognition of theft and vandalism of firefighting equipment?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I know that he asked the member for Beloeil—Chambly the same thing this morning, and that he could not remember it. Unfortunately, I have to say that I do not remember it either. However, when I listened to him this time, it made me question whether this is not something that falls under the jurisdiction of the provinces and Quebec.

The issue of equipment and so on is a matter for Quebec and the provinces, is it not? I will leave it at that because I honestly cannot remember, and there are so many other things to talk about. I have no other answer for him.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, once upon a time in Abitibi and James Bay country, in my home, there were forest fires caused by climate change.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to my party's motion today. Under the circumstances, this is an important motion to debate. I will be talking about what people in Abitibi and James Bay are going through.

The forest fires raging in Quebec are further proof that the federal government must stop subsidizing fossil fuels and accelerate the fight against climate change. In my riding, Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, as in many other parts of Canada, fires are raging, threatening many communities. Thousands of people have had to leave everything behind and evacuate immediately. All of these fires are affecting air quality, threatening infrastructure and undermining our collective efforts to fight climate change.

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The events of the past few days have made it clear that extreme weather events are a huge burden. They have shown us how high the human and economic cost can be. This situation forces us to re-think our climate change adaptation plans and redouble our efforts to prepare for the future and build a resilient society. We must scale up our efforts to adapt so we can help municipalities and the regions build resilience to natural disasters by creating an environmentally sustainable economic future.

I do not want to rehash last Monday's emergency debate, but since I had to be in my constituency at the time, I did not have a chance to take part in it. I will therefore use some of my speaking time to provide an update on the current situation in my riding, Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

The Abitibi and James Bay region is facing an extraordinarily difficult situation because of the forest fires. Thousands of hectares have burned and our forests are dying. People are confused about what to do. It is important to say that the situation is still very dangerous.

Last week I went to Chapais, where the risk of fire was high. The situation has since improved. The next day, the risk was high in Lebel-sur-Quévillon, where the Nordic Kraft pulp and paper mill is located. There could have been a very serious explosion, because of all the chemicals in the plant. The entire town of Lebel-sur-Quévillon had to be evacuated. In just a few hours' time, 2,500 people were evacuated to Senneterre and Val-d'Or. We can imagine the consequences.

People have to leave their homes in a hurry, and sometimes they even have to leave their animals behind, because they do not have time to pack up everything they need, given the stress that they are under. These people need support. They are not always able to assess what is going on, because right now the situation is worsening, not by the hour, but by the minute.

It is important for me to say that my heart goes out to all those affected by this situation. It is very difficult. It is a matter of survival.

It is also important to stress that people need to stay out of the forest. They need to avoid travelling and discarding cigarette butts, or driving around in all-terrain vehicles just because they are on vacation.

We know that outfitters are suffering at this time. I was there with the people of Lebel-sur-Quévillon. It is my hometown, the place where I grew up and spent my youth. When people found out that they had to evacuate, they were stunned, but they had to act quickly.

I commend the mayors who are having to evacuate with their people. I commend all the municipalities that are taking in those who are affected. I am referring to Senneterre, Val-d'Or, and Roberval. In Chibougamau, 7,500 people had to be moved because the road between Senneterre and Chapais was impassable. Quick action was needed in such conditions.

Simply put, my riding is the largest in Quebec, and it is on fire. The towns are completely surrounded by fire. Val-Paradis is a northern Quebec village in my riding, not far from La Sarre. This

village also had to be evacuated. I would like to thank La Sarre for taking in the people of that community. We always thank those who help out. We are short of firefighters, but help is on the way. We would also like to thank everyone and all the families who are providing support and taking in the disaster victims.

● (1235)

As I said, I was right there on the ground. I came here because as a parliamentarian, it is important for me to inform members of what we are going through right now because of climate change. With the fires that are raging right now, my region is absolutely feeling the effects of climate change. I am here not so much to talk about examples as to talk about the reality.

Right now, in my riding, just in the Chibougamau area, 78,000 hectares of forest have burned. In the Senneterre area, 132,000 hectares have burned. Let us imagine that forest. In terms of distance, it takes five hours to reach Val-d'Or from Ottawa. It takes four hours to go from Val-d'Or to Chibougamau. Let us imagine the immense forest surrounding our cities, the beauty we had that is no more.

We are also talking about businesses that are barely hanging on. We are talking about people who are concerned and wondering whether there will be work. We are talking about miners and forestry workers. Take, for example, Chantiers Chibougamau, which responded to the concerns of Lebel-sur-Quévillon and worked hard to dig a trench so that the fire would not spread to the factory or the town.

There has been a lot of collaboration. About 30 indigenous people from the Anishnabe Nation of Lac Simon and the Pikogan community are going to work as volunteer firefighters to support us. It is important to mention that.

I am also talking about communities. For example, the community of Lac Simon had to be evacuated to Val-d'Or. Many of those people have pets. The SPCA took care of those animals. Volunteers went to care for the animals and get them out. When times get tough, it affects everyone. It affects individuals, families, the municipality and the general public, because people are worried. There are also major wildfires in Alberta. My son lives in Edmonton and I must say I was very worried about him.

What are we doing as parliamentarians? What we should do is protect our environment. We cannot wait until it is too late. Unfortunately, we may be at that point. We must work together. It is not about pointing fingers. We must work together and make progress on environmental issues. Earlier, my colleague mentioned a few aspects that we need to develop together. We must stop talking and take action.

Climate change is exacerbating the conditions that lead to fires, such as drought, wind and lightning. All this also results in other extreme weather events such as landslides and flooding.

I will take this opportunity to express many thanks to all the mayors in my riding; I cannot say it enough. I have been in touch with these very competent people. All the crisis welcome centres in my riding are efficient and effective. With everything we are going through right now, I take my hat off to them and I congratulate them all.

However, I am no fool. I know that all the fires currently raging in our forests are not just the government's fault. I know that not all wildfires are caused by climate change, but are also a natural part of the forest life cycle. Still, it seems cynical for the Liberal government to be claiming, since it was first elected in 2015, that it believes in a climate emergency and is participating in the global effort to fight climate change. The truth is that, since 2015, it has been spending billions of taxpayer dollars to keep Canada's oil and gas industry on life support, including Canada's tar sands, the source of the dirtiest oil in the world. The government has gone off track.

The Bloc Québécois is asking parliamentarians and the government to stop investing in fossil fuels and, instead, to introduce incentives that encourage the use of renewable energy.

In closing, I would like to say a last word about my riding. I want to underscore the monumental efforts being made by the people working on the ground as we speak, including firefighters, volunteer organizations and everyone associated with them. Once again, I commend them.

● (1240)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech on this important subject.

[English]

My heart is with all those who are having to evacuate and for what they are going through. These events are deeply traumatizing. We need to think about the supports that will be necessary in the days, the months and the years ahead. I do not want this to be our new normal. I do not want my kids to not be able to have clean air to breathe or to be anxious about what crisis or disaster our communities will face next.

What are the mental health impacts of the climate crisis? What supports are we going to need, moving forward, to ensure we have these resilient communities?

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

The important thing is to get support from social services. I neglected to thank the integrated health and social services centres, including the one in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, and the Baie-James regional health and social services centre. These organizations support the community.

As members know, the Baie-James regional centre is normally headquartered in Chibougamau, which has been evacuated. Services are now being provided from Roberval. The fact is that, when it comes to social and mental health services, support is very impor-

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tant. There is a “during” and an “after”. We have to be there to support these people.

I am calling on the government to help Quebec by providing the necessary transfers so that we can support our communities. We need it. Today it is us, but tomorrow it will be others.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech, and I thank her party for choosing to debate this motion today. It is especially timely now, with forest fires raging across the country.

Last year, the Liberals gave big oil \$20 billion in subsidies.

Does the member have any suggestions for climate solutions that we could invest in, instead of doling out public money to oil companies?

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her support.

It is important to mention that we have to stop investing in oil companies. The Conservative Party often spreads false information.

At present, the issue is not to act on the basis of false information. We need to spread real information, because we need to take action on climate change right now. That is the important part. The government must take the proper measures, which have to be clear and specific.

● (1245)

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to my colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou. She represents a riding next to mine, and we have a lot of relationships in common. My riding shares a very long border with hers.

Over the past few days, people in my region have been anxious, particularly because of the air quality. The fires were more prevalent in her riding, but she was on the ground on Thursday, and she went to meet the communities, which are several hours apart. Last night, we did not know whether it would be possible to cross the La Vérendrye wildlife reserve, and the day before, we learned that the town of Chibougamau, with a population of 10,000, had been evacuated. That had a huge impact.

As my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot likes to say, managing this crisis is like building a plane while flying it. That is why co-operation and communication are so important.

I would like to pay tribute to my colleague, who has been on the ground, who has demonstrated solidarity, who has shared information with people and who is reinforcing the already very strong social fabric of Abitibi—Témiscamingue and northern Quebec.

I encourage her to keep up the good work.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague.

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It is true that we often collaborate. It is important to say that we are talking about this because our colleagues and our leader support us. I also have to say that the Deputy Prime Minister has reached out to me. The government is supporting us too, and I am grateful for that support. It is important to say these things, but we have to take action. I cannot say it enough: What we are going through right now with these fires is a huge deal.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to indicate that I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

I will begin by acknowledging that this Parliament is located on the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

I appreciate the fact that we are debating this today.

By their very nature, forest fires strike swiftly and without warning. Tens of thousands of families in Canada have experienced that this week. Few things are as terrifying as forest fires. As so many Canadians and communities can attest, few things have such devastating consequences.

Over the past few weeks, we have seen videos of families fleeing through smoke from flames encircling their vehicles. It is horrifying. They had nothing but the clothes on their backs. Houses were reduced to ashes. Cars, trucks and forests were incinerated. Smoke blanketed cities hundreds of kilometres away.

In Canada, there have been more than 2,293 forest fires since the beginning of the year. These fires have ravaged more than 3.8 million hectares and forced thousands of Canadians to flee their homes. More than 20,183 people are still under evacuation orders. This week, we were all shocked to experience the unprecedented thick haze here in Ottawa due to the nearby fires.

In Alberta alone, more than one million hectares have burned, making this the second-worst wildfire season on record. It is only early June, and the hottest and driest period of the year is still to come. The situation in Nova Scotia is also unprecedented. The province has already been hit by more forest fires this year than in all of 2022. The fire in Shelburne County is the largest ever recorded in the province. In Quebec, fires are estimated to have destroyed more of the province's forests in the past four days than in the past 10 years combined.

We are pleased to see that the immediate danger has somewhat subsided in certain areas, but there are still 239 out-of-control or uncontrolled fires across the country. The numbers change by the hour.

Environment and Climate Change Canada also issued special weather advisories in parts of the country, including the national capital region, to warn the public about the risks of wildfire smoke. People with lung disease such as asthma or heart disease, older adults, children, pregnant people, and people who work outdoors are at higher risk.

The situation is unprecedented. Emergency responders from across the country are pitching in. I know that all members will join me in expressing my gratitude and admiration for the unwavering

efforts of the firefighters and public safety personnel who continue to toil 24 hours a day to keep our citizens safe. International assistance has come to us from our partners in the United States, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, and more help is on the way from our allies, including France.

In particular, I want to thank all those who took the time to help their neighbours. A lot of people have offered their help to others. I had the opportunity to visit northern Ontario, Quebec and a lot of other places in the past few days, and I can say that it is necessary, it is paramount, for neighbours to help each other. I am proud to see that in Canada, when people need help evacuating their families, their neighbours answer the call. I am proud to see that in Canada, when a province needs help, its neighbours answer the call by providing the personnel and resources to help fight the fires.

Over the past few weeks, I have met with representatives of search and rescue organizations in Sault-Saint-Marie and Pointe-Claire. I had meetings in emergency operations centres in Thunder Bay and Quebec City, in addition to meeting with representatives of the Salvation Army in Montreal.

● (1250)

Those organizations exist to support efforts on the ground at times like these. I can say that the people who sustain those organizations are the embodiment of Canadian solidarity. Canadians can rest assured that the Government of Canada is ready to support any province or territory that requests assistance.

My riding, Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, has suffered the impacts of flooding, and we have seen the solidarity of the volunteer groups that have rallied together. I would like to thank everyone who has helped out, including the organizations, the businesses that supplied equipment and all those who came together, including the municipalities that set up service centres.

We have supported the provinces by sending nearly 150 members of the Canadian Armed Forces to Alberta to support firefighting efforts in the Fox Creek and Fort Chipewyan regions. DND and CAF personnel are also helping fight forest fires in Nova Scotia. This assistance comes on top of other supports being provided by various federal departments and agencies, including the Canadian Coast Guard, Transport Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada, to name a few.

Health Canada, for example, provided equipment such as cots for evacuees through the national emergency strategic stockpile. Public Services and Procurement Canada is ready to provide emergency assistance to guarantee additional supplies, services and temporary accommodation.

I do not have the time to list all the assistance we are providing today, Madam Speaker, but rest assured that our government will continue to work with all levels of government to ensure they have what they need to keep people safe. This is not the time for playing politics, it is the time for everyone, including the federal government, the provinces, the territories, indigenous people, organizations and municipalities, to work together. Let us all work together to fight the forest fires.

We must also plan for how to get back to normal after the fires are put out. In the event of a major catastrophe, the federal government can cover up to 90% of eligible response and recovery costs for the provinces and territories as part of the disaster financial assistance arrangements.

These events are becoming more frequent and more severe because of climate change, and this trend will continue. Canadians still clearly remember the destruction of Lytton in 2021 and Fort McMurray in 2016. Last fall, the Atlantic region was hit by hurricane Fiona, one of the worst storms ever recorded. We know that climate dangers pose significant risks to the safety of Canadians and also to our economy and our natural environment.

Indigenous communities are at greater risk because they are often in remote or coastal locations, do not have access to emergency management services and are dependent on natural ecosystems.

Understanding these consequences and other repercussions of climate change and preparing for these events are a priority for our government. Public Safety Canada is working with our federal partners, the provincial and territorial governments, indigenous organizations and our non-governmental partners to strengthen Canada's ability to assess risks, mitigate the effects of natural disasters, and prepare for, respond to and recover from them.

In conclusion, I want to thank my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois for raising this issue in the House today and the NDP for requesting an emergency debate about it on Monday. Indeed, it was very important on Monday also. Our homes and our well-being are at risk. As parliamentarians, we must continue to work together, setting partisanship aside, to make Canadians' safety a priority.

In closing, I would say that after watching what has been happening on the ground these past few days, we need to take climate change seriously. No government has ever done as much to combat climate change. We must keep going and fight the forest fires. That is the priority right now. Then we can look at ways to combat these environmental disasters more effectively.

• (1255)

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for expressing quite extensively his solidarity with all those who live there. The situation is indeed quite serious.

Just 20 minutes ago, I was talking with one of my assistants whose family lives in Chibougamau, a town that was evacuated yesterday. His mother and sister, who has young children, are now in Roberval, but he was saying that the situation is causing the children a lot of anxiety. They do not know whether they will be able to go home or whether they will lose their house. It is a very tragic situation.

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Above and beyond that, we are still talking about a motion about climate change. My colleague has rose-coloured glasses on when he says that his government is among those that have done the most to combat climate change. I would remind him that his government made \$40 billion in direct and indirect investments in fossil fuels last year, in 2022, including \$11.5 billion that was allocated solely to the oil industry.

How does my colleague think we are going to successfully combat climate change if we continue like this?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Madam Speaker, I would like to talk about our non-partisan collaboration on the wildfires. Our government is working hard to meet its G20 commitment to phase out fossil fuel subsidies. Although we cannot stop using oil overnight, we have made a lot of commitments in this regard.

Let us talk about what really matters today, which is solidarity in the fight against the wildfires. Let us talk about the wildfires, which is the hot topic of the day.

The Quebec government appealed to our government on Friday. The Bloc Québécois has asked me questions in the House. I answered that we were fully co-operating with the Quebec government. We received Quebec's request, and, the very next day, we gave our approval and said that we would assist Quebec.

[English]

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have asked this question of the Bloc members a couple of times, so hopefully the Liberal members will have been paying attention to the questions that are being asked about the motion today.

In the 42nd Parliament, I introduced a private member's bill dealing with the theft and vandalism of firefighting equipment. It would have made changes to the penalties for theft of firefighting equipment that result in actual harm to or threat to life, or loss of life, yet the entire Liberal caucus voted against it. I would like to ask the member if he knows why. It did not even allow the bill to get to committee stage, to be looked at at the committee level. It simply voted it down at second reading.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Madam Speaker, as a government, we have taken real action. We created the national risk profile. This document, which we have been working on since we took office, is now available. Today, we have an understanding of the risks in a world increasingly affected by climate change. In addition to equipment, this is one of the best ways to keep Canadians safe. It lets us determine what we need, and what equipment and personnel are required.

The bad news is that there will be more events like this as time goes on.

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I hope that the national risk profile will be further developed to cover events other than floods and wildfires.

• (1300)

[English]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is clear that we are experiencing a climate crisis. It is here today as forest fires ravage across the country. On Vancouver Island, in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, we are seeing fires. As a mother, I find it just heartbreaking to see the impacts, not just for the future but also for today.

When will we see the Liberal government finally implement real climate solutions? Instead, we are seeing subsidies going to big oil. We could be using that money for real climate solutions. When are we going to see it?

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Madam Speaker, we are proud to be at the forefront of the global movement against fossil fuel subsidies. Canada has accelerated its commitment within the G20 by moving the date up from 2025 to 2023. We are on track to meet this accelerated timeline. We are also asking our peer countries to accelerate their timeline. If everyone on the planet moves in the same direction, we will succeed in combatting climate change.

[English]

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I begin speaking about this very important topic in the motion, which, in part, asks us to stand in solidarity with and express support for all those affected by the current forest fires and to acknowledge that climate change is having a direct impact on people's quality of life and is exacerbating the frequency and scale of extreme weather and climate events, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the firefighters working night and day to control and put out the over 431 fires raging across our country in over seven provinces and territories.

I come from a very urbanesque riding, where people do not get to see what forest fires are really all about. Over this past week, I heard from constituents, and have experienced myself here in Ottawa, what smog from a forest fire hundreds of kilometres away feels like and the impact it has on our health and well-being. Schools in my riding have cancelled classes and recess to prevent kids from going outdoors so they are not breathing in a lot of really toxic fumes.

We tend to think about climate change as a concept that is out there, which we do not really connect with in urban centres like mine, but the forest fires this year have really grounded people, in my riding especially, in what the reality of climate change is, in Canada and across the world. It really begs the questions of what we can do, when we should have done it and how we can accelerate the process to ensure that the track we are on is delayed, smothered and stopped.

In the past seven years of the Liberal government, there have been significant steps taken. Bill S-5 is one of the very good ones that ensure recognition that climate change is, indeed, a crisis right now. We do need to invest further in protecting our environment, not just here in Canada but also in building partnerships abroad.

More and more Canadians are realizing now that climate change is real.

What has happened so far this year, and what is anticipated to happen over the next weeks and months, with forest fires in our country is setting for us a very clear path forward: We need to protect our planet. We need to do it by partnering with industry, civil society and all levels of government here in Canada through multi-lateral partnerships, and we need to do it with individual Canadians, because until and unless we really all come together on this, the outcome does look bleak.

The climate crisis right now is more urgent than ever. Canada is already experiencing an increase in heat waves; wildfires, as we have seen; and heavy storms. The poor air quality here in Ottawa over the last few days, as a result of the forest fires, is just a very small example. The impacts and the economic and health repercussions that come with them will continue if we do not accelerate what we are acting on now.

Since 2015, the government has taken significant action to protect the environment, to conserve nature and biodiversity, and to respond to the threat of climate change. Even so, we need to do more, and that is what I am hoping this motion will continue to do: push us and drive us together collectively, as a whole of government, partisan politics aside, to really tackle the issue of what climate change looks like now, what it will look like 50 years from now for our children and grandchildren, and the impact it will have on their lives.

• (1305)

We know the world's major economies are moving at an unprecedented pace to fight climate change, retooling their economies and building the net-zero industries of tomorrow. In fact, earlier today I had a conversation with one of those companies that is part of that industry, talking about its pathways initiative, which would lead to net zero; its investments in clean technology; and how they could transition. When industry comes together, when companies come together, when they work with government and when they work with indigenous communities, that is how we are going to develop a foundational, strong pathway forward to fighting climate change. The accelerating transition to net zero has started a global race to attract investment, as our friends and allies build their clean economies.

Canada has to keep the pace; we cannot afford to fall behind. Despite our competitive advantages and the foundational investments we have made in building Canada's clean economy over the past seven years, there are two fundamental challenges Canada has to address. The first is that many of the investments that will be critical for the realignment of global supply chains and the net-zero future are large-scale, long-term investments. Some investments may require developing infrastructure, while others may require financial incentives or a patient source of financial capital. For Canada to remain competitive, we must continue to build a framework that supports these types of investments in Canada. That is what we are doing with budget 2023.

Two weeks ago, I was happy to announce an investment by the government into a clean-tech company in my riding, Stromcore, which is now building batteries to replace biodiesel, to replace fuel in the manufacturing industry, for forklifts. Its work is profound, cutting-edge and part of the whole conversation about how we transition to being clean, to ensuring that climate change is curbed and to ensuring that our future generations have a clean environment to live in.

The second challenge is the passage of the United States' Inflation Reduction Act. It poses a major challenge to our ability to compete in the industries that will drive Canada's clean economy. Canada has taken a market-driven approach to emissions reduction. Our world-leading carbon pollution pricing system not only puts money back in the pockets of Canadians, but also is efficient and highly effective, because it provides a clear economic signal to businesses and allows them the flexibility to find the most cost-effective way to lower their emissions.

I realize that Canadians, during this very difficult time, feel the pinch, but the majority of people in my riding understand and appreciate that, yes, we do need to feel the pinch because we do have a world to protect, we do have to fight climate change, and each and every one of us has to do our part. This includes the current government, past governments and future governments. It includes all levels of government, civil society, individual Canadians and, across the board, the global community.

There is so much more we need to do. I am very proud of the efforts the Liberal government has made in ensuring that we are fighting climate change, that we are providing resources as these wildfires rage, and that we are working together with all parties across the aisle to ensure that we continue to fight that good fight.

• (1310)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. Once again, there is talk of good intentions and specific measures. However, I want to hear her reaction to the fact that the money her government is currently investing in the energy transition is being made available to oil and gas companies.

As a result, these companies stick around even longer when we should really be investing in actual clean energy, such as renewable energy, to begin a fair transition. What is more, this money should be invested in regions that are currently dependent on oil production, in order to support those populations through the transition.

I would like my colleague to respond to my comment. How does she explain that her government is still funding petroleum-based energy?

[English]

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, I think it is important to transition those that are heavy emitters, but in my speech I also spoke about a company in my riding that, through research and development and by starting a lithium battery within its garage, is now able to make clear reductions to our emissions through clean tech. We invested \$4.8 million in that company to ensure that it is able to thrive and provide support to other companies that rely on biodiesel

or heavy fuels. To make sure that the transition piece is happening, we are definitely investing in those companies.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a specific question for my friend from the Liberal side. When the carbon tax reaches \$170 a tonne, which will add 61¢ per litre for gas, and they have obviously done the modelling, how much lower will the temperature be in our country? How many degrees will the temperature drop when the carbon tax is fully implemented?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, I love that the member opposite feels he needs to draw a short-term transactional type of question here. What I had said in my speech—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I can hear the member speaking over me as I am trying to answer his question. It is that we need to continue. This is not a flip of a switch, and everything is fixed with one measure. It is, yes, a price on pollution; yes, it is to get to net-zero emissions; yes, it is to invest in clean technology and to make sure there is a transition to clean technology in our country. It is not partisan politics.

• (1315)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the situation with the climate crisis is very real. We are seeing forest fires all across the country. In British Columbia, in my own home province, we certainly have experienced this—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We are having some type of a technical issue. Is the hon. member's phone or computer close to the mike? Maybe an earpiece is on. Maybe we could turn down the earpieces that are right by there.

It almost sounds like water or something. We are just getting a constant noise.

We will try again.

The hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, I have moved everything away from the mike, so hopefully it is better.

The climate crisis we are experiencing is very real. We have seen forest fires in many different communities and in my home community of British Columbia, this is not a strange occurrence for us. We have experienced the heat dome and then, of course, severe forest fires, as well. I was reminded today by an indigenous leader that the most vulnerable communities are often people who have very little, and they are the people who suffer the most in a crisis like this. That includes indigenous peoples.

However, for the government to really address the climate crisis, it really needs to stop subsidizing the fossil fuel industry and redirect those dollars into renewable energy. Will the member commit to doing that?

Business of Supply

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, as our government and I have said in the past, they really are hand in hand, the environment and the economy. I think a clean and just transition includes partnerships with our indigenous communities. It includes partnerships with all types of industries to ensure that any transition, and the important transition we have to make, happen with the community coming together and ensuring we are working together. I know that I am very committed to ensuring that transition, and I know that the member opposite is also. I look forward to working with her on this very important issue.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would first like to offer my deepest condolences to a very important member of my team, Jean-François Vachon, who recently lost his grandmother. I extend my condolences to his family, and particularly his mother.

I also want to say that I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Laurentides—Labelle, with whom I also share Highway 110 and the boreal forest, which is significant given the circumstances.

I have spent the last few days at home driving around Abitibi-Ouest, an area in my riding of Abitibi—Témiscamingue that is now at a high risk and greatly affected. Our peaceful forests, our hard-working communities and magnificent, invaluable memories are being darkened by this unprecedented disaster. No one can remain indifferent to such a sad state of affairs. I thank all my colleagues for all their wonderful words over the course of the day.

I have seen with my own eyes the human distress and the concerns of our families in our towns and communities. These are communities where everyone knows their neighbours.

My colleagues who spoke before me presented the issues and spoke about the need for an energy transition, which is a crucial step in our commitment to the environment. It requires a shift to renewable and sustainable energy sources.

Given what is happening here, I invite the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry in particular to reflect with his colleagues on the economic policies of that transition, with special consideration for the regions whose resources will be sought-after commodities. I am thinking in particular about forestry and mining. We must accelerate investments at the start of the battery supply chain and recover the economic losses that are plaguing us. The Standing Committee on Industry and Technology recently tabled a report on the green transition, and another on the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises. They contain some very good recommendations.

I want to talk more about what is happening on the ground, what is happening at home. Due to the warmth of its residents, Abitibi-Ouest may be one of the friendliest places in Quebec but, unfortunately, that is not what we are talking about right now. On the ground, our forest firefighters and forestry workers, with their machinery, are working non-stop to fight a monster that is trying to engulf the towns of Normétal and Saint-Lambert, in particular, and Val-Paradis, which is in the riding of my colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

They are digging trenches, pulling down trees to create fire-breaks and continually spraying the fire from morning to night, and even during the night. Nothing is left to chance. The forest firefighters from SOPFEU can rely on firefighters from Normétal, who are led by their fire chief, Ms. Doris Nolet. While they are on the front lines, they can rely on an army of volunteers who provide services so they can lead the fight. Those volunteers provide meals, clean-up services and supplies.

What is happening in Normétal is just one example of the solidarity people in my region are showing. When I visited La Reine, I heard from seniors who brought photos with them because they were afraid they might never be able to go home and would lose their precious memories. Dedicated people at the La Sarre reception centre were there to listen to people's concerns and provide caring support. That is not all.

Right next to the reception centre, the Centre de formation professionnelle Lac-Abitibi is working with Table des chefs to provide free meals to evacuees. I want to give a shout-out to the very dedicated Cécile Poirier, who told me that they had served nearly 300 meals that evening. That shows just how badly evacuees need this service. I want to acknowledge the work of Karine Francoeur, executive director of Maison St-André, who is helping out by providing free clothing to evacuees. This regional solidarity is crucial to supporting the evacuees.

Amidst all this chaos, our mayors are hanging in there. Some of these dedicated people in my riding are Diane Provost, the mayor of Saint-Lambert; Ghislain Desbiens, the mayor of Normétal; and Fanny Dupras-Rossier, the mayor of La Reine. They and their municipal teams are all working tirelessly to coordinate emergency measures, support citizens, keep people informed and make sure everything goes as smoothly as possible. There is also Yves Dubé, the mayor of La Sarre, who is making facilities in his city, including the school, available to evacuees. I really want to emphasize the amazing work the RCM's general manager, Normand Lagrange, has done over the past few days. I have seen him in action, and I get the impression he never sleeps. My hat is off to him on behalf of the people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

• (1320)

I would also like to thank the reeve of the Abitibi-Ouest RCM, Jaclin Bégin, who is also an important leader in my riding and who works with the other municipalities. Despite the anxiety, there is hope and encouraging actions on the ground. Basic services are provided. So I want to point out that everyone is committed.

I would like to acknowledge the courage and solidarity of indigenous peoples, such as the Abitibiwinnik community of Pikogan and Chief Monik Kistabish, who welcomed members of the Anishinabe communities of Lac-Simon and Kitcisakik. We see the same mutual support in all the communities of my region. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Coopérative de solidarité de Pikogan, which helped train 25 new auxiliary firefighters recruited among members of the Pikogan and Lac-Simon communities.

Let us commend the mayors and chiefs of our communities across Quebec for their commitment. Their presence and dedication are being felt during these times.

I also want to acknowledge my counterparts, the elected provincial representatives from Quebec, especially my colleague Suzanne Blais, the MNA for Abitibi-Ouest, who is very active on the ground. I send her my salutations.

The executive director, Lise Bégin, and the municipal employees of La Reine actively prepared for an emergency by contacting each person to ensure their safety. I am highlighting this to show just how much people are working hard to find solutions. During our trip to that municipality, a second fire started, so elected officials from the village of Saint-Lambert had to be evacuated. This situation is evolving as we speak. Firefighters and SOPFEU are now facing a monstrous fire in my riding. The fight seems endless. They all hope for rain as soon as possible.

I felt a certain emotion when I saw light rain falling as I was leaving Rouyn-Noranda last night, but it was not enough to put an end to the situation. It is quite moving to feel the rain in such circumstances.

My thoughts are with the evacuated workers in my riding whose livelihoods depend on forestry, hunting, fishing and outfitter activities. No one should be overlooked in circumstances like these. I therefore want to underscore the importance of a major EI reform to better support our workers. In fact, the minister recently announced administrative measures. Maybe we should skip ahead down the list to emergency measures and make eligibility requirements easier for workers to meet. This will be very difficult if we wait, and it needs to start now. Evacuees and people currently without an income require special consideration.

Forestry and agriculture play a pivotal role in my riding. Farmers have shown tremendous solidarity by sheltering and moving animals affected by the fires to protect them from the smoke. However, this comes with added costs. I am grateful to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food for her time and attention. She understands the importance of this sector of the economy in my region. It is essential to compensate farmers for their animal transportation costs and other special expenses, and to carefully meet their needs given the devastation that the fires have caused to certain farmlands.

We must not forget private forestry producers, who will see or are already seeing years of hard work go up in smoke. Just under 650,000 hectares of forest have gone up in smoke across Quebec. Ottawa will have to be there for the forestry industry. It will have to listen to Quebec's demands in that regard. The reforestation of those areas must be a priority. Support measures for the forestry industry will be needed. I am thinking about Lebel-sur-Quévillon, a town where Chantiers Chibougamau just invested close to \$350 million in a plant in partnership with the Government of Quebec. The wildfire-related losses will be significant for communities like that one, which will need support to get back on their feet. The same goes for the vitality of our northern communities and the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region.

Business of Supply

These wildfires are making us experience all sorts of things. They have made us aware of how isolated our municipalities in remote areas are. The government needs to fund highway infrastructure and better air service to better take care of our territory. Ottawa needs to allocate funding to ensure that critical infrastructure is available at all times. Other options are needed.

I want to take this opportunity to remind members of the military expertise that has been lost in Abitibi-Témiscamingue over the past two decades. Because of its geographic position, my riding used to be a strategic area for national defence, and the minister has a document that sets out in detail my expectations regarding significant investments. Had she developed military expertise there, she would have been able to deploy and transport materials to more northern areas and respond more effectively. Military training in Abitibi-Témiscamingue would make it possible to get many volunteers out on the ground, volunteers who can provide support during serious crises. We never have enough trained people when a disaster strikes. These people become symbols of solidarity. They become heroes.

There are some lessons to be learned right now.

• (1325)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I indicated earlier, I think that this is a good motion. I plan to vote in favour of it, as I hope many people in this House will.

I recognize that towards the end of the motion, the Bloc specifically calls on the government to promote the use of renewable energy and public transit. There are a number of initiatives that are already ongoing with respect to both of those. I am wondering if the member from the Bloc can comment specifically on what more he thinks should be done as it relates to promoting renewable energy and public transit. What more could the federal government do?

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his input and for his support in these circumstances. That is support on behalf of the Liberal government, and it could mean a decisive moment in Canada's history and its economy. Action and change certainly have a cost, but the cost of inaction is even greater. Right now, the cost is obvious in the deforestation and the devitalization of our towns. The scarred, ravaged landscapes around them are extremely concerning.

I think of the wildfires that devastated Fort McMurray, Alberta, which cost \$3.58 billion. Losses due to natural disasters have reached \$3.2 billion, according to the director of communications and public affairs of the Insurance Bureau of Canada. Around the world, costs associated with disasters have reached a record \$275 billion. It probably costs more not to act than it does to act. We must act right now. The government has my full support on that.

Business of Supply

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my dear colleague for his speech. Our ridings are next to each other, just as he and I sit next to one another in the House.

I would like my colleague to say a few words about businesses, indigenous communities and the support offered by the government. What needs to be done so that more entrepreneurs, especially in the forestry industry, get the support they need?

• (1330)

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity again to acknowledge the courage and the work on the ground of my colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, who is more impacted than I am by the circumstances. I also want to acknowledge all of my colleagues from northern Quebec and other affected regions in Canada.

In the context, obviously putting out the fires and saving these businesses is a priority. I want to ensure that the people affected and the businesses that have incurred expenses or lost revenue are adequately compensated. We will work very hard on that. I am thinking about outfitters who made massive investments and who are wondering if their assets will still be standing after the fires. We may need to plan for support similar to the support that was offered during the COVID-19 pandemic. We will need to be generous in order to save our economy. Land use is not a luxury.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my dear colleague from the Bloc Québécois and all members of the Bloc for raising this debate today.

The federal government's answer is that it is already doing things to protect the climate, but obviously it has yet to reach any of its targets because it is still favourable to new products that come from fossil fuels. We have only to think of the Bay du Nord project, as well as other projects in the Arctic and in Newfoundland-and-Labrador.

What does my colleague think of the fact that the government says one thing and does the opposite?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member has one minute to answer.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, thank you.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the leadership of my colleague, the leader of the Green Party, who has been an inspiration for decades in the fight against climate change.

I have to admit that today, I am feeling optimistic about the future. I hope that what is happening across Canada, especially back home in Quebec, sends a clear message that we need to change the way we interact with the environment and get closer to nature. After hearing the Minister of Environment say he wants to be proactive and change things, I really want to be optimistic.

Obviously, I think the Liberals have done a terrible job when it comes to fighting climate change over the past eight years, but I hope we can look to the future from now on, because our children's future is at stake.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue. What he said was really touching.

I will approach the issue from a different perspective. One of my daughters is in Spain right now. The images she is seeing from the sky above my home in Lac-des-Écorces worry her, and her sister is also very worried. My daughters are 16 and 18 years old. I do not know what to say to them about their climate anxiety.

One of the reasons that prompted me to run in the campaign for Laurentides—Labelle in 2019 was the fight against climate change, the energy transition, and the capacity, as an elected representative, to influence the course of history. Today, I feel powerless because the Liberal government refuses to meaningfully fight climate change. The Liberal government will not address the real energy transition head-on.

I am very embarrassed to tell my daughters, but also the residents of Laurentides—Labelle, that the federal government, frankly, is not acting. Some say that the Prime Minister is pro-environment, but let us speak the truth. The Prime Minister, the government and the Liberal Party are greenwashing. Greenwashing is when a company or organization gives itself the image of being environmentally responsible. The word fits the government like a glove. Since 2015, the Prime Minister and his government have been boasting to us how green a government they will be, how important the environment is and how they will always be ready to defend the environment. The future will determine if there is any truth to that. They even appointed a well-known environmentalist to the position of Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Let us also note the modified title. This is called greenwashing.

At the same time, the government wants to complete the Trans Mountain pipeline; go figure. They make big announcements about this as they do for the battery plants. I wonder why. Are they afraid of taking responsibility for their actions? As we know, it is all a matter of public relations and image. They buy the perception of being green and eco-friendly, but it is not true.

The Liberal government's environmental record is very poor. Since 1990, Canada has increased its greenhouse gas emissions by 17.75%, excluding Quebec. If we exclude Quebec, it is because Quebec has decreased its greenhouse gas emissions by 8.1%. I say bravo. Will someone listen to us and act? Once again, as is often the case, Quebec is the example to follow.

Quebec is the example to follow because Quebec is alone in North America in prohibiting oil and gas exploration and production on its territory and is a member of an international coalition of jurisdictions committed to progressively reducing oil and gas production. I say bravo.

We need to start an energy transition. The first step in starting the energy transition is to stop investing in the energy of the past. It is imperative that we take Quebec's example and end all new investment in oil and gas exploration and production throughout Canada. It starts here.

However, that is not the direction that the Prime Minister is taking. Investments in oil and natural gas production will reach \$40 billion this year, 11% more than during the pandemic.

• (1335)

Honestly, I cannot believe it. I would like to have an answer and know what people think of that. It is unacceptable.

We know that this will not work. We know it so well that we felt it a bit less this morning. Since Monday, the skies of Ottawa and Gatineau have been shrouded. Air quality in the Ottawa-Gatineau area is among the worst. The forest fires are hundreds of kilometres away, however. Headaches, difficulty breathing, rashes and dry eyes are mild symptoms. It is safe to say that, even though the fires are far away, their impact is being felt.

I am thinking about the people in Sept-Îles, Val-d'Or or La Tuque, who have to live with this smoke that is harmful to their health. If we needed something to demonstrate that climate change will impact our health, the current situation is, unfortunately, a prime example. Some will say that forest fires are part of the boreal forest life cycle. That is true, but the difference is that this is not normal. It is June 8, not July 22, and there are already hundreds of active fires across Quebec. There is no doubt, especially from a scientific point of view, that climate change is having an impact on the size and scope of forest fires in Quebec and Canada. Climate change will worsen the severity and frequency of these fires. Dry forests are fuel. It is like putting gas on a fire.

I do not even want to imagine it, but studies predict that fires could burn twice the area on average per year in Canada by the end of the century, compared to what has happened recently. Meanwhile, we continue to invest in the oil industry. It is beyond comprehension.

In 2002, at the Earth Summit in South Africa, French President Jacques Chirac said, "Our house is on fire and we are looking away." This quote has stuck in my head since Monday. Quebec is on fire and some are looking away. Quebec is on fire and some want to contribute to oil and gas development. Quebec is on fire and they want to finish Trans Mountain. Quebec is on fire and some choose to deny climate change. I am disgusted. That may seem like a lot, but it feels good. I have to do it. I am telling my Liberal and Conservative colleagues that we have to act.

Today, my thoughts are with the seasonal workers, forestry workers and my colleagues who are hard at work on the ground. I have often had the opportunity to say in the House and to tell the people of Laurentides—Labelle that seasonal work is critically important. I am so afraid that they are going to be let down, which is something that they do not deserve. I listened to my colleague a few minutes ago, and I am hoping that our heartfelt pleas to make changes to employment insurance will be heard. I am imploring the government to make adjustments and allow flexibility to the qualifying period.

In closing, fires are currently raging in Laurentides—Labelle. My thoughts are with the residents and contractors in controlled harvesting zones. I will name just a few: Domaine de la Baie au sable, Pourvoirie Domaine les 4 vents, Pourvoirie des 100 lacs Sud, Pourvoirie Meekos, Pourvoirie Rabaska, Pavillon des pins gris campgrounds, Pourvoirie Cécurel, and many others. As I take Highway 117 and go to our controlled harvesting zones, my heart goes out to them and to all Quebeckers who have to live with the consequences of these wildfires.

Business of Supply

In closing, I would like to recognize the work of my colleagues, the member for Manicouagan, the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, and the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue. In all sincerity, I say to them and to the communities affected that we will not give up the fight against climate change.

• (1340)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is an encouraging debate. We see a great deal of passion, I would suggest, virtually from all sides of the House. We can contrast this to previous Bloc opposition days, when we talked about changes to the prayers and monarchy. Obviously Bloc members are listening to the priority issues of Canadians.

I like the motion that has been presented. Later I will explain in more detail some thoughts on the issue.

The national government, for the very first time, introduced a national adaptation strategy that involves dealing with the environment in a very tangible way. As a national government, this is the first time we have implemented a price on pollution and brought in the banning of single-use plastics in certain areas. We also have a commitment to the planting of hundreds of millions of trees.

I wonder if the member could provide her thoughts on why it is important that not only the national government demonstrate leadership. There is also an expectation that provinces, territories and indigenous communities from coast to coast to coast get involved in protecting our environment. It is not one level—

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, it is 2023.

Earlier in my speech, I mentioned that in 2002 Jacques Chirac said that our house is burning, that the earth is burning. This government will soon have been in power for eight years. All of a sudden, they are thinking about changing course. Meanwhile, we should already be seeing the positive effects of the shift that should have started in 2015.

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, pardon my voice, as the smoke in this area is bothering me.

Business of Supply

Also, pardon my feelings of skepticism toward all sides here regarding the importance of what is going on. For eight years we have been waiting for the government to take action. In 2017-18, the province of British Columbia experienced the very same smoke that we are experiencing in Ontario and Quebec. Now the forest fires are on the doorsteps of our friends here. My thoughts go out to all those who are impacted and affected. I know about this firsthand, and now all of a sudden the rest of the country is waking up and seeing the importance of it and how devastating the smoke and these wildfires can be.

To my hon. colleague from the Bloc, is it not a bit rich that our friends have been in government for eight years and are only now starting to wake up and say they are going to do something about it? They have yet to do anything after eight years of being in government. Why should we believe them now?

● (1345)

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I am not a fan of looking back to the past, but I would like it if people took responsibility. There needs to be a shift, starting today. Enough is enough. All parliamentarians need to take action and take responsibility. That is what I want to see.

If the Conservatives ever form government, what will they do? That worries me. I have no idea what to say to my children who are living with eco-anxiety.

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I really want to thank the member for bringing up the Trans Mountain expansion right now. It is going right through my riding. If someone were to drive anywhere in the Lower Mainland, they would see the trees down, the devastation, the streams that are being affected and even the devastation within the community as we build the pipeline. Right beside where the pipeline is being built in my riding of Port Moody—Coquitlam, kids cannot go outside because of the air quality. I thank her so much for raising that.

I wanted to talk a bit about northern and indigenous communities in Quebec. I wonder if the member could share how these communities are being impacted right now and as the climate crisis rages on.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, the situation is alarming. We are very worried. I would like to thank all those who are showing such solidarity. When a fire travels 15 metres a minute, it is frightening.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the Bloc for introducing this motion today, which I plan to support. More importantly, I want to thank the member for Cariboo—Prince George for his last question. I do not particularly agree with everything he said, but I want to thank him for addressing the issue of what is going on in this country right now.

In the short time he took asking that question, he spoke more about the forest fires going on in this country than the Leader of the Opposition did in his four-hour stunt last night when he was supposedly filibustering. The Leader of the Opposition took the floor of the House of Commons last night to fundraise, or to speak to the issue of our budget, and he went on for four hours talking about Henry VIII, Winston Churchill and the stonework in this room. He never once mentioned the fires going on outside in the four hours he spent speaking about whatever he spoke about last night.

I thank the member for Cariboo—Prince George for standing up and speaking about it and being passionate about it. We do not see eye to eye on whether or not this government has done anything. That is fine and I respect that. However, he is speaking to the issue and he cares about the issue and that means something to the debate in this place, in my opinion.

There is also another narrative out there, based on comments made in this House and what we are seeing coming out of Conservative Party conventions, that Conservatives do not believe humans created climate change. We do not have to go back and dig up quotes from years ago. We do not need to find some dark corner of a Conservative convention, where there is a conspiracy going on that humans have nothing to do with climate change and this is a narrative we need to project. We do not have to do any of that. All we have to do is look at Hansard, the official record of this place, from last week, when the member for Red Deer—Mountain View referred to the climate discussions as “60 years of catastrophic snake oil salesmen” predictions. He said:

Things change; the climate changes. That is how we got our rivers. I know I deal with the effects of climate change right now when I have to go out into my field and pick rocks, because that is how they got there. These are the sorts of things we have to realize. Things do change.

This is from the official record of this House of Commons from last week. Anybody can find it. We can find it in Hansard and we can find the video of it. It exists.

I am quite often perplexed, and I find myself in a different position when I listen to people like the member for Cariboo—Prince George, who spoke passionately and who I hope attributes what is going on in our country to climate change. I try to reconcile that with the colleagues he sits in this House with, who talk about the discussion of climate change over the last 60 years as 60 years of “snake oil salesmen”.

It is so incredibly difficult for me to reconcile that. How does one sit in a political party with somebody who has such strongly opposing views on whether humans created and contributed to the effects of climate change? I never in a million years, when I ran in 2015, thought I would come to this place and have to debate basic science and what scientists have proven to be the case, but I do that. When I come here, I am faced with comments coming from the other side of the House that suggest climate change is just part of the cycles: We were under a kilometre of ice 10,000 years ago, which he also referenced, and now we are not, and one day we will be again and this is just the way the planet works. I am really confused and find it very perplexing that those in the Conservative Party can have such opposing views on humanity's participation in climate change, but, nonetheless, here we are.

● (1350)

With respect to the motion, I agree with everything the Bloc put forward. I am very pleased to see it come forward with this motion, because I do not think it lacks significance. I do not think it is a light, fluffy motion that just calls on the government to do something that perhaps the government is already doing. It calls on the government to be more ambitious and more aggressive, and I think that is important. That is the responsibility of an opposition party, and it is being taken seriously.

Having said that, we did have a few motions earlier in the winter, which I believe my parliamentary secretary colleague referenced recently, come forward from the Bloc about the prayer we have. I found those to be interesting and oddly timed, but, nonetheless, this is an important one. It calls on the government to do better and to do more in dealing with fossil fuel subsidies specifically.

Fossil fuel subsidies, in my opinion, need to be decreased as quickly as possible. I have said this in this House before. I have made my position on that known publicly at every opportunity that I get. I would encourage my government and the Minister of Environment to phase out fossil fuel subsidies as quickly as possible. I understand that the phase-out period is supposed to be around 2025 and I look forward to that, but if there is an opportunity to do it by 2024 or even this year, I would tell the government to do that and would encourage it to do that because it is the right thing to do. We should not be subsidizing an industry that is polluting so heavily our environment.

If we look at GHG emissions, we see that all sectors of the economy have been on a downward trend except the oil and gas sector. That is why it is important that we put in strong emissions caps, in my opinion, to reverse the trend on that and that we ensure there is legislation in place to incentivize and push that sector in the right direction so it can match all of the other sectors, such as transportation and home heating, that have been on a downward trend.

One thing I took issue with arose earlier today when I asked the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie a question. I said that when we look at the trajectory of our emissions, they have been going down. Between 2019 and 2021, they were on a downward trend.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: What happened in those years, Mark?

Business of Supply

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I am going to get to that. I am going to say what happened in those years.

I specifically qualified my question by stating a falsehood that is continually repeated by the NDP and the Conservatives: What happened during that time? We had a pandemic. That is absolutely correct; we did. However, what else happened? Our economy continued to grow. Despite the fact that our economy continued to grow during the pandemic, emissions kept going down.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, in response to my question—

● (1355)

The Speaker: I will interrupt to remind the hon. members that if they are very excited to ask questions, the question period will come at the end. We will open it up for questions and comments then.

The member may continue.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, that is nothing. Usually it is a lot worse.

I asked a question of the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. His response, although he started talking about the pandemic, which I qualified in my question, he started to say yes, but that after the pandemic they started to go back up. That is not entirely true. As a matter of fact, he is using that same falsehood about the pandemic to justify his point, which is that they started to go back up since the end of the pandemic. However, since the beginning of the pandemic, 2019, they are still significantly lower.

When we come to this place, it is important that we deal in facts. We will have conversations about this, and I understand that my conversation will be interrupted in less than two minutes and I look forward to continuing after question period.

Having said that, I do respect the fact that the NDP, when it is presenting this, at least believes that climate change is real, and I genuinely appreciate that. I cannot believe I have to actually express that, because it is completely contrary to my Conservative colleagues, who do not seem to believe that climate change is real, especially when they come in here and talk about climate change and the discussion around climate change over the last 60 years as “snake oil salesmen”.

Why do I not read one more time, so it can really sink in before I am cut off, exactly what the member for Red Deer—Mountain View said. He said:

Things change; the climate changes. That is how we got our rivers. I know I deal with the effects of climate change right now when I have to go out into my field and pick rocks, because that is how they got there. These are the sorts of things we have to realize. Things do change.

I almost fell out of my seat when I heard the member say that last week, basically dismissing the participation of humans in climate change. Nothing could be further from the truth. We caused it and we have a responsibility to do something about it.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[English]***WORLD OCEANS DAY**

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, we know what climate change looks like on land. We see it. Our forests are burning. We see storms, droughts and floods. We experience it as human beings. However, every single second of every single minute of every single hour of every single day, the energy equivalent to 10 Hiroshima-sized atomic bombs is absorbed by our oceans.

Today is World Oceans Day, and it is worth pausing for a moment to note that while 619 British Columbians died in the heat dome of 2021, three billion sea creatures also died from the heat that was absorbed in the ocean in that time. People who wanted to get cool went down to the ocean and then wondered what the stench was. Our oceans are losing oxygen, they are hotter, more acidic and choking on plastic.

This World Oceans Day we do not celebrate, we protest.

* * *

● (1400)

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to begin with, I want to make it clear that I speak here today as the member for Louis-Hébert and not as a representative of the Canadian government, if ever there was any doubt.

A month ago, we highlighted World Press Freedom Day. As we all know, a free and independent press is a pillar of our democracy. However, there is one case that casts a long shadow on the ideals we purport to defend here in western democracies. I am talking about the case of Julian Assange.

Julian Assange is currently jailed in the United Kingdom, fighting extradition to the U.S., where he is being charged under the century-old Espionage Act and facing 175 years in prison on charges for publishing information of immense public interest that served to expose war crimes in Iraq, charges for doing exactly what quality and independent news organizations do every day, and what we expect them to do.

Whatever one thinks of Julian Assange, it is time for Canada to side with organizations like Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Reporters Without Borders, and with news outlets like The New York Times, The Guardian, EL PAÍS, Der Spiegel, Le Monde and to ask for these charges to be dropped, because they set a chilling precedent and because publishing is not a crime.

* * *

IRAN

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urgently raise the case of the persecution of journalist Niloofar Hamed.

Hamed is the 22-year-old Iranian journalist who broke the story of the now famous Kurdish woman, Zhina Mahsa Amini, her beat-

ing and murder at the hands of the morality police in Tehran. For her professionalism and journalistic ethics, she has been charged with “colluding with hostile powers”, a charge that carries the death penalty. She is now subject to a show trial behind closed doors, while her lawyer is prevented from expressing any defence on her behalf.

Niloofar's life hangs in the balance. The Iranian regime has been executing political prisoners every week, in addition to its continued intimidation and bullying of its political opponents.

The Iranian regime has the blood of thousands on its hands, of brave women and girls, men and boys who have taken to the streets in opposition to the brutality, the evil and the blood-soaked hands of the autocrats in Tehran.

Niloofar is a brave journalist, a credit to her profession. I invite all parliamentarians to join me in calling for the Iranian regime to immediately end the show trial and set her free.

* * *

ISLAMOPHOBIA

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two years ago, on June 6, in London, Ontario, we lost the Afzaal family to an act of Islamophobic terrorism. Out for a walk in the community they called home, they were targeted for their faith. It hit Muslims hard because it could have been any one of us.

Islamophobia in Canada is real. We all have a responsibility to fight it. That is why our government held the first national summit on Islamophobia, bringing together community groups from across Canada to share their stories and ideas.

We appointed Canada's first special representative on combatting Islamophobia, creating a day for awareness of Islamophobia and expanding funding for security improvements at community centres and places of worship.

As a member of Parliament, I introduced legislation for reforming our national security agencies and worked through my multi-faith council to bring people of all faiths together. We must all continue to work to make Islamophobia and all forms of hatred a thing of the past.

* * *

*[Translation]***MONIQUE MILLER**

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this week, Quebecor held its 2023 tribute evening to recognize the extraordinary contributions of two of Quebec's cultural luminaries, Monique Miller and Serge Fiori.

Quebec's cultural firmament is teeming with stars, stars whose voices, words, acting and music light Quebec up. Some of our stars have burned brightly for a short time; others have been shining forever, it seems.

Monique Miller is one of those magnificent stars. She has been treading the boards in our theatres for more than 70 years, interpreting the work of playwrights from Marcel Dubé to Michel Tremblay, from classics of Quebec theatre to the timeless greats, Molière, Ionesco, Shakespeare and Shaw. A grande dame of the theatre, she has also been a formidable presence in Quebec's small-screen industry since its inception: *Cap-aux-sorciers*, *Quelle famille!*, *Du tac au tac* and *Montréal P.Q.*

She has done it all with extraordinary talent.

The Bloc Québécois applauds Québecor's initiative to pay tribute to our greats. We join our voices to the much-deserved shower of praise for the one and only, the great Monique Miller.

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● (1405)

[English]

ITALIAN WEEK OTTAWA

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled to rise today to highlight an amazing community event happening this month in my community of Ottawa Centre.

A staple of Ottawa's event calendar, Italian Week Ottawa festival is back this year on Preston Street. This year's celebrations will run from today until June 18. It is eleven days of events members do not want to miss, so I welcome all members to join us.

The Ottawa Italian festival focuses on creating exciting experiences that share Italian culture in our diverse Ottawa community. The events scheduled this year include an opening weekend of music, nights of comedy, masterclasses on Italian cooking, an outdoor market, an art exhibition, and more.

I would like to finish by thanking the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion as well as the Department of Heritage for their ongoing support of Italian Week Ottawa. I wish the festival organizers, board members and all the volunteers the best of luck as they show Ottawa all that Italian culture has to offer.

As for all of Ottawa's residents, Italian Week kicks off another incredible summer of cultural festivals for our community to enjoy, with events like the Greek Festival and the Lebanese Festival just weeks away.

Happy *Settimana Italiana*.

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BROOKS BANDITS

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every fall, about 120 teams go on a journey to win the Centennial Cup. It is an honour to represent the best Junior A hockey team in Canada, the Brooks Bandits, the 2023 Centennial Cup champions.

In the last 10 years, with same coach, the Brooks Bandits have won 7 Alberta championships: three years in a row as the Canadian

Statements by Members

Centennial Cup championships, the first-ever back to back to back; and four national championships in 10 years. In the current championship and in the two preceding it, they did not lose a game in those three years. In six games in 2023, they allowed only four goals. A lot of players from this team receive U.S. scholarships and some go on to NHL careers.

I congratulate the coach, staff, administrators, families and the sports fans of Brooks Bandits.

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NATIONAL INDIGENOUS HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every June, in honour of National Indigenous History Month, I select a book written by an indigenous author and invite everyone in my riding to read along with me for Indigenous Reads. This year, I have chosen the *North-West Is Our Mother* by Jean Teillet, a lawyer, lecturer and great-grandniece of Louis Riel.

The book tells the rich story of the Métis people in Canada, starting with their early history in the late 1790s and ending at present day. The book explores the rise of the Métis Nation, their long battle for recognition and the ongoing challenges that Métis people have faced, even today.

Later this month, I will sit down with the Minister of Northern Affairs to discuss the book and the history of Métis people in Canada. I invite everyone to watch our Facebook Live at 3 p.m. on June 26 and learn more about our often overlooked history.

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CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, around the world, our Canadian Armed Forces are working to promote peace and security. That includes Haiti, where gang violence and civil unrest has reached a crisis point. The deployment from Halifax of HMCS *Gloucester* and HMCS *Moncton* to Haiti, along with the support from the Royal Canadian Air Force, demonstrates our commitment to the Haitian people.

These ships have conducted patrols around Port-au-Prince, signalling Royal Canadian Navy presence in the area, while the Royal Canadian Air Force's intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance support has been crucial in disrupting gang activities. In addition, the CAF has delivered three additional MRAP armoured personnel carriers that will aid the Haitian National Police in combatting gang violence.

Canada's whole-of-government response to this unrest includes diplomacy, sanctions against those supporting gangs and humanitarian assistance. We stand with the Haitian people as they strive for a more peaceful and prosperous future.

Our armed forces represent Canada's commitment to peace and security around the world, and I invite all members to join me in thanking them.

*Statements by Members***BUTTER TARTS**

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when we think of Canadian cuisine, we might think of peameal bacon, poutine or ketchup chips, but nothing holds a candle to the butter tart. They are great things, but this is Canada's delicacy.

This treasure originated in Simcoe County in the year 1900. Today, if we search online for butter tart recipes, we will find 79 million results. The possibilities are endless.

This weekend, in Midland, Ontario, on June 10, we are hosting the world's greatest butter tart festival. With over 200,000 butter tarts, people will be sure to find something to satisfy their palate.

While the price of flour is up over 8% and the price of butter is up over 10%, our spirit will not be broken. People can come to Midland this weekend to satisfy their palates. Let us bring the butter tart home.

* * *

● (1410)

ATTACK ON AMRITSAR TEMPLE

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise before you to shed light on a dark chapter of history which launched a decade of systematic abuse.

Operation Blue Star, conducted in June 1984, fought to suppress Sikh voices within the sacred walls of the Golden Temple of Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar. Regrettably, the repercussions of this ill-conceived operation were far-reaching and catastrophic, leading to the loss of innocent lives and forever staining the principles of justice and human rights. Let us not forget the countless Sikh pilgrims who sought solace within the serene walls of the Golden Temple, only to be met with violence and bloodshed. Their devotion to faith and their commitment to the values of peace and unity were crushed under the weight of tanks and gunfire.

The wounds inflicted by Operation Blue Star are not confined to the borders of India. They resonate deeply within the Sikh diaspora right here in Canada, where Sikh Canadians have contributed immeasurably to our social, cultural and economic fabric. We cannot remain silent in the face of injustice. As lawmakers and guardians of human rights, we must lend our voices to those who have suffered, to those whose cries for justice have gone unanswered for far too long.

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THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, the Bank of Canada raised the interest rate for the ninth time since February 2022. Of course, this should come as no surprise, given the budget the Liberal government tabled in March.

The real surprise was the budget itself. We thought relief was on the way when the finance minister admitted that deficits cause inflation, and then she added another 60 billion dollars' worth of fuel to the inflationary fire. The Liberal government's deficits have caused the inflation crisis, and this in turn has caused higher inter-

est rates, which has now put Canadians across the country at risk of losing their homes.

The IMF has warned that Canada is at the greatest risk of mortgage defaults out of all advanced economies. What is the solution? It is very simple. It is to stop the deficits, which would stop inflation, which would stop the interest rates from going up and stop the defaults. The Liberal government needs to stop its out-of-control spending before it is too late.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, batten down the hatches. Canada is at the greatest risk of mortgage defaults of any other developed country, and it is because the Prime Minister is steering this ship right off course.

Liberal government deficits are causing inflation. Inflation is causing higher interest rates, and higher interest rates are causing Canadians to default on their mortgages. The Liberal government is forcing Canadians to sink or swim, but we know that most are barely treading water. Nearly half of all homeowners are finding their mortgage payments unaffordable, and Canada has the highest household debt in the entire G7. Liberal inflationary spending, red tape and government gatekeepers are leaving Canadians underwater.

Conservatives have a solution to right the ship and get our country's compass pointing towards prosperity once more. We will stop the deficits, which will stop the inflation, which will stop the interest rates from going up, which will stop the defaults. Let us bring it home.

* * *

[Translation]

TOHU

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, firmly rooted in the Saint-Michel neighbourhood and at the heart of the Cité des arts du cirque, TOHU is a place of creation, culture and community engagement that contributes considerably to Montreal's reputation as an international capital of the circus arts.

TOHU recently won in two categories at Tourism Montreal's Distinction Awards for its 3GIANTS project, presented during the 2022 edition of the Montréal Complètement Cirque festival.

I would like to congratulate the executive director, Stéphane Lavoie, and his entire team on these important awards and recognitions, which reflect the quality of their work.

On the weekend of June 16 to 18, I invite everyone to come and enjoy the Lumières de Saint-Michel event, presented by the TOHU team and featuring a nocturnal parade, shows and circus entertainment.

I want to thank TOHU, which has been inspiring so many since 2004 and sharing the wonders of the circus arts.

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• (1415)

[English]

WILDFIRES

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is on fire.

By last Sunday, more than three million hectares had already burned across the country, about 13 times the 10-year average. There are more than 400 active wildfires, most of which are deemed out of control, and thousands of people are under evacuation orders—

The Speaker: I am going to ask the hon. member to start over once we quiet down so that everyone can hear.

The hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford may start from the top.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, Canada is on fire.

By last Sunday, more than three million hectares had already burned across the country, about 13 times the 10-year average. There are more than 400 active wildfires, most of which are deemed out of control, and thousands of people are under evacuation orders. Over the last 20 years, we have never seen such a large area burned so early in the season.

My home province of B.C. has already seen fires burn an area larger than that of last year's entire fire season. It is only June. We are not even in summer yet. The signs are all there. Climate change is having a direct and brutal impact on the lives of people. The sheer scale and ferocity of the forest fires are a testament to that fact.

Yesterday, I saw a headline that read, "Parliament fiddles while Canada burns", an apt description of what we have seen from Liberals and Conservatives. As parliamentarians, we owe it to Canadians to meet this moment with the seriousness it deserves. We must do better.

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[Translation]

SERGE FIORI

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what animates this moving and magnificent individual, this artist who left an indelible mark on Quebec, its history, the hearts of its people and the promises of the 1970s and beyond.

Serge Fiori is extraordinary. He crafted a brand new musical universe that crossed borders and stood the test of time. His music pierced right through the skin of Quebecers, flowed through their veins and found a place in their hearts.

What I do know is that Serge Fiori, who was awarded a Quebecor prize Tuesday night at an event held at the Mount Royal Chalet, loves unreservedly, unconditionally, unboundedly. He loves

Statements by Members

so much and so well that he is like a river of emotions that overflows in the spring. He makes us want to share in one of the embraces that he so generously shares with his voice, which, even when speaking, carries a range of emotions in which people want to remain enveloped.

Quebec loves the beautiful, great and eternal Serge Fiori. Fiori loves Quebec. He is so in love with Quebec that he wants, with all his oceanic heart, for it to become a nation.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians learned yesterday of the devastating news to their household budgets. The Bank of Canada has hiked interest rates once again, which are now 19 times higher than they were just one year ago. Plain and simple, Canadians are at the most risk of any advanced economy for mortgage defaults, according to the IMF.

Let us make no mistake about it. These rate hikes are caused by Liberal inflationary deficits. The finance minister admitted it just weeks ago, before adding \$60 billion in new deficits instead of balancing the budget. The economics here are simple. Liberal government deficits cause inflation, which cause higher interest rates, which cause mortgage defaults. The solution is simple too. Liberals must stop the deficits, which will stop the inflation, which will stop interest rates from going up, which will stop the defaults.

The Prime Minister admitted he does not spend a lot of time thinking about monetary policy, and now Canadians are paying for it. Mortgage payments are going to go up another 40%. It is time for the Liberals to smarten up and get the crisis they caused under control.

* * *

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Ms. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party opposite is far too comfortable using divisive, sexist rhetoric to gain cheap political points at the expense of women. It is crass. It is gross. It is reckless.

Let us not forget that the leader of the Conservative Party used misogynistic hashtags to drive alt-right traffic to his YouTube page. He could not care less that many women in this country feel unsafe online or that he has aligned himself with the very same people who perpetuate this toxic online hate.

When it comes to the issues that matter most to Canadian women, such as child care, good jobs and reproductive rights, he and his handpicked Conservative candidates stand against those very ideals. It is indicative of one thing. The Conservative Party will never stand up for what matters when it matters.

While the Conservatives will not, we on this side of the House will never ever back down from—

• (1420)

The Speaker: It is now time for Oral Questions.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[English]***HOUSING**

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians learned yesterday that the Bank of Canada is raising interest rates for the ninth time since last year. This comes thanks to the Prime Minister's out-of-control spending, which is driving up the cost of the goods that we buy and the interest that we pay. Half of all mortgage holders were already struggling to make payments and that was before the bank's announcement. The Department of Finance knows this number, and the government refuses to share it.

Can the finance minister tell us how much families will now pay for their mortgages because of her inflationary spending?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we compare ourselves to our economic peers, we have a lower deficit, a lower net debt-to-GDP ratio, the fastest-growing economic growth in the G7 and lower interest rates.

That is what is allowing us to invest in things such as dental care, child care, health care, affordability, economic growth and jobs. Over 900,000 jobs have been created since the pandemic. Yes, global inflation is hard, but we will get through this by working together.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals say everything is fine. They either do not know the number or they will not tell us. It is \$4,000 a month for an average mortgage payment.

After eight years of the Liberal government, consumer debt is the highest it has ever been. Canadians carry more debt than our entire GDP. The Prime Minister told us that interest rates would stay low. He promised that he would take on debt so Canadians did not have to. Canadians need some certainty. They need to pay their bills.

How many Canadians will have to lose their homes before the Liberals notice something is wrong?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the last week, the Conservative Party has tried to convince Canadians that we would be better off if we did not make those investments in health care, if we did not invest in dental care, and if we reduced investments in seniors' pensions and retirement security. They want to get rid of the CBC. They do not want to attack climate change.

Canada has the highest economic growth and the lowest deficit in the G7. We are able to invest in making life more affordable for Canadians. Our government is up to this challenge, and so are Canadians.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear the Liberals do not want to talk about the economy. I understand why.

We just learned that David Johnston fired the crisis communication firm he hired for strategic advice. It turns out that the same firm worked for the member for Don Valley North, who was asked to leave the caucus amid allegations of foreign interference. David Johnston exonerated that member without even talking to him. There is a conflict of interest and then there is this.

What the hell is going on?

The Speaker: Before we go to the Minister of Public Safety, I want to remind hon. members that parliamentary language is something we want to respect as much as possible. I understand we get emotional, and it sometimes slips out.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at this stage, it is shocking but not surprising that the Conservatives continue to focus on Mr. Johnston, someone who was appointed by former Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper, someone who did much work under the last Conservative government. Despite all of that, they would rather focus on partisan attacks than the actual hard work of fighting foreign interference together.

Mr. Johnston has laid out a path forward to engage Canadians to ensure our national security establishment has all of the tools necessary to protect Canadians. Rather than continue on with these partisan attacks, the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada should take the briefing.

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*[Translation]***HOUSING**

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday evening, hundreds of thousands of families in Quebec and Canada had a very difficult conversation at the supper table.

The question was this: Will we be able to keep our house? The Bank of Canada increased the policy rate for the ninth time in just under a year, which means that interest rates will rise. The government rightly pointed out that mortgage payments are going to go up by 40%. There is one thing that the government could do to reduce inflation and that is to control spending.

Why does it not do that?

• (1425)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague referred to what happened yesterday evening. While those difficult conversations were happening at the supper table, the Conservative leader was in the House, where I heard him rambling on and on for four hours. He talked about King Henry VIII and the difference between copper coins, silver coins and iPads, but I did not hear him talk about an economic plan for Canada.

The Conservative leader has been on the job for 271 days and he has nothing of substance to offer Canadians.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has a selective memory. The Conservative leader clearly said that there are two things the government must do. First, it should not create new taxes and, more importantly, it should have a plan to reduce spending and get to a balanced budget.

Why have a balanced budget? That would honour the word of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance who said that deficits add fuel to the inflationary fire.

Does the Deputy Prime Minister still agree with herself, namely that they really need to control spending and, most importantly, aim for a balanced budget for all Canadians?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about balance. We have struck a balance between fiscal responsibility and compassion.

What the Conservatives are proposing is austerity and cuts. Our government is offering a new grocery rebate. Our government is offering subsidies for dental care. Our government is proposing a low-income workers benefit in Canada to support and help workers.

The Conservatives are just not interested in helping Canadians. We are doing all of that and still have the lowest deficit in the G7.

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CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec is grappling with forest fires that are causing 11 times the devastation we have seen for the last 10 years, on average. We are talking about three million hectares and it is only June.

In terms of length of season, intensity and frequency, periods of drought and heat conducive to fires can be linked to climate change, while climate change can be linked to oil and gas development.

Does the Prime Minister agree that fossil fuels are the reason for the fires that are devastating Quebec?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader of the Bloc Québécois for his question. We agree with him. We must do more to fight climate change. There is a clear link between the forest fire season we are currently experiencing in Canada and the use of fossil fuels.

We must reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. That is why we will be supporting the motion moved by the Bloc Québécois today in the House of Commons.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I feel like I have gone back in time 10 years. No serious person can deny that oil and gas are to blame for some of the terri-

Oral Questions

ble tragedies happening around the world, and increasingly right here, too. This obsession with oil comes at a very high price.

Will the Prime Minister agree to halt all forms of funding, direct or indirect, to the oil companies and transfer the money saved to Quebec and the provinces in order to increase funding for research into mitigating the effects of climate change and the measures required to protect ourselves, particularly when it comes to municipal infrastructure?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank the leader of the Bloc Québécois for his question. I think we can walk and chew gum at the same time. We are not going to wait until fossil fuel subsidies are completely eliminated.

We are already doing this, so we can make massive investments in public transit, electrification and clean technologies. That is what we did in the last budget. It is what the Conservatives vehemently oppose, even though they claim to believe in technology. When we want to invest in technology, they say we should not invest in technology.

I thank the Bloc leader for his question. We will work with the Bloc on these important issues.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have seen the images of New York's Statue of Liberty completely shrouded in smoke from Quebec's wildfires. It is astonishing to think that 128 million people in the United States are under air quality advisories. The air quality index for New York City peaked at 413 on a scale of 0 to 500 by the end of the day on Wednesday. Figures like these have not been recorded in 20 years.

Climate change knows no boundaries. What will it take for this government to quit spouting hot air and finally take action?

● (1430)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my hon. colleague that we are in the process of eliminating fossil fuel subsidies in this beautiful country we call Canada with the collaboration of his very own party.

We put a stop to international subsidies last year, and we were applauded by NGOs like Environmental Defence and Equiterre and by international organizations like Oil Change International. According to these groups, when it comes to getting rid of fossil fuel subsidies internationally, there are two global leaders: the United Kingdom and Canada.

Oral Questions

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that would be more believable if the Liberals had not bought the Trans Mountain pipeline and approved the Bay du Nord project.

Listening to the Liberals, it sounds as though everything is sunshine and lollipops. The problem is that the sun is hidden by the smoke. It is getting harder and harder for the Liberals to keep pretending everything is fine when the entire country is burning.

Since 2015, the famous water bombers used to put out fires are not even made in Canada anymore. We are now forced to borrow them from abroad. This government is not prepared to deal with the crises that are coming.

When is this government going to stop subsidizing oil companies and use that money to invest in renewable energy?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is quite simple: We are already doing it. We are investing more than \$200 billion in clean technologies and in the fight against climate change. That is half of what the United States, a country 10 times our size, is doing. What is more, we are eliminating fossil fuel subsidies.

I agree with my hon. colleague. We need to do more. We need to move faster on both tackling climate change and ensuring we can adapt to it. That is exactly what we are doing on this side of the House.

* * *

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the IMF reports Canadians have the most indebted households in the G7, with a mortgage default crisis looming. Out-of-control Liberal spending gave Canadians nine bank interest rate hikes in a year. Former Liberal finance minister John Manley said that the out-of-control spending by the Liberals is like pressing the gas while the Bank of Canada is trying to slam on the brakes with its interest rate hikes. Adding another \$60 billion of fuel on that inflationary fire is not going to help anybody.

Will the Prime Minister cancel his tanning plans this summer, get to work in this House and rewrite his budget, so Canadians do not lose their houses?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact, inflation is coming down. It peaked at 8.1%; it is now 4.4%, and that is better than the United States, Europe and the OECD. It is actually projected to continue coming down to below 3% very soon. It is still too high, but that is why we are investing in affordability. We have lifted 2.7 million Canadians out of poverty. We have created more than 900,000 jobs. In fact, through the workers benefit, more than 4.2 million Canadians are taking home bigger paycheques.

All of this is while maintaining the highest economic growth in the G7 and the lowest deficit.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives will continue to fight to stop this Liberal-NDP government from putting another \$4,200 of debt on the backs of struggling Canadians. Liberals' out-of-control spending gave Canadians the highest inflation seen in 40 years, and that made interest rates go up. The majority of Canadians are only \$200 away from insolvency. Any more rate hikes are going to be crippling. This budget would turn Canada into a nation of inflation and higher debt.

Will the Prime Minister end his surf trips, end the phony celebrity tours and rewrite this failed budget, so Canadians can keep their homes this summer?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when global inflation reared its head, the Conservative leader had a solution; it was to invest in cryptocurrency. If Canadians had followed that advice, and sadly many did, they not only would have been reduced, if they had invested in Terra, Celsius or FTX—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am sorry; it started a couple of questions ago, and I think it is more people talking to each other, so I am going to ask them, if they are speaking with each other, to please whisper, and if they are more than one seat away from someone, to maybe just move over and talk to them at a lower pace, not so loudly.

See how I am speaking quietly? I want everybody to talk quietly to each other, if they are not answering or asking questions.

The hon. government House leader has about 25 seconds.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, if that advice was not bad enough, they got something new. It does not matter that Canada is lower than the OECD in terms of its average on inflation, lower than the eurozone, lower than the G7, lower than the United States and lower than the U.K.

It does not matter that we have one of the lowest inflation rates in the world. They want to solve global inflation by slashing supports to Canadians. They think they can fix global inflation by getting rid of dental care, by getting rid of child care and by attacking the most vulnerable. Not only will it not work, it is shameful.

• (1435)

HOUSING

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is supposed to be a place of prosperity, hope and opportunity, yet for far too many Canadians it has become a place where they can no longer afford to work, to live and to thrive. Earlier this year the finance minister admitted that her Liberal deficits were driving inflation. Still, they added \$60 billion of inflationary fuel on a cost of living fire.

We know that deficits lead to inflation, inflation leads to interest hikes and interest hikes lead to mortgage default.

How many Canadians will lose their homes before the Prime Minister learns his lesson?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the member opposite said that Ireland is the place to be and that it is the greatest country right now. I would say that the facts show that this is the greatest country on earth. This is the place where we are leading growth and change, where we are transforming to the economy of the future, where we are building the jobs of the future and where we are making sure we have a future for our country.

We love this country. While they idolize others, we stand for this country.

The Speaker: Order. There are no points of order during question period. You will have to wait until it is over.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I must have misheard because he said he admired Canada. I heard the Prime Minister say he admired the basic dictatorship of China. I would ask that member to come down to the food banks in Cobourg. I think it is about two hours from his riding. He should see the children lining up outside the food bank.

Shame on you. Shame on you. Life has never been better, that is all we hear. That is not the truth. Go to the food banks. See the double and triple use. See Canadians suffering.

We know that deficits lead to inflation which leads to housing default. How much longer until the Prime Minister learns his lesson, stops the inflationary deficit spending and puts an end to—

The Speaker: Order, order. I just want to remind the hon. members to place their comments or their questions through the Chair, not at the Chair.

The hon. minister for families.

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately what Canadians know is that the Conservative way of doing things is one of throwing up their hands, sitting down and saying, “Let’s do nothing”. Actually, no, “Let’s cut”. That is the Conservative way of doing things. Let us cut the Canada child benefit. Let us cut the thousands of dollars that Canadian families are saving when it comes to child care. Let us cut the grocery rebate that we are giving to Canadians. Let us cut the Canada worker benefit.

Oral Questions

On this side of the aisle, we actually believe in investing in Canadians. The facts speak for themselves: 2.7 million fewer Canadians living in poverty, including 635,000 children—

[Translation]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since January 2022, interest rates have risen nine times. Everything costs more, including groceries and heating. Now we are getting another cold shower: another increase in mortgage payments.

Families have to cut back on groceries in order to survive and continue making the payments on their mortgage. Their house is their main asset. The Liberals told them that when rates are low, it is time to borrow. What great advice.

What does the Prime Minister have to say to these many families who are struggling to make ends meet?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, when we know that times are tough and the people we represent are struggling, we roll up our sleeves and work harder to provide support to these people, the same people the Conservatives want us to abandon by cutting assistance to families for child care, dental care and the low-income workers benefit.

On this side of the House, we will continue to be there for Canadians while being fiscally responsible.

• (1440)

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are not the ones who have abandoned Canadians. The Liberals have. They need to wake up.

When a mortgage increases by \$2,000 a month, is it realistic for a family to overcome that obstacle? The answer is no. This government has been irresponsible, and now Canadians are paying the price. The Bank of Canada told the Liberals that their policy is causing inflation.

I was sad to read in the paper this morning about a mother in Quebec City who said, “basically, our house is killing us”.

What does the Liberal government have to say to that family?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that families in Quebec are going to receive \$1,400 with the doubling of the GST tax credit. Unfortunately, with the Conservatives’ austerity plan, those families would not get that money.

Oral Questions

I would also like to point out that inflation in Canada peaked at 8.1% and has now fallen to 4.4%. Yesterday, the Bank of Canada said that it expected inflation to drop to 3% this summer. Yes, times are tough, but they are going to get better—

* * *

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this morning, more than 11,000 Quebecers were evacuated because of the forest fires. Everyone else also felt the impact of the fires, if only by breathing the ambient air. Climate change is here.

We have a duty to support the victims, but we also have a duty to be consistent. The oil and gas sector is the primary accelerator of climate change. We have to divest from oil and gas. We have no choice.

Since we need to get out of this industry, will the government commit to banning any new oil and gas development and putting an end to searching for deposits?

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

I want to reassure her. Fighting climate change is the reason why we brought in carbon pricing, one of the most ambitious such initiatives in the world.

Fighting climate change is the reason why we are implementing zero emissions legislation to put more electric vehicles and zero emissions vehicles on our roads.

Fighting climate change is the reason why we are making record investments, including investing \$30 billion in public transit by 2030.

Fighting climate change is the reason why we are putting a cap on greenhouse gas emissions and bringing in many other measures.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I understand, but the government keeps repeating that it could accelerate the fight against climate change if it did not have to fight the Conservatives. That is true, but things would also move more quickly if it stopped imitating the Conservatives.

Not only is it refusing to divest from oil, it is also looking for new deposits at the bottom of marine refuges. It has just authorized BP to drill off the coast of Newfoundland. Even worse, according to Radio-Canada, the Minister of Natural Resources said that if BP finds oil, he could help them develop it by redrawing the refuge's boundaries.

Will the Minister of Environment and Climate Change immediately correct his colleague?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have already talked about this, and I want to repeat that those are only exploration licences

and not production licences. It is very important to know that. A production project has never been proposed in a marine refuge. It is quite possible that such a project would be rejected.

Furthermore, I would like to speak about the work we are currently doing with Bill C-49. It will make it possible for us to develop renewable energy projects, such as wind energy, in the Atlantic provinces.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, blaming the opposition is not going to cut it anymore. Competing over who is the least bad is not going to cut it anymore.

The Conservatives are not the ones authorizing oil exploration in Newfoundland; the government is. The Conservatives are not the ones talking about rejigging the boundaries of a marine refuge to facilitate oil extraction; the government is.

Enough with the blame game. Let us look at what we can do better. We have to get out of oil and gas. Everyone knows that.

Will the government take action that is both concrete and symbolic and announce an end to oil development in marine refuges?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, when we took office, only 1% of our lands and waters were conserved and protected. Now we are at 14%, and we will reach 30% by 2030. We will keep doing this great work.

We are continuing to invest in renewable energy. That is what we did with Bill C-49. It will provide a lot of renewable energy opportunities in the Atlantic provinces.

* * *

● (1445)

[English]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's rapporteur was paying the same crisis communications firm as the member for Don Valley North. That is the former Liberal member who left caucus because of the same scandal the rapporteur was supposed to be investigating. In a surprise to no one, the rapporteur exonerated the former Liberal MP.

With all the conflicts of interest, will the Liberals recognize the damage they are doing and call a public inquiry today?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on and on the Conservatives go about Mr. Johnston, who was appointed by Stephen Harper. They now appear to disagree with their former Conservative leader. They disagree with the member for Durham, who took a briefing from the service to ensure that we can do the work of protecting the people who work in our democratic institutions. In fact, the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada disagrees with himself; he said that Mr. Johnston is one of the most credible individuals, with the most integrity, in this country. He has now reversed himself on this. He should do so again and rally around the cause of protecting our democratic institutions from foreign interference. This is not a partisan issue.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems to be a comprehension issue for the minister. The question is about levels of conflict of interest with the government. We have the Prime Minister, who hired his friend, paying him \$1,500 a day. That friend then hired Liberals. He hired Frank Iacobucci, from the Trudeau Foundation. He hired Liberal insiders, such as Sheila Block, and now we have this rapporteur, who is taking the same communications advice as the member for Don Valley North is getting. It is conflict of interest after conflict of interest.

Fire the rapporteur. Call a public inquiry. Will the Liberals do it today?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2007, when Mr. Johnston's integrity was called into question, the leader of the official opposition said, "This is a very qualified individual, and frankly, I haven't heard anybody question his integrity". I agree.

I will take it back to 2007, when the Leader of the Opposition was being questioned on how close Mr. Johnston was to the Conservative Party and the fact that he was appointed in that role by Stephen Harper not once, not twice, but three times. The Leader of the Opposition stood up against the calls saying that he was too close to the Conservatives. I do not understand how the Conservatives can say that now and pretend that he has no credibility. That is what has no credibility.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the special loyal Liberal rapporteur David Johnston has hired Navigator to help manage the conflict of interest crisis he has plunged himself into. We just learned that the member for Don Valley North also hired Navigator to obtain strategic advice. The upshot is that this week, the not particularly independent rapporteur exonerated the Liberal member for Don Valley North, despite serious allegations about his ties to the regime in Beijing. We could not make this stuff up.

It is time to end this farce. When will the Prime Minister launch a truly independent public inquiry?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives will continue their personal attacks against Mr. Johnston, despite the support he received from the current leader of the Conservative Party of Canada. We need to stop this bickering and concentrate on the task at hand, which is protecting our democratic institutions. We must bring Canadians into the

discussion. On this side of the House, that is exactly what we are doing as the Government of Canada.

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[English]

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is on fire, and cities across North America are suffering in the smoke of this unprecedented ecological disaster. The Prime Minister promised the world that Canada would finally get serious about capping our oil and gas emissions, but since then, the environment minister has allowed an increase in production of 109 million barrels a day. Meanwhile, big oil is racking up record profits, firing thousands of workers and switching to automation. Therefore, where is this cap on big oil, and why will this environment minister not stand up for Canadian workers and our fragile planet?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been very clear that we are putting a cap on oil and gas emissions, but let us also talk about what we are doing to reduce combustion right across our entire economy.

Just last year, we tabled an emissions reduction plan. It covers all sectors, and we are doing that work. We are moving to a sales target on zero-emissions vehicles. We are helping Canadians to transition the fuels they use to heat their homes. We are going to make sure that we are there, and we are already seeing progress. The national inventory report that we put in with the UN showed that we are on track. We are already bending the curve on our emissions.

● (1450)

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, more than 400 wildfires are raging across Canada, forcing thousands to flee from their homes, and it is only June. The climate crisis is being felt in every corner of our country, yet the Liberals continue to hand out billions in subsidies to the biggest polluters. Some of these tax breaks, including the accelerated investment incentive and the accelerated capital cost allowance for fossil fuels, are set to expire, but oil and gas lobbyists are trying to get them extended. Therefore, will the Liberals stop listening to oil and gas executives and end these subsidies for good?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her advocacy on this issue. As she is well aware, last year, we eliminated international fossil fuel subsidies. Canada and the U.K. are the two most advanced countries in the world who have tackled this international crisis, and we are on track to phase out domestic fossil fuel subsidies this year, in 2023, two years earlier than any of our G20 partner countries. We are getting there, and we will get there faster than anyone else.

*Oral Questions***DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, June 1 marked the beginning of pride season across Canada. We honoured the occasion today with the raising of the pride flag and a celebratory drag brunch. It is a joyful time of year, when we uplift the 2SLGBTQI+ community. However it was disappointing that the official opposition was not well represented as we raised the pride flag. This is especially the case because we sadly recognize a rising tide of anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate and intolerance that is bringing to light a very real fear.

This community needs our support, now more than ever. Could the Minister for Women and Gender Equality share what our government is doing to protect the community's rights?

Hon. Marci Ien (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for joining us this morning to raise the pride flag. I say thanks so much to all who came. Pride season is a time of both celebration and reflection. We see the rising anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate, and it is causing real fear. That is why we responded with \$1.5 million for security supports to Fierté Canada Pride, for safer pride festivals right across this country.

To queer Canadians, we say this: We see them, we hear them and we stand with them. I wish them a happy pride.

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HOUSING

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberal deficits and spending have caused inflation to reach a 40-year high, which caused interest rates to reach a 22-year high. These rates will cause mortgage defaults.

We have made-in-Canada inflation, and people cannot afford the government. We need to stop fuelling the inflationary fire, stop interest rates from going up and stop people from losing their homes.

When will the Prime Minister stop his inflationary deficit spending?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important to reiterate that inflation is coming down. It was at a peak at 8.1%. It is now at 4.4%. It is projected to go down below 3%. I think the other thing to say is that we are focused on affordability. That is why we have lowered taxes for Canadians, not once but twice. We lowered taxes for small businesses. In fact, in this budget, we found a way to drop credit card fees by 27%. That is going to save small businesses a billion dollars a year. That is the type of solution we can build if we work together on the budget instead of filibustering it.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member just does not get it. The government refuses to take any responsibility for what it has done to affect the cost of living of Canadians.

For example, a local food bank in my community told me that they registered 294 new households in March alone, with the fastest-growing demographic needing help being two-parent, working households. Inflationary deficits are crushing families' finances.

When will the Prime Minister give people hope and end the inflationary deficit spending so that Canadians can afford to stay in their homes?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to be clear about what the government has spent money on. When the Conservatives talk about those deficits, those deficits were spent on such things as CERB, the Canada emergency response benefit, or the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which quite literally kept households afloat during the pandemic.

When it comes to what we are spending on right now, we are spending on such things as the Canada workers benefit. That is in the current budget, which the Conservatives are delaying, and it will help the lowest-income Canadians have more access to more money.

If the Conservatives truly cared about helping low-income Canadians, they would support Bill C-47. They would vote with us, and they would—

• (1455)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Banff—Airdrie.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with billions in new spending in the budget, the Liberals are driving up inflation and the cost of living. This has caused another increase in interest rates, which is going to cost thousands more for Canadians on their mortgages. However, the Prime Minister has the audacity to try to claim that his budget is “uninflationary”.

One does not have to be a meteorologist to look outside and see that it is raining, and one does not have to be an economist to know that this Liberal budget is driving up inflation. When will the government finally come up with a plan to balance the budget?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is really delivering for Canadians.

I will just read back to the hon. member what his colleagues believe. The member for Edmonton Riverbend believes that we should download responsibility for housing to provinces and territories, as does the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon. The member for Calgary Centre believes in not supporting density and actually opposes more density to build more housing supply. The member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry believes that we should pull back federal investments in housing. The member for Calgary Signal Hill believes that we do not even need the housing accelerator fund, and so on and so forth.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us listen to what some Liberals have to say.

A former Liberal finance minister described the government's economic strategy as “a bit like driving your car with one foot on the gas and the other on the brake”. Some Canadians might want to go out and try that for themselves to really understand the metaphor. However, with the carbon tax driving up the price of gas, no one can afford to do burnouts anymore.

If the Liberals will not listen to our advice or even their own advice, will they at least listen to Canadians, who are footing the bill for all their spending?

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 2015, we have been there supporting Canadians, including seniors. As the member opposite knows, in April, millions of Canadians received the climate action incentive rebate, putting hundreds of dollars back into their bank accounts. We did not stop there. This budget, which they are filibustering and not making pass through the House, helps nine million Canadians, including seniors. That is going to help with dental care, through our new Canadian dental care plan, and 11 million Canadians will receive a new grocery rebate.

On this side of the House, we are going to continue to make sure that Canadians have the supports that they need.

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[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us take a step back.

There is foreign interference in our electoral system. About a dozen ridings were targeted. The former leader of the opposition was targeted, along with at least two other members. This is extremely serious. The House itself is being targeted. The legitimacy and integrity of the members of the House are being undermined by foreign interference. That is why the House continues to push for a public inquiry.

What is the government waiting for to launch the inquiry?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the short answer is that we are not waiting for anything.

Since the beginning, we have taken concrete measures, such as creating new national security powers. We increased transparency by creating the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians and the National Security and Intelligence Review

Agency. Now, we have a recommendation from Mr. Johnston, a distinguished Canadian, for the next steps: a conversation with Canadians.

How can we take the next steps to better protect our democratic institutions? That is exactly what the Government of Canada is focused on.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is constantly accusing the opposition parties of partisanship on the foreign interference file.

Actually, we are asking for an independent public inquiry so as to be as far from partisanship as possible. The Liberals responded with a rapporteur who was appointed by the Prime Minister and only reports to the Prime Minister.

The Conservative Party, the Bloc Québécois, the NDP, every community that has fallen victim to Chinese interference, former chief electoral officer Jean-Pierre Kingsley, and former Liberals, such as Gerald Butts, are calling for a public inquiry.

Who is being partisan on the interference file?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we have accused the opposition of making personal attacks against Mr. Johnston, it is because those are the facts. For several months now, the opposition, especially the Conservatives, has continually engaged in personal attacks against Mr. Johnston, despite his long-time service to Canadians.

Now, we need the opposition to reverse course and agree to work together, accept the security briefing and help us protect our democratic institutions and all the Canadians who are working toward that goal.

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● (1500)

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, massive deficits cause inflation. Inflation causes rate hikes. Rate hikes make mortgage payments unaffordable. Unaffordable payments lead to mortgage defaults.

However, there is a solution. The Liberal government could stop the deficits, stop inflation, stop rate hikes and prevent defaults. Even the finance minister agreed with this basic advice a few short months ago.

When will the Prime Minister end his inflationary deficit spending?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I already described, inflation is coming down in Canada, and it is actually below inflation in the United States, inflation in Europe and inflation in the OECD. That is what is allowing us to invest in making life more affordable.

Oral Questions

I remember that when I was door knocking last summer, my constituents would tell me that their child care costs were as much as a mortgage payment, but now that we have reduced those costs by half and we are going to continue to reduce them to \$10 a day, they are not saying that anymore.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the latest interest rate hike is having a devastating effect on Canadian homeowners and homebuyers.

Half of homeowners say that their mortgage is already barely affordable now, and shocking higher payments are only one renewal away. Rate hikes are also crushing the dreams of new homebuyers and threatening to collapse transactions that are currently in progress.

When will the Prime Minister take the advice of former Liberal finance minister John Manley, take his foot off the inflationary gas pedal and rein in his deficits?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I appreciated about the question from the member opposite is that he is concerned about the welfare of Canadians. On that, we share commonality.

However, we would link the welfare of Canadians to the small businesses that really run our economy. Each time we on this side of the House have put forward policies, proposals or directives that would assist those small businesses, the party opposite has voted against them, whether it was lowering taxes for small businesses or whether it is CEBA supports and rent subsidies that we put in place to assist our small businesses.

Now, before this very chamber, we have support in place that would reduce credit card fees for small businesses from 27% to much lower than what they are right now, and that is being opposed by the party opposite.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives MPs on the immigration committee called four times for action to help international students who were victims of a fake college admission letter scam, and four times the Liberal and NDP MPs on the committee voted against it.

Malicious consultants profited by tens of thousands of dollars from each and every student, promising them a new life in Canada and then sticking them with a fake college admission letter that the immigration department did not catch.

Hundreds of international students are now protesting at CBSA offices. These students finished their studies, worked hard and obeyed the law. How could this incompetent Liberal government allow hundreds of international students to be defrauded?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question, because I think we collectively agree that this is unacceptable and we are seized with this situation that these international students are facing. Our focus

is to make sure that we identify the perpetrator of this fraud and prevent them from abusing anyone again.

At the same time, we recognize that there may be students in this cohort who are vulnerable and who were taken advantage of. There is an opportunity for them to present their case, and we will be there with them.

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to Gilles Lehouillier, mayor of Lévis, the inclusion of Davie Shipbuilding in the national shipbuilding strategy marks the birth of “the largest economic ecosystem in the past 50 years” in Lévis.

Can the Minister of Public Services and Procurement tell us more about the economic spin-offs that Davie's inclusion will have for the Lévis region and for the country more generally?

Hon. Helena Jaczek (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle for her important question.

The historic investment in Davie is great news for Quebec and for Canada as a whole. It is expected to generate \$21 million in economic spin-offs in a variety of sectors and support more than 4,000 jobs. Together, we are rebuilding Canada's marine industry.

● (1505)

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and his speNDP junior partners have caused a problem. Their massive inflationary budgets have caused rate increases, which cause mortgage increases, which cause defaults on homes for Canadians.

We have the solution. The solution is to stop the deficits, stop the inflation, stop the interest rate hikes and stop the defaults on homes.

I have a simple question: When will the Prime Minister stop his inflationary deficit spending?

[Translation]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at a time when wildfires are raging across Quebec and Canada, the Conservatives' priority is to filibuster a bill for implementing the measures set out in our budget. Clearly, the Conservative's plan centres on austerity.

We have made it very clear that our government will never give up our fight against climate change. We will never abandon the environment. We are here for future generations, and we mean it.

[English]

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a ridiculous response. Canadians are paying the price for the Prime Minister's addiction to spending. The Liberals are telling Canadians that they have never had it so good. One in five Canadians are skipping meals. Eight million Canadians are visiting food banks because there is more month than paycheque always left over.

The simple question is this: If the Liberals are making things so good, why do Canadians not have more money in their pockets?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, contrary to the Conservatives, when we see Canadians struggling, we say, “Let us figure out a way to help them.” The Conservatives say, “Let us do nothing” and sit on their hands.

We have put forward several initiatives to help Canadians, including the increase to the Canada workers benefit, the doubling of the GST tax credit, the grocery rebate that 11 million are going to get as of July 5 or the Canada dental benefit that is going to help millions of Canadians access dental care for the first time.

The Conservatives have an opportunity right after question period to support our budget implementation act, help Canadians and make sure that we move forward together.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, families in Nunavut are waking up to a financial nightmare. The Prime Minister's out-of-control spending is causing inflation, and mortgage rates are skyrocketing. An average mortgage payment for a home in Iqaluit went from \$3,100 in 2016 to a whopping \$4,667 today. That is a \$1,500-per-month rise in the last seven years. Sadly, many families in Nunavut are going to lose their homes.

When will the Prime Minister end his out-of-control inflationary spending? When?

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands the needs of northerners and Canadians. That is why we have introduced the grocery rebate for all of Canada. That is why, in terms of food security, I have introduced \$163 million of new money for Nutrition North. That is why we introduced \$10-a-day day care, which the member voted against. That is why we brought in the Canada child benefit, which has lifted 450,000 kids out of poverty, and the member voted against it.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is World Oceans Day, and it is a moment to think about the critical role healthy and abundant oceans play in the fight against climate change.

Oral Questions

Can the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard please inform the House on our government's progress toward our ambitious goal of protecting 30% of our oceans by 2025?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for St. John's East for her tireless advocacy on behalf of oceans and fisheries.

In 2015, less than 1% of Canada's oceans were protected. Today, we are protecting close to 15% and we are on track to protect 25% by 2025 and 30% by 2030 by working closely with indigenous peoples.

Healthy oceans support prosperous coastal communities and are a very important heat and carbon sink. We are taking action to protect the oceans and the planet, half—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, exclusionary policies that ban trans women and girls from sports are cruel human rights violations. There is no credible scientific evidence to support these bans. The real threat to women's sports is not trans women; it is systemic and discriminatory underfunding of women's sports.

Human rights protections are only meaningful when the government takes a stand in defence of rights and against discrimination. What is the Minister of Sport doing to bring an end to trans-exclusionary policies at organizations like Swimming Canada?

● (1510)

[Translation]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, our government will always stand up for human rights, especially the rights of the trans community. Incidentally, I want to point out that, unfortunately, the Conservative leader was not at the flag-raising today to support the community.

That said, I will continue to work with all sports community partners so that, together, we can find a way to respect the rights of trans people, women and all communities in local and international competitions.

*Speaker's Ruling**[English]***CLIMATE CHANGE**

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, our country is on fire. The climate emergency is all around us, and instead of serious action, we have the Conservatives' tone-deaf efforts to repeal the carbon tax on one side and the Liberals giving our money to the very sector, the oil and gas industry, most responsible for it on the other. What we need now is action, not more loans for the Trans Mountain pipeline.

Will the government get serious and end all subsidies to the oil and gas industry today?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have good news for my hon. colleague. In 2018, EDC went from \$12.5 billion in international fossil fuel subsidies to less than \$400 million last July. This will get to zero this year. These are international fossil fuel subsidies. We will also eliminate all domestic fossil fuel subsidies in 2023, two years earlier than all of our G20 partners.

* * *

HONORARY CANADIAN CITIZEN

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move:

That,

Whereas Russian opposition leader Vladimir Kara-Murza is facing political persecution in the Russian Federation including a show trial with high treason charges following his public condemnation of the unjustified and illegal war by Russia against Ukraine;

Whereas he has survived two assassination attempts by poisoning including in 2015 and 2017;

Whereas he is currently imprisoned in Russia and his health is failing;

Whereas he is the recipient of the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize awarded by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;

Whereas Vladimir Kara-Murza is a Senior Fellow to the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights;

therefore, this House resolves to bestow the title "honourary Canadian citizen" on Vladimir Kara-Murza and demand that the Russian Federation set him free.

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER**TECHNICAL ISSUES RAISED DURING THE TAKING OF RECORDED DIVISION—SPEAKER'S RULING**

The Speaker: Before proceeding with the vote, the Chair wishes to return to the issues experienced with the voting application during the votes held yesterday.

Multiple members claimed to be having difficulty with the voting app, and instead sought to cast their vote by video conference.

Many others, having voted successfully with the app, connected to the video conference, seeking to confirm their vote. Their interventions were often preceded by lengthy preambles, despite the instructions of the Deputy Speaker to cast their vote without additional comments.

As was done after similar difficulties last Friday, the Chair asked the House administration to investigate what had occurred. Many employees worked last night to confirm, once again, that there was no generalized outage and that, with a few isolated exceptions, the application worked as intended.

[Translation]

In the two years the House has been using the voting application, there have generally been a small number of members who experience technical difficulties on a particular vote. In those cases, the correct procedure is for them to connect to the video conference and to cast their vote orally.

There are also some occasions where the app will signal to members the potential for an issue and invite them to confirm their vote via video conference. Again, this is normal and generally presents no problem for the small number of members affected. Finally, technical difficulties can often be resolved by contacting an IT ambassador which, as members know, is something that is highly recommended as a remedy for issues. These are then normally very quickly resolved.

● (1515)

[English]

What was unusual was that, both Friday and yesterday, a particularly large number of members who seemed to have such difficulties were almost exclusively from one political party. However, only three members made any attempt to contact our IT support during the votes.

One of the advantages of the voting application is that it can be used by members from anywhere in Canada. As such, the Chair finds it curious, even worrisome, that yesterday, a good number of members who seemed to have issues were using the application from their lobby. Furthermore, when claiming to have experienced issues, they opted to log into the video conference from the lobby rather than walking the few metres it takes to enter the chamber to clarify their vote.

More troubling is the audio feedback issues that were created while doing this from the lobby, thereby putting the safety of our interpreters at risk, something that was addressed by the Deputy Speaker yesterday.

[Translation]

Given these circumstances, the Chair suspects that these difficulties were not technological in nature. A verification of our technical logs leads one to the same conclusion.

In the ruling delivered on Monday, found at page 15261 of the Debates, I stated, and I quote:

The Chair has the utmost respect for the voting process. The success of the voting application depends on the good faith of members. All members are to treat their right to vote in this place with the sanctity and respect it deserves.

As we approach the summer adjournment, I recognize that there are often moments when tensions run high, and disagreements can become more pronounced, but the Chair implores members to carefully consider their actions and the example they are providing.

[English]

On March 14, 2008, Speaker Milliken said, at page 4183 of the Debates:

Like all Canadians, and indeed all hon. members, I realize and respect that political exigencies often dictate the strategies adopted by parties in the House. However, as your Speaker, I appeal to those to whom the management of the business of the Parliament has been entrusted—the House leaders and the whips of all parties—to take leadership on this matter....I ask them to work together to find a balance that will allow the parties to pursue their political objectives and will permit all members to carry on their work.

In this spirit, the Chair once again hopes that members will cast their votes with the solemnity such an act deserves and will refrain from actions which bring the House into disrepute.

I thank all members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1520)

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023, NO. 1

The House resumed from June 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-47, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: It being 3:19 p.m., pursuant to order made Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-47.

[Translation]

Call in the members.

● (1530)

[English]

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

(Division No. 366)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière

Cannings	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fergus	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Joly	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lattanzio
Lauson	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinity	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
McPherson	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Miller	Morrice
Morrissey	Murray
Naqvi	Noormohamed
O'Connell	O'Regan
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Singh	Sousa
St-Onge	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thompson	Trudeau
Turnbull	Valdez
Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip

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NAYS**Members**

Aboultaif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Carrie
Chambers
Chong
Dalton
Davidson
Deltell
Desbiens
Doherty
Dreeschen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Findlay
Gallant
Gaudreau
Genuis
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Kelly
Kmieć
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lawrence
Lemire
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
Maguire
Mazier
McLean
Michaud
Morantz
Motz
Nater
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Plamondon
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Rood
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shields
Simard
Small
Steinley
Strahl
Thériault
Thomas
Tolmie
Uppal
Vecchio

Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaulieu
Bérubé
Blanchet
Block
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Caputo
Chabot
Champoux
Cooper
Dancho
DeBellefeuille
d'Entremont
Desilets
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Ferrer
Fortin
Garon
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Larouche
Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Normandin
Patzner
Pauzé
Perron
Poilievre
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Scheer
Seebach
Shipley
Sinclair-Desgagné
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Stubbs
Therrien
Tochor
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The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, as it is Thursday, we would ask the House leader on the government side if he could inform us as to what the Liberals have for their agenda next week. Specifically, the Conservatives would like to know if the Liberals have a plan to address the higher deficits, the higher inflation and the higher interest rates they have caused, which are causing people across this country to be worried about losing their homes.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, inflation is a global phenomenon. It is good that Canada is below the OECD average. It is also below the G7 average, the G20 average, the U.S., the U.K., Spain, Germany and many other countries. Of course, that is not good enough. We have to continue to lead and do everything we can. That is why I am so proud that this House just adopted a budget with critical measures to help Canadians in every corner of this country with affordability, because we are not going to fix the problem of global inflation by slashing support to the most vulnerable.

After passing the budget, this House has important work to do over the next two weeks.

It will start this evening as we resume debate on Bill C-35, on early learning and child care, at report stage. Once that debate is done, we will resume debate on Bill C-33, on railway safety. Tomorrow, we will debate Bill C-41, on humanitarian aid. On Monday at noon, we will begin second reading debate of Bill C-48 concerning bail reform, and then we will go to Bill C-35 at third reading after question period. On Tuesday we will call Bill S-8, on sanctions, at report stage and third reading.

On top of this, priority will be given to Bill C-22, the disability benefit, and Bill C-40 regarding miscarriage of justice reviews, as well as our proposal to implement changes to the Standing Orders, which were tabled earlier today, to render provisions with respect to hybrid Parliament permanent in this House.

Furthermore, I have a unanimous consent motion that I would like to propose in relation to the debate tomorrow.

I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, in relation to Bill C-41, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts:

(a) the amendment in Clause 1 adopted by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, which reads as follows:

“(a) by adding after line 26 on page 1 the following:

(4) Subsections (1) and (2) do not apply to a person who carries out any of the acts referred to in those subsections for the sole purpose of carrying out humanitarian assistance activities conducted under the auspices of impartial humanitarian organizations in accordance with international law while using reasonable efforts to minimize any benefit to terrorist groups.

“(b) by deleting lines 15 to 19 on page 2.”

be deemed within the principle of the bill; and

(b) when the bill is taken up at report stage:

(i) it be deemed concurred in, as amended, on division, after which the bill shall be immediately ordered for consideration at the third reading stage,

(ii) not more than one sitting day or five hours of debate, whichever is the shortest, shall be allotted for consideration at the third reading stage,

(iii) five minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government orders that day, at the conclusion of the five hours allocated for the debate, or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, all questions necessary to dispose of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith without further debate or amendment, provided that, if a recorded division is requested, it shall be deferred pursuant to order made Thursday, June 23, 2022.

● (1535)

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CLIMATE CHANGE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, would members look at that? Two days ago, the Leader of the Opposition said that he was going to pull out every tool in the tool box to prevent the budget from being passed. I have been here since 2015, and I am pretty certain this is the earliest I have ever seen a budget get passed. I would encourage the member for Carleton, the Leader of the Opposition, to keep up his tactics, because it is certainly helping this side of the House get important pieces of legislation like the budget, which will help so many Canadians, through the House.

As we talk about this motion introduced by the Bloc today, I cannot help but reflect on what I was talking about prior to question period when I started my speech, and that is the absolute reluctance of Conservative members to agree that humans have caused climate change and that we have a role to play in addressing it.

I am reminded of a cartoon that I recently saw that was floating around on social media that shows forest fires burning and firefighters fighting those fires while a plane flies above with a banner off the back of it with the Conservative logo, “Scrap the carbon tax.” Conservatives are ready to burn the whole place down in the name of preserving our ability to extract fossil fuels from the

Business of Supply

ground. Even the Bloc Québécois, which they are partners with most of the time, the light blue, understands that climate change is a serious issue and we need to move quickly. We need to do more and push the government to do more at all times in order to properly combat the negative effects that we are seeing as a result of climate change and, quite frankly, prepare ourselves to be able to deal with them.

There is a lot that has already changed and a lot that we will not see reversed for generations to come. We have to understand that climate change is with us and that we have to be as prepared as we can be to deal with it in the best ways possible. However, that is not to say that we should throw up our hands and suggest that we should not be doing anything to prevent further disasters and further climate change from occurring. The Bloc Québécois, with this motion, is pushing the government, as it should, as a responsible opposition party, to do more and to do better.

I reference item (e) in its motion, which I am very much in support of. It states, “demand that the federal government stop investing in fossil fuels and develop incentives, while respecting the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces, to promote the use of renewable energy and public transit.” In response to that, I would say that we have done a significant amount, whether it is investing in public transit and, in particular, electric buses in transit systems throughout our country, investing in renewable energies or investing in electric vehicle technology and electric vehicle purchases by consumers. The federal government has been there, but that is not to say that we cannot do more; we must do more and we have to be asking the government at all times to do more about ensuring that we are taking this matter seriously.

When we talk about some of the specific investments, I am reminded of a company just outside of my riding of Kingston and the Islands, in the riding of Hastings—Lennox and Addington. The government formed a partnership with Umicore, a battery manufacturing facility, which will establish the largest battery manufacturing facility for electric vehicles in North America. This is a company that has a lot of history and has built similar facilities in other parts of the world. It is based out of Europe. It has expanded in Europe, and is now looking at markets outside Europe. It is looking at Canada.

One may ask why it is interested in Canada and not the United States. We are a relatively small economy compared to our neighbour, the United States, and there are other options in North America. Quite frankly, it chose Canada because it sees our commitment to sustainability. It sees our commitment to supporting the industry that it is part of. That is exactly what we need to be doing now.

Not only is the Bloc Québécois calling on the government to do more from an environmental perspective, but this motion is also asking the federal government to bolster the economy and have a stronger economy as it relates to renewable energy. This is absolutely critical at this point, as we heard the Minister of Environment say earlier. We are at the forefront of new technology. This is technology that is going to change not just Canada, but the world.

Business of Supply

We have an option. We can either wait and let other countries develop it, import their technology and what they produce in years to come, or we can be at the forefront of it. We can develop those technologies here, we can harness the intellectual capability, intellectual patents and the ideas that come from people who are working on these projects. We can see them developed here, and then we become an exporter of that technology, selling it to the rest of the world.

• (1540)

Anybody who looks at macroeconomic policy would determine that the far superior way of approaching this is to become a leader in this. Of course, in order to do that, they have to believe that is the future. That is where the divide is in this House, at least as it relates to Conservatives versus every other party. Conservatives do not believe that the future is in those technologies. They believe that the future is in the continual extraction of oil and fossil fuels from underground so that they can be burned and used, and we would not have the opportunity to benefit from those incredible advancements that we are seeing in other parts of the world.

As I wrap up my speech, I again want to compliment the Bloc Québécois for bringing forward what I regard to be a substantive motion that is not light and fluffy and lacking a call to action, but indeed a motion that does call on the government to do more. That is what a responsible opposition party should be doing. I see that in this motion today and I am very happy to vote in favour of it when we ultimately vote on this next week.

• (1545)

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his macroeconomic policy speech. I suppose that is what it was. I listened to him speak with regard to EVs, electric vehicles, and ZEVs.

I am quite sure the member will not know these staggering numbers, but, if he does, that is wonderful. Today, the government that he boasts about so well has invested in 20,000 chargers across this country. What is being said is that we need 200,000 chargers across the country. I do not see any being built around here. By 2025, just to upgrade the electric grid in Ontario alone will cost \$400 billion.

Why does the government not get on board with the United States government and align both EV and ZEV electric systems as opposed to trying to be heroes?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member has not seen any EV-charging stations yet. Has he walked into the parking lot of West Block? There are three right there. Down in the parking lot in front of the Justice building and the Supreme Court, there are another eight charging stations. They were not here when I was elected in 2015 and now they are here. He does not see them. They are popping up all over the city. I ask him to open his eyes. They are literally everywhere.

Conservatives like to fearmonger about what is referred to as range anxiety, that people will not be able to get from *a* to *b* without their car dying. If they go into the province of Quebec, they literally could not put themselves in a scenario where there is not a charger available for them to fast-charge, very quickly. If they tried,

they would not be able to do it because Quebec is so much further ahead than the rest of the country.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and for his kind words about the Bloc Québécois's initiative today.

The purpose of this motion was precisely to unite people and to say that, together, we need to do more in the fight against climate change. I am pleased to see that he is going to vote in favour of the motion.

When it comes to climate action, there are simple things that the government can do today. We still see that his government is authorizing oil and gas exploration in marine refuges. These areas are supposed to be protected. These are dozens of square kilometres of water that we have decided to protect, but the government is still allowing oil and gas exploration to see whether there is oil that can be extracted. There is some inconsistency in what the government is saying. They say that they want to do more, but at the same time they are allowing this kind of thing to go on.

Does my colleague agree that his government could stop all oil and gas exploration today?

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I do agree that this government could do that. We do need to take a reasonable, rational approach and we need to push the needle as far as we can. I am not personally in support of continuing the exploration, but I also think that what is more important is to create the right economic conditions that naturally, as we are seeing, so many of the large fossil fuel producers are just discovering, which is that the economics of it are not there anymore because the world is changing.

We are in a transition period now and, despite the fact that there might still be some interest in extraction and finding new areas to extract, I think, personally, that we are at a tipping point where we will very quickly start to see that decline. One in 10 cars sold in Canada was an electric vehicle. We are just at the chasm of the innovation curve where we will start to see it take off. At that point I do not think that there will be an interest to continue to explore for fossil fuels.

• (1550)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the fact that the planet is on fire and the Conservatives do not bother to show up for an emergency debate as they have nothing to say on it is not something that I think we should focus too much on because we have watched this gong show from them for a long time. The issue here in this motion is whether the Liberals will move beyond talk to action. Under the Prime Minister, emissions from oil and gas continue to rise. They are not doing their part. The environment minister allowed an increase of one million barrels a day. They will allow another 800,000 barrels a day under the TMX pipeline.

I am asking whether the government, in the face of this climate catastrophe will say “no more” to increased permits and increased development of oil and gas. That is the question before us.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I am really glad to answer this question because it is similar to an exchange I had with the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie earlier, which was specifically about our emissions. The reality is that despite economic growth during the pandemic, our emissions went down by 9% between 2019 and 2021. The member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie earlier said that since the pandemic they have started going up. One cannot choose to use the bottom of the pandemic as a baseline if one is not going to accept the argument that they have come down since then.

The reality is that our emissions have not gone anywhere near where they were in 2019, despite that exchange that happened earlier. That is the reality of the situation. We have the second-best performance in the G7 for decreasing GHG emissions during that time period.

I think that we are doing our part. Can we do more? Absolutely. Does this motion call on the government to do more? Absolutely, and that is why I will vote in favour of it.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, the words of this motion speak specifically to stopping the investments in fossil fuels. One of those investments was just this past week when we saw \$3 billion more in a loan guarantee to the Trans Mountain pipeline.

I respect the member for Kingston and the Islands. I see him as one of the leading voices in the Liberal caucus when it comes to moving further on climate. Can he talk about the extent to which we need to stop with these loan guarantees and invest those funds in the proven climate solutions we need?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, that is the reason I wholeheartedly support this motion. I will be honest with this member. I informed my whip before I knew that this party would be voting for it that I would be voting for it because I genuinely do not believe that we should be investing in fossil fuels. That is my own personal position. The sooner we can get to a point that we are not doing that, the better. I realize that the government is on track to get to that point by 2025, but if we can get to it by 2023, I would be even happier.

I support this motion. I personally am not in favour of continuing to prop up the fossil fuel industry. I do not think it is good for our environment. I know it is not. I do not think it is good for society as a whole.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, through you, I want to thank my colleague for Kingston and the Islands for his speech.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You don't mean that.

Mr. Scot Davidson: I do mean that but I do have some—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I remind hon. members that this is not a conversation.

The hon. member for York—Simcoe.

Business of Supply

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Speaker, in my riding what people are talking about, alluding to the member's mention of the carbon tax, is affordability. They are talking about competitiveness globally.

We are seeing onions come in now from Mexico and Morocco because Canada is becoming uncompetitive. This is about affordability. I think the member for Kingston and the Islands has had four electric vehicles. He could be on his fifth. I am not sure, but he can correct me on that. People in my riding have to wait to buy a five-year-old car right now. They cannot afford an electric vehicle. They are going to have to wait for a 10-year-old electric vehicle.

If this is so critical an emergency why does the Prime Minister not park the jet?

• (1555)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I was teasing the member earlier. I always have a good exchange with him and I appreciate his question.

The reality of the situation is that I understand there is an affordability crisis out there. I understand that a lot of people are struggling. However, yesterday I got an email from my son's school that told us that kids would not be going outside for recess yesterday as a result of the smoke in the air. He is in grade 1. I do not ever remember that happening when I was a child. I do not want my children to grow up in a world where we have many days like what we had over the last couple of days.

Yes, the member is right. There are a lot of people struggling with affordability in particular right now, but we also have to do something about protecting our environment. This comes down to finding a balance. Where is that balance? I think, ultimately, that is where the struggle is.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, you will notice that my voice is a bit hoarse today. I will do my best. I hope that the interpreters can hear me clearly.

I mention this because it is directly related to today's topic, unfortunately. This little throat irritation started on Tuesday morning when here in Ottawa we could smell smoke from the wildfires. It got worse, and today my voice is almost gone. It really is quite something. It is extremely unusual to smell that much smog all the way to Ottawa. Today, we see that it has reached New York and other U.S. cities. Americans are acutely aware of what is happening here on the north shore, in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Abitibi—Baie-James and northern Quebec.

On Monday evening, there was an emergency debate in the House about the forest fires. I plan on using essentially the same speech.

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That said, I want to take a moment to thank the people who are still on the ground in Quebec: the local authorities, SOPFEU, the Canadian Armed Forces who have sent military personnel, the people who have come to lend a hand. These people are working extremely hard. Our thoughts are with those who have been evacuated from their homes, who had to leave with a few suitcases and without knowing whether they would find their homes intact when they return.

Of course, we cannot help but associate the increasingly extreme and intense weather events we are experiencing, such as forest fires, with global warming and climate change.

That is more or less the purpose of today's motion. I am extremely pleased that the Bloc Québécois has decided to dedicate its last opposition day in the parliamentary period to an issue that is so important but that I believe is not discussed enough in the House of Commons. There is always another scandal, always something more important to talk about than the pervasive climate crisis. It is still here, which is why we need to talk about it and we need to do more.

As I said earlier, this is a motion that is not partisan and that does not seek to trick the other parties. We really want to bring people together. What the motion says makes sense: We have to do more, we have to do better and we have to do it quickly.

I spoke earlier with the Minister of Environment, who said that if governments had listened to scientists 30 years ago, we would not be experiencing smoke and forest fires in Canada right now. I agree with him.

Today, we have an opportunity to change course. It is not too late. Scientists are telling us that it is almost too late, but that actions still can be taken. I expect the government to not only take action to mitigate the climate crisis, but also to make decisions on climate change adaptation. That is how serious the situation is.

A few years ago, we were talking about the climate change that was coming and how we should prepare for it. Today, we are in the thick of climate change, and we need to adapt our infrastructure to deal with its devastating effects, which, for many, are already irreversible.

As I said on Monday evening, we seem to be experiencing abnormal events, what with hurricane Fiona, floods and forest fires. However, this kind of thing is becoming more and more normal. It is practically becoming an everyday occurrence. That may well be the case for the coming years.

Earlier, I heard my colleague who spoke just before me say that it has become almost unimaginable to think that we will raise our children in this environment. I often hear environmentalists say that they do not know if they want to bring a child into the world, with the planet on fire. They do not think it would be wise to force another human being to go through this. I thought that was quite an intense way of thinking about it, but when it comes to thinking about having children of my own, I do feel that the quality of the air we breathe and the quality of the water we drink have been affected by the actions of the past few years. We can do everything we can to protect our children, but we cannot keep them from breathing the air outside. It is extremely worrisome.

I want to give a quick overview of the forest fire situation in Quebec. I know that some of my colleagues have already done that.

• (1600)

I want to take this opportunity to commend the member for Manicouagan, the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou and the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, all from Quebec, who returned to their ridings this week to be with their constituents as they go through tough times. I salute their work.

When tragedies are happening in our ridings, it is important to be with our constituents to reassure them and share information. Some people have been reluctant to leave their homes to seek shelter, but we have to repeat the messages and tell them to listen to local public authorities.

There are still around 150 active forest fires in Quebec today, including roughly 110 that are out of control and threatening inhabited communities. People are hard at work digging trenches to prevent fires from spreading in villages and municipalities and near businesses. That is the reality on the ground.

Experts have been explaining what a normal forest fire season looks like. They are saying that the season is likely to be a little longer and extremely difficult this summer. They say a lot of work lies ahead in order to be able to fight all of them. This is extremely troubling.

Let us come back to today's motion, which is fairly simple. I was pleased to hear members of the Liberal party saying that our motion was reasonable and that everyone should agree on it. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons said that he was going to support it and that he personally agreed that we need to stop oil exploration and development. That is a good thing. I wish more members of his caucus shared his opinion.

However, that is clearly not the case, because the government continues to issue permits for oil exploration. Antonio Guterres sounded the alarm when he said that we must not implement any new oil projects and that those days are over if we want to have any chance of success. That is discouraging for people.

This morning, I read an article by Étienne Leblanc on Radio-Canada. He analyzed climate change denial, which is gaining ground. I found that very interesting. Mr. Leblanc wrote, "Even though more and more extreme weather events are happening around the world, the level of public concern about climate disruption has scarcely budged. Yet climate change denial is gaining ground."

He believes that people become discouraged when governments say that they want to do more on climate change, but then do the exact opposite. He made the link between climate change denial and the fact that people increasingly find it difficult to believe that climate change is caused by human activity. Climate change deniers believe that these events are natural, that they are the whims of Mother Nature, and that humans do not cause or contribute to them.

In his article, he explains some of the causes of climate change denial. We have heard at length about the statement by Maxime Bernier, who is the leader of the People's Party of Canada and who was the foreign affairs minister in Stephen Harper's Conservative government a few years ago. Mr. Bernier said that he was sure the forest fires had been started by environmentalists as part of a plot. We are hearing more and more of these types of claims being made on social media by people with a certain amount of credibility, including some who have even held important government positions at the federal level. The people making these statements are considered to be intelligent. Not only do some people get scared, but they end up believing them.

I went on Facebook and posted the speech I gave on Monday evening, in which I talked about the forest fires and the connection to climate change. The comments I got on my post were shocking. I will not repeat every word I read in the comments, but people said that I was nuts, that climate change did not exist, that the fires were not connected to climate change, that the air quality index was very good, that there was nothing to worry about.

It seems like some people are living on another planet. We are literally having a hard time breathing, and outdoor sports activities are being cancelled this week, yet these people are not making the connection and do not think that we might need to change our behaviour. Worse still, we do not have governments that encourage people to change their behaviour.

I see that our time together is drawing to a close. I will be pleased to answer my colleagues' questions.

• (1605)

[English]

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, part of this is about preparing our country for the future. I spoke about this in 2020.

I wonder if the member could comment on this. Our country lacks CL-215 water bombers. Public Safety has asked the military for help. We do not have a fleet of water bombers; we are short of them. Australia has the polar opposite forest fire season than we do. It would make sense to have shared resources with other countries, preparing Canada for the future.

Could my colleague comment on the procuring of water bombers and preparing Canada for what is to come?

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I did not get to the very end of our motion today, but the idea is that there would be some kind of financial transfer. The money for the subsidies that the government gives to the fossil fuel industry should instead be transferred to the provinces so that they can fight climate change, get prepared, and adapt to these changes.

Personally, I see that the provinces, Quebec and organizations like SOPFEU are well organized; they are taking the lead and asking the federal government for help as needed. That is the federal government's role. I do not think that it needs to take the lead on this, but it does have to step up if the need arises.

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If the necessary resources are not there, then we should get them. There is already international assistance on the ground, with over 700 people from other countries, including the United States. As for France, it has sent a hundred people to help out. That is wonderful, but do we need to be better prepared? The answer is "maybe", but let us send the money to the provinces so that they can take care of it.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Bloc wants to see all fossil fuel subsidies come to an end. Are there any exceptions in her mind, for example, orphan wells? The government is assisting in getting rid of those wells. Orphan wells are bad for our environment. There is a cost for the government to deal with them. The Bloc considers that a fossil fuel subsidy.

Is that a bad thing for the government to be doing? What about fossil fuel subsidies for people who live up north? From the Bloc's perspective, is that a bad fossil fuel subsidy?

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, that is the problem right there. When the government promises to stop helping polluting industries that are already making billions in profits each year, it always finds a way to get around this promise and still help these industries, saying that it is to help them green their operations. The same can be said about orphan wells: The government says that they need to be dealt with.

At the end of the day, the government keeps wanting to give money to these industries. However, it has been proven that these industries are the most polluting and that they are capable of looking after their own affairs.

Therefore, I think that these subsidies need to be ended once and for all and that we should support renewables and green energy. That is where the money is needed.

• (1610)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her work and her speech.

We have an excellent motion before us today. However, based on experience, I fear that the Liberals will vote in favour of this motion and then do nothing. In other words, they are all talk and no action.

What would my colleague like to see the Liberal government do once this motion is adopted?

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Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, the answer is simple: The government must completely stop investing in fossil fuels. That is what I want to see happen once this motion is adopted. I want the government's actions to match its words. It is talking about drilling for oil in marine refuges, marine areas that are protected, which is completely crazy. If the government were consistent in its approach, it would not do something like that.

We have an incredible opportunity at the moment, because there is a minority government in power. If the opposition parties stood together to hold the government to account, fossil fuel subsidies might already be a thing of the past. Unfortunately, some parties, like the NDP, support the government in its budgetary policies.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was listening to my colleague, whom I know personally, and I know that she has lost her voice because of the current situation and the poor air quality. I know she went to bed early yesterday and had her hot milk. I understand that the situation affects everyone.

I would like to begin by highlighting the work of my colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou. I know this is difficult for her. The fires are not under control. There are evacuations in Chibougamau and Chapais. I know this is a particularly tough time, so I want to say that we support these communities. My faithful squire, the member for Lac-Saint-Jean, and I will be pleased to welcome these people to our region. I know that they are currently travelling to Roberval, which is in the riding of the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean, but I want to give him a hand to ensure that these people are properly welcomed, as will be the people from Lebel-sur-Quévillon.

When I look at today's motion and the current situation, I wonder what we need to do. What is the best response to support people who have been displaced? Preventing such events from happening in the future is the best response. To prevent them or, at the very least, mitigate them takes some political courage.

I have often heard the Prime Minister say that he would be there. It is a phrase he uses often. I have even heard him say they would be there to be there. That is quite something. However, being there means going beyond the rhetoric and actually doing something. I say that because when I hear a Conservative member, I disagree with him, but I know what to expect.

I remember that the Conservatives had an opposition day to celebrate oil. They said oil was irreplaceable. That is the vision of the Conservative Party, so I know what to expect. In the case of the Liberal Party, the problem is that, often, the Liberals are a bit like Conservatives who ignore each other. What I mean is that they have the same approach to the oil and gas issue, but they wrap it up in a nice little package. However, the candy inside is the same: unwavering support for the oil and gas industry.

This leads me to believe that there has to be a change in culture in Canadian politics. I see oil as such a strong symbol of identity in Canadian politics that no one is prepared to admit that this sector of economic activity creates enormous problems. It is similar to the gun issue in the United States. No one is prepared to say that staking it all on fossil fuels will create problems in the long-term that will cost us a fortune.

Let us look at what has happened over the past two years with the approval of the Bay du Nord project and the government's desire, which was again mentioned during oral question period, to drill oil wells in a marine refuge. This led the mischievous member for Mirabel to say that with Guilbeault, we will get our drilling licence. He copied Elvis Gratton's famous phrase, "With Groleau, I will get my liquor licence."

It is just as ridiculous to hear the colonized Elvis Gratton speak about his future based on a liquor licence as it is to hear the Minister of Environment defend his decisions, which are incoherent if he is any sort of an environmentalist—but I'm not the one who came up with the comparison.

Let us continue in the same vein as the member for Mirabel. I find that the NDP is paying dearly for its dental insurance, because they have no choice but to support this government's positions and to vote for gag orders. Once again, this made the infamous member for Mirabel say that by spending so much time at the Liberals' feet, the New Democrats are going to get oral thrush, that little problem that can affect our toe nails.

● (1615)

When I think of the oil and gas sector, I think of a bottomless public money pit.

I am a member of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources. In last year's budget, there was \$2.6 billion for developing carbon capture and storage technologies. Businesses said that if we wanted to take that route then 75% of the cost associated with these new technologies needed to be assumed by the governments. What a sham.

They are trying to develop low-carbon oil. The government is defending that by bringing in programs. There are two major carbon sequestration projects and 57% of the money funding those two major projects is public money. There is also the emissions reduction fund, which was introduced during the pandemic. In the end, we read in a report by the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development that this fund did everything but reduce emissions in the oil and gas sector.

Then, there is Oil Change International who told us that Canada gives 14 times more in subsidies to fossil fuels than to clean energy. That is 14.5 times more subsidies to fossil fuels than to clean energy when the average for the majority of G20 countries is barely 2.5.

If we, by which I mean everyone but me, take a look at ourselves, we see that Canada is the country with the worst track record when it comes to supporting the oil and gas industry. That is not to mention all of the talk about blue hydrogen. We no longer want to talk about so-called blue hydrogen. We are going to take gas and make hydrogen using carbon capture technology. That hydrogen will supposedly be a source of clean, renewable energy. Only experts in the gas industry could say such a thing.

They are taking it even further than that. SMR technologies were designed to meet the needs of the gas industry so that it could use less gas in its processes and sell that gas. We thought that SMR technologies might be the solution.

The Canadian federation is caught in a stranglehold because most of the funding allocated to economic development goes to the oil and gas industry. On average, the EDC invests about \$14 billion a year in that sector.

It is difficult to provide accurate figures because we do not know how the government defines fossil fuel subsidies. During the election campaign, Minister Guilbeault said—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I want to remind the hon. member that we cannot refer to members by name.

The hon. member for Jonquière.

• (1620)

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I sincerely apologize. I am a respectful man, and yet I still made a mistake.

During the election campaign, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change said he planned to end fossil fuel subsidies by 2023. This is 2023, and the government still cannot define what it considers to be an inefficient fossil fuel subsidy. It cannot even define what a subsidy is. It simply does not have the courage.

Speaking of courage, the latest on the list is the much-touted just transition. Apparently, the government no longer wants to use the term “just transition”, because it could be used in a play on words with the Prime Minister's first name. The government now prefers to talk about sustainable employment. What a show of courage. If Canada does not have the courage to use a term, a concept, that is used internationally, how are we going to implement measures that require courage? The government does not even have the will to use the correct term.

The cherry on top is Trans Mountain. The bill for that is now \$30 billion. I would remind the House that the government's post-COVID-19 recovery plan, which was supposed to be green, was \$17 billion. A single oil project has cost \$30 billion. It is nonsense, especially when the Parliamentary Budget Officer indicated many times that we would never make a penny on this project. It is a money-losing venture.

The government's promise was to take the profits generated by Trans Mountain and reinvest them in clean energy. There will be no profits. They will not exist. We are trapped in this box.

I will be pleased to answer my colleagues' questions.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent motion.

I have just one question. Did the leader of the Bloc Québécois read the motion before my hon. colleague moved it?

The leader of the Bloc Québécois, when he was minister, was very much in favour of developing oil on Anticosti Island. He circumvented BAPE three times on development projects. He autho-

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rized McInnis Cement, one of the most polluting projects in Canada and he was in favour of the third link highway project between Quebec City and Lévis, which was recently cancelled by the CAQ government.

Obviously he will have the last word and will be able to reply, but does the member not see major contradictions between his motion and the positions of his leader?

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, the only big contradiction that I see, is that of the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and the former NDP leader who said that the Energy East pipeline was a win-win-win. Had there been an NDP government, there would have been a pipeline from western Canada to Quebec. That is a bloody contradiction.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would ask members to be careful of the words they use.

I give the floor to the hon. member for Essex.

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, as someone who was a firefighter for seven and a half years, I know a thing or two about firefighting. I also know we cannot always have all the resources at our fingertips, but we have other folks around us, from other municipalities, provinces and, quite frankly, across the country, who come to the firefighters' rescue.

As we are now seeing U.S. cities filling up with smoke, would the member agree with me that we have to use more of a national strategy and work with our partners in the United States to fight fires on both sides of the border?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, had my colleague listened carefully to my presentation, he would know that I said at the beginning that we need to work on prevention.

If we want to prevent these very intense forest fires, we have to think about more than just how to fight them. We have to think about how to prevent them. If we want to prevent these forest fires, we must reduce our dependency on fossil fuels. That has to be understood. That is the starting point.

If we continue to court disaster by producing more oil and gas, we will have to allocate phenomenal amounts of money to fight climate change in the next 20 years. That is what we must deal with. That is the strategy that we must put in place.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I wanted to pick up on my colleague's last statement.

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He talked about phenomenal amounts of money. In 2022 alone, \$275 billion were needed to address natural disasters around the world. That same year, big western oil companies made \$220 billion in profit. Meanwhile, in Canada, we are giving \$20.215 billion to support oil companies.

Could my colleague comment on this situation?

• (1625)

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, it makes no sense.

Since 2022, the gluttonous oil and gas sector has been reaping record profits: ExxonMobil made \$56 billion, Shell made \$40 billion and TotalEnergies made \$36 billion. In 2008, their oil refining margins went from 9.4¢ to 48.2¢.

We cannot be supporting these big oil companies with public money. As the member for Mirabel has repeatedly said, at some point, we will realize we have been shafted.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to start my comments by thinking of those individuals who have had to weather the forest fires, particularly those who live and work in the communities who, whether in terms of recreational, work or living environments, have incurred a great deal of hardship. One cannot underestimate the degree to which these fires have impacted literally thousands of lives in a very real and tangible way. We recognize the interruptions that have taken place as a direct result.

However, we do not often hear about a wildfire taking place in a particular community. It might be on the news for a day or two, maybe more than that, but what remains in these communities is there for a long time. It takes a while for a community to bounce back. To those individuals, I want to extend my best wishes and recognize what they are going through, which is a great difficulty that no doubt creates much anxiety and stress. They should know that they have a national government that is doing what it can in co-operation with different levels of government, stakeholders and non-profits. Obviously, the Government of Canada will do whatever it can with respect to our firefighters; whether they are paid or volunteer firefighters, the government has their back.

The second thing I will comment on is the firefighters. The other day, the Prime Minister was talking to me and others about a situation, which was referred to earlier today. Two firefighters were called into a home just north of Halifax. There was an elderly gentleman with dementia who had gone missing, and family members called in expressing concern. They were not too sure where he was, but they believed he was actually still in the home. The two firefighters busted down the door and went into the home, with smoke all around and flames flying. They found the elderly gentleman sitting in a chair, in good part unaware of what was taking place, and they rescued him. In a very humble way, both firefighters said, in essence, "That's what we do."

I think that those two fine gentlemen embody the spirit and goodwill that we see day in and day out in our first responders, both from those who get paid and those who volunteer. I think I can speak on behalf of all members, no matter what political party, in

recognizing the efforts of our firefighters. This is where I wanted to start things off.

It is an interesting process when we see disasters in communities. In Manitoba, we have had forest fires and floods, and I will provide comments on both situations. However, right now, I want to recognize these three provinces in particular: Quebec, Nova Scotia and Alberta.

I also want to talk about how people come together. Let us recognize that. The government plays a very important role. There is absolutely no doubt of that, and I will expand on that. However, we see people come together when there are tragedies that take place in communities. They do this in different forms, whether it is through volunteering, sending money or other forms of support. It could be as simple as a prayer at a local gurdwara, church, mosque or synagogue. It could be sending support in the form of cash. We see that time and time again.

• (1630)

In Alberta, we saw people from Manitoba pitching in to help fight the wildfires. We have a wonderful neighbour, the United States, to the south of us. President Biden was talking with the Prime Minister of Canada. As one member referenced, smoke and wildfires do not know any boundaries.

The smoke from the fires from the province of Quebec is travelling all over the place and crossing international boundaries. I would suggest that it did not even have to take that for the President of the United States and the Prime Minister to have a discussion; we now have individuals from the United States coming north to help us deal with the wildfires.

Whether it is the communities at the micro level, the different levels of government or international relations, we see people coming together. This is because we recognize the harm being done, not only to our communities but also to our environment as a whole. That is why we have such programs as the disaster program, which is there to support Canadians, because disasters take place.

I looked something up. I understand that it was actually Pierre Elliott Trudeau who established the program, the request for federal assistance, back in 1970. It was an interesting figure that I received. It is estimated that 280 events have happened since 1970. If we put that into the perspective of what we have witnessed over the last few years, there is no doubt that we are seeing an increase.

Interestingly enough, in terms of those direct federal contributions, we are looking at close to \$8 billion over that time frame. We can look at what we are spending today in terms of disaster support. A hurricane hit Atlantic Canada, resulting in hundreds of millions of dollars in damage. Homes were destroyed. The municipality went to the province. The province then came to Ottawa, and Ottawa has been there to support Atlantic Canada after that storm. We continue to be there today to support Canadians, as we are there today for the people of Alberta, Quebec and other jurisdictions where we see these disasters taking place.

In the past, my home province of Manitoba has had forest fires and floods displace thousands of people. We need to recognize that there are things the government can do that will, in fact, make a difference. One of the best examples that comes to mind, as I see my colleague from Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa walk in, is “Duff’s Ditch”.

A premier from Manitoba said that one of the ways we can avoid the city of Winnipeg flooding all the time is to build a floodway around the city. If we look at the south, where the water comes from, the floodway takes the water just before it enters the city. When the Red River is overflowing, Duff’s Ditch will take the overflow around the city. It takes it around via the east and then dumps it back into the Red River once it is north of the city.

• (1635)

What an idea that is. This is the type of investment that we need. We need to become more resilient. Former Premier Duff Roblin has often been referred to as a visionary for trying to deal with this particular issue. I can tell members that, with respect to the amount of real dollars, even factoring in inflation, billions have been saved as a direct result of this. The premier at the time realized the benefit of looking at what is being thrown at us through the environment. By doing this, people’s lives were protected in many ways, and property was protected in terms of flooding. There have been occasions when we have had floods in the city and in the Point Douglas area, the area I represented. Back in 1997, I can say that the federal government was supporting the area. I remember when Jean Chrétien came to Point Douglas to support Canadians in the north end of Winnipeg at a time when we had needs. Therefore, there have still been issues.

I use that as an example, because one of the things that we need to recognize is that climate change has really had a profound impact on weather patterns. Because of emissions and other environmental factors, we are seeing a greater number of disasters. As a result, different levels of government need to take more action. We have a national government that states that it has set up a national adaption strategy. It is the first time ever. As a national government, we are saying that we need to have a strategy that encourages municipalities, provinces and others to look at ways in which we can improve the infrastructure, so that when disasters hit, we can minimize the cost and the damage to our communities. There is no question about whether that will happen.

We are talking about 1.6 billion new federal dollars. That is on top of the \$8 billion that we put in place since we have been in government. No government in the history of this nation has invested more in infrastructure than the current government has. That is why, when I hear some opposition members saying that we are not doing enough or asking what the government is doing, I would suggest that they review some of the budgets that have been introduced. They will see hundreds of millions of dollars, going into multiple billions, to invest in things like infrastructure. They have seen a government focused on dealing with the environment in a very real and tangible way. Whether it is working with indigenous, provincial or territorial governments, the federal government understands and appreciates that there is joint jurisdiction in many different areas, and the environment is one of them.

Business of Supply

Earlier today, someone posed a question in regard to our oceans. I happened to be sitting beside the minister responsible for oceans, and she gave the answer. Canada has three oceans from coast to coast to coast. Often, people forget about the north. Do people know that under 1% was actually protected when we formed government back in late 2015? Not even 1% of our coastal Canadian waters, which we are responsible for, were actually protected. Today, one can multiply that by almost 15. Just under 15% of Canada’s coastal waters are now under protection.

• (1640)

What was even more encouraging is that the minister responsible for oceans talked about 2025. There is a very good chance that, as a government, we are going to hit 25% of our oceans being protected. We have the Prime Minister and cabinet saying that this is not good enough, and we can even attempt to do better. By 2030, let us see if we can get it up to 30% of our coastal waters. I believe that we are on target to hit that type of a milestone.

The amount of land being converted for conservation has dramatically increased under the government. I believe we have even seen the adoption of what could be three, maybe more, new national parks under the government.

They say let us talk about other policies. We have budgetary policies, or monetary policies, and we have legislative policies, or initiatives. Let me give members an example of both.

From a legislative perspective, we have brought in legislation to have net-zero emissions by 2050. For the first time ever, we now have, in legislation, a law that says that Canada will be at net-zero by 2050. That is a very important commitment in law that is coming from the Government of Canada, a legislative initiative.

We also have a budgetary initiative that will have, and has had, a very positive impact on Canada’s environment and the people of Canada, which is the price on pollution. The Conservatives call it a carbon tax.

Countries from all around the world, back in 2015, went to Paris, and one of the points that came out of Paris was the idea of a price on pollution. It was not a new idea, but it was amplified in Paris back in 2015. It was not new because the first government in North America to have a price on pollution was the Province of Alberta. It was a Progressive Conservative government in Alberta that brought it in.

It was not new. When this government adopted it, we brought it back to Canada. We said that we are going to have a price on pollution because it is the right thing to do. We instituted a rebate to support Canadians. The system works so that there is an incentive, whether one is a consumer or one is within the industry, for less emissions, for ensuring that we see actions being taken to protect our environment.

Business of Supply

The Conservatives have been all over the map, like a fish out of water, flipping and flopping, depending on who their leader is. The current leader says they do not support the price on pollution. I am hoping that fish is not dead yet, and we will get another flop or a flip. I am hopeful.

I believe there are members of the Conservative caucus who understand the benefits of a price on pollution. There were leadership candidates, although they lost, mind, in the Conservative caucus who actually support it. It is always interesting to watch when the Conservatives get a little bit embarrassed or humiliated on that particular issue.

• (1645)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, Carbon Pricing; the hon. member for Kitchener Centre, Transportation; the hon. member for Nunavut, Northern Affairs.

[English]

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always interesting to hear my colleague from Winnipeg North speak about how much the Liberal government is doing.

People in my riding of York—Simcoe are on the outside looking in. I am going to give the hon. member a couple of examples. He spent about five minutes talking about oceans, but the member's government did not support my Bill C-204, which was to stop the export of plastic waste for final disposal. Basically, the Liberal government said that it was not happening. The funny thing was that *The Fifth Estate* tracked containers going to Thailand, which proved it, and asked the environment minister why the Liberals did not vote for it. It would be a sign, to stop dumping plastics into the lake and burning plastics.

Also, I alluded to waiting since 2015 for the Lake Simcoe cleanup. Where is the cleanup fund for Lake Simcoe? Here we are, eight years later, and there is no money for Lake Simcoe. I am happy the member is getting the water agency in Winnipeg, even though we asked for it in the Great Lakes and Lake Simcoe. Whether that is due to a by-election happening there now or not, I do not know.

I wonder if the member could comment on that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, talking about cleaning up Stephen Harper's mess, let me draw a comparison.

Stephen Harper was the Prime Minister of Canada, and containers of garbage were being shipped from Canada over to the Philippines, where they were left to rot. It caused such a stink that the people in the Philippines were telling Canada to take back its garbage. The then president Duterte said, and I think he meant it somewhat tongue-in-cheek, he would declare war on Canada to have it take back its garbage.

Not to worry, we avoided that by ensuring there was a place for us to take back the garbage, and we did. It was somewhere in British Columbia. They took care of the garbage and did a fine job.

We are used to cleaning up Stephen Harper's mess—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments.

The hon. member for Mirabel.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned that his government has invested heavily in infrastructure. As with any type of investment, there are good ones and there are bad ones. Among the billions of dollars invested in infrastructure, there are the investments made in Trans Mountain. At the outset, Trans Mountain was supposed to cost \$7 billion. So far, it has cost \$30 billion in public money. It is a project that is bad for the environment and that is incurring losses.

Everyone makes mistakes. It happens to every government.

With the information we have today, if it were to be done all over again, does he think the government should make that investment, and does he think Trans Mountain was a good investment?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would suggest that the member needs to be a little more patient because at some point Trans Mountain will be divested.

Whether it is indigenous entrepreneurs or others who ultimately take over Trans Mountain, I believe that Canada as a community would be better off because it was the right decision to make at the right time. At the end of the day, I ultimately see a great deal of benefit.

This is the big difference. As a government and as the Liberal Party, we understand that the environment and the economy go together. We need to work with all the different stakeholders out there to make sure we all benefit.

• (1650)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, like the hon. member for Winnipeg North, I am very worried about the people in northern Alberta. I am very worried.

I think of my friend, Chief Allan Adam and the people in Fort Chipewyan, who have been evacuated from Chipewyan Lake. I am very concerned about them. I appreciate the concern the member expressed.

However, I do have to say that my worry, always, with the Liberals is that they are very good at saying they are going to do something, but they are not always very good at actually doing that thing. There has been awful lot of discussion about what they have signed and what is in the budget, but ultimately, we have a government that is the worst in the G20 in investment in green technology.

The Liberal government invests 14 times more in the oil and gas sector than it does in renewable energies. I am wondering how he could stand in this place to say that he is concerned about firefighting, and how he could stand in this place to pat himself on the back for the work the Liberal government is doing, when Canada is literally the worst in the G20 and we are investing 14 times more—

Business of Supply

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, first and foremost, I do not believe what the member is saying.

Let me emphasize the next point. The member would argue that we are subsidizing fossil fuels. Yes, we are subsidizing them and we have a tangible commitment to get out of that subsidy. However, we should keep in mind that a high percentage of that subsidy is going to deal with orphan wells. Orphan wells are a bad thing for our environment and it is not good for the government to just ignore that problem. We have to deal with it, and that means spending money.

If we are spending money, the NDP says that we are subsidizing fossil fuels. I would suggest that we are protecting the environment, because orphan wells are bad for it. We need to deal with them. It would be irresponsible of government to ignore orphan wells.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, the words of the motion say, "stop investing in fossil fuels". The member for Winnipeg North just shared with the member for Mirabel that we need more patience for TMX. We need more patience for what? To cut down more old-growth forest, to waste billions more dollars. This is what the UN Secretary General calls moral and economic madness.

We do not need patience; we need urgent action so that our kids do not live in climate hell.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the Green Party has a very unique position in the House in the sense that it is the only party that would say it is time for us to disassemble, to take apart our pipelines. The Green Party genuinely believes that we need to get rid of the existing pipelines. The Conservative Party says that no one cares about the environment, just build, build, build, even though it was not very successful at it, but that is what it will say.

As this government has clearly demonstrated, if we work with Canadians on the environment and the economy, there is a way we can manage all of it in an appropriate fashion.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, today, in response to a question asked by my colleague from Repentigny, who wanted to know why the government was issuing permits to oil and gas companies to allow them to drill in the habitat of the right whale, an endangered species, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources said they were not drilling licenses, but only exploration licenses.

That surprised me. The Liberals claim they do not want to drill, but they issue permits so companies can go see if there is any oil to be found. The question I wish to ask the member for Winnipeg North is simple. What is the point of issuing exploration permits if, at the end of the day, they do not want to extract the oil? Is that not a flagrant contradiction?

• (1655)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I was here when the question was posed. The parliamentary secretary provided an an-

swer to the member. Tomorrow, we are back at it, and I would encourage the member to ask the follow-up question of the parliamentary secretary.

The minister responsible for oceans talked about this, that when we became government, 1% of the oceans were protected. Today it is almost 15%. In 2025, it will be close to 25%, and we are shooting for 30% by the year 2030. I see that as a good thing. I hope that will help the member sleep tonight.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, does the hon. parliamentary secretary understand that marine-protected areas only protect the fish that are in the sea? There is nothing in the marine-protected areas legislation that would prevent grey water dumping from cruise ships and other emissions from various boats. When the Liberals say how great a job they have done, there is skepticism by other people who say it is not what they have done.

I want the member to think about when he is portraying things—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. parliamentary secretary a few seconds to answer.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am not going to advocate for those types of things to be banned outright, as the member seems to be implying. The government needs to continue to work with the B.C. government, other stakeholders and different industries. I am very much interested in what specifically the member is ultimately trying to recommend.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, as we speak, forest fires are spreading, especially in northern Quebec, even though firefighters are demonstrating great courage as they work to put them out. This is a worrisome situation with disastrous consequences for the inhabitants of the municipalities that had to be evacuated on an emergency basis in recent days.

I want to salute the great solidarity shown by my colleagues from Manicouagan, Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou and Abitibi—Témiscamingue towards the people of their ridings who have been through a lot in recent days.

Despite the rain and the suspension of the evacuation order, there is still a state of emergency in Sept-Îles, and we know that there is presently a great deal of concern in Abitibi—Témiscamingue and Jamésie in northern Quebec.

Yesterday, by the late afternoon, more than 12,000 people had been evacuated in Quebec, with almost 14% of them from indigenous communities. That number continues to grow.

Business of Supply

Tuesday evening, Chibougamau, the biggest town in Jamésie, and the Cree community of Oujé-Bougoumou declared a state of emergency and ordered the evacuation of 7,500 residents, including those in cottage country.

Early yesterday, over 450 people—after having spoken with the mayor of Roberval, I think it is now almost 700 people—were being sheltered at the sports centre in Roberval. This has been a stunning effort by the residents of Lac-Saint-Jean and the people of the Saguenay since evacuees from Chibougamau started flowing in on Tuesday night. Frankly, the demonstration of solidarity has been spectacular.

Roberval's mayor, Serge Bergeron, who, I would point out, was my opponent in the last electoral campaign as the Conservative candidate, is a remarkable man and a wonderful human being. I applaud his incredible solidarity and the solidarity of the citizens of Roberval who quickly rallied in as many ways as possible to lend a hand to the families who had to leave their homes.

Adversity brings out the best in human beings. I can say with assurance that we did witness that in Lac-Saint-Jean. Right now, in my riding, we can see solidarity and the best of humanity. I have had the honour of representing this riding since 2019. I was very moved by what happened. The wonderful engagement we see attempts to assuage the fears of people who are afraid of losing their homes, their property and sometimes even some of their companions, such as the animals that live with them. Frankly, it is difficult for most people, but there is solidarity that may bring some comfort amidst all that is happening.

Teams from the Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux de Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean are on site to support evacuees. Professionals are there to support them in any way they can. People are extremely anxious. I know, because I have been on the phone the last few days. I spent countless hours on the phone. People are anxious, but at the same time, they remain positive and help each other a great deal. There are fires less than 20 kilometres from their town. Our hearts go out to them, sincerely.

Given the urgency of the situation, the Town of Roberval immediately set in motion its emergency protocol and an internal crisis task force, involving the town's administration, the municipal councillors and emergency preparedness. The interesting thing is that there was a simulation a few weeks ago in preparation for a disaster scenario. Their team was prepared to act quickly. The scenario became reality. I note the fact that an exercise was held in preparation.

This massive wave of support shows once again how much people come together in Lac-Saint-Jean. People were lining up to volunteer. People spent nights setting up cots. Social media is overflowing with offers for a place to stay. Stores opened earlier to accommodate people. There are pharmacies, dentists and grocery stores. There are people who wanted to help and still want to help out of pure humanism and that is really nice to see. It is nice to see even though the situation remains alarming.

That is why, in light of the evacuations, our leader, the leader of the Bloc Québécois, moved a motion in the House of Commons to ask the House the following: to “stand in solidarity” with all those affected, to acknowledge “that climate change is having a direct im-

pact on people's quality of life, and that it is exacerbating the frequency and scale of extreme weather and climate events”, to recognize that the “federal government must do more” and “invest more in the fight against climate change”, to demand that the “federal government stop investing in fossil fuels” to the detriment of renewable energy sources. Naturally, all of this must be done while respecting the jurisdictions of the provinces.

● (1700)

Again, the situation is alarming. Experts agree that the worsening climate crisis will increase the number and intensity of forest fires in Quebec over the next few years. According to Christian Messier, professor of forest ecology at UQAM and the Université du Québec en Outaouais, the worst is still yet to come.

We know that the boreal forest is an ecosystem that is historically conducive to fires. Global warming is making the situation worse. The regions most affected will be Abitibi-Témiscamingue, James Bay and northern Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. As we are seeing now, the north shore, Mauricie, Gaspé and even the Laurentians are not spared.

Ironically, forestry and forest management are among the solutions of the future to fight climate change. The forest industry is most well-positioned to transition to the green economy. Those are not my words. That is what the experts are saying.

Nevertheless, federal funding for forestry, as my colleague from Jonquière so aptly put it, is a pittance compared to what our good federalist friends are giving to the auto industry in Ontario and to the western oil industry. As my colleague from Mirabel so aptly put it, with a bit of humour, but in a serious way, when we look at the federal government support for the auto industry in Ontario and the oil and gas industry in the west, it seems that we are getting shafted. I completely agree with the member for Mirabel.

It is not like the government has not gotten an earful from my colleague from Jonquière and I about our priorities for Quebec's forestry industry. I urge the federal government to clear the wax out of its ears. What is happening right now should be more than a wake-up call. In fact, the forestry industry is a prime industrial sector for the green economic recovery, with strong economic potential and an indispensable role in the fight against climate change.

Another major win for Quebec when it comes to the environment is Hydro-Québec. Interestingly enough, contrary to a number of provinces in the rest of Canada, Hydro-Québec has never required any federal assistance.

For some time now, the climate deadline has been forcing us to abandon fossil fuels. The clock is ticking, but the federal government is holding us back. At some point, we are going to have to open our eyes, stop talking, and start doing something. No one can predict the future, but if the Quebec government had all the power, it would certainly find it easier to go ahead with its own projects, its clean projects.

Looking at Quebec's history, its love of the St. Lawrence and wide open spaces, its aversion to fossil fuels, I get the impression that making Quebec a country would allow Quebecers to be greener and to take control of their environmental future.

As we know, right now, when something falls directly within its jurisdiction, the federal government can take action in environmental matters without the agreement of the provinces. It can also decide to continue funding the oil and gas industry. In fact, Quebec is reluctantly helping to fund fossil fuel development in western Canada. Each year, Quebecers see their taxes go to Ottawa. Billions of dollars are gifted to oil and gas companies in western Canada.

Ultimately, this makes it impossible for us to be as green as we would like to be within Canada. That alone, for me, for my children, for our children, for future generations, is a damned good argument for Quebec independence.

In closing, I would like to say this to those who have had to leave their homes in the last few days, to all those affected, directly or indirectly, by the fires, to the crews working to put out the blazes, and to all Quebecers: Let us stand together in these uncertain times and let us not forget that the Bloc Québécois is with them.

• (1705)

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was pleased to hear the member speaking about forestry practices being really important in preventing forest fires. I know that Quebec has had a carbon tax for a number of years now. What percentage of the carbon tax in Quebec is allocated toward adaptation and prevention, such as was mentioned in his speech?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. I do not know the exact percentage, but someone is telling me that 100% of that money is used for green energy projects. I think that we have a model that works, that makes sense, that is realistic, that takes into account climate change, and that enables us to work for future generations.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, which I found to be very compassionate, because it focused on the people who have had to be evacuated because of the wildfires and whose lives have been turned upside down.

There is one thing that I think we do not talk enough about and that is the loss of expertise necessary to build water bombers in Quebec and Canada. Canadair and then Bombardier used to build water bombers in Montreal. Now, they are no longer manufactured here. It is a bit like what happened with COVID-19. Canada is no longer able to produce vaccines because we no longer have any plants that can manufacture them.

We are no longer building water bombers at this time. We need to borrow them from other countries, which makes us dependent on those countries. I know that my colleague likes independence. Does he think we should have the capacity to build our own water bombers?

Business of Supply

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, not only do I love independence, but I love Quebec independence. I know that my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie votes for a pro-independence party provincially. He is bound to one day join us on this side of the House.

As for water bombers, the problem is that the federal government has never had any policies to support the aerospace industry. Once again, a Quebec industry has been sidelined, like forestry, in favour of Ontario's auto industry and western Canada's oil and gas industries.

The New Democratic Party made a deal with our friends in the Liberal Party to get dental care. I figure that natural disasters cost us a lot of money every year because of climate change. If they had done a climate change deal instead of a dental care deal, we would have saved money and could have used it to create the dental care program. I wonder if the dental crisis is a greater problem than the climate crisis right now. I do not think that it is. Unfortunately, the New Democrats decided to support the Liberal government.

• (1710)

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, our Conservative colleague mentioned our carbon exchange and the emissions permits we have in Quebec. When we sell emission units, a large part of the money, if not all, goes into Quebec's green fund and is used for various investments to make us more resilient to climate change and better able to adapt.

Would my colleague not say that, in the western provinces that rely on oil, instead of complaining about the federal carbon tax, they should seize the opportunity to implement similar mechanisms to ensure that those provinces could also, independently, take charge of their own transition? Would it not be more constructive and rewarding for them to do that?

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I do not want to get involved in western provincial politics, but it seems that I have to. Unfortunately, successive governments in western Canada have never had a vision for the future. When things were going well in the western provinces and they were making a lot of money by reselling oil, instead of investing in diversifying their economy for the future or in social programs, they decided to cut taxes, thinking the good times would last forever. That is unfortunate.

Let us look at what is going to happen with Trans Mountain. The government invested \$30 billion in Trans Mountain and not a single penny will be returned to Canadians. In fact, we are going to lose money. We would have had the opportunity to invest that money elsewhere, including in the diversification of the western provinces' economies. We would have been happy to take part in that. Unfortunately, that will not be the case, and that is all the more reason for Quebec to be independent, because we want to stop subsidizing an industry that is doomed to failure.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to see you and all of my colleagues.

Business of Supply

I want to take a moment to send my best wishes and thoughts to everyone affected by the forest fires right now. I am thinking of the community members who are supporting all those who are helping with the evacuations as well as my colleagues, the members for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, Manicouagan and Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou. I know that they are with their families and they travel a lot. They are supporting initiatives on the ground. It is very touching to see them get involved like that. I want to offer them, as well as the people affected by these fires, my full support.

Those who know me well know that I grew up in Lebel-sur-Quévillon. Today, the town has been completely evacuated. I spent my childhood in James Bay. The latest images I have seen are extremely disturbing. Visibility is significantly reduced. Some of my family worked at the Nordic Kraft plant in Lebel-sur-Quévillon, which is currently surrounded by trenches to prevent the flames from reaching the building. The town has experienced serious economic hardship, but the plant recently reopened. The economy is getting back on track. I want to tell all these people that I am thinking of them and that the Bloc Québécois is thinking of them. We offer them our full support and our thoughts.

We are nearing the day's end, and much has been said. As a final point, I would like to talk about dependence. We have been talking all day about dependence on oil, fossil fuels and cars. I was wondering how I could contribute to this debate. As members know, I always try to be constructive. It occurred to me that not much has been said today about the second type of dependence, or addiction, which is a very serious disease in Canada. I am talking about addiction to oil money within the public sector.

The reality is that if we were not so addicted to oil money, if certain provinces were not so addicted to oil money to be able to deliver quality public services, if certain political parties were not so addicted to oil money and the oil lobby in order to function, if the Canadian government was not so addicted to the oil money it collects through corporate income tax, if there had not been so much development in the banking sector, which has grown significantly in Calgary in recent years, we would not be where we are today.

However, we are in a situation where it always seems like the transition will be extremely costly because we need oil money so badly. There are many examples of this, and it is serious. This short-term, short-sighted attitude is serious. In the good years when the price of a barrel of oil is high, above \$100, provinces like Alberta have made the choice to live solely off oil. For example, they had very low income tax rates for individuals, at 10%, with one level of tax administration.

Some provinces have no sales tax. They complain about the carbon tax, but they do not have a provincial sales tax. These provinces are extremely dependent on fossil fuel royalties. Accordingly, when there is a market low, these provinces are very hard hit and want to continue producing more oil, even if it brings in little profit. When the market is strong, the provinces want to rake in surpluses. That is why these provinces are against any kind of transition.

I will read some quotes that indicate how far we are from the transition. I am quoting politicians. The first is from May 2023. The politician in question said, “we don't want to see actual production

cuts as an effort to achieve emissions reduction. So let's be very clear: we're not going to be endorsing production cuts”.

That is goes completely against the recommendations for the transition of the International Energy Agency and the IPCC report.

This same politician said, “As we engage in more and more work to effectively reduce emissions, there's likely room for production to increase”. Rachel Notley of the NDP in Alberta said this during the election campaign. That shows just how deeply rooted the problem is.

We know that the current leader of the federal NDP was at odds with Ms. Notley in that regard at some point. We have to give him that. We must be honest. The leader of the NDP in Alberta finally said that she disagreed with the current NDP leader and that they would produce more oil.

● (1715)

This did not stop the federal NDP from supporting the Alberta NDP, going door-knocking with them and being pleased that they were elected in Calgary and Edmonton. The day after the election, their parliamentary leader was ecstatic to see that this oil and gas party got tons of seats in Calgary and Edmonton, in violation of the rules of the House in the middle of question period. We could hear chants of “Calgary” and “Edmonton” in the House. Next we might have seen them stand up and shout that they too were oil and gas people, just less transparent about it.

Ms. Notley said in 2023 that she disagrees with the idea that we should not partner with oil and gas companies when they are in a position to have such significant weight in our economy. Imagine the addiction. She says she disagrees that we should get out of oil, which contributes so much not only to Alberta's economy, but also to Canada's. That is where we are. When left-wing parties are in favour of oil and gas in the west, then it should come as no surprise that we are having a hard time advancing the idea of the transition.

We therefore have the International Energy Agency saying that there is no need for new oil and gas projects and we should not develop any. We have a government with an environmentalist for Minister of Environment. I sincerely believe he is an environmentalist, but Canada's sick addiction to oil money is so deeply entrenched that he has no other choice but to give in and agree to Bay du Nord and its 3 billion barrels of oil.

The Prime Minister promised trees during the election campaign. He promised to plant about two trees for each new barrel of oil he authorized. That gives us an idea of the number of barrels he is allowing for.

Jean Chrétien, at the time, said that if he had given as much money to Quebec as to the tar sands, he would have won every Quebec seat. This mentality is ingrained in the Liberal Party. Let us take Trans Mountain as an example.

There is something called the sunk cost fallacy. It is a cognitive bias, a situation where so much energy and money have been poured into something that does not work that people keep pouring money into it. They feel so bad about investing in a project that does not work that they keep investing. For some, it is their relationship as a couple. For the Liberals, it is their relationship with the oil in Trans Mountain. At first it was \$7 billion, and then it was \$9 billion, and then it was \$13 billion, and now it is \$30 billion. That is what the parliamentary secretary and member for Winnipeg North told us earlier. It is going to go up to \$40 billion, \$50 billion, \$60 billion or \$70 billion. He is telling us to just be patient until they realize that it is a bad infrastructure investment. People have to own up to their mistakes.

That is Canada, because we have parties that always think in the short term.

I have a message for the Conservatives, who have the shortest-term view of the bunch. Unlike the NDP, who voted today for a budget that contains \$25 billion in oil subsidies and are not ashamed to say that they were proud to do so, the Conservatives are at least honest. They talk about the cost of living and about the carbon tax. They talk about people struggling to make ends meet.

I would like them to know that, according to the people at the Insurance Bureau of Canada, who are not environmental extremists, Canadians lost \$3.1 billion in insurable property in 2022 because of weather events and all the natural consequences of global warming. The Insurance Bureau of Canada says that the amount will increase going forward. Who pays for that? It is their constituents, the citizens, the people who go to the gas station and pay the carbon tax. In Fort McMurray, the recent fires caused \$3.58 billion in damage. It is the most expensive disaster in Canadian history.

I believe that the Conservatives want the best for people, but I think they are only thinking as far as tomorrow morning. They are not thinking about next year, 10 years from now, 15 years from now or future generations. I think they are good people who have the potential to open their eyes, to try to be less short-sighted, to think about future generations and to realize that every additional step towards more extraction is another step towards a huge liability that they will pass on to future generations.

I respectfully encourage them to take a constructive look at the motion we moved today. We did it for our children and for theirs.

• (1720)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Mirabel seems to be extremely concerned about what is happening with the NDP in Alberta. I find that really interesting.

I would like to bring his attention back to the environment and to what is happening in Mirabel, more specifically in Kanesatake, where, for years, there has been an illegal dump. Foul-smelling, toxic water is leaking from that dump, and it is having a real impact on people's health.

Residents of Kanesatake recently organized a press conference to denounce the ping-pong game between Ottawa and Quebec on this issue. Many MPs were invited to participate. Both levels of govern-

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ment keep passing the buck, and the problem in my colleague's riding is not being resolved.

I attended that press conference, as did the deputy leader of the Green Party. The member for Mirabel was invited, but he refused to attend. Why?

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, that was the first issue that I began working on, even before I was elected.

Unlike the NDP, I work in this riding every day and I understand that there are very sensitive issues, like safety and social harmony.

I consulted all of the parties. We worked with the environment minister and the minister responsible for indigenous relations. We are still working on this. We worked with journalists and campaigned to raise awareness. We are doing it without putting on a show.

What interests us is the environment, not putting on a show in other members' ridings.

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will ask for some forgiveness from my colleagues, as my voice has been impacted by the smoke we are encountering in Quebec and Ontario and on this side of the country. I will remind colleagues that British Columbians in my riding of Cariboo—Prince George and I have been experiencing it for a long time. I am glad that in the last couple of days and the last week, if there is a positive that has come out of any of this, Quebec and Ontario have been waking up to what the rest of us have been dealing with for quite some time.

In today's debate, I wish I had more time to speak to this because it is something we have lived with in my riding in the eight years since I have been elected. In 2017 and 2018, we had some of the worst wildfire seasons we have had in the history of our province. Indeed, in 2017, we had the longest state of emergency, which was over three months. We also had the largest mass evacuation in our province's history.

Members will pardon me for my skepticism about the government ever doing anything, because it has been eight years since the Liberals have been in government and six years since our largest wildfire season and they have yet to do anything. They stand with hand on heart while a phony tear comes to their eye and say they truly, really care, yet two weeks ago, when I appeared at the natural resources committee, I heard the government cut funding to the wildfire resilience program. That allows communities to be fire smart and to look after themselves to make sure they are prepared for the next wildfire season. The government has cut that. That is shameful.

My concern is that, after six years, I still have communities in my riding waiting to be made whole. Our colleague from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon has Lytton in his riding. It is totally devastated. The whole community is gone. The businesses there and that whole community have seen nothing from the government.

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These debates get very partisan. Of course, everybody takes shots, but let us remember that there are real costs to this. Lives and livelihoods are lost. Everybody has taken shots at the Conservatives over this time, but I will remind colleagues that it was our former Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney's government that brought climate change to the forefront of international discourse. The acid rain treaty that we signed with the U.S. in the late 1980s and early 1990s was groundbreaking. It was the first time this debate really took place.

Our friend from Kingston and the Islands railed on and on, for about the first 10 minutes of his 20-minute speech, about how our leader blocked and filibustered last night in his speech. He asked how we can sit as a party and be a party to this leader. How can the member sit in a party with a leader who has so many ethical challenges? I know our colleague from Kingston and the Islands to be a decent person, but over eight years we have sat and watched the Prime Minister face ethical challenge after ethical challenge, yet the member still sits there and is a good soldier for the Liberals. He cannot point fingers across the way.

Our argument is that a tax plan is not a plan to fight fires. We have real people in real communities who are losing their livelihoods and losing their way of life, yet the government, in eight years, has done nothing. As a matter of fact, as I said in this discussion earlier, the Liberals have cut resources to the very thing they say they are doing. They stand there when they think it means something or when they want to get voted in, but after they get voted in they do nothing.

• (1725)

In 2021, the Prime Minister, in the eleventh hour of that election, came to my home province, pledged millions upon millions of dollars and said that he was committed to finding a thousand forest firefighters. Two years later, the Liberals have done absolutely nothing, so pardon me if I am skeptical that, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, the government will ever do anything with respect to climate change, wildfires and flooding. It is important that whoever is in power takes this seriously. The government is not.

• (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 5:30 p.m., pursuant to order made on Tuesday, November 15, 2022, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[*Translation*]

The question is on the motion.

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

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Monday, June 12, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

COPYRIGHT ACT

The House resumed from April 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-294, An Act to amend the Copyright Act (interoperability), be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is a rare opportunity for me to address you twice in such a short period of time. I am sure you are delighted.

I would like to take a few seconds to say that I am thinking of the people in my riding and all the organizations in my riding that are working very hard in these increasingly difficult economic circumstances, when housing and food prices are rising. My thoughts go out to them, given that the Bank of Canada raised interest rates yesterday.

I have in mind the Centre d'aide et de références de Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines, the Dépannage alimentaire de Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines, the Centre de dépannage St-Janvier, the Comptoir d'entraide populaire de Mirabel in Saint-Augustin, the Centre de dépannage de Saint-Canut, the Comité d'action sociale in Saint-Joseph-du-Lac, the Communauté d'entraide de Saint-Placide, the Armoire d'espoir in Oka, the Saint-François d'Assise parish in Oka, the Sainte-Marie-du-Lac parish in Sainte-Marthe-sur-le-lac, the Petite Maison de Pointe-Calumet, the Centre d'entraide de Saint-Colomban and all the other organizations that provide support in my riding. I want them to know that they are important to us and that we support them in these increasingly difficult times.

That said, today we are debating Bill C-294 at third reading. First, I would like to thank the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands for introducing this bill. I think it is a great initiative. I think, not surprisingly, he knows that we will support it.

This is a very short bill that contains only two clauses. However, the length of the bill is no indication of the quality, because it is designed to resolve important issues related to the debate we had in the House on the issue of planned obsolescence. Essentially, this bill allows the owner of a device that uses an operating system, for example, to break the lock on the operating system in order to take full advantage of it and use applications in the operating system that are not provided by the company that created said operating system. This is essentially an amendment to the Copyright Act.

We understand that creators have to make a living from their art, that it is important, that we have to take action against copying and against the unapproved use of a cultural good or, for example, an application, and so on. However, there are times when the consumer ends up paying a price.

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I will give a few examples. Today's phones are literally computers. They are not like the phones of the past. Mine is quite sophisticated, for example. These phones have operating systems. Theoretically, under current copyright law, the company that makes my phone could prevent independent app developers from allowing me to use those apps on my phone. These apps can be extremely useful, like the VaxiCode app we used during the pandemic, or GPS apps that prevent people from getting lost in the woods.

Obviously, phone companies have been gracious enough to allow users to install apps of all kinds, but they do still have the right to prevent us from making full use of our devices. However, it appears that not all companies have been so gracious as to allow us to use other apps on their operating systems, which I think goes a bit too far.

I will give the example of John Deere tractors. I represent an agricultural riding. Over 80% of the city of Mirabel is zoned for agriculture. Our farmers use very sophisticated machinery. Today, these machines are computers on wheels. The operating systems of these tractors have software to optimize the way fertilizer is spread. They come with all kinds of devices that can even coordinate farm machinery based on weather conditions, outside conditions, and so on. They are basically computers.

Farmers think that an innovation market could spring up to allow third parties to offer all the technological innovations that John Deere could offer, but does not. However, when they buy their tractors, they are only paying for a licence to use the operating system.

• (1735)

They do not own the operating system, so they do not have the right to improve the performance of a piece of equipment that they paid a fortune for. Those things are expensive.

There is also the matter of code sharing. The company could say that people can develop apps if they want to but that it will not share its code. That is the kind of situation that my colleague's bill seeks to address.

It is closely related to the issue of planned obsolescence. The House previously worked on the right to repair. What was the objective? The main objective was to give consumers the full value of a product that they paid for, by ensuring that they do not have to buy the same item again at full price when the original item still has years of life and use left in it. We therefore worked on the right to repair.

We worked on planned obsolescence. That is a term that can be defined in a variety of ways, but basically, it refers to methods used by companies to ensure that, after a certain period of time, a period shorter than the full physical lifespan of the product, the product will no longer be usable. There are all sorts of keys and mechanisms that can be used to do this.

How can one describe planned obsolescence? As I said, it can take various forms. A company may simply design a product that is less durable. It could launch new models so that the older model becomes out of date or incompatible with new software. It can make products impossible to repair because the parts are unavailable or prohibitively expensive. It can use the Patent Act to prevent

parts from being manufactured, or it can use the Copyright Act, and so on.

The original intent of these copyright laws and patent laws was not to prevent consumers from using their own property. The original intent was to allow the author of a work or the inventor of a new device to earn a living and ensure that a third party did not appropriate their own invention. Today we are in a situation where these laws are being used to prevent the consumer from benefiting. That is precisely what Bill C-294 addresses.

It is complementary to the approach taken by the Government of Quebec. For example, in 2019, the Liberal MNA for Chomedey at the National Assembly of Quebec introduced Bill 197, which sought to stop planned obsolescence. This bill introduced a sustainability rating. It stated that the replacement parts, tools and repair service required for the maintenance or repair of a good must be available on the market for a reasonable length of time after the purchase of the good. It includes a provision stating that the manufacturer cannot refuse to perform a warranty on the grounds that the good was repaired. We know how it works: If we do not go to the dealer because we do not want a monopoly, since no one likes monopolies, and we get the thing repaired for less somewhere else, we are told that the warranty will not be honoured.

The Quebec government addressed this. The law is not yet in force. Europe has also addressed planned obsolescence. According to a European Union directive, member states are to amend their laws to classify products according to their reparability. Every product will eventually have a rating on a scale of 10 so that buyers know if the product is durable. This is good for consumers and for the green transition. Europe has a reparability index based on five criteria: the availability of documentation; disassembly, thus access to tools; the availability of spare parts; the price of spare parts; and specific criteria for various categories of equipment.

In the Canadian context, this represents consumer protection. It is the responsibility of Quebec and the provinces. No matter what Quebec does to protect its consumers, if the owners of operating systems, in this case, can use the provisions of the Copyright Act against the initial spirit of the Copyright Act to block consumer rights, this counteracts the efforts made by Quebec.

• (1740)

In this context, I want to again applaud my colleague's bill. I thank my colleague for introducing it, and I recognize that his bill complements the work done by Quebec. I will repeat, as I did at the start of my speech, that we will support the bill.

*Private Members' Business**[English]*

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand here tonight to speak to the bill presented by the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Bill C-294, regarding interoperability, and the member who spoke previous to me, the member for Mirabel, who is my seatmate, spoke eloquently about the impacts and the structure of this on the agriculture industry, which I will come to.

However, if you will provide me a little leeway, Mr. Speaker, as members know, the Speaker's riding and mine have had some dramatic forest fires these last two weeks. In the context of this bill and agriculture, I just want to stand up and thank a few people in the riding and in the Speaker's riding who have done an amazing job dealing with the issue of livestock that had to be evacuated.

It is a huge issue. People do not generally think about that in these kinds of fires, but on Cape Sable Island in Shelburne County there was agriculture livestock, and a lot of it, that had to be quickly evacuated, because it is tough to move it slowly. They actually did not have an evacuation order, but they moved it out in case. They moved it to the exhibition in Yarmouth, in the Speaker's riding, and they were fantastic to deal with. They took in a lot of animals and kept them safe and healthy, as did the exhibition in Bridgewater, in my riding. It was a full house of livestock that had to be safely moved and stored, which is no small effort. I would like to thank both those organizations for all the volunteer work they did to protect the animals.

In Bill C-294, the summary says that the enactment would amend the Copyright Act to allow a person, in certain circumstances, to circumvent, or get around, a technological protection measure, TPM, which is a technical term, to make a computer program interoperable, or in other words to make a computer program work with any device or component, or with a product they manufacture.

On this bill, we need to start with what the purpose of the Copyright Act is, and the member for Mirabel touched on it. The Copyright Act provides exclusive rights for authors and creators of works. It can be an artistic work, a dramatic work, a musical work or a literary work, and the latter category encompasses computers and computer programs. These exclusive rights are collectively referred to as "copyright".

Copyright provides the rights holder, the person who created the work, the sole authority to perform specific acts vis à vis the product. They control what happens to their product. That is the purpose of copyright, and these rights are listed under section 3 of the Copyright Act and include the sole right to reproduce the works, so that the owner and creator is the only one who can reproduce that work, or they can choose to rent that work out to somebody else, and that includes a computer program, like when we sign up for or buy Windows. We buy a licence, but we do not actually own the software. That is owned by the manufacturer, but the manufacturer can license those out.

A copyright generally lasts for a person's lifetime plus 50 years.

Other persons may use a protected work under certain circumstances. The owner of a copyright may assign it to another person.

They may also license the use of the work with or without conditions, often in return for a payment or royalties.

What is this act doing on artistic copyright related to the issue of technology and specifically farm equipment? An important part of that is that section 41 of the Copyright Act defines circumventing a TPM, which I referred to earlier, as descrambling a scrambled work, decrypting an encrypted work or otherwise avoiding, bypassing, removing, deactivating or impairing the TPM. In other words, circumventing it is trying to find a way to use that computer program or work that one was not authorized to use as a person who is not the original rights holder.

This is an important part of what this is trying to get at. The member who is putting this bill forward worked quite extensively with people in his riding who are concerned and having trouble delivering their businesses.

● (1745)

With increased computerization in the development of everything that we buy or do, whether it be a cellphone or even a fridge now, as everything has computer chips the technology can be used to actually be anti-competitive. It can be used to make it exclusive so that nobody else can access or connect another device to that device, in order to make someone buy their other devices and not be able to buy a competitor's device. It is becoming more difficult over time for manufacturers to market their innovative products if they cannot connect to the original product if it requires that.

Large companies such as John Deere, which the member for Mirabel mentioned, have introduced what are called digital locks on machinery. This move restricts access to repair or interoperate the tractor or equipment with another manufacturer's equipment. One cannot even go in and repair it, whether it is on warranty or not, unless it is through an authorized dealer. That is a primary concern as to operating farm equipment because when a repair of this type of equipment needs to be done, it is not done when one is not harvesting, but done when one is out in the field. It is very difficult often to get those who are the only authorized repair people to actually be able to come out, repair that equipment, get the parts and do it all in a timely manner so that one can get back to one's work in farming. Every day lost is an important and costly loss for that farmer.

As a result of all that, those who are significantly disadvantaged by this have been calling for changes that would safeguard both the right to repair and the right to connect one manufacturer's equipment to another manufacturer's equipment. One may prefer a different combine from the combine that John Deere has one's equipment hooked up to. That is a big issue.

What this bill attempts to do is allow, in certain circumstances, an individual who owns that equipment to seek repair from suppliers or even on their own by accessing it and getting it repaired without having to go to that authorized dealer only. That “authorized dealer only” concept is a sort of monopolistic trait that says that if I can only go to that dealer then I am sort of held captive to what that dealer is going to charge me for those repairs. It prevents a free and open market.

We are going to see this not only in farm equipment but with everything in our lives. Try to buy one's home appliances from different manufacturers. If they are all computerized and one is from one manufacturer and the other from another manufacturer, although they are supposed to be able to “talk” to each other they will not be able to because of these restrictions around TPMs and the inability to do this.

The member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands began working with all of these groups and put together, as the member for Mirabel said, a very simple bill. It is not very long. It is two clauses and it repairs that simple clause in the act.

I would commend the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands for tackling this. Sometimes it is confused with the right to repair, which is another private member's bill before this House, which is the right for us to repair a certain thing in a certain way. This bill makes sure that, if one wants to connect two pieces of equipment together that have technological protection, one will be able to get that done without breaking the law.

As we consider this going forward, I will be supporting the bill. We studied it at the industry committee. It is now here for third reading. I would encourage all members of this House to support this important bill, which is pro-competition.

• (1750)

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to Bill C-294, now in its final stage of consideration in the House of Commons.

I am also pleased by the overwhelming support received for this legislative initiative thus far. I want to thank our colleague from Cypress Hills—Grasslands who brought this important initiative to the House that seeks to remove a copyright barrier to interoperability, which would benefit all Canadians, including those in my riding of Yukon.

The Copyright Act, as it currently reads, represents an obstacle to Canadians who really wish to make their products with functionalities enabled by software, such as smart phones and farm vehicles, interoperable with other products, devices or components.

The Copyright Act currently represents an obstacle to interoperability because it generally prohibits that circumvention of technological prevention measures, also called TPMs, or digital locks. Manufacturers often include digital locks to protect software in their products to prevent unauthorized access and copying.

The Copyright Act also includes an exception that permits the circumvention of digital locks to achieve interoperability between two computer programs. However, being limited to the interoper-

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ability between computer programs, this exception is not sufficient to cover the needs of Canadians and the market.

With the increasing number of products with functionalities enabled by software, interoperability also means ensuring that parts or components added to such products be compatible and exchange information with these products' software. As the member for South Shore—St. Margarets just explained, these parts and components actual can then talk to each other.

Without being permitted to circumvent digital locks to access the product's software, it remains difficult to make these products interoperable with other products, components and devices. This obstacle can notably impact Canadians when manufacturers decide to introduce new technologies that are not compatible with the previous generations. In such scenarios, software-enabled products we can own easily become only good to gather dust next to our VHS players.

Bill C-294 specifically seeks to address this issue. The bill proposes to expand the scope of the current exception in the Copyright Act, so the copyright framework allows Canadians to circumvent digital locks to make a computer program, or a device in which it is embedded, interoperable with another computer program, device or component.

Bill C-294 does not call into question the importance of digital locks in the copyright framework but stresses the importance that the Copyright Act provides efficient exceptions and limitations to digital locks when they harm the legitimate interests of consumers to have control over the products they own.

Legal protection for digital locks is an important enforcement regime in the copyright framework with roots in international treaties. Canada has obligations to provide adequate legal protection and effective legal remedies against the circumvention of digital locks used by copyright holders under the WIPO Internet Treaties and certain free trade agreements.

Digital locks are meant to grant creators more control over the distribution of their creative works in the digital marketplace by preventing others from copying, accessing or using the fruits of their labour without their permission. This enforcement regime ensures the Copyright Act continues fostering Canada's flourishing creative economy by providing creators with an efficient mechanism to obtain a return on their investments.

Protection for digital locks was originally promoted as a tool to encourage creative industries to offer their works, such as songs, books and movies, on the Internet and in other digital forms. It has never been the intent of the protection for digital locks in the Copyright Act to prevent the interoperability of products.

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Bill C-294 is an essential measure to rebalance the equilibrium of interests and provide consumers more control over the products they own and use, while also preserving incentives for creators in the Copyright Act.

For instance, Bill C-294 would solely permit Canadians to circumvent digital locks for the purpose of interoperability. Bill C-294 would not facilitate copyright infringement.

Protection for digital locks and copyright infringement are two distinct regimes in the Copyright Act. While persons may be allowed to circumvent a digital lock on a work to access it, they are not allowed to make unauthorized copies of the work unless an exception to copyright infringement also applies. Bill C-294, with the amendments reported to us by the committee, would ensure that the expanded interoperability exception permitting the circumvention of digital locks would not be available if it involved an infringement of copyright.

• (1755)

I want to reiterate my support for Bill C-294, which is a pledge to Canadians that they should not be frustrated by digital locks when they seek to render the products they own interoperable with a new part, component or device.

I acknowledge that the scope of this bill is limited. It is an exception to the prohibition to circumvent digital locks that addresses only one aspect of facilitating interoperability. As such, it does not encourage industries to develop standards ensuring interoperability between different manufacturer products and ecosystems. However, I am persuaded that the exception proposed in Bill C-294 would have positive impacts in offering more opportunities for Canadians to make their products interoperable. That is especially the case with the amendments reported by the committee, which ensure that the exception would apply to independent service providers, helping the owners of products to achieve interoperability.

Bill C-294 also aligns with the government's commitment to provide Canadians with a right to repair by encouraging the prolonging of the life cycle of products and with its commitment to support innovation and foster follow-on innovation by small and medium-sized enterprises. This is practicality in action. It really is about the choice of products for Canadian farmers and Canadian consumers.

I look forward to the vote and invite my colleagues to support Bill C-294 to send a strong signal to Canadians of the importance that the House of Commons gives to this great initiative.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to stand on behalf of my constituents of Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, a riding I am very, very proud to represent.

Before I go on, I would like to point out that in about 10 minutes I am going to be followed by another speaker, the member for Essex. I do not want anyone to get confused and think that I have been speaking for 20 minutes. A lot of people get us very mixed up, even the parliamentary photographer, people in our own caucus and CBC reporters. I know I am the better looking of the two.

Today I will be speaking on a private member's bill from a close friend of mine who represents Cypress Hills—Grasslands, and he is doing a great job.

This bill is important to me and to my riding. Not too many people know that my riding is one of the larger ridings in Saskatchewan, and the biggest industry in my riding is agriculture, so what is being brought forward is of utmost importance to those I represent. I will share later on some of the first-hand experiences I have had, what I have seen and witnessed and what benefits this bill would bring to those who are in the agriculture industry.

The city I live in is the city of Moose Jaw. It was founded as a trading post for farmers who were bringing their goods to market. In fact, in 1905 it had the largest flour mill in it, the Robin Hood flour mill. This reiterates the importance of the agriculture industry and the way the agriculture industry has evolved from the horse and cart to tractors to very expensive and very large machines, such as combines.

I have never met a farmer who did not know how to recycle, who did not know how to maximize their dollars. They are up against Mother Nature. They are up against the weather. They are up against time. They are up against seasons. They have challenges. They are being challenged right now with a reduction in fertilizer and an increase in carbon tax. Things are impacting them and are impacting us, as we can see in the grocery stores. However, that is not really what we want to talk about. We want to talk about technology, how it has evolved and how it is impacting farmers.

As I said, I have never met a farmer who did not know how to maximize. If I were in my riding right now and I said to a farmer that I had seen him take a piece of equipment from a Case tractor and put it on a John Deere, that could actually get me lynched. I really hope that this comment is not going to be clipped and posted, because I did say that once when I was out speaking with many of my constituents from Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, and some faces were very upset with me.

This poses a challenge and it poses a problem, because the price of equipment is going up so much. It is almost a million dollars for a combine. This is essential equipment that farmers rely on in order to not only produce the crop but also to harvest the crop.

I mentioned earlier about time being of the essence. Farmers, if the weather is bad, sometimes cannot go out into the fields, but they still need to get the crop to market. When the weather is good, they need to make sure everything is operating well.

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● (1800)

I will give members a first-hand account. Last year, I was in my riding during harvest time, and I was on a John Deere combine with one of my constituents. I had just done a tour of Drake Meats, which is a smoked meat business in Drake, Saskatchewan, and I smelled like smoked meat. The gentleman who was driving the million-dollar combine said, “Do you smell smoke?” I said, “Yes, as a matter of fact I do. I was just doing a tour.” He hesitated, but that answer did not satisfy him. About 30 seconds later, he said, “Do you smell smoke?” I said, “Yes, I have just been on a tour of Drake Meats.” At that point, he stopped the combine and lifted the header, and we both got out of the combine. I took a couple of steps back and watched him walk around.

He went to check the other side of the combine, on the header, and just as he was coming back, boom; there was a big fire, right behind him. It was unbelievable. I yelled, “Fire, fire, fire.” I have never seen a man move so fast in my entire life, to go grab an extinguisher. I went and grabbed another extinguisher, and we put out the grass fire. I have to be honest: I felt like a rock star and a hero. There were three other combines. They do not move very fast, but the drivers saw what was going on and they showed up, just in time to get pictures and photo ops of me helping to put out the fire. Again, it is on record.

Time is of the essence. What happened there was that the header caused a fire. It is a challenge farmers have. It is about timing and it is about interoperability. Some people who are watching tonight might not understand the challenges farmers have in dealing with modern technology. I will give an example that might help them relate. A Tesla we see on the roads needs a certain type of charging station. Other electric vehicles need a different charging station, which does not work for the Tesla, so there is a problem.

What we really want to do here, with this private member's bill, is to actually give power back to those who have purchased those million-dollar combines so they could actually fix them, work on them or interchange some of the technology required for them to bring in the harvest.

While I was out in the riding last year, I met a gentleman who had a John Deere riding lawnmower. That is not that expensive, but a screw had fallen out and he could not fix it. He called up the John Deere dealership, and the dealership sent out a technician, who put the lawnmower on a trailer and took it to the dealership, where the screw was fixed. Then it was brought back. That cost him \$500. Technology is getting beyond farmers' being able to fix equipment in the fields.

I will be supporting this bill, because I believe it would be beneficial to those in my riding. It would be beneficial to farmers who are under pressure and under attack. They need help, so I am asking my colleagues in the House to support my friend, the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands in order to get this bill passed so we can make things better for farmers, better for people in my riding.

I appreciate the member's efforts. I appreciate some of the things I have actually learned through reading this, as well as the fact that there seems to be quite a bit of support, not only from our caucus but from others across the floor.

● (1805)

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, half of me wants to stand on a point of order and speak about this great colleague of mine for suggesting that perhaps he is better looking than I am, but we will let the public be both the judge and the jury on that.

Ironically, although I do not smell like smoked meat, I did appreciate the fact that he spoke about the firefighters in the field, because the truth of the matter is that I was a firefighter for seven and a half years. I put out many a wheat fire and grass fire, many of which were actually caused, unfortunately, by our farming industry, so I appreciate his bringing that up.

It brings me great pride today to stand here in this place on behalf of the fantastic residents of Essex, who sent me here. I say “thanks” to them.

Before I dive into the bill, in great support of the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands' private member's bill, Bill C-294, I do want to just send out heartfelt thanks and best wishes to the firefighters across Canada, who are battling, so dearly and desperately, the raging wildfires.

I have said it before and am proud to say it: My father was the milkman in Essex, with Lewis Dairy. As I always say, am I ever happy that my mother opened the door when he dropped off that milk to the house, because, otherwise, I would not be here today. The reason I say that is that I have heard many stories from my dad about how farming equipment, both in the dairy industry and in the grain industry, has evolved. I know it to be true, because I grew up on a farm.

I, myself, do sharecropping, so I have my own farm. I see the various utility equipment that goes onto a tractor or goes onto a combine. Bless my wife and my daughter for loving horses so much, all five of them. Now we are getting into hay. I suppose it is easy for me to speak to this because all the different farming takes a whole bunch of different utility equipment, to not only harvest but to also plant these crops. I look at this equipment and I look at the interchangeability, the opportunity to save a few thousand dollars, for a thrasher from one company to another that perhaps would not or could not interchange with a Case tractor, a John Deere tractor or a New Holland tractor.

I will then also take it one step further. Especially in Essex, where we are somewhat landlocked in that we are surrounded by three bodies of water, land is, quite frankly, at a premium. It is darn expensive, but it is really expensive, and almost unheard of, for our next generation of young adults not just to be able to afford a home and start a family but also to take over the family legacy, which is the farm. They need every opportunity, every possibility possible, to ensure that they can even begin to think about taking over the local farm.

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I have two amazing sons and an amazing daughter. Both of my sons spend a lot of time on the farm. They are grease monkeys, and I am darn proud of them for being grease monkeys. They repair a lot of the farming equipment that, quite frankly, I break. Whether it is cutting the laneways or plowing in the headlands, there is always a screw, a nut, a bolt or a washer that just does not fit anymore. It gets worn out. The cost to repair that, the cost that our farming community goes through because something is not interchangeable, is absolutely astronomical. I think about when we blow a belt on that same utility that I cut the fence rows on. I am sure the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands would know how expensive a farming belt is, especially when one has to bring it in from overseas.

If we start today, if we start in this beautiful country today, to make the equipment interchangeable, the lives of farmers today and the future for the next generations will be that much easier.

● (1810)

My brother-in-law, Rob Reid, has been with the Ridgetown agricultural college, a subsidiary or sister college to Guelph University, for a number of years. He has been in charge of the dairy and the hogs, but he also does all the work with the college training students for future generations with regard to the equipment.

This year, I will have been happily married to my lovely, loved wife Allison for 25 years, so I have known Rob for about 30 years. I have heard the stories, the trials and tribulations at the college. It has to really watch the money it spends, when it spends a whole bunch of money on one type of equipment, and five, six, seven or 10 years later, when half of the equipment comes to the end of its useful life, it has to buy new additions to that equipment. The tractor still works, but the plow or the thrasher or the planter needs to be replaced, and it is not interchangeable. Therefore, the college has to basically start from zero. What does that do? It not only costs the college, but, ultimately, it also costs the students. As if it were not tough enough to go to college now, and as if it were not tough enough to excite future young adults to get into farming and take over their family business, now the cost of tuition has just gone crazy, right through the roof. Therefore, this private member's bill only checks all the important boxes of what the future of Canadian farming looks like going forward.

I think about Vollans farm equipment business, just around the corner from my house, and about how many times I have taken my Zero-Turn lawnmower there if, as was previously mentioned, there was a nut falling out of the bottom, or there was a worn out U-joint. If it were not for Vollans, and I do not have a lot of money in my pockets here today, I would have a whole lot less money in my pockets, because it is so unique and so excellent in how it is able to adapt various pieces of equipment and put them together. However, we are now getting into the digital age, which allows for an interface of two digital systems coming together to put together two pieces of critical infrastructure needed to feed Canadians, put food on the table of Canadians and, quite frankly, to feed the world, as well as to make life much, much more exciting and more affordable for our farming industry.

Essex, as I mentioned, is a very small, landlocked, area, but it is a very vital area. As a matter of fact, the majority of the grain produced in Essex, and this should put a smile on a lot of faces here,

goes straight to our distilleries. If members like Crown Royal, they will probably like the fact that we grow a lot of corn. Now that I have everybody's attention, they probably know just how important this private member's bill is.

To conclude, I am a very proud son of an amazing father who taught me a whole bunch about farming, as did my grandfather while he was still alive. I am proud to be partners with Greg Eisler, a fantastic farmer who farms my land alongside me. Also, I really want to thank, one final time, my dear friend, the member who represents Cypress Hills—Grasslands incredibly well, for bringing this private member's bill forward.

● (1815)

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-294, sponsored by our friend and colleague, the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

I simply want to say how supportive I am of the bill. It is a great bill that will certainly help the great folks in Perth—Wellington and the farmers and farm families across Perth—Wellington and across Canada.

While I am on my feet, I move:

That this question be now put.

● (1820)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know that, typically, when we get into discussions of this nature, there is often a right of reply given to members. I want to make sure that the member who introduced the bill is in fact aware of that. You might want to allow that member the right to reply.

First, we will deal with the motion. If it does not have to be dealt with, as a courtesy, we should provide the member who introduced it the opportunity to reply, depending on what you get back.

The Deputy Speaker: I am cognizant that the PMB hour expires in just a very few minutes, so just hold on a second.

The motion is in order.

Continuing debate, the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to once again be able to rise and speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-294.

This bill comes from constituents in my riding who work at Honey Bee Manufacturing and brought the issue forward to me. It was an issue that came up when we were discussing the CUSMA negotiations. Although it predates CUSMA, it was flagged at that point in time, in the same breath. That was when it was first brought to my attention, and I was able to bring the issue to the House of Commons—

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order from the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, because of this relatively new process that was introduced just a few minutes back, my concern is that the mover is not going to get the opportunity of a right to reply. I am prepared to allow that to occur, as a courtesy, with unanimous consent, as opposed to the member talking out the clock and he never gets that opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker: What I will do is tack one more minute on to Private Members' Business, just so we can consult to be sure that we are following the right process on this one. Therefore, if members do not mind, we will take a second, and I will make sure that the hon. member has his right of reply on this bill. I think that is the intention here, but I am just not quite sure how to proceed on it.

Just so everyone is aware, now that we basically have two motions, we could full well run out of time. I am guessing that this is the idea, and we will probably end up having two votes on it.

However, this is technically the hon. member's right of reply, so I will recognize him as such. The hon. member has four minutes and 46 seconds.

The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

• (1825)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be able to have this right to reply on a bill that I feel is of utmost importance, not just for the people of Cypress Hills—Grasslands and southwest Saskatchewan but also for the entire country. I am grateful for the support that I have received from my colleagues in the NDP, my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois and also the government.

I will speak favourably about the process that we went through at committee. We had a very collaborative approach, again, with members from all parties. I am willing to say that I even accepted a friendly government amendment that helped to provide a bit more certainty and clarity for the bill as it pertains to our trade agreements. As we know, that is a very important part when we are talking about something like this, so I was very happy to be able to do so.

I want to talk a bit more about farmers. The original intent of the bill was to address choice for farmers, as well as to be able to provide a bit more certainty for the manufacturers who make the products that our farmers rely upon.

I have Honey Bee Manufacturing in my riding. It is a big employer of people in the small town of Frontier; people from many of the communities around the area also commute to Frontier to be able to work there. It is a fantastic town. It is a fantastic company that does a terrific job. It employs well over 100 people, and probably closer to 200 people, in a town that only has about 300 people in it. Again, there are many other communities around it that people commute from to work there.

There are other great manufacturing companies, such as MacDon, which is a competitor to Honey Bee and also supports the bill. MacDon makes the FlexDraper header; Honey Bee makes the Air-Flex header. The two companies are in competition with each other, but they are united in their support for this bill.

Private Members' Business

We look at other short-line manufacturers, such as Degelman, Vaderstad, Bourgault and Schulte. There are many great small-town Saskatchewan manufacturers that are supporting small-town communities, as well as supporting our farmers by providing them with the tools that they need to be able to put the crop in the ground and harvest it when the time comes in the fall. This is a fantastic bill. It is going to support our innovators and our farmers.

The bill applies to more than just farming. The concept of interoperability goes beyond just simply agriculture. In the digital sphere, we look at, for example, our smart phones. Everybody is aware that we have our Apple and Android phones. There is interoperability of applications to be able to work on both platforms, and this bill would strengthen the ability to have apps work on both platforms.

A really good example of interoperability is actually NATO and the position that Canada has within NATO when we talk about our military equipment, when our members go to other countries to fulfill their obligations and do the terrific job that they do around the world. Whether it be in peacekeeping or in training missions, Canadian troops do a fantastic job. This bill, in a way, would support what they are doing as well, because the interoperability of military equipment is extremely important to our troops, as well as to troops around the world. This actually has a far-reaching impact beyond just Canada.

With respect to our computers, without interoperability, people cannot even use a regular computer when it comes to plugging in a keyboard, mouse and monitor and having them work. In the old days, before we had everything all built into one, there were many products that would attach and plug into a computer.

The way that we are changing and redefining interoperability in the Copyright Act would provide more competition across the economy. The current Copyright Act only recognizes interoperability between two computer programs. This bill would expand the scope of that, so that it would be between a computer program and an interface or a device in which the program is embedded. Again, it would broaden the scope of interoperability. It would provide a better realization as to what interoperability looks like today; it would also provide the necessary flexibility for innovators tomorrow, next year and down the road. What is farming going to look like in the future? If we do not have changes like those in this bill, we are not going to have innovators in the future who can make the necessary equipment and changes to allow for that next great innovation.

We heard the Bloc members talk in their speeches about planned obsolescence. This bill would provide for higher-quality products out there across the entire economy to make sure that people have good, long-lasting equipment that is more environmentally sustainable and responsible. It would also provide choice for consumers, which is what is the most important.

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• (1830)

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

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 14, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE ACT

The House resumed from June 6 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.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to speak in the House of Commons and represent my constituents by lending my voice to debate on the various bills that come before this chamber. Tonight, we are talking about Bill C-35, an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada.

I have knocked on a lot of doors as a candidate and even an activist in the past. One meets a lot of people at the doors, especially in a riding like mine, which is a suburban riding full of neighbourhoods geared toward younger parents with young families. My riding is statistically younger than the average in Canada, and it is full of homes geared toward families with children. I see a lot of parents and kids at the doors.

Parents and families are under a lot of pressure. We are in the midst of a cost of living crisis. We are in an inflation crisis, where food, transportation, housing, all these things, are ever more expensive. The government has done many things to make these things more expensive, such as the carbon tax, which basically raises the price of everything, but especially food and transportation, whether it is gasoline, bus passes or the way that transportation costs inflate everything. Child care is, of course, among the many ever-increasing expenses that parents face.

When I knock on a door, I never know what I am walking into. Every political candidate here knows the experience, knocking on doors down the whole street, when we get to a door where a young parent answers with a toddler in one arm and a couple more active kids in the house. We may be getting them in a moment of stress. They will talk about a lot of things that make life stressful for parents, such as affordability.

I do not know that I have talked to a parent at a door who said what they really need is a bill that will declare things like quality, availability, affordability, accessibility, inclusiveness and create a new board that would report to a minister. They just want to know that they have access to a child care space. More often, it is a more general sense of financial relief they are looking for; of course, child care is a big piece of this for many families. The bill that we

are debating tonight does not offer much in the way of relief from the financial stress and strain that parents are facing and the ability to have confidence in knowing that there will be child care space. Saying the word “availability” does not create child care space.

If one flips through the pages of this bill, there is really not a whole lot here. There are a few pages of throat clearing, definitions and things like that. We get down to its purpose and declarations, where it boldly states the government's “vision for a Canada-wide, community-based early learning and child care system and its commitment to ongoing collaboration with the provinces and Indigenous peoples to support them in their efforts”. It goes on with this talk of goals. I suppose it is good to have goals. If I were a motivational speaker, I guess I would encourage people that way. However, just stating that one has goals is not going to create a child care space, and neither will this bill.

The funding principles that are stated here enshrine in law the government's agreements that it has already entered into with the various provinces and territories. These agreements exist separately, and this bill just talks about them and their principles.

• (1835)

One principle the Liberals are quite clear on is that the only model of child care they really want to address, through not only this bill but also their entire program and the agreements they have entered into, is government and non-profit child care, which would exclude many parents and many entrepreneurs, who happen to almost always be women, operating existing child care facilities.

There are many models of child care that are, at best, not affected at all by this bill, but at worst, they are threatened or challenged by this bill. That came out in testimony when this bill was discussed at the committee stage. The one concrete thing this bill does is establish a national advisory council on early learning and child care. They have created a board. I do not think that is something that will do anything to create child care spaces that do not exist.

We know the Liberals like boards. They give them an outlet for them to appoint their friends. We have seen this before. They can appoint defeated Liberal candidates, Liberal donors or any of their friends. It comes in handy for the Liberals to have their friends appointed to various boards. We see that rather shockingly working itself out with the appointment of the special rapporteur.

This bill would not do anything for Canadians who cannot access spaces. This bill would help some families who already have access, and those families are benefiting from the government's vision for child care. They are having their costs reduced.

There is an entire other set of parents and children who do not have access. We have entire provinces that have virtually no child care. They have been called “child care deserts”. It has been remarked upon how many people in Saskatchewan have no access to a child care space. There is nothing in this bill that would address that.

It may even harm some of the entrepreneurs, as I said, who have existing businesses who do not fall within this model. Newfoundland and Labrador is another province we heard, during the committee study, has limitations of space that nothing in this bill would address.

It is easy to say the word “accessibility”. It is easy to say the words “affordability”, “quality” and “inclusivity”. However, it is hard to see these spaces created and brought into existence. There are too many Canadians who are left out by this bill.

It is a shame about the sensible amendments. They may have helped modify the principles of the bill to make it more inclusive of different models of child care across Canada. That sadly did not happen. We are left with a bill that is full of promise, but short on actual substance to improve the lives of Canadian families.

• (1840)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after listening to the member, one draws the conclusion that he does not support the legislation, yet I suspect that the Conservative Party, when it comes down to it, will likely be voting in favour of it.

As much as the member was so critical of the legislation, we recognize that there are Conservative premiers, premiers from coast to coast, saying that the \$10 day care and the national plan that we put into place is working. We are getting more day care spots. We are seeing the reduction to \$10-a-day child care.

Is he going to vote in favour of the legislation? Does he not support \$10-a-day day care?

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, there is something of a false premise there, which is that this bill would suddenly conjure \$10-a-day child care for everybody. That is not what this bill would do.

The member asked me a direct question about support for this bill, and I will point out to him that I voted for this bill at second reading. I supported this bill going to committee, where it could have been improved through committee study. It was very disappointing that members of the government caucus who are on that committee were not open to amendments. Ironically, the Bloc members, the separatist party members, were prepared to work with Conservatives to improve a bill on a national, federal program.

There were members at committee prepared to make this bill better. I continue to wrestle with rewarding the failure of the Liberal government to fulfill the objectives of the bill, yet I do support the objective of having child care that is available for Canadians, affordable and high-quality.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, what I like about this bill, and I have spoken to this a few times and have raised questions about it as well, is that it enshrines into legislation the im-

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portance of indigenous people's rights, as well as enshrining international instruments, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I wonder if the member agrees that enshrining these international instruments is very important in ensuring that our children are getting the best quality care, which they deserve?

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, that is just it. It is about the actual care and quality of care for the children. Most parents, given the choice between a bill that enshrines principles and a day care space that is affordable, would probably choose the affordable day care space.

Again, this is what we often see with the Liberal government and the bills it introduces. The Liberals want to be rewarded for the intentions of their bills rather than their ability to execute and achieve the outcomes they state.

• (1845)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my colleague a question. He is from the opposite side of Calgary on the diagonal, and his riding is very similar to my own. Like me, he knocks on a lot of doors during election time.

I have never heard a constituent of mine tell me that they wanted to see a bill passed that created a commission or a national council, where people would be paid to talk about an issue as opposed to addressing the issue and dealing with it directly. The member did go through the legislation, and I wonder if he could comment on that.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly my point. The member is correct that the one concrete thing this bill does is create a commission and paid positions for people to talk about child care. I do not see a specific, real, true strategy to deliver on the objectives stated in the legislation.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am always pleased to rise in the House to speak on behalf of my constituents, and today we are debating Bill C-35, an act respecting early learning and child care.

I spoke on this bill at second reading, before it went to committee. After reviewing my comments from my previous speech, I do not see many improvements that would address the very important concerns I have with this legislation.

From the outset, I want to affirm that Conservatives support making child care more affordable for families. That is why, back in 2006, our Conservative government created the universal child care benefit, which put money directly in families' pockets to spend on their priorities. At the time, the Liberals claimed that families would just spend it on beer and popcorn, but they have since come around to our position with their improved Canada child benefit, which combined a number of already existing child care benefits, including the Conservative universal child care benefit, under one program.

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The Liberals have moved forward with their new Canada-wide early learning and child care initiative. In budget 2021 it was projected to cost \$25 billion, at least, over five years. Now, due to record-high inflation and high demand for limited, affordable child care spaces and limited professional child care workers, this number has undoubtedly become far larger.

I would remind the House that this program is being funded entirely by borrowed money, and the cost of these Liberal deficits and higher interest rates means that, for every billion dollars borrowed, they will pay an additional \$45 million in interest every year.

I am very excited to see the new movie *Oppenheimer*. Thinking about that movie got me thinking about the brilliant Albert Einstein. Einstein is reported to have said that the eighth wonder of the world is compound interest. Those who understand it will receive it, and those who do not understand it will pay it. I do not think the Liberal government understands it because compound interest is truly a powerful force.

As the Liberals borrow billions more each year to fund their programs, that interest compounds. At the current interest rates of 4.5% for Canada government bonds, the interest cost for a plan that costs a billion a year will exceed and rise exponentially as long the government borrows year after year. These deficits are radically increasing the interest costs Canadian taxpayers will have to pay. Eventually, this debt has to be repaid. It is Canadians and the economy that will suffer because the government will either have to borrow more or tax Canadians more to pay for it.

We have always given the Liberals a hard time. We have called them the tax-and-spend Liberals, but today we have something that is far worse. We have the borrow-and-spend Liberals. At least with the tax-and-spend Liberals, they would go out and raise taxes to try to gather money to pay for their programs. With the borrow-and-spend Liberals, they conjure this money out of thin air. They create new money in the system.

This creates inflation in two ways. By competing for capital in the economy, they raise the cost of everything from mortgages to business lines of credit, which thus raises the cost of owning a home, running a business and many other things. The second way it creates inflation is when they spend that money. When government spends the money it borrowed, it is competing with consumers and businesses for goods and services, which raises the cost of everything.

The Liberal child care plan is proving to be not only an expensive failure, but also extraordinarily inflationary. I have spent the last two years, since the government brought forward this program, consulting with families and child care operators. Very few of them have anything good to say about these programs. While some families have benefited from lower child care costs, there are at least tens of thousands of Canadian children who are stuck on waiting lists. Some of them have been stuck on these waiting list for years. Their children will be in kindergarten before a spot ever opens up, if it ever does, so they will not benefit from this program.

The guiding principles under section 7 about funding in this bill say that this program must be accessible, affordable and inclusive. The program has been implemented over the past couple of years. It

is still in the process of being fully implemented, but looking at the outcome of what we have seen so far, the program, as it stands, is not accessible. At least 50% of families have not been able to access an affordable care space. It is not affordable because those families that cannot access a space are still paying the full unsubsidized price for child care, and it is certainly not inclusive because these families are from all sorts of communities.

● (1850)

Because this is a universal child care plan, it does not matter if a family earns hundreds of thousands of dollars a year or a family is below the poverty line. There is no consideration for lower-income families or special dispensation for these families, so what we are seeing is that marginalized communities are being further marginalized by being excluded from programs. As such, on its own principles, the government is failing to achieve what it said its principles are.

The government also said under paragraph 7(1)(b) of this legislation that the bill must provide access that enables “families of all income levels, including low incomes, to benefit”. Before the implementation of the Liberal early learning and child care plan, many families across Canada already benefited from subsidy programs provided by their municipalities and provincial governments. These low-income families were paying far less for child care than the top rate that most middle-income and upper-income families were paying. These families were already benefiting from government subsidies in some form or another. However, because the government has implemented a universal system that does not take into account means testing of income, we have a flood of people from middle- and upper-income families taking spots in the system, and low-income families that could get subsidized spots in the system are no longer benefiting from these spots. Therefore, on another principle of this legislation, the government's already existing child care plan is failing.

Statistics show that the demographics of people who were already accessing child care in this country before the implementation of this Liberal plan were primarily middle- and upper-income families. Those middle- and upper-income families that already had a child care space are the primary beneficiaries, because they never had to wait on a waiting list since they already had a child care space. When the government took the \$1,500 a month families were paying and brought it down to \$500 a month, it was putting \$1,000 a month in the pockets of primarily middle- and upper-income families.

This fails on the standard and principle of creating equity and fairness, because we know that inflation impacts lowest-income families the most. Lowest-income families spend proportionally more of their income on things like shelter and housing, transportation, food and other things. As such, when these families do not get access to child care, they continue to spend a lot of money. When higher-income families get access to these government subsidies, which they are currently, they get extra money in their pockets and spend it on things that are not necessarily shelter or necessities because they are of higher income and it is a lower proportion. They are spending money on more restaurants, a new vehicle or maybe a bigger house. As we are seeing, these are areas where inflation is really rising in this country.

This is another example that demonstrates the inflationary power of the government's legislation. The people who are being hurt the most are the lower-income families, because the prices of things are being pushed further and further beyond their reach.

I spoke to child care operators and asked what the biggest problem they are facing is, and they said labour is the biggest problem. They said to me that currently in Ontario the most they can pay a child care operator is \$25 an hour. That is annualized at about \$48,000 a year. There was a woman working at a day care centre who has been working there for 30 years, and she is getting paid \$25 an hour. She is making less today, after inflation, than she was making when she started 30 years ago. For a high school or university graduate coming straight out of school, an entry-level job in the federal government will pay around \$48,000.

A 30-year professional child care operator under this Liberal plan, which the Liberals say will raise wages somewhat, is making less than an entry-level worker for the federal government, and with competition for labour, they are losing people left, right and centre. They cannot retain people, and because of the restrictions and regulations the government has put in place under this legislation, they cannot compete for this labour. Their hands are tied and they are losing staff, which means losing capacity and increasing wait-lists. This is an unfolding disaster that families are seeing across Canada.

• (1855)

Finally, the child care director told me that the reason families cannot get spots is that the government has capped the number of spots it will fund. These families cannot get spots because the government is choosing not to fund them. The government is responsible for the wait-lists we are seeing in this country.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two quick quotes, one from Canada's most populated province. "I'm so proud of the work we've done with our federal partners to land an agreement that will lower costs for families across the province." This is from Doug Ford, who happens to be the Premier of Ontario. Here is another quote: "Our government is proud to work in partnership with Canada to strengthen and grow Manitoba's early learning and childcare system in all communities of our province." This is from Heather Stefanson, the Conservative Premier of Manitoba, my home province.

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The Conservatives like to bad-talk the legislation, yet at second reading they voted in favour of it. Chances are they are going to vote in favour of it at third reading.

Will the hon. member clarify this for those who are following the debate. Have the Conservatives made up their mind? Do they know what they are going to do at third reading? We understand they do not like it, but will they vote against it?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, it is always great to see politicians stand up in the House and quote other politicians who are patting each other on the back about how wonderful the things they have done are. However, do members know who I really want to hear from? I want to hear from the families that have been waiting for two years on a waiting list. They are literally calling child care centres several times a week to ask if they have an opening yet. They are being told there is a 700-child wait-list.

I want to hear less from government members about patting each other on the back over how wonderful a job they are doing, and I want to hear what their constituents are telling them about these massive wait-lists, which are only being exacerbated by the government's failure.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the member is going to be upset when I quote another politician to him. He is a member of Parliament from Alberta, as I am, so I just want to flag for him that in 2021, Danielle Smith, the Premier of Alberta, wrote before she was premier, "How could we sign a deal like this?.... It's not too late to change course". Of course, after she was in the election campaign recently, that changed. She then said that she was very proud of the \$10-a-day day care plan, and she in fact took credit for it. We can see how Albertans would be very confused.

I would like to know, like the member from the Liberal Party, where the Conservative Party of Canada stands on this. Are Conservatives also confused? Are we also to expect that they will say one thing when they are in the House and another thing when they are campaigning? Where do they stand on this bill? Will they support child care for Canadians? Will he support child care for Albertans by voting for this bill?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, this bill will do nothing to create more affordable child care spaces for Albertans.

I think this is very interesting. The NDP comes from a philosophical place that says for those who have much to give, much will be asked for, and for those who do not have much, much will be given. I find it very odd that the New Democrats are not criticizing this legislation in the same way I am because of the inequality it is entrenching in our system.

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It is the middle- and upper-income families that are statistically benefiting far more from this government subsidy than lower-income families. I would think that the New Democrats, in the spirit of wealth redistribution, which is something they claim to support, would at least have some criticism to suggest that maybe it is lower-income families that need more support through this legislation. We are not seeing that support for low-income families, and it is very surprising that the NDP is not standing up for the low-income families being excluded by this flawed Liberal policy.

• (1900)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his presentation.

To the comments by the previous questioners of the hon. member today, one thing that I think we fail to realize is that, while other politicians are saying the federal government has done a pretty decent job on some of this, the federal government has really only given them one option: here is the package; take it or leave it.

With the position that most of the provinces are in, there are dollars coming their way, but they are not in a very good position these days after COVID and the other things the federal government has imposed on them, like the carbon tax. People who represent those provinces only have one option, and they are bound to take the money because the provinces are all in dire straits, just as the federal government put in by the Liberals is.

I wonder if he could comment on the fact that there is only one option, and the provinces are not in a position to not take the dollars for some of these programs.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I think too often in this House, it is forgotten that there is only one taxpayer. The federal government does not give money to the provinces. It is all coming from the same taxpayer, taxpayers who are residents of the municipalities, residents of the provinces, residents of Canada. With this cycling of money, we have to remember that fundamentally it comes from the same hard-working taxpayers. We need to start standing up for them for a change, because we are not seeing that from the Liberal government.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-35, an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada.

We know Canadians are struggling. When I speak to parents about affordability, they tell me about how they cannot afford to pay the bills, they cannot afford to heat their homes, they cannot afford to put gas in the tank and they cannot afford to put food on the table. When discussing child care, it is important to address the affordability concerns that I hear from parents.

The Prime Minister's inflationary spending has created a cost of living crisis. Families cannot afford basic necessities anymore. I was just debating the recent Liberal budget, which proposes more than \$60 billion in new spending, pouring even more fuel on the inflationary fire. This additional spending comes out to \$4,200 per family, meaning higher costs for those already struggling to get by. This burden only makes it harder for parents to afford quality care for their children. To make matters worse, the Liberal government

is tripling the carbon tax, making it more expensive for Canadian families to make ends meet.

It does not stop there. Just in case Canadians were not struggling enough, the government is implementing a second carbon tax. Yes, Canadians heard that right. The new tax will cost the average family in Manitoba over \$600 additionally per year, without a rebate. The Prime Minister's carbon tax will cost families in Manitoba over \$2,100 a year. Parents cannot afford these new tax hikes when they are raising families. Rural Canada will be hit especially hard by these punitive taxes, displaying the Liberal government's disregard for the rural way of life.

After eight years of the Prime Minister, everything feels broken. The Liberals have hiked taxes on Canadians while fuelling inflation through their out-of-control spending. We recently learned that Canadians will have to bear yet another interest rate hike caused by the NDP-Liberal coalition's out-of-control spending.

To trick Canadians into believing it is acting on affordability, the Liberal government has unveiled the so-called \$10-a-day child care plan. Unfortunately, this proposal is nothing more than a political marketing scheme designed to deceive Canadians. The Liberal government thrives on making grand promises but fails to deliver on them.

Why should Canadians believe the Liberals about child care this time? The Liberals have been promising results on this for years. Canadian families, especially those in rural Canada, are concerned about child care. The lack of available child care is becoming the norm across the country. Canadians have heard and experienced the stories of those waiting months, and in some cases years, to find a child care space for their child.

Some Canadians add their names to countless lists, only to continue waiting, with no response in sight. This causes parents to stay out of the workforce for an extended period of time, something they cannot afford to do during this cost of living crisis. The pain and suffering that families face waiting for child care should be a top priority for the government.

In my own province of Manitoba, 76% of children live in areas without equitable access to child care. This figure gets considerably worse for families that live in rural Canada. In many communities, only one child care space is available for every three children. Canadian families need more access and more choices in child care, not an Ottawa-knows-best type of approach. Any discussion of child care needs to empower the voices of those in rural Canada, not just those in urban areas. Unfortunately for the Liberal government, listening to the voices of rural Canada is not something it has ever displayed.

During consideration of Bill C-35, the Conservatives sought to strengthen the voice of private, home-based child care providers. Supporting home-based caregivers and listening to their voices would have strengthened access for families in rural Canada. It is not just me saying this. Listen to those in the industry. Julie Bisnath, program coordinator of the Child Care Providers Resource Network, stated, “Championing home child care...would increase access to a diverse array of child care options.” Unfortunately, the NDP-Liberal coalition voted down these common-sense measures that would address the concerns of families struggling to find care.

● (1905)

To make matters worse, the number of skilled child care workers across Canada is in short supply. There are not enough workers to meet the needs of Canadian families who are struggling to access care.

In my home province of Manitoba, it is estimated an extra 3,000 early childhood educators will be required to fulfill the demand in the near future. Unfortunately, Bill C-35 does nothing to address this shortage.

How does the Liberal government believe Canadian families will have access to child care without the workers needed to provide that support? Once again, the government has unveiled a plan that is filled with promises but light on details.

Our Conservative team previously proposed changes to this legislation that would have addressed the worker shortage in the industry. This included a plan to support recruitment and retention of child care workers, which is an idea that has been praised by experts in the field.

Bea Bruske, president of the Canadian Labour Congress, supported this Conservative amendment, stating:

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.

Once again, this Conservative proposal was voted down by the NDP-Liberal coalition.

Without a plan to address the shortage of child care workers, especially in rural Canada, we cannot fix the long wait lines for child care across our country. As Conservatives, we believe Canadian families deserve access to affordable and quality child care. Sadly, the Liberal plan will leave many families in the dark.

With the limited number of spots across this country, those who obtain a spot in a \$10-a-day child care facility will be lucky. Those who are in the back of the queue will be out of luck. They will be forced to pay much more expensive fees for care, especially those on the lower pay scale.

Although these concerns were brought up in committee by industry experts, their concerns fell on deaf ears. As the Liberal government ignored these concerns, Canadian families on the lower income scale will definitely have the most to lose out of all this. Instead, the pressure to find adequate care will only build while the cost of living continues to impact Canadian families.

This top-down Ottawa-knows-best approach to child care will not address accessibility. It will not consider the lack of child care

spaces and workers across this country and it will not address the desire for families to choose care that suits their needs.

Any plan on child care must address the backlog of spaces available for families, any plan on child care must address the shortage of workers and any plan should be centred on allowing families to choose the care that best addresses their needs.

In my region, parents and caregivers know what is best for their children. It is not a handful of Ottawa bureaucrats living miles away. Unfortunately, the NDP-Liberal coalition ignored these concerns throughout the debate on this bill, and it is my worry Canadians, especially those in rural Canada, will pay the price because Ottawa did not listen to their concerns.

The \$10-a-day child care is only a political marketing scheme that lacks substance and details to address the concerns of Canadian families. In the end, like everything offered by the Liberal government, it will promise one thing and deliver nothing.

In closing, it is the Conservatives who will continue to speak up for the families struggling to afford child care. It is the Conservatives who will stand up for families who continue to wait for a spot in care. It is Conservatives who will bring home quality child care for all Canadians.

● (1910)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I suspect people have heard of the phrase “the hidden agenda”. The Conservatives are often accused of not telling Canadians what their real intentions are. We are seeing a very good example of that today.

They are very critical of the legislation. They are critical of the \$10-a-day child care, but they will not tell us how they will vote. Twice now I have asked them a very clear question. When it comes time to vote on third reading, I asked what the Conservatives will do. My prediction is that the hidden agenda will kick in, the Conservatives will vote yes, and when it comes to it they really do not support it, but do not want to be seen supporting this Liberal initiative.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Mr. Speaker, this is the most frustrating thing about these bills. We try to divide them. We try to pick a side. At the end of the day, it is families and kids who are going to be harmed the most by this.

When we create a bill like this and do not listen to the industry and do not look after the people who actually need the service, there is a problem. That is what I am discussing. That was what my whole speech was about. There are huge holes in this bill and hopefully the Senate can fix it.

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Right now, we are debating this. Maybe he will have a change of heart when he goes home tonight. Maybe there will be some changes that come up, but right now, this is where it is at.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague raised a number of important issues. I would like to hear his thoughts on some of those issues.

He talked about the labour shortage. Is it not true that low-cost child care that enables more women to remain in the workforce does more to reduce the labour shortage than expensive child care that encourages women to stay at home with their children? When a parent stays at home and does not work, there may be other benefits, but not economic benefits.

Does subsidized child care not ultimately reduce the labour shortage?

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Mazier: Mr. Speaker, the problem with the labour shortage is this bill does not address it. There is such a great need; 3,000 jobs are needed in Manitoba alone. The need is so great and the Liberals did not even address that in here.

There are things called “child care deserts” and I did not get to the stats on them. For every province, the stats are broken down here. According to the Canadian Centre of Policy Alternatives, 48% of children live in child care deserts. By province, Saskatchewan tops the list at 92%. Newfoundland, a very rural province, is at 79%. In Manitoba, 76% live in a child care desert. B.C. is at 64%. Then there are Alberta, Ontario. Quebec is at 11%. Funny, it works because you have been there the longest.

● (1915)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was much younger when I got elected and I have listened, for many years, to Conservatives attacking child care. Now I am an old, white guy and I am pretty good at identifying old, white guys, so whenever it comes to child care, Conservatives get all their old, white guys up there to say why we do not need it, why this is a failure. It has been an ongoing gong show.

The other thing the Conservatives say is it is rural against urban. I live in a rural area and it is not the 1950s. It is the same attitude they brought to the fact that we are dealing with a climate catastrophe and not a single Conservative showed up for the forest fire debate.

Why are the Conservatives putting up all their rural old, white guys, when we are dealing with what young mothers and young families need? Mothers and women have a right to access. The Conservatives have no plan. They have never had a plan and they would do everything they can to—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what to say to that. That is just a pathetic question. It is not even just a pathetic statement; it is untrue. I did not do anything to set up anybody against anything. The Liberals do forget about rural. We have a ru-

ral lens and the member knows full well that we have special concerns. Rural Canada needs to be addressed separately.

For the NDP member to sit there and say there is nothing wrong with this bill, I would say my whole speech was about holes. Why did that member not sit down with the committee and actually address the holes that were in there so it would be a better bill?

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for too long families in Canada have struggled to find high-quality, affordable and inclusive early learning and child care. Bill C-35 is a really important step to changing that once and for all. I am pleased to speak to this bill and to give a bit of a northern flavour. Bill C-35 will replace that unnecessary struggle with access to affordable, high-quality and inclusive early learning and child care.

For families, access to child care is not a luxury, but an absolute necessity. It will give children, whoever they are, wherever they live across the country, a chance at the best start in life. It will give parents the peace of mind that comes with knowing their children are in safe, skilled and caring hands. It will give thousands more parents the opportunity to join the workforce, pursue their professional ambitions and contribute to the Canadian economy.

I have a special interest, ever since being the chief medical officer of health in Yukon over a dozen years ago, where I got to learn the value to not only public health, but also the economy of subsidized early learning and child care. Therefore, this is not hyperbole, but an area where we are already seeing results. Of course, we already have the overwhelming evidence from Quebec, which has long established its own affordable child care system.

Experts agree. TD Bank has been saying since 2012 that this should be a top spending priority of a federal government. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce talked about the disproportionate effect on women and participation in the labour force as a result of the pandemic and the necessity to invest in child care.

We know now that, because of the early learning and child care agreements the Government of Canada has signed with all provinces and territories, parents have already seen child care fees decrease and child care spaces increase.

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Also, we have made crucial investments to support our early childhood educators, who are the cornerstone of a high-quality early learning and child care workforce. Every single one of those agreements includes commitments that will support provinces and territories in making improvements to benefits and wages, and access to ongoing, leading-edge training for early childhood educators.

As much as time permits, I would like to focus on the territories and how the early learning and child care agreements are benefiting families in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and Yukon.

I know my colleague from Nunavut is here to participate as well in this debate.

While certainly there are many indigenous communities across the north with a pressing need for child care, the Government of Canada is working in a coordinated manner, through jointly managed partnerships with first nations, indigenous communities and the Métis Nation, to expand quality and culturally based service delivery based on indigenous priorities for indigenous families regardless of where they live. This is a separate track, funded through a dedicated indigenous early learning and child care commitment, and listeners should know this is outside of the scope of my remarks today.

Nunavut really deserves high praise for becoming the first jurisdiction to achieve \$10-a-day licensed child care under the Canada-wide early learning and child care system. The territory achieved this milestone 15 months ahead of its own action plan schedule and, more remarkably, three years ahead of the March 2026 federal goal for Canada-wide implementation of \$10-a-day early learning and child care. It means Nunavut families began accessing \$10-a-day child care as of December last year, and joined Yukon and Quebec in achieving that goal.

In dollar terms, it means families in the territory could save up to \$55 per day for each child in care. For a territory experiencing a significant rise in the cost of living, as we know how real that is, this saving provides tangible benefits.

In January last year, the Government of Nunavut and the Government of Canada signed an agreement that secured \$66 million over five years to support early learning and child care in Nunavut. This investment is in addition to the nearly \$13 million we announced in August 2021. That agreement includes \$2.8 million to support the early childhood workforce.

Nunavut will create 238 new, licensed, not-for-profit spaces by the end of March 2026, and is already moving toward reaching that target. We may not be surprised if Nunavut gets there well ahead of 2026.

Yukon achieved the target of an average \$10-a-day fee in the spring of 2021 through its own universal child care program. I am very proud of the progress Yukon made early and ahead of this federal program. Since then, with the help of federal investment, the territory has been making great strides in creating spaces and developing its educator workforce.

• (1920)

Since the signing of the Canada-wide agreement, Yukon has created over 200 new spaces to support parents' access to high-quality care. Federal investments of \$1,200,000 have also supported the enhancement of early childhood educators' wages in Yukon, resulting in the highest median wage for this sector in Canada. I can see how much of a difference that makes when I talk to childhood educators and day care operators. That helps in recruitment and it helps in quality, and the kids and the families are happy.

Funding of \$800,000 provided by the Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada supports the early learning and child care benefits program, which offers comprehensive benefits to early childhood educators working in licensed early learning and child care programs in Yukon.

With the help of Yukon University, the territory is increasing access to quality education for early childhood educators, who may enrol in the university's professional diploma pathway program, which is offering accelerated training. Just last weekend, I was there for the university convocation to watch some of those graduates at convocation proudly walk across the stage. With the help of \$120,000 in federal funding, Yukon University has also embarked on an early childhood education program for educators working in rural areas. This focus on educators is a recognition that they are the heart of any successful early childhood education program.

In the Northwest Territories, the Government of Canada and the Government of Northwest Territories announced almost a year ago that child care fees for families with children up to five years of age in licensed child care would be reduced on average by 50%, and the reduction was retroactive to January 1, 2022. Since its implementation, all eligible licensed child care programs across the territory are participating in this reduction initiative. It was one of the benefits of the federal-territorial agreement signed in December 2021.

The Government of Northwest Territories has a well-defined 10-year early learning and child care strategy, and the goal is the total transformation of its early learning and child care system. As Northwest Territories Minister of Education, Culture and Employment R.J. Simpson said when he launched the strategy document, the Northwest Territories is moving toward “a robust, mature and sustainable system.”

Minister Simpson uses the word “sustainable”, and that is at the core of Bill C-35. We have all the early learning and child care pieces in place, and this proposed legislation really is the glue that will bind those pieces. In passing the legislation, we will be promising the best possible start in life to future generations of children in Canada. This will be no idle promise. We know we can do it, because we have the proof.

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In the years to come, when families are enjoying the benefits of Canada's fully functioning early learning and child care system, I believe we will look back on the agreements we have made and the legislation before us today and say, "What a great system. How did it take us so long to get this?" Therefore, I urge my colleagues to give quick passage to Bill C-35.

● (1925)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the committee there were amendments moved by the Conservative members of Parliament to try to improve the bill and make it better. In my riding, there are many shift workers and people who work off-hours who will not be covered by the agreement that would be entrenched into legislation through this bill.

I wonder if the member could explain why the Liberal members on that committee refused to even consider reasonable amendments by the Conservative side to improve this bill.

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Mr. Speaker, I would point out that dozens of amendments were in fact passed and that there was vigorous discussion, I know, at committee to achieve the best possible legislation and agreement toward that.

I also know that really what we are looking at is a framework, and it is up to the implementation and agreements with the provinces and territories to make it work.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, the member for Yukon, which is an amazing place.

I would like to hear what he thinks about the implementation of this bill, which will support subsidized child care. The member spoke at length about the rural nature of his riding. How can we ensure that this program serves both the city of Whitehorse and the more remote communities equally?

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments and his question.

Rural-urban equity is very important. I know that is a factor the Yukon government is considering in the implementation of this program.

There are always challenges when it comes to recruitment in rural areas. Nevertheless, in general, it works because the needs have been accurately identified so as to ensure appropriate implementation.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have some concerns, and I think my colleague from the Bloc just addressed some them.

It is the access and the workers that I am most concerned about. What would the member suggest should be done for northern and rural communities where access to child care staff is not available, where child care workers are not available and where we have seen that there is a lack of access to quality child care?

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Mr. Speaker, we also have to recognize that we are in an era when there are labour shortages in general all

around the country, in all sectors. That is one of the challenges we are seeing with implementation.

At the same time, we have set the framework for high-quality education. The other aspect I would briefly point out is that in Yukon, early childhood educators are well paid, and that is a real benefit for both recruitment and retention.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have four kids who have benefited from the Quebec day care, what was called in those days the \$7-a-day day care program. Some studies in Quebec have shown that this program has allowed 70,000 mothers to go back to the workplace and that this has contributed to an increase in the Quebec GDP of more than \$5 billion. Yes, everyone heard me right: \$5 billion.

I wonder if the member would like to comment on that.

● (1930)

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Mr. Speaker, I could probably comment for an hour on that, but I think a couple of key aspects are that we knew Quebec had set the standard years ago and that this was really the standard to aim for with nationwide early learning and child care.

It also brings out the point of what a fantastic investment quality early learning and child care is. It is not just a public health investment, but an economic investment.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will note at the outset that I am sorry to disappoint the member for Timmins—James Bay, but I am not an old white guy. I am a Conservative, but I am not an old white guy.

I would also like to point out that the NDP and Liberals have once again used the draconian tool of closure to shut down debate on the bill we are debating tonight, Bill C-35. It is unfortunate that they lack the courage to have an unfettered debate on child care.

[Translation]

They fear that parents will choose the Conservative approach, which emphasizes choice and freedom.

[English]

They must fear that their one-size-fits-all, Ottawa-knows-best approach will be rejected once again.

I spoke on this bill at second reading in January before it went to the human resources committee for study. At that time I laid out four key principles that I thought the committee should use to strengthen the bill.

First, the legislation should find solutions that help parents in the modern economy, not just those working in nine-to-five industries; second, the bill should empower parents to make whatever child care choices best suit their needs; third, the legislation should refrain from dictating to provincial governments about how to deliver their child care services; and fourth, the committee should make recommendations to give families more financial freedom to support any child care choice they make. The government could have started by cancelling the carbon tax and reining in inflationary spending that is driving high interest rates, with another hike yesterday's, and inflation.

With that, I supported sending the bill to committee, where Conservatives brought forward several amendments to enshrine some of these concepts into legislation, but the NDP and the Liberals, as they usually do, used their coalition to shut down common-sense Conservative proposals. Those two parties ignored the call of parents who have to hope for a day care space to open up on a lengthy wait-list. They silenced shift workers, who need child care beyond the hours of operation of regulated day cares. They turned a blind eye to parents who prefer to rely on family members for child care, including many new Canadians. They forgot that indigenous parents often prefer alternatives to state-run child care institutions, given their family and historic experiences with residential schools. They ignored parents in rural and remote communities, where regulated child care is often not available.

It is true that the NDP-Liberal child care plan has helped some parents, but it is also true that the plan is leaving far too many people behind. Thankfully, there is one party in this House that represents the common sense of the common people. Only the Conservative Party supports a child care plan that is parent-driven and child-focused. The Conservative vision flows from our belief in small government and big citizens.

We respect the right of parents to make child care decisions that meet their individual needs. That begins by ensuring families have the financial flexibility they need to create the life they dream of for themselves and for their children. To do that, we have to make life more affordable with lower taxes, lower interest rates and more powerful paycheques.

I was part of the previous Conservative government that promoted income splitting for families and implemented a child care tax credit and the universal child care benefit, and we did so with a balanced budget. Do members remember those?

The benefit was universal and supported the needs of every child in Canada. Unfortunately, the vision of the NDP-Liberal government fails to meet that standard. Its legislation reflects the core belief of left-wing politicians that government is the best solution to societal problems. That is why this bill gives more power to the government to decide who gets child care support and who will provide those services. That is why the government is encroaching on provincial jurisdiction, forcing provinces to give the federal government more control.

• (1935)

For example, the child care agreement with B.C. will direct \$3.2 billion into the child care system with one key condition, that those dollars only be allocated to run regulated day cares. I expected a

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more inclusive and modern child care approach from the Prime Minister, because it is 2023.

His Deputy Prime Minister promised better, when she introduced this child care plan in her budget. She said:

This is women's liberation. It will mean more women no longer need to choose between motherhood and a career.

This is feminist economic policy in action.

This is so typical of the Liberal government: big promises, no follow-through. Instead, the Liberal government implemented a program straight out of the 1970s, when women were generally limited to typical nine-to-five office jobs.

Listen to the words of Melissa, an Ontario mother of three, an entrepreneur, who is at her wits' end trying to find day care: "I have had my son on a wait-list for three different day care spots since before he was born, so I can return to work, but I have had no success.... My husband and I both work shifts, and I have a goal of starting up my own foot care business. I would like to have full-time child care so that I can pursue that goal, but at this point, I am looking for any care that I can get. For now, I will have to work around my husband's shifts, which is fine but it makes our budget much tighter with the constantly increasing cost of living."

If Canada really had a feminist economic policy, then striving entrepreneurs like Melissa would be able to find child care that meets their needs. Speaking as a woman who raised a family amid a career in law and politics, I can say that this program is not modern feminist economic policy.

I do not know where the Liberals have been for the past 50 years, while women have been breaking the glass ceiling of every industry and every realm of life. Women are leaders in the military, policing, medicine, aerospace, engineering, mining and resource extraction. They are on the cutting edge of research and development. They are bolstering our food supply chains as agricultural producers. They are manufacturing the cars we drive and designing the transit systems we rely on. Many women are taking up jobs in the skilled trades, helping to construct the homes and highways that we need to build up our great country. Women are thriving in industries that were once male-dominated, and they need flexible child care options that meet their needs. Instead, the Liberals and the NDP implemented recycled Liberal election promises from the 1980s, which fail women working in today's economy.

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To make matters worse, the program fails to live up to the standard set by the courts. In 2010, as an administrative law judge with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, I presided over the Johnstone case. Fiona Johnstone worked shifts as a border services officer. Her child care preference was to rely on family, only available three days a week. She sought accommodation from her employer, requesting that she work full time with extended shifts. Her employer refused.

After hearing testimony from child care experts, I made a precedent-setting decision that found the CBSA discriminated against Fiona Johnstone by failing to accommodate her child care choices and needs. My decision, later upheld by the Federal Court of Appeal, protected child care choice as a right for working parents on the ground of family status in the Canadian Human Rights Act.

A modern national child care program should reflect the court ruling by supporting the child care choices of all Canadian parents. This is a half-hearted effort. Most of it is inconsequential. The one thing it does is establish an advisory council. Conservatives sought to strengthen this section by including private child care service providers on the council. We also tried to include mandatory reporting on labour shortages in the child care sector to Parliament. Both of these common-sense amendments were rejected by the coalition partners.

I look forward to a day when a Conservative government will better align child care strategy in a way that respects the choices of all Canadian parents.

• (1940)

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I heard the term “Conservative approach.” The Conservative approach has been to threaten to rip up these agreements, much like Prime Minister Harper did in 2006, when we had a deal in place with the provinces.

I would remind the member opposite that Conservative premiers across the country have signed these agreements with the federal government. Why does she not see the merit in these agreements like her Conservative cousins in all provinces across the country?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, I think my friend across the way is a little confused. He says, “some Conservatives say this and some Conservatives say that” and then he says what the Conservative approach is.

I will tell the member what the Conservative approach is. It is freedom. It is choice. It is respecting parents in their child care choices and giving them the flexibility to meet their very real needs. The modern working woman is not a nine-to-five clerical worker all the time. They are entrepreneurs. They are professionals. They are shift workers. They are people doing all kinds of work in all kinds of industries, and they need to be respected.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, one element of my hon. colleague's speech caught my attention and that is the issue of jurisdiction.

We know that one compromise of a federation is equally sovereign levels of government, each with its own areas of jurisdiction.

However, what we have seen in recent years, with increasing frequency, is Ottawa interfering in the provinces' areas of jurisdiction. Social services and child care are not Ottawa's responsibility, but that of the provinces. By taking half the taxes, Ottawa takes those resources and then chooses to use them to interfere in the provinces' areas of jurisdiction by attacking their sovereignty, which is supposed to be on the same footing as Ottawa's sovereignty.

What does my hon. colleague think?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

[*English*]

Conservatives respect provincial jurisdiction. Our country, quite rightly, is based on a confederation that has both provincial and federal jurisdiction, sometimes overlapping a bit. We reject the idea that the federal government should impose national programs and put conditions on the money it sends when it is not in its jurisdiction to do so. However, we do believe the federal government has a role to support provinces and support their choices, just like we believe in the freedom of parents to choose their child care for the needs that they have, particularly those who also want to use family members, which is very common, particularly with new Canadians. We need to give parents choice when it comes to raising their own children.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for highlighting the changing reality of the working lives of women in this country.

One thing I do want to point out to the member, gently if I could, is that she brought up the idea that we had used closure or that closure had been used to shut down debate on the bill. However, I am sure she knows the difference between closure and time allocation. The reason I am sure she knows the difference between them is that, of course, when Prime Minister Stephen Harper was in power in 2015, the Conservatives actually hit 100 times that they used time allocation. In fact, a minister at the time, Peter Van Loan, had a cake in the lobby to celebrate the 100th time that the Harper Conservatives used time allocation. So, I am sure the member knows what time allocation is.

One thing I want to ask the member about her speech is with regard to private versus not-for-profit child care. Many experts have told us that not-for-profit, publicly delivered child care is, in fact, higher-quality child care. Would she agree that this is, in fact, the case, that when it is not for profit, when we are not trying to make money off child care, it is a higher-quality child care and it is, in fact, better for children?

● (1945)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, as I said before, there are many forms of child care, and those forms can be quality. I would not like to tell the young mother running a day care in her home, who manages to accommodate her own children and the children of neighbours who trust her with their care as she provides loving care to them, who will be often shut down by this program, that she is not providing quality care. There are many places that, yes, make some money, not a great deal of money, in for-profit day care providing quality, caring and nurturing child care to children.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank all of the members who are in the House today contributing to this very important debate. I am delighted to be here, representing the people of Edmonton Strathcona.

I come to this debate from a place that I think many of us do. I am a parent. I am a mother. I know exactly what it was like to try to get child care for my children. I remember going to centre after centre trying to find a space to help our family as we tried to find child care for my two children, who are perfect in every way. It is important that I mention that. We did find child care for them. We were very happy with our child care and we were very happy with the child care providers who provided that service to us, but I also know that I came from a place of privilege. I was lucky enough to be able to pay a very high price for child care. I was lucky enough to live in an urban community where child care spaces were available. The child care spaces I was able to find were in a non-profit centre and I trusted the care that my children were receiving, but I also remember getting that call two years after my daughter started day care from one of the other centres, saying they finally had a space available, two years after she started day care. Families cannot wait that long. Women cannot wait that long for day care spaces.

We, within the NDP, have been saying for a very long time that child care is fundamental. I stand in this place on the shoulders of the champions of child care who have come before me within the New Democratic Party. Olivia Chow tried to bring forward legislation to make child care a reality. I have seen members of our caucus now work so hard on this child care file. The member for Winnipeg Centre has done more to move this child care discussion forward than I think any other member of Parliament here has done. I know the member for London—Fanshawe, in previous Parliaments, has tried very hard to make child care a reality. In fact, the previous member for London—Fanshawe also tried very hard to make sure that child care was a reality. On top of those people, colleagues within the NDP are also held up and supported by the incredible child care advocates around this country, the incredible labour leaders who have been pushing for this since the 1970s, pushing to have

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legislation in place, because we always knew that child care was the best thing we could do for families, for women and for children.

The other thing I wanted to highlight is that this particular bill coming forward is something that I think we can all be proud of. We can all be proud that this piece of legislation is coming forward. It is a piece of the supply and confidence agreement that the New Democratic Party of Canada has with the Liberal Party of Canada. This is another one of those pieces the New Democrats have forced the Liberals to do. We would not have this legislation if we did not have that in the supply and confidence agreement.

Today was an exciting day for us as New Democrats because, of course, today the budget implementation act was passed, despite the attempts from the Conservatives to block it. The leader of the official opposition said that he would do anything in his power to stop the bill being voted on, but then it got voted on a couple of hours later. That is a different debate for a different day, but we got dental care today. That was something that New Democrats pushed for. Dental care is something that I think we all should be very proud of, and child care is again one of those things.

There are a few things that I want to discuss about child care. Many members have stood in this place and talked about the challenges with this. I agree. There definitely are challenges with making this child care a reality for every family, for every woman across this country. There is lots of work to be done. It is not going to be enough to pass this legislation, brush our hands and be done. This legislation will require the government to continue to do that very difficult work of making sure that those child care places that are available are available to people in all communities, that they are accessible and that they are quality. That is one of the things that I think are most important.

● (1950)

When we look at child care, we need to ensure that these spaces are quality child care, that they are quality child care positions and that they are accessible to all families. That means we want to make sure that they are available to moms who have different work realities. We want to make sure that they are available to people in rural communities, in northern communities and in communities that have had trouble finding child care workers. We want to make sure that those places are there. That is the work that needs to go into this going forward.

We also want to make sure that we are investing federal dollars, public dollars, into a public system. This is an ideological difference between the Conservatives and the New Democrats, just as how Conservatives believe in private health care and we do not. We fundamentally think that health care is better when it is publicly delivered and universally accessible, paid for not with a credit card but using a health card. We believe that on health care. We believe that on child care.

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Fundamentally, we know that child care is better when it is publicly delivered, when it is delivered within the public good. It is like long-term care. During COVID-19, we all saw that it was the private long-term care centres that had the highest mortality, that had the highest pain for seniors and that had the highest level of indignity that seniors went through during the terrible time of COVID.

It is the same idea. One cannot make profit off of child care without cutting corners. It is just not possible. That is how one makes profit on child care. One pays the staff less. One cuts corners and quality of care. For our young people, that is not what we are looking for.

That brings me to my next point. I want to talk about child care workers. We have a very big concern that there is a shortage of child care workers. How do we address that? We make sure that child care workers are paid adequately. We make sure that child care workers are able to access and pay for the training that they need, that they are able to support their families and that the job they have is a family-sustaining job. That is how we get more people to be involved in child care work.

In my province, we have an unbelievable group of folks who are working on the child care file. I have met with them many times, the advocates who have been doing some of this work for such a long time. Susan Cake is one of those advocates. She is the chair of Child Care Now Alberta. She says that “while it could be great that we will have 20,000 more spaces for children in Alberta, we need a concrete plan to staff these spaces. We need a plan to educate more Early Childhood Educators and we need a wage grid, inclusive of pensions and benefits, to ensure fair compensation across the province.”

I think that is fair. We cannot look at this program without looking at the idea of making sure that child care workers and child care educators are provided with the resources they need.

We need this in legislation for one really fundamental reason, which is to protect child care from Conservative governments. I have to say it. In Alberta, we have a premier right now who said, in 2021, that signing the \$10-a-day child care program was a terrible decision, that it should not have happened and that they should never have done it. She, of course, campaigned on this \$10-a-day child care and claimed it as her own, but this is something that is deeply worrying. We have a Conservative Party here whose leader has actually said that he does not believe in this child care program and that he would scrap the spending that is going into it.

I have some serious concerns about what we have to put into legislation. It is not just because child care is the right thing to do. It is not just because child care is vitally important for women, for families and for children. It is not just so that we can ensure that workers are paid an adequate wage, so that quality, accessible child care is available in every place in this country. Rather, it is also to ensure that, no matter what, Conservatives cannot take child care away from families and give money to their friends instead.

• (1955)

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I quite enjoyed hearing my colleague's speech, especially when she touched upon her personal experience. We have been hearing a lot

about the Conservatives and why they feel that no plan is a good plan, why they would throw out a plan that helps many. It may not help everyone who wants to stay at home or have families take care of their children, but for many, that is not a possibility.

Those women need a sustainable centre where they can send their children. What does the hon. member think the plan will mean for women in her riding?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I wanted to point out during my speech that, when Rachel Notley was elected as the premier of Alberta in 2015, she put in a pilot project for \$25-a-day child care. That contributed to cutting child poverty in half in the province of Alberta during the time she was the premier. It was a pilot, and I think \$10 a day is a much more reasonable cost.

We heard from chambers of commerce and the Royal Bank. Even after COVID, we heard that the best thing we could do for economic recovery in this country was provide child care to families. For Edmonton Strathcona, for Alberta and for places across this country, it is fundamental in how it will change people's lives.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is the puzzling thing. I have a question for the NDP. It is supposed to be for the working people. It does not matter if they are male or female. When I think of the NDP, working families is its history, but it seems to have forgotten about that.

My speech was all about the holes. It was all about the things we tried to bring forward as Conservatives that were not addressed by the NDP or the Liberals. I do not understand that.

Right now, there is a system where a doctor or a nurse making six figures will get the subsidy as long as they have a day care spot. However, the parents working out there on the farms or in the trucking industry do not get it at all. How can the NDP square that off?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, boy, that is quite a question.

I spoke about the importance of protecting the workers who work within our child care centres. I talked about how this is fundamental for allowing women to go back to work or letting them go back to work.

When the member brings up a question like this, what he is really trying to ask is why there is not money for the for-profit centres. He is asking why money is not being given to the Conservatives' friends for the for-profit centres. I am not interested in answering that. He knows the answer. It is because better-quality child care comes when it is not for profit. Non-profit child care is of better quality. I want it for my family, my children and every child in this country.

It is not a very realistic question.

● (2000)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, economist Pierre Fortin studied Quebec's early learning centres. He found that subsidized child care centres were self-funding in the sense that they resulted in more women remaining in the workforce, earning income and paying income tax. Their income tax exceeded the cost associated with this measure.

What does my hon. colleague think about that?

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, it is an excellent point. It made me a little sad after COVID, after we were recovering from COVID economically, and that was when people were paying attention to child care. People have been saying for decades that child care is a vital piece of our economy. The fact that it took a global pandemic for people to say that this is what will restart our economy was a little sad, but it is 100% accurate. When women can contribute, when they can be in the workforce, that is an economic driver that cannot be overestimated. It is a fantastic opportunity for our economy, and any attempt to stifle that is a grave economic mistake.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour once again to rise in this House today as representative of the amazing people from the riding of North Okanagan—Shuswap.

I rise today to speak to report stage on Bill C-35, an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada, or as the Liberals love to call it, the universal child care plan. I will be speaking to some extent about how it is not really a universal child care plan; instead, it is a plan that would benefit those in areas with access to day care, especially those who already have children in day care. However, it leaves out the 50% children living in what have been called “child care deserts”.

I support anything we can do to make life better for young parents, or even grandparents or guardians, who are raising children anywhere. However, I am not sure the Liberal-NDP government does. It is a number of years since my wife of 44 years and I required child care. As I go back to those wonderful years, and all those 44 years have been truly wonderful thanks to her, I recall that there was a time when we were coming out of the recessionary times caused by a former Liberal government that had a spending problem. It caused massive inflation and skyrocketing interest rates.

During those wonderful years, we struggled to afford our home, to put food on the table and to provide the best for our daughter. We were only able to do that because we had family help. We had family members only minutes away who were able to provide child care so that my wife could return to work to help pay the bills.

The bills at that time were so inflated that we thought we were doing well when we got our first mortgage at 9.5% and a second mortgage at 12.5%. Friends had bought a few years prior at mortgage rates of 19% to 21%. That was all caused by a former Liberal government's overspending, which caused incredible inflation.

We have now come to a point where we are grandparents to a beautiful granddaughter, who has made our hearts grow more than

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one size bigger. I believe she is at home watching with her parents, so Grampy says hi to Ava. We are blessed, as she and her parents are, that they have access to good day care for her, because they live in a larger city.

While this bill is touted to be about universal child care, it is very clear that it will not be universal. With 50% of children in Canada living in child care deserts, it simply cannot be called “universal”. In fact, my colleagues have proposed that the short title of the bill be changed from the current title of “Canada Early Learning and Child Care Act”.

With 50% of children living in areas without government-approved day care, Conservatives have been the only ones raising the alarm bells that parents have been ringing, and that the government, in its usual fashion, has failed to listen to or understand. This is much as it failed to listen to the warnings it was given about massive deficits causing life to be unaffordable, especially for young families.

I mentioned that we had family close by. We had a caring grandmother who gave us a choice, so my wife could return to work. We had the choice of what we thought was the best day care possible for our daughter. This bill would not give parents the choice of how they want to provide day care for their children. They will not benefit from this bill if they live outside of urban centres or if they choose to have a family member or friend provide child care.

● (2005)

Universal child care needs to be truly universal. It needs to be universal to those in the urban centres, and it needs to be universal to those who choose to provide non-government supported child care. It needs to be universal to low-income families that do not have transportation or some of the other amenities and benefits available those with higher incomes. It needs to be universal to those living in rural areas, such as those in my riding in areas like Falkland, Cherryville, Anglemont, Adams Lake or Malakwa, all areas that could be a 30-minute to an hour-long drive to a community with child care covered by this program.

Young parents living in these communities would face long drives, fuel costs and time in dangerous winter or summer traffic conditions just to get their children to child care, instead of having access closer to home on a more equitable basis, where they may be able to carry on a home-based business or work at a local small business. They cannot do that under this program.

Witnesses testified at committee about the problems with the shortage of spaces and how it is not a universal, equitable plan. Ms. Maggie Moser, director of the board of directors of the Ontario Association of Independent Child Care Centres said:

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The CWELCC program has not delivered good value for taxpayers and does not meet Canadian standards of equity. The implementation provides undue benefits to higher-income families, who are sailing their yachts on the tides of the program, while those who need it most are left drowning.

Lower-income families were excluded from obtaining access to the CWELCC child care spots. Families who could already afford the fees of their centre were the ones who benefited from the rebates and discounts, while the rest were left behind on a long wait-list.

She also talked about the association she works with, stating:

We have 147 spaces as well as 24 half-time spaces, going all the way from infant up to kindergarten. Our centre is 100% full. There is not one empty space in our centre.

At the moment, we have around 600 names on our wait-list. They are for spots in the next year and a half. It is a current list, in that we ask our families to contact us every six months to maintain their registration. If they haven't done that, we take them off the list so that we can maintain a list only of families who are now looking for the next 18 months.

I am disappointed that the Liberal-NDP coalition continues to mislead Canadians in so many ways. For them to be labelling this as a universal child care bill and program is absolutely false. It is disgusting they are misleading Canadians by failing to recognize the 50% of children in Canada will not benefit from this program, especially those in rural communities and those who are not in a program already.

• (2010)

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have heard many speeches tonight, especially from the Conservative members, that this plan is not universal because there are those who would not like to use a day care centre or those who perhaps cannot use a day care centre. What I am curious about is in the last several platforms of the Conservative Party of Canada, I did not see any solutions as to how they would spend money to try to help families care for their children. We do have a Canada child benefit, which is very generous and goes to many families, many rural families, to help them with child care needs. That is still going to go on.

I would like to know from the member what his plan would be. I would like to see what the proposal would be in their next platform and how the Conservatives would provide child care spaces in rural Canada.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, one of the ways we would provide better access to child care would be to provide choices to Canadians, but we would also make sure that Canadians were not burdened with the heavy costs of inflation and high interest rates. They cannot afford a home to live in, so they cannot even afford day care because of the costs the government is piling on, not just with one carbon tax, but now a second carbon tax.

People in outlying communities have no choice of transportation or public transit. Those are the people who are being hurt the most by the government, and the government is doing nothing to help those people with child care.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech.

Here is what I understand from his speech and the beginning of his last answer. He does not approve of a government urging people to make greater use of child care services rather than looking to

other options, such as keeping children at home with a family member.

Is he saying that, if a government provides some kind of support, it should be neutral in terms of choice and there should be just as great an incentive to keep children at home as there is to send them to child care?

[English]

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, I believe that parents should have the choice of where they send their children for child care or day care, whether that be in their own home with nannies or other people, even family members, coming in to provide child care in the parents' and child's own home, or through the other process. That needs to be more universal, which this program is not even close to providing.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, these debates always provide an opportunity to try to find common ground, even with my Conservative friends and colleagues. In this particular case, what I am noting is the way in which the hon. member quite rightly and aptly describes how capitalism does not value the care economy and does not value a lot of the gendered work that happens in homes and in our communities. I heard the member talk about a need for incentive, for people to be compensated for the care economy, and that reminds me of the guaranteed basic livable income. The member spoke at length about universality, and I happen to believe he is quite right.

Would the hon. member care to reflect on a universal basic income, or a guaranteed basic livable income, for caregivers, be they gendered as the mothers of the household, or the grandparents or any family members, that would allow them to take care of their children in their communities, such as the rural communities he listed in his speech?

• (2015)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, the way to be able to afford that and to pay those day care and child care workers to be in the homes is to have young families being able to take home stronger paycheques and more of their paycheques than the current government is allowing them to take home. The government is taxing them more and more, making it less affordable. We have seen the inflation, the high cost of groceries and the high cost of home heating, so they cannot afford to pay the bills and they cannot afford to pay—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville has the floor.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to share in the discussion of Bill C-35, or the universal child care plan, as messaged by the Liberal government.

Although long-term funding to establish and maintain a predetermined, narrow-scope national early learning and child care program through provincial agreements has already been implemented, and a National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care has already been established, with members of that council already having been announced on November 24, 2022, I will be speaking to the report put forth by HUMA, the committee that studied this legislation, which has already been implemented.

Conservatives are here to ensure that all voices, all perspectives and all needs of parents are heard, to improve and build out on the limited options Bill C-35 would provide. In addition to establishing and maintaining the needed access to child care this bill purports to provide, we have heard from those parents and providers of care who are not recognized, included or guaranteed in any way the same level of support from their federal government in caring for and educating our children. The Liberal government has exclusively indicated that its focus is on establishing and maintaining public and not-for-profit entities. It indicates as a sidebar that private programs would be eligible for funding. However, they do not and would not have the same priority for ongoing federal investments.

When the Liberal government indicates that Bill C-35 would further the progressive realization of the right to benefit from child care services, as recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is also indirectly demeaning the rights and responsibilities of mothers and fathers to ensure that their children are cared for and educated according to their priorities and not necessarily according to the priorities of any particular ruling government in a democracy, or a non-democratic authoritarian body, such as an advisory council that is not accountable to anyone.

Liberals indicate that their universal program would contribute to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I know there is apprehension to some degree in the indigenous communities that prefer to care for their children according to their ways, not under the supervision of a national day care strategy that includes some, dismisses others and chooses winners and losers based on its intentions for reducing the role of parents, extended family, elders and self-determination within their own communities.

The 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”.

Melissa's story needs to be told. She says, “I have 3 kids. Thankfully 2 of them are school age. I'm currently on Mat leave with my third and I have had him on a wait-list for 3 different day care spots since before he was born, and I have been actively looking for day care for my return to work, which was to be in July but I have had no success.

“Thankfully I have holidays that were not paid out and stat and bank OT that my employer is allowing me to use to extend my time off until August, which only allows me more time to look for care.

“My husband and I both work shift work. He works 12 hour continental shifts and I work 8 hour shifts and I have a goal of starting up my own foot care business, so I would like to have full time care

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so that I can pursue that goal but at this point I am looking for any care that I can get and still no success.

“So I have now had to drop my full time posting at work and I am going to have to work casually so that I can work around my husband's continental shifts.

“Which is fine but it makes our budget so much tighter especially with us having just moved into a bigger house to accommodate our family of 5, and the constantly increasing costs of living.

“My husband joked telling me to open my own day care, but I am actually considering it as it would help my family out and maybe others but that is not actually the ideal career choice for me.

“It's too bad the situation that parents are facing with the day care shortage and the cost of living that is affecting everyone.”

Melissa's story is the opposite of feminism. She has no choice, and her story is one of thousands across this country.

Conservatives recognize that Canadian families should have access to affordable and quality child care and should be able to choose child care providers who best suit their family's needs. Some examples of those whom we would include are those who are proud of their ethnic heritage and want their children to grow up learning within their culture, which is not an option, and those who want their children to be trained up within their faith, including Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh or other faiths, to ensure that their family and faith values are respected and followed when their children are being cared for by others.

There are those who want their children to be cared for by a friend or a family member who commits to being their primary caregiver when child care is needed and, of course, needs compensation. There are single parents who want to be able to both work and be the primary caregiver for their children, so they choose part-time or off-hour work to earn a living. They do not qualify. Many families want their children cared for in their home and/or home schooled.

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● (2020)

Bill C-35 discriminates against women. Truth be told, the majority of child care operators are women. I am disgusted that the attitude toward these women, the language and intent of the bill, prevents any growth in opportunities for private female operators, many of whom operate home day cares as a means of being with their children while providing a service to other women in the workforce. They have value. They are far more accessible to part-time or shift workers and those who simply need some after-school care. None of these circumstances many women face meet the criteria for a spot in Bill C-35's "universal" program. Affordable quality child care is critical, but if one cannot access it, it does not exist. Bill C-35 does nothing to address accessibility for these people.

The \$10-a-day day care does not address the labour shortage or the lack of spaces. Bill C-35 is good for families who already have a child care space, but it does not help the thousands of families across this nation on child care wait-lists, most of whom live in rural Canada, or the operators who do not have the staff or infrastructure to offer more spaces. There are not enough qualified staff to keep all existing child care centres running at full capacity, let alone to staff new spaces. Therefore, one has to ask what the rationale is for not championing women operators who run day cares and early learning care as small businesses. Wait-lists are years long, and we need to do more to broaden out the scope of this service. It is very disappointing as it stands right now.

As a matter of fact, Conservatives tabled amendments to better this bill. We sought the inclusion of all types of child care, but did not get the support. We did not want it to reflect political ideology but to reflect the choice of parents. We sought to have representatives from private, home-based providers alongside public and not-for-profit providers. It was voted down.

We sought to amend the function of the national advisory council to include supporting the recruitment and retention of a well-qualified workforce, having an understanding of available spaces, and progress in reducing wait-lists via an annual progress report. That was voted down.

We sought to amend the reporting clause in the bill to include the Minister of Labour in the annual reporting, which would have to include a national labour strategy. Again, that was voted down.

This Liberal child care bill prioritizes elitism over compassion. It does not enable families of varying incomes to benefit. The government should be supporting families that need child care most, based on their income. It should not be subsidizing the child care of wealthy families who can afford it with what they are making. It smacks of elitism and is anything but in line with the government's social justice rhetoric. As in the Matthew effect, increasing public provision ends up advantaging higher-income rather than lower-income groups. Even in the Quebec model, despite the gains in access, quality levels remain low compared to the rest of Canada, with lower-income children in lower-quality rather than higher-quality settings.

Of course, there is the labour shortage. There are not enough qualified staff to keep even the existing centres open, let alone staff new spaces. The middle class, and those working hard to join it, a phrase we have heard before, should be the focus of this "univer-

sal" program at this point in time. Stakeholders have indicated all kinds of shortcomings in this universal program.

When we form government, Conservatives will ensure that all voices, all perspectives and all needs of parents are heard, and that all means of providing the needed care and early learning are options available to improve and build out on the limited options Bill C-35 provides.

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am hearing a lot of sad stories about those who are not able access day care spaces, but what I am not hearing are any solutions.

From what I am hearing, it seems we should do away with the spaces we are creating and the help we are providing, so that everyone ends up with a sad story and nobody has child care. The member can correct me if I am wrong. I would love to hear what her party's solution would be and how it would back that solution. Would it be paying for a system that provides day care for all Canadians, and how would it do it?

● (2025)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, first of all, this program would not be providing that. We need to be really clear about that. It would not be universal, and it should be.

We had a program in place and we would expound on this. Would we take away the money from the provincial governments? Let us get real; of course we would not, because it is needed and is providing growth in care for women's children. However, it is sorely lacking, especially when we get out of the big cities and go anywhere beyond them to rural Canada. There is an incredible shortage of help. I have young mothers and fathers, both working shift work at the mine, who are having to drive their kids to Esterhazy, which is 30 miles away, before they go to work another 10 miles away, at 5:30 in the morning. Those little kids are not getting home until 9:30 at night because that is how far they have to go to hold on to their spaces.

Rural Canada is the backbone of this country. It is where our GDP is created. We need to do a far better job of also providing child care through small businesses that women run incredibly well, and because they care for children. That is the route that we would go.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, as I listened to my colleague's speech, I wondered where she was getting her information.

In another life, I taught at a university. In a course on social policy, we took a close look at the role of child care and the child care system in Quebec. Several analysts said that the transformative impact on society was unimaginable. Women returned to the workforce, single mothers managed to find a job, children arrived at school without language delays. To hear my colleague, there could be nothing worse than having a public child care system.

I wonder if the thing that bothers her is the fact that this promotes a model other than the traditional family where the mother stays at home and takes care of the children. I wonder.

[English]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, I have a fairly good understanding and grasp of what is going on in Quebec, and there are good things going on; there is no question. How it is being funded is interesting as well, because Quebec is depending on a lot of transfer of funds. That being said, there are still 80,000 children on wait-lists.

When I came here in 2015 and we studied that system as this was first brought up in the House, the truth of the matter is that there were children who aged out before they ever got that care, because there were not enough spaces. Perhaps it is better now; I have not taken a look lately, but the truth of the matter is that it is a real challenge. According to the information I have from Cardus—

Mr. Matthew Green: Cardus.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Yes, it does good research.

Mr. Matthew Green: Did you send the research—

• (2030)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Please allow the hon. member to finish.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, on access, quality levels remain low compared to the rest of Canada, with lower-income children in lower-quality day cares rather than in higher-quality settings. This is something I see, and I know that if this carries on, we are already seeing that circumstance where it is the elite people who—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will give the member for Hamilton Centre a chance to ask a question.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, when I hear the Conservatives say that everything is broken, I think that, in their world, I believe them, because they are the ones trying to tear everything down. We have a member who has spoken at length about all the problems with the system.

This is enabling legislation. One would think that a party that purports to support entrepreneurialism would see an opportunity for a government-funded program, a national program, to inject money into a sector to allow new child care to open up: new child care in the north, rural communities and in her particular riding, for instance. With all these stats that the member purports from these so-

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called research organizations, like Cardus, she has never once said how she would go about addressing the issue.

My question for the hon. member is this: Will she finally, clearly and definitively state how she would address this particular issue to grow the amount of child care—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville 10 to 15 seconds to answer.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, that was a fine question, but the truth of the matter is that it is not either-or; it is both-and. We are in favour of continuing on with the commitment, and it is time the member realizes there is a role in this country for small business, and women are really good at it. In our rural scenarios, it is a very good way to provide care, which this program would not do.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 8:30 p.m., pursuant to order made Tuesday, June 6, 2023, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the report stage of the bill now before the House.

[Translation]

The question is on Motion No. 1.

[English]

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

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to order made Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Monday, June 12, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

[Translation]

STRENGTHENING THE PORT SYSTEM AND RAILWAY SAFETY IN CANADA ACT

The House resumed from March 10 consideration of the motion that Bill C-33, An Act to amend the Customs Act, the Railway Safety Act, the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, 1992, the Marine Transportation Security Act, the Canada Transportation Act and the Canada Marine Act and to make a consequential amendment to another Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I seek the consent of the House to share my time with the intrepid member for Jonquière.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to share his time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, the intrepid member for Jonquière just joked that I should have said no myself. I am going to run out of time for my speech.

On July 6, 2013, 47 people died as a result of a train derailment involving 72 tank cars carrying crude oil. This tragic event reminds us of the significant risks associated with this activity. The industry needs to be better regulated. With regard to this tragedy, I would like to refer to the work of Anne-Marie Saint-Cerny, author of the book *Mégantic: une tragédie annoncée*, published by Écosociété.

Ms. Saint-Cerny began her investigation by looking at the journey of William Ackman, the owner of Canadian Pacific, or CP, at the time. Mr. Ackman took over the railway company on May 17, 2012, as shareholders were outraged at their total return of 19%, while competitors got a return of 56% to 117%. Ackman hired Hunter Harrison, a former CEO of CN, Canadian National.

To increase profits, Harrison presented a four-point plan: increase the convoy, increase the speed, reduce maintenance and reduce the number of employees. Convoys would be five times heavier and longer, with a length far exceeding one kilometre. They would be 15% faster and 4,500 positions would be eliminated within six months. Saint-Cerny tells us that Harrison profited from the phenomenal increase in the transportation of petroleum products, which increased from 500 tank cars to 140,000 in 2013, with the use of block trains, that is long convoys of black oil tankers, the famous DOT-111 tank cars, which were obsolete and condemned by all safety agencies in the U.S. and in Canada.

Block trains reduce travel time by going directly from their point of origin to the destination, without stopping to load or unload cargo for various clients. To increase profitability, CP subcontracts its convoys to Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway, or MMA, whose network represents the shortest line between Montreal and the Irving refinery in Saint John, New Brunswick.

Ackman and Harrison do not care that MMA has the worst accident record in North America. On the contrary, they have nothing but admiration for its owner, Edward Burkhardt, who privatized railroads in New Zealand and Estonia. They admire him above all because he is the man behind the notorious one-person crew practice, which was a determining factor in the Mégantic disaster.

Harrison can brag that he really delivered the goods. As Saint-Cerny reports, 10 months after he started working for CP and two months before the tragedy, the company announced its largest profits in its 132-year history. Of the 25 largest listed companies in Canada, CP posted the best return to shareholders in 10 months, with a return of 26%. In 2016, Harrison was the highest-paid CEO in Canada.

Anne-Marie Saint-Cerny's other target is the federal government. She quotes the mission statement of the department responsible for railways, which says, "Transport Canada develops safety regulations and standards, or in the case of railways, it facilitates the development of rules by the rail industry". She also pointed out that Transport Canada recognized, at the time, that the primary responsibility for safe operations rests with the industry. The quoted report then states that Transport Canada "can order the development of a rule or the amendment of an existing rule". The real issue is when it

says that the Railway Association of Canada, "in consultation with its member railways, would then draft the rule."

In addition to writing its own rules, the company self-monitors and has its own policy for protecting assets the company administers or owns.

The Conservative transportation minister at the time, John Baird, who was responsible for this delegation of power, ensured Transport Canada's discretion by rendering the organization useless. While there were once 7,000 people overseeing transport safety in Canada, there were only 43 inspection positions at the time of the tragedy.

The title of Saint-Cerny's book, which can be translated as "Mégantic: a tragedy foretold", says it all. The risk of such a tragedy happening was very high, both because of corporate greed and Ottawa's complacency. This summer will mark 10 years since the tragedy. It will be 10 years since 47 people lost their lives for bigger profits. It will be 10 years since hundreds of lives were changed forever because of Ottawa's lax attitude. It will be 10 years since the downtown core of this community was razed to the ground.

● (2035)

In 10 years, have things really changed? I would say that things evolve very slowly in Ottawa. Ten years later, we have Bill C-33. It does not solve everything, but it is another step in the right direction. Obviously, we will vote in favour of the principle of the bill.

Furthermore, the Auditor General's recent audits, the Railway Safety Act review of 2018 and the studies done by the Standing Committee on Transport describe safety concerns with freight transportation. The bill responds to several recommendations of these reports, and we believe that many measures it contains will help improve railway safety.

In fact, during the 2017-18 review of the Railway Safety Act, I submitted a brief that pointed out some shortcomings. For example, I pointed out the following:

Gone are the days when trains essentially transported minerals, logs, grain or containers. This must be acknowledged....the current legal and regulatory framework is not suited to the sharp increase in the transportation of dangerous goods.

During its investigation of the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, the Transportation Safety Board revealed a number of serious deficiencies, both at the railway company and at Transport Canada: worn-out rail lines; fragile cars that were not suitable for carrying crude oil and that should have been decommissioned a long time ago; inadequate information on the content of the cars, making it very difficult for emergency services to do their work; a lack of coordination with local authorities; too few inspections; a lack of inspectors; a lack of follow-up; and too much confidence in the railway company's ability to police itself.

At the heart of the problem is the very architecture of the act and the self-regulatory regime it provides for. Protecting the public is the primary responsibility of the state. It cannot be passed down to a private company, which finds itself in a conflict of interest because lowering its costs means more profits.

It is not up to a private company to propose the security procedures it should be subject to or to verify whether it is in compliance. The act must be overhauled to ensure that the government fulfills the responsibilities it should never have delegated.

Here is another suggestion I made:

Rather than a simple update, your committee should recommend that the government propose, within the next two years, a complete overhaul of the Railway Safety Act, so as to put an end to the system of self-regulation by companies, and ensure that the government itself is responsible for establishing safety plans, ensuring compliance with them, and providing the internal human resources needed to fulfill these responsibilities.

This overhaul of the act should include a review of certain aspects of the Canada Transportation Act, even though the government committee's 2016 report did not propose any measures in that regard.

That was five years ago, but I am glad the government is finally moving in this direction. I also stressed the importance of better informing local authorities, in real time, of the arrival on their territory of rail convoys carrying hazardous materials. Some efforts have been made to that effect. Another point I raised was the need to reduce train speeds in densely populated areas, regardless of the size of the town, and to provide better support to municipalities in their emergency response.

On April 29 in Lac-Mégantic, there was a screening of the four-part documentary series *Lac-Mégantic*. At that event, Gilbert Carette and Robert Bellefleur, members of the Coalition des citoyens et organismes engagés pour la sécurité ferroviaire de Lac-Mégantic, recalled that years before July 6, 2013, residents spoke out against the industry, which was letting longer and heavier poorly maintained convoys carrying more crude oil, propane and other chemicals travel on worn rails. They said it was a conflict of interest that the safety inspections were being carried out by the companies themselves and approved by their own authorities.

Mr. Carette and Mr. Bellefleur are still calling for a public inquiry. While waiting for some light to be shed on this incident, while waiting for major changes to be made and for these problems to be corrected, we have here tonight Bill C-33, which is a step in the right direction to prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again.

• (2040)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think the member is right to raise the issue of dangerous cargo and hazardous things that go through our municipalities and our cities. I very much recall what happened in Lac-Mégantic. Just a few weeks ago in the city of Winnipeg in my area, the CP tracks had some issues that caused McPhillips Street, a major thoroughfare that is travelled by 90,000-plus people, to be shut down. A lot of thought was given to what would have happened had the cars gone over and spilled onto the street itself, as opposed to just staying on the top level. There is a great deal of concern.

My question to the member is this. We have had a great deal of time. We have had lots of reports and recommendations now on the issue. I would like to know the member's thoughts on seeing this bill continue to progress through the House.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, obviously, the Bloc Québécois members support Bill C-33, and we want it to go to committee so it can be properly studied.

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Obviously, we feel it is taking a long time. This summer will mark 10 years since the Lac-Mégantic tragedy. Trains are getting longer and heavier. This is a self-regulating industry that is primarily concerned with serving its shareholders and turning a profit. That takes precedence over public safety and the public good, which are the government's responsibility. We are asking that this be corrected.

Bill C-33 does this in part; it is a step in the right direction. Is it too little too late? Perhaps.

I want to reiterate that the citizens of Lac-Mégantic are still calling for a public inquiry into what led to this tragedy.

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise with eagerness, because in my former life as a city councillor in a port town and in Hamilton Centre and with a home about 100 metres from a rail line, I had to continually fight the port, which wanted to put garbage incinerators into our community, and the rail lines, which I fought in order to get more transparency and more accountability around their shunting yards and around the piercing decibels of their operations in residential communities.

Given the tragedies that have happened in Quebec and given the local impacts in those communities, does the member agree that we should ensure that both rail and port works within our local communities should provide greater transparency, better communication and co-operation with local government, and accountability to the local communities where they operate?

• (2045)

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comment, which was absolutely warranted.

I see the same thing in my riding, in the city of Joliette. Obviously, there is no port, but there are rail lines. In any of the federally regulated sectors, companies do not feel accountable to local elected officials, the ones closest to home, the ones who represent us best. They are the ones on the ground, the ones in touch with everyday life, and they have to fight tooth and nail for accountability and information.

A few years ago there was an incident involving a train transporting chemicals in Joliette. It was very difficult for the mayor, the fire chief and the police to get information. A lot of progress has been made, and there is more accountability now, but it is still difficult. We have to dig deep, change people's attitudes and recognize local elected officials for who they are: our primary representatives.

[English]

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my understanding that the train in the Lac-Mégantic tragedy was carrying oil. I do not know if all the cars were carrying oil, but that added to the gravity of the disaster.

Can my colleague comment on whether pipeline construction would be a safer option than transporting oil by train?

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[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, transporting oil by rail is very risky. The problem with pipelines is that they do not replace rail transportation to the pipeline. They actually increase transportation capacity. Pipelines are therefore risky too and do not do away with rail transport. The overall risk goes up. That is very concerning.

The government must make the safety of its citizens its top priority.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for Joliette for giving me such a fine introduction. If I had the misfortune to cough during his presentation, it is because my eloquence pales in comparison to his. I was somewhat nervous. I hope he will forgive me.

The Bloc Québécois is voting in favour of Bill C-33 on the grounds that rail activities need to be constantly regulated and inspected. To begin, let us remember that Bill C-33 seeks to modernize the different laws on railways, ports and transportation of goods. The provisions in Bill C-33 follow the recommendations of the supply chain task force, which was formed in March 2022 by the Minister of Transport.

The task force's mandate was to study the recent supply chain disruptions, namely the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and floods in British Columbia. I would like to take a look, with my colleagues, at some of the task force's mandates and perhaps come back to a problem that currently exists in Quebec. The task force's mandate includes the following:

...examine pressing supply chain congestion and fluidity issues in the Canadian and global contexts [and assess] the range of impacts on Canada's economy, including on the volume and value of trade and the capacity of infrastructure assets to accommodate trends in flows;

[note] collaborative opportunities to support a resilient North American and global trade network and address congestion by accounting for actions taken or considered by like-minded countries;

[work] with experts and partners in the Canadian and global contexts to identify structural weaknesses, policy or regulatory impediments, and/or market power imbalances that impact competition in modal and multi-modal sectors;...

[and, finally, establish] areas of action/recommendations that could be directed to federal and other levels of government and industry, to reduce congestion and improve the fluid and predictable operation of transportation supply chains.

The task force's mandates highlight the importance of making our supply chain fluid. Many people in Quebec noted a problem that may be unique to Quebec: access to railcars. Access to railcars has become very difficult. That is what I heard from people in the forestry sector, especially people at Chantiers Chibougamau, who are going through a very tough time. Our thoughts are with them.

In case some of my colleagues get the opportunity to go to Chibougamau someday, I just want to mention that the glued-laminated timber structures made by Chantiers Chibougamau are really spectacular. Unfortunately, they cannot use CN cars because access is restricted. That is also the case for Resolute Forest Products and many businesses working in the forestry sector.

In the next few months, these people will emerge from a significant crisis. We are not talking about that today, which is okay given that we are focusing on our efforts to support the people who have been evacuated from their homes. However, once the fires are put

out and we get back to normal, we will realize that a lot of very expensive equipment was destroyed by the fires, and this will weaken the forestry sector, which is already suffering because of the ongoing trade dispute with the United States.

If we add to that the recurring logistics problems that these people have getting access to railcars, then things get even more difficult for them. The problem of accessing railcars was pointed out some time ago. Logistics experts at Resolute Forest Products showed me the losses they incur by not having access to railcars.

I think that the panel's mandate mentioned this idea of fluidity, but, unfortunately, we are not quite there yet. Even though certain critiques have been formulated and certain problems have been identified, it must be said that the bill responds to several recommendations from the task force's report, and we believe that a number of the measures in the bill will help improve railway safety.

● (2050)

The Bloc Québécois welcomes the creation of secure areas to reduce congestion at ports, the creation of a monetary penalty regime for safety violations, the strengthening of safety management systems and the prohibition on damaging railway structures or interfering with railway operations. However, if the bill is referred to committee, the Bloc Québécois will ensure that the proposed measures do not place a disproportionate administrative burden on small ports such as the Port of Saguenay, which is thriving these days.

I would like to come back, as my colleague from Joliette did, to the specific case of Lac-Mégantic. I am sure that everyone remembers where they were on July 6, that fateful day, when the train came tearing down the hill near Lac-Mégantic at 1:15 in the morning and derailed. It exploded in the middle of the town. When members are not busy, in the evening perhaps, I recommend that they watch Alexis Durand-Brault's TV series, which is quite interesting, as well as Philippe Falardeau's documentary, which shows the full scope of the tragedy and the way it left many people forever scarred.

These permanent scars could have been avoided with a bypass addressing the criticisms of Lac-Mégantic residents. Unfortunately, last February, Public Services and Procurement Canada tore up the agreements it had signed with 17 landowners in Lac-Mégantic, Nantes and Frontenac and decided to forcibly expropriate their property instead. The federal government decided to expropriate these 17 landowners, even though, I must point out, it had already come to mutual agreements. This option allows it to avoid having to take into account the challenge led by UPA de l'Estrie and the authorization required from Quebec's Commission de protection du territoire agricole, which must be decided by Quebec's administrative tribunal.

The approach taken by the government on this issue is quite simply appalling. It is a bit of a cowboy approach. The ink was not yet dry on the agreements it had just reached when it promptly turned around and reneged on them. This is consistent with how the federal government has handled the rail bypass file over the past 10 years, sometimes in a disrespectful, expeditious and, dare I say, inhumane and perfidious manner.

The people of Lac-Mégantic have already suffered enough because of this tragedy. The federal government must not add insult to injury by expropriating them in spite of signed agreements. After dragging its feet on the bypass project for a decade, and with the 10th anniversary of the disaster right around the corner, Ottawa, with typical arrogance, prefers to push everyone else around to make up for lost time, rather than do the right thing. This is certainly not the way to win back the trust of the people of Lac-Mégantic.

The Bloc Québécois asked the government to take note of the fact that Quebec has its own legal processes and decision-making bodies, and in no way should they be ignored or circumvented by the federal government on the bypass file. Our political party also wishes to point out the importance of the Lac-Mégantic bypass, which is much more than an ordinary infrastructure project. Rather, it is a social healing project. Consequently, if the government wants it to succeed, it must act respectfully towards residents.

• (2055)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, like the speaker before him, the member talked about the legislation in a relatively positive way. He was maybe questioning some of the timing of it. I think it is important for us to recognize that we have had a great deal of consultations and work that has been done. We have had two reports dealing with different aspects of the legislation, which were commissioned back in 2017 and 2018. We have had a lot to deal with in regard to the supply chain, which we witnessed throughout the pandemic.

I think what we have today is good, solid legislation, and I understand the Bloc supports sending the legislation to committee. Does the member, or does the Bloc, have any sort of specific amendments they would like to see at this time that they would be prepared to share with the government in advance of the bill's potentially being sent to committee?

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I would say there is still a bit of work to be done, especially on small ports. That was pointed out earlier. I think the committee will also have some issues to address, such as how hard it is for us to get certain railcars in Quebec.

If the goal is to make our supply chains more fluid, we cannot do so just for the oil and gas sector. We also have to do it for other economic sectors. Difficulty getting railcars seems common among forestry stakeholders.

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know that about a year ago, several CN workers were on strike. They were signal and communications workers. These work-

ers deal with a lot of safety issues and were concerned about their own safety and the safety of their comrades. The fatigue that a lot of train operators talk about was one of their key concerns, and they went on strike to fight for it. They had to fight for their own safety.

I know that the national supply chain task force report from last year had six recommendations about worker safety. The Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities had four recommendations on safety. None of those are in this bill.

I would like to hear the member's response and reaction to that.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, as my colleague from Joliette pointed out in his speech earlier, the Mégantic tragedy happened in part because there was only one train conductor.

I am sure the committee will do that work. It will have to hear from workers' representatives too. That awareness is important. I quite agree with my colleague.

• (2100)

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my intrepid colleague for yet another excellent speech.

I would like to hear more from him about the importance of logistics and access to railcars for the forestry sector. He talked about Chantiers Chibougamau, for example, which is doing excellent work. Of course, our thoughts are with them.

When railcars are not available and they have to get materials out—by truck, I suppose—is there not a better, cheaper way to do it that is also better for the environment?

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, that is such a relevant question.

Indeed, if members can recall, there was the announcement in Montreal concerning work to be done in the tunnel. We expected there would be massive congestion in the years to come. It is in this context that the people from Chantiers Chibougamau informed me that since they would not have access to those railcars, they would add between 35 and 60 trucks per day to Montreal's highway system.

Besides the fairly large logistical problem for these businesses, there is also the environmental cost to pay for putting more trucks on the road because of failed logistics. There is a fairly large economic cost for Quebec's businesses.

From what I have heard, this problem would be unique to Quebec because in Ontario a railcar shortage would not be felt in the same way.

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[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I first want to begin by asking for unanimous consent to split my time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have received notice from all recognized parties that they are in agreement with this request.

The hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Timmins—James Bay.

I rise in the House to share the NDP's support at this time for this bill at second reading, with the clear understanding that there are some major shortcomings with Bill C-33 and that there have to be substantive amendments made going forward.

One of the key concerns that we have had is that the Liberal government's approach to Canada's supply chain issues is heavily driven by commercial interests, the commercial interests of big corporations that dominate the marine and rail transportation sectors. This, of course, has been the history of Canada in many ways, particularly when it comes to our railways.

We have seen the way in which profit has been put ahead of the lives of workers, of people and of communities, time and time again. Canada has a dark history when it comes to the development of the railways: the occupation of indigenous lands; the forcible removal of indigenous communities; the exploitation, early on, of Chinese workers and the many workers who lost their lives in very dangerous conditions to build the railways; the ongoing exploitation of workers over decades; and the bitter labour disputes, where workers working on the railways were doing nothing more than fighting for health and safety, safe conditions and the ability to keep our country moving.

We know that in Canada, over the past 20 years, 60 railway workers have lost their lives on the job. Due to archaic rules and regulations, and a lack of clarity on jurisdiction, there has been no criminal investigation into their deaths. Their deaths were investigated by private, corporate police and corporate risk management bodies. Justice has never been served.

I want to reflect on a few of those tragedies that have touched many of us through this work, and me personally. First of all, as other colleagues have said, is the Lac-Mégantic rail disaster that occurred on July 6, 2013, where 47 people died. It was the deadliest rail accident since Canada's Confederation in 1867, a rail disaster that was entirely preventable but rooted in the push to move product, and in that case crude oil, in very dangerous conditions. Forty-seven people died. A community has been forever changed as well as our country in many ways.

Here in northern Manitoba, Kevin Anderson, who was 38 years old, died after he and a co-worker were trapped for several hours following a train derailment in September 2018, just an hour away from my hometown of Thompson.

Kevin Anderson's family, from The Pas, Manitoba, has, for years now, fought for justice for their son. They fought for an inquest, an inquest that finally began some months ago. Unfortunately, just a

few weeks into its beginning, it was already ruled that the scope of the proceedings had to change, and there would be no discussion of the preventability of this train conductor's death, of Kevin's death, as part of this inquest.

One of the most impactful cases that I have worked on as a member of Parliament was working with the families of Andrew Dockrell, Dylan Paradis and Daniel Waldenberger-Bulmer, three workers who were killed in the train derailment by Field, B.C., in 2019. These three workers worked for CP Rail, and their deaths, the tragedy and the injustice dealt to them and their families was documented in *The Fifth Estate's* work, "Runaway Train: Investigating a CP Rail Crash".

In their case, the CP private police investigated and, not surprisingly, found that the company was not at fault. Fortunately, as a result of their steadfast advocacy, these families were able to get an investigation into their loved ones' deaths. We all hope that they will receive justice.

● (2105)

The reality is that as members of Parliament, we have the responsibility to stand up for the well-being of Canadians. We have the responsibility to stand up for the well-being of Canadian workers. In this case, we have seen the Liberal government and previous Conservative governments, when it comes to railway safety and regulating the railways, use kid gloves, if at all, and have always done it ensuring their profitability.

Bill C-33 was an opportunity to change that. The reality is that while there is some good in it, there is much more that needs to be done. There are significant shortcomings in this legislation. While the act would create, for example, indigenous engagement committees for port authorities, there is no mention of creating these committees or otherwise engaging indigenous communities when it comes to rail transport.

Another shortcoming is about the standing committee on transport's report on rail safety. It recommended the removal of the jurisdiction of private railway police in investigations involving their companies. It is our view, as the NDP, that private railway police should be dissolved entirely due to the lack of public accountability. This bill not only does not take up the recommendations made by committee, but in fact would strengthen the authority of private railway police. Proposed section 26.4 of the bill explicitly prohibits unruly behaviour at stations or on board railway equipment, which would be handled by these private corporate police services.

We have also been clear that the bill lacks legislative guidance on the required content of emergency response assistance plans for emergencies involving dangerous goods. Current emergency response assistance plans rely on municipal fire departments and have no requirement for maximum response times. This was an issue that came up in the Ponton tragedy that killed Kevin Anderson.

The standing committee on transport recommended, in its report on railway safety, that “Transport Canada mandate maximum response times as part of rail companies’ Emergency Response Assistance Plans for the transportation of dangerous goods” and that “Transport Canada work to finalize timely approval to emergency response assistance plans for the transportation of dangerous goods.” These recommendations are not reflected in Bill C-33.

Another shortcoming is the lack of public regional risk assessments associated with increases in rail transport of dangerous goods, a key issue in the Lac-Mégantic disaster. The standing committee on transport recommended, in its railway safety report, that “Transport Canada undertake public regional risk assessments to assess the impact of increased rail activity on communities, First Nations and the environment in regions that have seen significant increase in the transportation of dangerous goods.” The amendments to the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act do not act on this recommendation.

Another shortcoming is about the safety of workers. This has not been properly accounted for in this bill. In fact, the safety of workers is not explicitly mentioned at all. The national supply chain task force’s 2022 report included six recommendations to address the worker shortage in our supply chains. Not a single recommendation was implemented. Also, the standing committee on transport’s rail safety report included four recommendations to address fatigue management for rail workers. None of these have been implemented.

In conclusion, Bill C-33 ought to be an opportunity to change our Railway Safety Act and our port authorities act in order to make sure these important sectors of our economy and these workplaces respect workers and make a difference in a positive sense for communities. Unfortunately, when it comes to the railway industry that has not been the case.

Tonight, as we discuss this bill, I think of the families that are still grieving for those they lost on the job working the railways. I am thankful for their advocacy and their strength in pushing for justice and pushing all of us to do better. I hope the Liberal government will work with the NDP and other parties to make the necessary changes to Bill C-33 to ensure it is the strongest possible legislation and to make a difference for Canadian workers and Canadian communities going forward.

• (2110)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I am sure the member can recall, it was not that long ago, just a few weeks back, that Winnipeg had a derailment of 12 cars, which ultimately shut down McPhillips Street. McPhillips goes right through the heart of Winnipeg North, so we have very recent first-hand experience of the impact this has on a community, with community members feeling concerned about their safety. Not knowing what was in the derailed cars initially caused a great deal of concern. There was even an economic impact on some of the small businesses.

I am wondering if she can provide her thoughts on the importance of getting this type of legislation through, because it will have a positive impact.

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Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member raising the derailment that took place in Winnipeg not long ago. It was obviously big news here in our province, and it speaks to the domino effect of these kinds of incidents.

Obviously we are very thankful and fortunate that what was being transported was not dangerous goods and that there were adequate services to respond to the situation. Nonetheless, people were impacted negatively as a result. It is a clear reminder of the work we need to do to make sure that the legislation in front of us is made stronger than what it is at this time.

I will acknowledge that while a derailment in Winnipeg is very serious and big news, the reality is that derailments happen all the time and have been happening much more frequently, particularly in rural and northern Canada. The results have been much worse. The sense of urgency that needs to follow our work here is something we cannot ignore—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to take another question.

The hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned a number of the derailments we have had in Canada. She referred to Lac-Mégantic.

I know she comes from the riding that has Churchill. From my farm leadership days and provincial legislature days, I understand there were a number of derailments there, with grain mainly, which is fortunate, I guess we could say, as it is not explosive. There have been some derailments in what used to be the Hudson Bay route, the route to Churchill that runs right through her riding.

I know a number of things have been done. As a farm leader, I have watched a number of developments in the industry with regard to low-slung cars and aluminum cars to make the cars lighter. It is not so they can haul more, but so they can travel through the tenuous conditions in some of the more muskeggy areas of that particular track at slow speeds. She has referred to a number of areas with worker labour issues as well, and I appreciate that.

I wonder if she can expand on what she thinks are the most important things needed to secure the line that runs through her constituency to Churchill.

• (2115)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Speaker, I would need a whole other speech to talk about what the Port of Churchill needs to survive and thrive.

I am proud to have been an advocate in support of Churchill getting rid of the American billionaire railway company that took over the rail line when the Liberals privatized it and ran it into the ground. Churchill paid the price. The communities on the Bay line paid the price. Thankfully, we were able to get them out of there.

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We now have a very innovative and unique ownership model for the port. However, the reality is that we need sustained federal investment to make sure that Churchill survives and thrives. It is a gem when it comes to Canada. We talk about being a proud northern Arctic nation, and Churchill has the only deepwater Arctic seaport. We need to see sustained investment from the Liberal government and future federal governments.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am certainly pleased to speak to Bill C-33. As I speak here from northern Ontario, where we have one of the most beautiful sunsets, there is a very disturbing sunset, a surreal and unreal sunset, because we are watching our lands up here burn.

I mention that because I live right beside the railway tracks of the Ontario Northland Railway, at mileage 104 of the rail line. In the middle of the night and sometimes in the morning, the house shakes as the railcars go by. They are carrying sulfuric acid tanker cars from the smelter at Noranda.

The issue of rail safety is fundamental to the communities I represent. If one of those trains goes over, we are talking about an ecological disaster. We are talking about a disaster that could take the lives of many people.

The issue of rail safety is something that I have heard debated time and time again. I remember as a young MP, when I was first elected, Bill Blaikie standing in the House and warning the Liberal government at that time that if it allowed rail companies like CP and CN to self-police for safety, it would cost lives. We have lost over 60 workers in 20 years on the rail lines.

Forty-seven people were incinerated in Lac-Mégantic in one of the most horrific tragedies in memory. We would think that would make for a serious overhaul of the transportation system in the country. When I look at Bill C-33, I say, okay, we are ready to take it to committee to look at it to improve it, but it falls short in so many key areas. It falls short on addressing the concerns of municipalities, indigenous communities and workers, and it does not implement the recommendations made by the national supply chain task force report, nor the standing committee on transport's recommendations on rail safety. Serious concerns remain with respect to rail safety, yet the Liberals chose not to act on a single recommendation from the transport committee's 2021 report on rail safety. We need to do better.

On the issue of the port authorities, we saw how the myth of globalization blew apart like dust in the pandemic and Canadians were left with serious supply chain issues. We have to address how supply chains work, and our ports play a huge role in that. The capacity has challenges, and container traffic is expected to grow. What is the plan for that? There is a total lack of data. It restricts collaboration and is creating inefficient supply chain decision-making in infrastructure investment.

The issue we see in terms of who sits on these port authorities is huge. They have been pork-barrel dumping grounds for political hacks and friends for decades. We need labour representation on the port authority and the board of directors.

The Canada Marine Act provides representation for other stakeholders, including the prairie provinces and local governments, but

we feel strongly that subclause 101(2) of Bill C-33 should be amended to include labour representation in a similar way to make sure that we have more accountability for the people who work on the ports. That also includes the need to start addressing the reports on greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. We have to start dealing with the climate crisis before us.

I would like to speak, from a more personal sense, of the connection of the railway to who we are in the north.

My mother's family were Cape Bretoners or they came out of the Ottawa Valley. Back in the day, there were two choices: They worked in the mines or they worked on the railways. My grandfather, Joe MacNeil, went underground at the McIntyre mine and broke his back. Many of his brothers, uncles and cousins went to work on the rail lines. They said the Ontario rail line back in the day was more wild than bar rooms, and I think those bar cars certainly were, but this was how we travelled.

I grew up on those rail lines. My great uncles were conductors on the Ontario Northland on the night train. We saw how Brian Mulroney attacked public trains and cut the Northlander night train.

● (2120)

Then we saw Kathleen Wynne's government go after it and shut the Northlander down, and it left people without access to public transportation in the north, leaving them on our highways, which have really become death traps for travellers. Anybody who has travelled Highway 11 or Highway 17 in the winter knows about the seriously dangerous conditions that are not being addressed at the federal or provincial levels, and there has been a huge push to ensure that we have proper rail service restored to the north. It is something I have fought for, for years, and I want to see it restored.

We have had promises of the Northlander coming back, and these trains are vital links to communities. I would certainly invite my colleagues to travel on the Polar Bear Express, which leaves out of Cochrane. Once in Cochrane, it will take them to beautiful Moosonee and Moose Factory.

It is not just the links we have in terms of family; these are economic links. How do we tell European tourists who come to Canada and say they want to visit James Bay that they have to drive nine or 10 hours on a highway before they can catch a train? It just does not make sense.

Having grown up on a rail line and having had family working on the rail lines, I am very partial to rail, but I also understand that we need to put in place the basic safety standards that will make sure we can move forward in terms of overall safety and overall efficiency while getting traffic off the highways. Particularly in a time of climate crisis, the rail lines can do that, but we need to have properly maintained rail services. We can no longer allow company police and corporate risk management to address safety or accidents. That has been a failure, and it is a continuing failure.

In terms of the port authority issues, we really need to look at different approaches for the small and large ports, and we are going to push for that as New Democrats. Small ports and large ports are fundamentally different bodies. Having three separate advisory committees in small ports is an excessive administrative burden, but in smaller port authorities we could establish a single community advisory committee. It would have to have representation from the first nations and from local communities, as well as from labour, to make sure that the small port authorities were empowered to do the work they are supposed to do.

We need to have, as well, clarification regarding labour disputes. Section 107.1(1) would give the minister the authority to take extraordinary measures related to ports when there is deemed to be a “risk” to “national economic security”, but this has been used by government and by the companies to hammer down on their obligation to do fair negotiations. Our workers on the rail lines deserve to be able to negotiate. They deserve to be able to have fair wages, and we need to make sure that labour disputes are handled in a proper manner and that the government is not just using a threat to national economic security to cut down the ability of rail workers to have proper representation when it comes to wages, safety and other rights they have.

I am more than willing to take questions. I will be here all week, as usual, and it is always an honour to speak.

• (2125)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is a primary purpose to the legislation, which has taken a while to come forward and get to this stage only because of all the consultations that were required, since several acts would be changed through this bill.

The member highlights the importance of the issue of safety, and that is a driving force in terms of the reason we have the legislation, along with the issue of economic development. The member also made reference to a family background, and I think if we take a look at our rail lines, we would see that there are a lot of families that have grown up within that industry.

I guess I would ask the member to what degree he feels the legislation is good to go, at least into the committee stage. Does the member have any specific thoughts in regard to amendments at this point?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, we certainly believe that we need to move forward with this legislation. As I said from the get-go, we feel that we are still continuing to pay too much lip service to the corporate interests of the big rail lines and the port authorities. We need to address a number of issues.

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For example, the issue of the regulation of greenhouse gas reduction targets for the port authorities is huge. We need to make sure that we have the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act as part of this.

That could be under clause 107(2), where we could make sure that for these huge centres where traffic and transportation are happening, where goods are being moved, we actually have a long-term plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I think that would send a very positive message to Canadians.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague.

There have been various train accidents in rural Canada. In one accident in particular, in St-Lazare, Manitoba, about five or six years ago, rail cars tipped over and there was a little bit of leakage and spillage. The one thing that was really apparent was that there was no connectivity.

It seems that when we hear about something that happens in, let us say, Winnipeg, everybody has cellphone connectivity and all the emergency services can actually cut in. I am wondering if the member could comment on that, and when it goes to committee, if we could keep an eye on that and see if we can get some language around that.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question. Our trains are running on the Ontario Northland route, coming through Temagami, running through some very rugged country. If they go over, it is an ecological disaster and we need a response immediately.

These issues of being able to get the word out, of being able to make contact, are very important, and I think that these are things that we need to look at in the legislation, because Canada is a very large, rugged, isolated country where trains are travelling through some very rough terrain, and we need to make sure that we have all of the proper protections in place at every level, especially if we are dealing with a potential derailment.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Timmins—James Bay for making a number of excellent points about this legislation. From my point of view, coming from another part of the country, one important part of this legislation that needs clarification is what it needs in terms of protecting the Salish Sea from the use of our area as free parking for freighters that are backed up out of the port of Vancouver.

I am also very concerned about rail safety, very concerned about the appalling record of the privatized large freight-moving trains in this country and the callous disregard for worker safety.

I would like to ask the hon. member to expand on that point.

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• (2130)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, again, I remember Bill Blaikie standing in the House and saying that if we allowed these corporations to self-police, workers would die. We have had 60 deaths over the last 20 years. That is appalling. Sixty deaths is absolutely unacceptable. In Lac-Mégantic, 47 people were incinerated, and nobody was ever really held accountable. That is not acceptable. We must do better. People's lives are worth more, and we have to stand up for them.

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 talk on what I believe very much is progressive legislation, and it shows in a very clear fashion—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, we would grant unanimous consent if the hon. member wanted to split his time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I understand that this is silly time.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, in all honesty, I thought he was standing up to offer his time as an add-on to my time, and I would be more than happy to take his 10 or 20 minutes, or however long he was going to speak, because I have a number of thoughts on this bill.

When we think about actions of a government, we see that this legislation is a very good example to not only contrast the Liberals with the Conservatives, which I will get into in a bit, but also to show how the government uses legislation to advance both the economic interests and the safety interests of Canadians at the same time. That is what I really like about Bill C-33.

The Prime Minister, different members of cabinet or members of the Liberal caucus as a whole, whether inside or outside the chamber, will often try to emphasize that the government and the Liberal Party genuinely want to deliver an economy that works for all Canadians. From coast to coast to coast, we want an economy that works for all Canadians. This is the type of legislation that can really make a difference to that end.

From the very beginning in 2015-2016, we have dealt with issues such as safety for Canadians and support for labour in legislation we brought forward. That is why it was somewhat interesting that the Conservatives seem to be opposed to this legislation. I understand they are going to be voting against it. When the legislation first came up for debate back in March, there were concerns expressed by the Conservative Party regarding labour disputes in our ports and how the legislation was going to deal with them. That sends up a few red flags, or blue flags, since they are Conservatives, to be fair.

Ultimately, as a government, we believe in the open and free bargaining process. The Conservatives seem to be hinting that we can anticipate some amendments if the Conservatives allow the bill to go to committee. That is one of the reasons we have to bring in

time allocation on legislation. Even if it is legislation that sometimes the Conservatives give the impression they are supporting, like the previous bill that we were debating, or legislation such as this, which the Conservatives do oppose, if we do not bring forward time allocation, we would not be able to get through the legislative agenda.

This is where it is nice. They often talk about majorities and minorities. In the last federal election, we got a minority government, and that is true. We are happy to say that Canadians entrusted us with the largest number of seats. We continue to focus on serving Canadians, and we are very grateful that we get a higher sense of responsibility and co-operation from at least one opposition party, and at times a second opposition party, that enable us to bring forward and ultimately pass legislation, which is so critically important.

Other members have talked about the benefits of Bill C-33 and what the legislation would do, which I will expand on shortly, but I want to set the stage by talking about how industries in Canada are one of the economic driving forces of our nation.

First, we have to recognize that we are a trading nation. Goods need to be transported in all areas of our country, in our ports and our rail yards, and I would even go beyond that.

• (2135)

As some members of this House will know, the growth of the trucking industry has been incredible. The area I represent, Winnipeg North, I would suggest, has the highest concentration in the province, and it is growing. In fact, the other day I was out on Eagle Drive, providing support for the trucking industry and opportunity for trucks to travel in a safer fashion. It was the first time I was able to see a semi that was electric, and it was kind of cool to sit in a semi and push the button and not hear anything. The industry, like other industries, recognizes the need for change.

This legislation is important, because it would substantially change the way in which our supply chain will be serving Canadians, and it is important that we get it right. When we think of the ramifications on the supply chain if we do not get it right, they are actually quite severe.

I remember when I was in the third party a number of years ago, back in 2013-14, and I stood up and raised the issue of grain. I was talking about the piles of grain in the fields in the Prairies, but in the Pacific Ocean just west of Vancouver, there were ships waiting to get into ports, and there was a backlog of farmers wanting to get their grain to market. I do not quite understand all of the technicalities of it, but I can tell members that there were people around the world who wanted our grain, as our producers produce the best grain the world, but we had a difficult time getting it from the fields into the ships, and it was at a substantial cost.

Those supply chains, in many ways, contribute to feeding the world, to providing widgets and food products to Canadians from coast to coast to coast, so when we look at the legislation, it focuses attention on ports and trains. However, I would like to focus a little more broadly than that, by looking at my home province of Manitoba.

We can talk about the history of CN, CP and other trains, but particularly CN and CP and the impact that has had on the city of Winnipeg, let alone the province of Manitoba. The southern boundary of Winnipeg North is at the CP tracks, which has provided thousands of jobs over the years and continues to provide good jobs for many residents of Winnipeg, particularly in Winnipeg North.

When I was a child, the CN yards were out in Transcona, and Winnipeg would not be what it is today if it did not have those rail yards. In fact, I suspect if members went along Pandora, they would find that many of the homes built on that street were built with wood from CN, such as boxcars and so forth. At the end of the day, when we advance a few decades, we will see that these hubs or rail yards have been able to survive through time, with a great deal of modifications, because of how the world evolves and the changes that were required. One could think of the environment, for example, and what is being carried on our trains.

We could talk about the Port of Churchill in Manitoba, which this government has invested in a great deal, and not only with financial resources but effort. I think of Jim Carr, in particular, and my colleagues, the members for Saint Boniface—Saint Vital and Winnipeg South, who put in so much effort.

• (2140)

I must also say that in Kildonan, former members of Parliament MaryAnn Mihychuk, Robert-Falcon Ouellette and I had discussions, talking about the important role that the Port of Churchill could have, not only today but into the future. Those are the types of things that give life to a community.

We could take a look at the trucking industry component that I made reference to closer to the beginning, and how the trucking industry complements both trains, ports and the shipment of cargo, and the supply chain. The legislation talks about the ways in which we can ensure that the changes that have been taking place and the modernization that is taking place within the legislation that we are proposing will ensure that Canada's supply chains, services and products are in a better position to meet market demands, while at the same time providing assurances for public safety.

When I think of the issue of safety, it was not that long ago, many Canadians will recall, that there was the Lac-Mégantic incident. It was a horrific situation, because of a derailment and the impact that it had on a wonderful community in the province of Quebec. No doubt it was a driving force in terms of a number of initiatives that were taken, including the rail safety action review that we initiated back in 2017. After doing some work and recognizing that tragedy, along with some other issues, we put together that rail safety review back in 2017.

For people from Manitoba, particularly the city of Winnipeg, there was a very recent incident that put a bit of a scare into the community, with the Winnipeg overpass on McPhillips. I made reference to the CP line being my southern boundary. Below the underpass is McPhillips Street, a street that feeds 90,000 residents, most of whom are in Winnipeg North. Twelve railway cars were derailed. The derailment happened just before eight o'clock in the morning. Imagine what rush hour was like then. McPhillips is a very busy street. The best way I can describe the types of cars that were derailed is that they were like tankers, black tube tankers, a

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dozen of them. At least those were the ones that were actually visible, derailed. Fortunately, even though they were derailed and twisted up, none of them fell over the bridge. None of them actually tipped, which was a good thing. As I say, there were 90,000-plus people just going to the north, not to mention Winnipeg Centre just to the south. That street had to be closed down for a while as we had to deal with that derailment.

There was a Transportation Safety Board team that came out to check it out. There were other groupings of individuals that checked the site for hazards. It turns out that it was carrying bitumen that was being used for asphalt.

I say that because I am very proud of the fact that in the Prairies we have a lot of commodities. We want to ensure that those commodities get to market. We want to ensure that our railways and our tracks are going to be there, not only for today but well into the future.

• (2145)

Often, before it gets to the tracks, we go further west, to the B.C. coast, whether it is Vancouver or other ports. They play an important role. It is not just out west. One of my colleagues was telling me about Saint John, New Brunswick. I understand there are hundreds of millions of dollars being invested in that area, which has yet another port that has trains being hooked up. I think of the importance of that port and how those authorities are ultimately managed.

Through this legislation, we are providing more opportunity for those authorities to be able to cover a wider scope of areas of responsibility. We are ensuring that they are going to be able to make those ports more efficient. We are ensuring that there is going to be a higher sense of accountability and more transparency. We have to ensure that people have a sense of what is actually in the ports, in terms of what is in the trains. As has been pointed out, the speed of a train has a profound impact. We cannot afford to get this wrong, because of the economics and because of the safety of our communities.

Over the last number of years, the government has signed more free trade agreements than any other government in the history of the nation. That is a true fact. That emphasizes the degree to which the world has confidence in what Canada manufactures and produces and the commodities that we have to offer. It spreads across the spectrum, not to mention all the things that are coming into our nation. We are a trading nation.

When the Conservatives talk about issues such as inflation, I would suggest that this legislation would assist with that, and not only for today but also for tomorrow. As a government that is concerned about our infrastructure, not only are we, through budgets, supporting infrastructure, but one only needs to look at CentrePort. The Minister of Transport was in the city of Winnipeg, investing in CentrePort as a way to build a safer environment for rail movement.

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These investments in infrastructure that we have made, along with the legislation that we are bringing forward, protect our industries. They will ensure that our supply chains are healthier going forward. As long as we have a government, as we do, that continues to work at developing and investing in things like our infrastructure, Canada will continue to be a country that is envied around the world.

I would suggest that these strategic hubs, wherever they might be in Canada from coast to coast to coast, are not only economic drivers for the communities in which they are located, but also a lifeline to all of us, no matter where we live. That is why I said at the very beginning that I am quite pleased to be able to talk about this legislation, because it shows in a very real way what a proactive government can do to make a difference in the lives of all Canadians by legislatively putting into place safeguards and by ensuring that these hubs of activity continue to develop and provide economic opportunity. As I said, we want an economy that works for all Canadians. That is something we will continue to strive for.

• (2150)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the very beginning of when the member started speaking, whenever that was.

The member for Winnipeg North, I believe, made a novel argument that I have not heard in the House before when he spoke about the previous bill debated. We were providing critiques of the bill, and he said that we were prolonging debate unnecessarily. Since we agreed with the substance of the bill, we should stop debating. On this particular bill, when we are rising in the House to provide our perspectives from our ridings, and we oppose the bill, we should also not be debating the bill.

I do not have a question. I just wanted to provide this as commentary. It is a novel argument that the opposition should simply cease to function, because we either oppose or like a bill; therefore, we should not debate it in the House, but just send everything to committee automatically. The government and the member seem to think that our role here is not to provide the views of our constituents in this chamber. However, that is the whole purpose of Parliament.

I thought it was a novel argument. I just wanted to highlight that in the chamber.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, let me highlight something for the member opposite. There are very few pieces of legislation that are more important to Canadians than the budget implementation bill. I want to read what the leader of the Conservative Party said in regard to the budget implementation bill. He said, "We have announced that we are going to use every parliamentary tool in our tool kit to block this disastrous, risky and inflationary budget from passing until the Prime Minister makes the commitment to balance the budget in order to bring down inflation and interest rates.... I will keep speaking and keep speaking and keep blocking...until the Prime Minister rises with a plan".

A few hours later, we passed it, but the point is that the Conservatives will use whatever tactics they can come up with to prevent legislation from passing, even legislation that I think they may end

up voting in favour of. From the Conservative Party's perspective, it is a destructive force inside the House.

With every piece of legislation, Conservatives try to prevent it from ultimately passing. If we did not have another opposition party that was prepared to assist us in getting legislation through, we would never be able to pass anything, including the budget. Ultimately, that would cause an election.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: There is further discussion going on here. I just want to make sure we are done.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the back and forth is entertaining me, at any rate. I wanted to bring up something around the environmental disasters that we see happening time and time again.

Interestingly enough, I met Linda Duncan, who was the member for Edmonton Strathcona before me, when we were both working on cleaning waterfowl that were impacted by a derailment right outside of Wabamun Lake, one hour west of Edmonton. Very dangerous chemicals were spilled into the lake. It was an ecological disaster. It is still causing a lot of challenges at Wabamun Lake.

When I look at this bill, I know that some of the amendments or suggestions brought forward were not acted on in terms of making this safer or making sure that the emergency preparedness plans were in place. We know these things are happening. We know there are ecological and environmental disasters that last for a very long time, yet the government did not choose to accept some of the amendments that would have made it a safer bill.

Could the member comment on that?

• (2155)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that one of the ways in which we are able to advance legislation is by getting this support. It is often the New Democratic Party that provides this support. Even when, at times, it brings forward amendments, we will not necessarily support an amendment, for a wide variety of reasons. No doubt, they are very good reasons.

However, it then means the NDP has to garner enough support from other political entities in the House. That is the advantage of a minority situation. I am very concerned. I think of a rail line and some of the dangers that are there, where it could be a spark from a train that causes a brush fire, especially when we think of what is taking place in our communities, particularly Nova Scotia, Quebec and Alberta, with all the wildfires.

I am concerned about our water table, whether it is a lake or a river. That is one reason to ensure that we have legislation such as this, which provides more authority for the minister and ultimately provides more protection to Canadians and our environment.

It might not answer all the questions coming forward, but it is a modernization. It would make a positive difference. We appreciate the support for the legislation, overall, that we receive from the NDP.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill C-33, even if it is only in a question for the hon. parliamentary secretary. I have been waiting for this bill to come up for debate. It is a key and critical piece of legislation for people in my community, as I mentioned when I was asking a question of the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

We have an incredibly frustrating, dangerous, environmentally damaging and constant situation of freighters that cannot get loaded properly in the Port of Vancouver because of inefficiencies there. They are backing up into the Salish Sea, where they take advantage of essentially free parking; this damages our ecosystems and ignores indigenous rights in the area.

Therefore, I certainly will vote for this legislation to go to committee. I want to see amendments. It would, for the first time, say that the Minister of Transport could direct such vessels to move to other ports. However, as it is currently drafted, it is inadequate to really go where we need it to go to end the practice of anchorages being available to freighters, for free, to pollute our waters.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, having had the opportunity to be with the Minister of Transport in the city of Winnipeg on several occasions, I really appreciate the degree to which he would be open to ideas and thoughts. If there are ways in which the legislation can be improved, I would suggest to the member that she does not necessarily have to wait until it goes to committee; she can share those thoughts with the minister well in advance.

There is one thing that I would highlight for the member, as I am sure she is already aware, because it was in an answer that I first learned today during question period. The minister responsible for oceans indicated that, when we formed government, 1% of Canada's ocean waters were actually being protected. Today, it is just under 15%. That is almost a fifteenfold increase, and we are on target to having 25% protected by the year 2025 and, moving forward, ideally hitting 30% of Canada's coastal waters.

Obviously, this government is genuinely concerned about our coastal waters and our environment. That is why we have seen such significant movement on the conservation of our ocean waters, which we are responsible for.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am noticing this all started in 2017 with the review. At that time, I was still back with the Keystone Agricultural Producers, and there was an issue with private crossings. Through Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, there is the Yellowhead Highway. There is Highway 1, and then the Yellowhead route runs right through the riding. There are over 100 private crossings that just go into farmers' fields, pastures and stuff like that.

In the act and in the review act, there was no language around private crossings in rural areas. I have to say, this is a typical Liberal play. I was absolutely quite aghast at how vacant it was and how they just got forgotten about altogether. We fought that. Actually, I am still fighting it now as an MP. I have had several farmers and,

actually, elevator and grain companies come to me and ask how they are going to deal with this when they want to close a private crossing, or tell me they have a \$200,000 bill for a pair of arms where they are only accessing their own property.

Therefore, would this bill deal with private crossings in this review, or has there been any thought by the Liberal Party on this?

• (2200)

The Deputy Speaker: I can always depend on the hon. member to keep speaking.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is a good question. I do know that it has been talked about at great length. In the province of Manitoba, there are even individuals who have died this year as a result of rail crossings. I do not know the exact circumstances surrounding this, but I do know that these are tragic accidents. I do not have an analysis of which ones are private, which ones have the crossings and so forth. It would be an interesting thing for the committee to look at.

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to note that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

It is always an honour to rise in the House, and today, to speak to Bill C-33, the strengthening the port system and railway safety in Canada act. That is just the short title. It is a bill that would amend seven existing acts of Parliament, but for a bill that does so, it would accomplish very little.

Although I believe in the importance of improving the security of Canada's transportation system and that urgent action is needed to fix our supply chain issues, this bill falls incredibly far short in achieving either of those goals. The reality is this bill is all optics and no results. It is typical Liberal legislation. It is a box-ticking exercise that creates the illusion that something is being done about a problem that the government has ignored for too long. We know that foresight, planning, operational excellence and managerial competence are not in the Liberal government's wheelhouse.

Actually, it is worse than that. This bill would increase red tape and regulatory burdens, forcing more costs to be downloaded to consumers. In these inflationary times, that is the last thing Canadians can afford. It would choke the tenants and users of our ports and stymie what should be a drive for efficiency and international competitiveness, while failing to address the root causes of the supply chain congestion. It fails to establish that decisions made by the ports must be in the best interests of the supply chain and the national economy.

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More government is not the answer. This is not looking to the best ports in the world, which are gateways to their continents and countries and are significant economic drivers for their regions. The Port of Rotterdam in the Netherlands, the country of my heritage, is the largest in Europe; it is the gateway to Europe, and it is hailed as the smartest port in the world. Rather than learning from experts and taking a serious look at what Canada could do differently, we are stuck at the bottom again. How is it that the Port of Vancouver, our main gateway to and from Asia, ranks 368th in efficiency out of 370 ports around the world? It is the third worst in the world. How did we get here?

In 2017 and 2018, Transport Canada initiated two separate reviews with the goal of determining the necessary steps that would address supply chain issues and help avoid them in the future. That was five or six years ago. The best the Liberals could come up with is a bill that is a bunch of nothing. What a missed opportunity.

What about the Liberals' own supply chain task force? Did they listen to the supply chain stakeholders and transportation experts they assembled? The world reached a supply chain crisis two years ago, and it was brewing before that. For a government that is good at convening, it convened. It brought together government and industry, logistics specialists, shippers, producers, transporters, manufacturers and more. They were good, smart people; let us give some credit for that. However, did the government listen to them? The task force even produced a fancy report with a colourful cover; it was called "Action. Collaboration. Transformation." The title cleverly spelled out the acronym "ACT", but it did not act. In its introductory line, the national supply chain task force report stated, "Canada's transportation supply chain is nearing its breaking point." How do we fix this? How could we "ACT"? What action could the government take now and into the future to fix it?

On pages 34 and 35 of the report is the meat of the answers. There are summary tables in a Gantt chart format that list 13 immediate response actions and eight long-term strategic actions.

The minister welcomed this report with much fanfare. That was on October 6, which is over eight months ago. What has happened since? How many of those 13 immediate, meaning now, and eight strategic recommended actions does Bill C-33 address? Does it address a handful or any at all? The answer is zero. We are talking about shipping Canadian goods, our trade, the lifeblood of our economy.

• (2205)

Eight months later, there are no immediate actions, none of which would actually be required to be legislated. How is it that none of those are done?

Urgent action is needed to address the worsening supply chain congestion, but we also need to get to the root causes of supply chain congestion. The strategic recommendations would go a long way to, if members will pardon the pun, turn this ship around, but they are nowhere to be found in Bill C-33.

How else is Bill C-33 flawed? I will go back to the red tape burden. There would be new reporting requirements that would reduce the efficiency, effectiveness and competitiveness of Canadian ports. They would be a particular burden on smaller ports, which cannot

be ignored for their critical role in moving goods in the country, fuelling our trade corridors and driving economic activity.

Where else does Bill C-33 fall down? It would not resolve the lack of financial flexibility our ports need. How do they compete with the best in the world and how do they modernize when they are prevented from accessing the private sector funds needed to make investments and grow? We visited as a transport committee the Port of St. John's, and it has a borrowing capacity of \$4 million. That is effectively maybe one house in the greater Vancouver area, and maybe two in the GTA. It is a small amount. This is preventing the port from growing, and other ports are facing similar challenges.

On rail safety, Bill C-33 would really only make modest changes that reflect existing practices. That is it. After all these years, there is nothing. What is a new offence for interfering and tampering with rail lines going to accomplish, when the police already have the authority to act on that? It is not a problem of authority; it is a lack of enforcement. The other changes to modernize our rail system that should have been considered in Bill C-33 are, again, a missed opportunity.

One last point is that the bill would also give a tremendous amount of new power to the Minister of Transport. It would be more government and more red tape, and unfortunately, in the case of that minister, he is one who does not act quickly, if at all, as we saw in the holiday travel chaos in our airports in December and January.

I am sure members can understand my skepticism.

Canada's ports, airports and railways are a federal responsibility, and they are in an absolutely miserable state. A small but recent example of a Liberal government policy that is stymying our transportation corridors and supply chains is the rolling truck age program. For some unfathomable reason, authorities were looking to ban perfectly legal trucks from picking up cargo in the Port of Vancouver for the sin of being 12 years old or older, because trucks moving fewer goods is somehow going to help the congestion. The good news is that the pressure worked and the program was postponed for a third time until at least next year, and hopefully forever.

Our ports need better than Bill C-33. Our railways need better; our shippers need better; our supply chains need better; our economy needs better; and Conservatives stand ready to deliver. Members can imagine a competent government that takes serious action on these burgeoning problems, removes the gatekeepers, gets our ports back on track and fixes our airports. If this bill is the best the government can come up with after eight years in office, it is time for it to step aside and let Conservatives fix the mess and unleash Canada's great potential for everyone.

● (2210)

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when situations occurred, just like the member has mentioned, at the airports and when tragedies occurred, like Lac-Mégantic, I know that many of the Conservative Quebec members had called upon the government to increase safety and take on other measures. There were many calls from the opposition benches to do more, when it came to making sure that our airports, which are independently operated at this point, worked efficiently.

I want to know from the member why his intention is to oppose this legislation, which would allow for more safety measures and would allow us to address some of the concerns the Conservatives propose.

Mr. Dan Muys: Mr. Speaker, I guess the member was not listening.

None of the concerns she just raised would actually be addressed by Bill C-33. No one, other than my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable, has actually spoken more about safety. I was on the transportation committee when we introduced the rail safety report that was referred to in debate. This piece of legislation was actually the first report as I joined the committee, and it had started in the previous Parliament. None of those recommendations have been acted upon in this legislation. The supply chain task force started in January 2022. It had a report on October 6, 2022, eight months ago, with 13 immediate recommendations, the first of which was to deal with port congestion. None of those have happened. It is a big failure of the government.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member talk about red tape, and part of my fear when the Conservatives talk about less government and less red tape are the impacts that would have on occupational health and safety, the safety of the actual rails themselves.

We will recall that in 2015, it was the Conservative government that passed Bill C-52, which also amended the Railway Safety Act. Clause 17 of that bill repealed the definition of “fatigue science” concerning railway safety management systems. Between 1993 and 2014, the Transportation Safety Board attributed 22 railway incidents to fatigue as a factor or a source of risk. That is an average of one incident per year. Between 2015 and 2017, seven incidents occurred. That is an average of 2.33 incidents a year. Since the removal of fatigue science in the Railway Safety Act, we have more than doubled Canada's incidents of fatigue-related accidents in the railway industry.

Would my friend from Flamborough—Glanbrook, who I know to be a reasonable man, correct the mistake of the transport commit-

tee's recommendations to address worker fatigue and ensure that railway employee safety is part of Canada's Railway Safety Act?

Mr. Dan Muys: Mr. Speaker, I agree that my colleague from Hamilton Centre and I have a good working relationship and have had many conversations, in fact, recently at the Hamilton port on the transport committee's tour.

As I referred to in the answer to the previous question, the very first report that was done when I joined the transport committee was on rail safety, and fatigue management was an important part of that study. We heard from witnesses on that, yet none of those recommendations are reflected at all in Bill C-33, which has been pointed out by others in debate.

What is added in terms of red tape are more officers, more advisory committees, stuff that is not going to actually address any of those root problems.

● (2215)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to refer back to something that my colleague mentioned in his speech about the position of Canadian railroads and the ability of our ports in relation to all of the other ports in the world. He said we are number 368 out of 370, I believe are the numbers that he used. He can correct me if that is not correct.

We have the ability to repair lines and that sort of thing, as we saw from the November disaster that took place in the Rocky Mountains that basically isolated the west coast with regard to railroad travel. It was fixed within a week or two.

Can the member elaborate a little more on what he thinks are some of the solutions to problems that could have been put into Bill C-33 that might have been used to get us back at least a bit closer to the top rather than being right at the bottom of all the ports in the world?

Mr. Dan Muys: Mr. Speaker, as I have referenced, there are 13 immediate recommendations and eight more longer-term actions of the supply chain task force that have so far been ignored. We heard about the borrowing capacity of ports as the transport committee toured all of our major ports throughout the middle of March. There are those two things, as well as a host of other things, and we could learn from the examples of places like Rotterdam, Antwerp and Seattle that do much better jobs than we do here.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this evening we are talking about Bill C-33, an act strengthening our ports and improving rail safety.

One of the stated objectives of this bill is to improve supply chain disruptions, which are causing inflation.

Government Orders

It looks like a very substantial bill, more than 100 pages long, and amends six or seven acts of this Parliament, but when we read through it we notice that it does not say very much at all. In fact, it does not do much at all in effectively tackling the many challenges that our ports and transportation infrastructures face today.

I want to focus on the Port of Vancouver. My colleague has pointed out that its rating is not very good compared to other ports. It ranks roughly 380, or something like that, compared to the Port of Rotterdam, the land of his ancestry and mine as well, which is one of the most efficiently run ports, so it can be done.

The Port of Vancouver is a very crowded piece of real estate, which is one of the reasons given why it is maybe not as efficient as some other ports. Of course, the Netherlands does not have a lot of land either, but it has still managed to use what it has very efficiently and effectively.

Unfortunately, this legislation before us today does not really tackle the underlying basic problems regarding supply chain resiliency and efficiency.

Every day my riding of Langley, which is very close to the Port of Vancouver, just a 45-minute drive, experiences the presence of the Port of Vancouver with so many trains coming through. It is the main line of the CP, and the CN runs through it as well. There are trains coming in with empty container cars, and trains with full containers heading out to the rest of Canada and down into the United States.

CN and CP have been good, responsible corporate citizens. They have partnered with the Port of Vancouver in the last decade or so to build some overpasses so that traffic can keep flowing more or less smoothly. I say more or less, because it is not perfect. There is always room for improvement. If anybody from CP, CN or the port authority is listening right now to this speech at this hour of the night, they will know what I am talking about. Although we are very grateful for the overpasses, they would have been better placed at 200 Street, at the Fraser Highway crossing, close to the Langley bypass, to 216 Street, close to the new interchange with the freeway, so there is still work to be done. There needs to be improvement.

That brings me to another local issue. Roberts Bank is going to be expanded. To give a bit of background, the Port of Vancouver is the largest port in Canada by volume shipped. As a matter of fact, it is as big as all the Canadian ports put together, and we are going to expand it.

When I say it is the biggest, it is the amalgamation of three ports some years ago, the Port of Vancouver, the Fraser port, which has ports on the New Westminster side and the Surrey side, and also Roberts Bank, which is in the city of Delta. Roberts Bank is now going to be expanded. The port itself is an artificial island that was built in the Strait of Georgia, which we nowadays call the Salish Sea. It is a big island. There is a causeway that goes up to it with a highway on it and a couple of railroads. It is going to be expanded, I am not sure by how much, but it is a very significant infrastructure project.

That brings me back to Langley. With all these trains coming through, the traffic is going to increase, so if somebody from CP,

CN or the Port of Vancouver is listening, we are going to be looking for some more overpasses just to make sure Langley keeps on functioning while the port expands.

We are talking about Bill C-33, which comes on the heels of the Final Report of The National Supply Chain Task Force 2022, commissioned by the Minister of Transport.

I will read a quote from it, which states:

• (2220)

A recurring theme in the report is the struggle of both government and industry to cope with uncertainties arising due to critical factors such as rapidly changing trade patterns, human- and climate-caused disruptions, shifting geopolitical risk, and increased consolidation in major transportation modes. As a medium-sized player in the global market, Canada is finding it difficult to overcome these challenges....

That is the introduction to the report. The authors of the report dig deeper, and my friend has already raised some of the immediate actions that were called for, but I am going to take a look at some of the longer-term ones.

Recommendation 11 is to establish a supply chain office because the authors know that supply chain disruptions are one of the biggest problems we are facing. Unfortunately, the bill would not do much about that.

I was at a round table with stakeholders talking about this report, and they were all operators: marine operators, train operators from CP, etc. The port authority was there too, of course. One of the main concerns was bureaucracy upon bureaucracy upon more bureaucracy. They are looking for efficiencies. These people know how to do their business. They are asking government to please deregulate to allow private enterprise to make things more efficient.

There were a couple of other things they mentioned, and I think this is really important to understand as well. They said to immediately address the significant transportation supply chain labour shortages in Canada. Now, when I talked to employers, and not just those in transportation, any employer, they tell me that one of the biggest challenges is that there are not enough people.

I attended a meeting of the Western Canadian Shippers' Coalition and its representatives told me that there are not enough people, not enough trains, not enough truck drivers, not enough people working on trains, not enough people repairing tracks and not enough people repairing trains. These are the fundamental issues that our transportation system and our ports are facing today. Unfortunately, this report does not get into that sufficiently.

Government Orders

A couple of weeks ago, I went with the transportation committee, and I am not on that committee, but I tagged along with its members to the port of Prince Rupert. It is the third-biggest port in Canada after Vancouver and Montreal. It will soon become the second biggest port because it has huge expansion plans, and I applaud that. I think that is a fantastic idea. It is actually closer to the major Asian ports and hours by rail to Chicago. It is as quick to get to Chicago from the port of Prince Rupert as it is from Vancouver. I really applaud the expansion of that port. It has room and can build much more efficiently.

To sum up, there are a lot of problems today in our transportation system and in our ports, and Bill C-33 would not do enough. I think the bill needs a major rethink. We will be voting against it. Of course, we are in favour of all the things that the minister said the bill was going to do, but we are saying that the bill would not do them. Bill C-33 needs a major rethink, and it needs to go back to the drawing board. The people who drafted this legislation need to understand what the real issues are.

I have an amendment to present, which is being seconded by my colleague from Flamborough—Glanbrook. I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following: "the House declines to give second reading to Bill C-33, An Act to amend the Customs Act, the Railway Safety Act, the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, 1992, the Marine Transportation Security Act, the Canada Transportation Act and the Canada Marine Act and to make a consequential amendment to another Act, since the bill fails to improve supply chain efficiencies, address rail service reliability, improve labour relations, and weakens the ports' ability to fulfill their mandate with an Ottawa knows best approach."

• (2225)

The Deputy Speaker: The amendment is in order.

We will continue with questions and comments.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to drill down on something that is a widespread assumption without evidence, which is that the private sector is more efficient.

I have been tracking what happened to my riding with the back-up of freighters, as many as 27 at a time, all up the coast of Vancouver Island, all the way up to Ladysmith and Gabriola. It is very inefficient. Everyone loses. The grain shippers lose. The grain farmers lose, and people in my community lose.

It did not use to be so bad. Members would never guess the law of unintended consequences at work here. What was the thing that changed, that made the shipment of grain so very inefficient? It was getting rid of the Canada Wheat Board. We did not know, at the time we were debating getting rid of the Canada Wheat Board, that one of the consequences would be that shipping grain would become a gong show.

The Wheat Board used to organize the shipment of grains. Multiple farmers used to have the rails ready to go, and the grain was shipped more efficiently. Now we have a privatized system, and what is left of the Wheat Board is owned by Saudi Arabia.

• (2230)

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands and I are just going to have to fundamentally disagree on that.

If members talk to grain farmers in the Prairies, and I am surrounded by a number of them, they had a bumper crop, and the problem was getting the grain to port. There are not enough trains, not enough people working on trains and not enough railroad capacity. These are the problems, and this is what needs to be addressed.

The government needs to get out of the way to allow private enterprise to solve the problem. It will do it.

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it just shocks me because all day we listen to complaints from the Conservative Party about what more the government should do, and then we hear that the government should get out of the way. I feel like the Conservatives contradict themselves all the time.

I would like to have a more in-depth explanation from the member of the amendment he has proposed.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, the motion is pretty self-explanatory. I do not know what more I could say in depth.

We think that Bill C-33, as well-intentioned as it is, just does not do enough. It needs a major rethink. The people who drafted it need to go back and read this report, which I was just referencing, and the very good, well-written reports coming out of the transportation committee.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I understand there are lots of other issues with this bill and wanting to change some things within committee is key.

One of the things I am concerned about is the safety of workers not being accounted for within this piece of legislation. About a year ago, I was talking to folks from IBEW, workers on CN, who put their very jobs on the line because they were so concerned with the safety of their work on the rail line.

The national supply chain task force talked about rail safety for workers, the exhaustion levels they face and the fatigue. They made recommendations that are not in this bill. The transportation committee made several recommendations that are not in this bill.

Could the member talk about the workers' safety and the importance of that? I would really love to hear his thoughts on that.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, I am in full agreement. Worker safety is number one. Safety is always number one for any company, and I applaud any company that has a good safety record.

This bill does not do enough. As I said, it needs a major rethink. It needs to go back to the drawing board. That is one of the issues that needs to be addressed.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will ask forgiveness again from my colleagues in the House and those who are watching. I have asthma, and the smoke is killing me today.

Government Orders

It is a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to Bill C-33. As many of my colleagues know, I spent a lifetime in the transportation industry prior to being elected, doing everything from owning and operating a small ground-handling business to serving in various management and executive roles in the airline and airport side of the industry. I spent a lifetime in promotion of our country's opportunities. I know a little bit about ports, airports and supply chain logistics.

I spent a lifetime in pursuit of our national, provincial and regional opportunities, including tourism, air service development, supply chain logistics, and the safe and secure transport of our goods to market. It is through the lens of these experiences that I stand here today to offer some comments on Bill C-33 and not only the failures I see in this bill but also the failure of the government after the last eight years. It is a failure to realize the key opportunities that Canada has in our logistics, our geographic positioning in the world, our ports and airports.

Canada's transportation industry has long been a pillar of our nation's economy. It connects people, businesses and communities from coast to coast to coast. Simply put, it connects Canada to the world. We are, after all, a trading nation. Our success as a nation is predicated on our ability to get the goods we produce to market, our ability to seamlessly move the products and services we produce, facilitating safe and secure transport, and seamlessly accessing our country, to and from our communities.

From 1903, when Wilfrid Laurier launched our national railway from Winnipeg to Prince Rupert, the freight rail sector of Canada's economy has been the backbone, moving more than 320 billion dollars' worth of goods annually from coast to coast to coast.

Canada's national railway is the only transcontinental railway in North America. It connects three coasts, those of the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Gulf of Mexico. Almost all sectors of Canadian economy are served by its freight trains, including manufacturing, agriculture, natural resources, wholesale and retail. In recent years, we have seen the fragility of our supply chain and our transportation network.

Railways are a vital mode of transporting goods within Canada and to our international markets. They provide a cost-effective and efficient way of transporting bulk commodities such as minerals, grains, forest products and manufactured goods. The reliable and extensive rail network supports the competitiveness of Canadian industries and facilitates international trade.

The railway industry directly employs a significant number of Canadians. It encompasses a diverse range of jobs, including train operators, engineers, conductors, maintenance workers, administrative staff and more. We must always ensure that those workers, those Canadians who are on the front line, whether it is in our ports, railways or our airports, are always safe and secure. This bill does nothing. It does not go far enough to ensure that. Additionally, the railway sector indirectly supports employment in related industries such as manufacturing, logistics and supply chain management.

Railways enable industries to access raw materials, transport finished goods and connect markets. The efficient movement of goods by rail contributes to cost savings, supply chain optimization and

business competitiveness. In the last eight years, Canada has taken a step back in our global competitiveness. Why is that? It is because, in our previous Conservative government, we had a government that understood what Canada had, the opportunities that we had. It invested in trade agreements, bilaterals, with other countries, and it invested heavily in our ports and airports.

● (2235)

We had a strategy. We had a game plan on how we were going to capture the world and connect to the world. One example is the Asia-Pacific gateway program, where the former Conservative government invested a billion dollars in our ports; our airports; our roadways, working with our provincial governments; and our railway system. I will be the first to say we did not go far enough, but we had a plan to continue putting Canada on the map. When I look at the list of the top 60 ports, I see that I have toured almost every one of them. I stood there, whether it was in Antwerp or whether it was in Rotterdam, and saw the efficiencies. I dreamt that, one day, and I have always said this, if Canada ever figured out what we wanted to be when we grew up, we could flip this world on its ear.

Canada could be what Rotterdam is to the EU. We could do that here, whether it is connecting our ports to our airports or connecting our ports to our railways and our roadways. I have not heard anybody in this debate talk about the intermodality of our network, our supply chain and our transportation network. If we are catching fish off the coast of Prince Rupert and transporting them by truck to rail and then onto an airplane and just, in the same day, catch that day service in Asia, we have those opportunities.

The world needs more Canada. It wants more of the products we have, but we continue to fail. In the last eight years, we have seen a government that has allowed rail blockages and has allowed labour disruptions to continue, and that sends a message, not only to our competitors but also to our customers, that Canada is not open for business. Bill C-33 would not address any of that.

We have talked about the congestion being experienced in our ports and our airports, whether it is warehousing that we cannot get or is backed up, staff disruptions or employee disruptions, labour disruptions or rail capacity.

If members will indulge me, I would like to share a letter I received this morning. It is from one of my constituents, who owns a lumber mill. I have been very vocal about championing our softwood lumber industry. Time and again, our rail service, or lack of rail service, in this country is failing our softwood lumber or forestry industry. Simply put, it cannot get rail cars. What happens? The products, worth millions upon millions of dollars, sit in the yard.

Good morning Todd,

If anyone within the Federal or Provincial governments cares about the forest industry and the survival of the remaining companies left, then something has to be done YESTERDAY about CN and their ongoing lack of service to the forest industry. Otherwise, what you have seen so far in 2023 with respect to permanent closures will continue. If we can get our product shipped to the market on a weekly basis, particularly in this difficult market, we are dead. Companies will be forced to close up shop and/or continue move their operations into the USA South where having to deal with CN and their shitty service is no longer an issue.

To date, no one within the provincial or federal governments have the balls to fix the CN problem or even tackle the issue. This issue has been completely ignored despite the fact that CN's lack of service to the forest industry has been a serious problem since 2014. No results despite our pleas for help. Very disappointing and not impressed. Not sure how the farming industry got it done with Bill C49 in such a short period of time and their level of service has improved considerably. I suppose they are more important than the forest industry?

I put that into the record because I have met with the current Minister of Transport. I have met with his predecessor and I have met with their predecessor.

● (2240)

From the day that I was elected, I have continued to raise these issues. I have raised them with the minister who can actually do something about it, and I have raised it with the company, repeatedly. There are mills, not only in my riding but also in ridings in western Canada, that are closing because we cannot get our products to market. Do not even get me started on the fact that the government, after eight years, cannot secure a softwood lumber agreement, but our forestry producers are facing unbelievable tariffs and penalties on top of not being able to get their product to market. They cannot get rail cars. Why is that? It is because of our rail capacity.

We had a former government that invested in twinning highways, putting overpasses in so we could move goods on longer loads and twinning railways so we could have double-stacked rail cars going through. We had a former Conservative government that invested in land terminals so that if there were land constraints at the port, goods could move inland, like in Prince George, where I am from. It has CN Worldwide Distribution Services right there. It has a large yard where the cars are interchanged. Not only that, but it invested in airports. The airport in Prince George has the third-longest runway in Canada. It can handle the largest aircraft and can compete with any airport in terms of handling cargo. Straight through my riding, I was on the world stage in the promotion of the Port of Prince Rupert and the Port of Vancouver. The Port of Prince Rupert is the fastest and greenest route to Asia in North America. It has the deepest open-water port. It connects to the fastest and greenest rail network into the U.S. Midwest.

We have so much opportunity, and the current government just does not see it. I do not know whether the Liberals do not see it or just do not want to act on it. It is not like we are not telling them this. They stand there and promise they are going to do better. There is lots of talk about prorogation. Perhaps we will go into an early election if the speNDP and Liberal coalition breaks. I would assume that there will be some big announcements about what the Liberals are going to do again if they get elected. If they get elected, what are they going to do? They will probably not follow through with their promises, which is what we have seen time and time again.

The maintenance, expansion and improvement of the railway infrastructure requires significant investments. These investments

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create jobs during the construction phase. They contribute to the economic activity of our communities. Furthermore, ongoing infrastructure development helps enhance capacity and efficiency of the rail network, leading to increased productivity and economic benefits, not only for the communities that they serve, but also all across our nation. Again, I will go back. It puts Canada on the map. It gives us another opportunity for economic success and prosperity. We have not seen that with these guys.

I heard the member for Winnipeg North say that, under their government, the Liberals invested in CentrePort or they started CentrePort. That was not done by the Liberals. I was on the front lines with CentrePort from the very beginning. It is an incredible port that was started by a Conservative government with considerable dollars for marketing and efforts and investment in terminals with the project. Again, intermodality would bring the products into CentrePort, and it could ship them into the U.S. Midwest as well by air, by truck or by rail. These are things that I have not heard anybody talk about in this.

I do not have the benefit of sitting on the transport committee. I would love to do it someday, maybe. I know we are back and we have capable people who work on that file. Our shadow minister is incredible. The whole transport team is incredible, and I know that it raised these issues within the committee.

● (2245)

It is just frustrating when we see a bill, like Bill C-33, that is probably well intentioned, but did the Liberals listen to the stakeholders who were there? They did not. Time and again, whether it is this bill or a Fisheries Act bill when I had that file, they say that they do consultations, but they do not.

Our colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands brings up good points. It is frustrating that we just spent the whole day talking about climate change. Canada's transportation network is among the greenest in the world. It gets our products to market. It supports good-paying jobs. It allows Canada's products, whether they are tech products, agriculture products or natural resources products, to get to market so we can benefit the world.

As I said early, the world needs more Canada and we have great producers right here, but they struggle with getting their products to market. Why? It is because we failed them. More specifically, the government has failed them over the last eight years.

As I said, we have spent a great deal of time talking about climate change in relation to the Bloc opposition day. Rail transportation is generally considered more environmentally friendly compared to other modes of transport, such as road or air.

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One day, someone spoke to me about the rail system and the train going through their community all the time. I asked whether they would rather see the chemicals on that train be in trucks going through their community or would they rather see it on rail. Rail gets chemicals off the roads onto an area that is less inhabited, with less contact with the public and the community.

We cannot look beyond Lac-Mégantic. We never want to see one of those disasters again. Bill C-33 does not address the challenges that we see. We only need to look as far south to our friends to the south to try to make things better. When we make things better in terms of the safe and secure transport of goods and people, the world is our oyster. Canada can be whatever it wants to be. It sends a message to the world that we are open for business.

I remember going up in an elevator with the CEO of the Seattle port authority. She was a very nice lady. She saw my badge that said where I was from. She said, "You are from Canada." I said I was. She said, "You are causing a lot of people in our business headaches." I asked her why that was. She said, "We do not want Canada to become competitive."

Our border communities, whether by road or by rail, lose so much leakage to our U.S. counterparts, our friends. Why? It is because its airports are more efficient. Its policy regarding airlines and ticketing is more efficient and cheaper. Its ports are also more efficient.

Whether it is goods or people, there is so much leakage transborder that we are losing that Canada could capture by just reinvesting and rethinking what we want to be when we grow up. We should start with our transportation network and have a real ports and airports strategy.

We can look to the south to see what the U.S. does when it invests in its airports and ports. It gives authority to those running the airports. It gives opportunities to the public and the producers, whether they are shipping or producing goods, whether the public want to go to and from, and visit friends and travel abroad, Canada has failed.

I cannot speak enough about the uncharacteristically high number of delays and cancellations seen within our aviation industry in recent months. It is not enough for our airlines and airports to sit there and point fingers at one another and assign blame. We have to do something about it. Only a government that is intent on making things better and actually helping our transportation ecosystem to realize its potential can do that.

At that time, we can move our goods to market, move our culture, share our culture, our people and our goods, and really make sure that Canada finds its place in the world market.

● (2250)

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been hearing a bit of a theme tonight, whether it is will Bill C-35 or Bill C-33. It is "let us do nothing".

I have not heard a lot of opposition to what is in the bill. Generally, I am hearing that there should be other things in the bill; there should be additional stuff. That is sad to see. The opposition's purpose is supposed to be to hold the government to account, but it

seems like they will oppose anything for any reason, not valid reasons, because right now they just say that more needs to be done. I hear the member on that, but what is in this bill is good stuff. It is a step forward, and I urge the member to support this piece of legislation.

I also heard the member complaining that the legislation does not address labour disputes at the ports, and I want to understand that better. Is the member trying to imply that he would prefer to intervene with collective bargaining and the ability of unions to do that? Is that what the member is saying? I ask because oftentimes Conservatives say they stand for the little guy.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, well, my hon. colleague can sure read that question well from the lobby. I applaud her for that. Clearly she was only listening to what she wanted to hear. She did not listen to my entire speech.

The bill fails in all aspects. There is not enough there. As I said, even the stakeholders are saying that it is a nothing bill; it is a nothing burger. That is from the stakeholders, the people who have skin in the game, not somebody who sits here in the House or a bureaucrat who has no skin in the game and is not doing anything about it. These are producers who have real issues, and if we fail them, they lose their livelihoods.

I talked about the bill not going far enough in terms of safety and security and the secure transport of our goods and people. I talked about it not doing anything about the intermodality of our systems.

There is so much the bill could have done. However, they always say, "Well, it is good enough. Work with us and perhaps we will get this in place down the road. We just need to get it done." I fail to see the reasoning in that. The bill does not do enough. It does not protect workers in terms of the safe and secure transport of goods, nor those who are working on our front lines.

● (2255)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, to my dear friend from Cariboo—Prince George, I give my deep sympathies for the struggle he is going through tonight. He has had more than his fair share of health problems in the last year, and this does not seem fair.

To his point about access to rail and the farmers who cannot get the railcars needed to ship grain to port, the question for me is this: How is this a problem of over-regulation? This is a problem of greed at the corporate level by CN and CP.

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I swear to God that these guys seem to be surprised every year by the fact that, in the fall, suddenly there is grain to ship. I think they should see it coming by now. It is rather a seasonal event and quite predictable, yet they lay off their workers and use the cars for other things, and then in the fall, surprise, surprise, grain farmers cannot get their goods to market.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is absolutely right. Our rail companies are picking and choosing the winners in this game. They pick the high-value commodities and the others sit by the wayside.

I have fought time and again with our largest rail company, CN. They talk about winter operations, saying it is winter that caused this. As long as I have been alive, winter has happened at the same time every year. How can a company that has been around for so long claim that it has been caught off guard?

It is the same with our gateway airports, specifically YVR in our network. I have sat with them so many times over the years as a manager of small to medium-sized airports and said, “Winter is coming. Are you guys prepared?” They would say they were prepared and ready to go. Then guess what happens. A little bit of snow happens and it is chaos. This is wrong.

I just spoke at an aviation conference on Monday. We had airport operators who were saying they should send their airport staff to our major gateway airports during the winter so they can help clear the runways, because our guys seem to do it all the time. The member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley mentioned the snow we got in the wintertime that shut down our major airport, YVR. That is just another Thursday for us, if I am quoting him properly. That is the frustration we have.

I am not just blaming YVR. It is the whole transportation ecosystem the government has not addressed. The Liberals stand up and give non-answers during question period when opposition parties are pressing them on these challenges. There are no answers. They promise to do better, and then a bill like this comes out and it does nothing.

After eight years, they have had so much opportunity. It is time for them to step aside, because I can say that we are going to do better when we form government.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the member for Cariboo—Prince George and I are in quite strong agreement that we have infrastructure problems in transportation.

Here is my view at this point, having been working on these issues, as my hon. colleague has, for quite a while. We created in the 1980s harbour authorities and airport authorities that are arm's length from government and completely unaccountable to anyone. They are arm's length from the minister. The minister cannot get involved in the decisions of the airport authority or the harbour authority, except of course to rubber-stamp when they want something as destructive as the expansion of Roberts Bank.

I wonder if the hon. member agrees me that we ought to open a bigger conversation: Do these airport and harbour authorities work for Canadians?

• (2300)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, I know a bit about that, as I was part of the executive team that transferred our last national airport system in Canada, the Prince George Airport. We went from a Transport Canada federally operated airport to a local airport authority, the Prince George Airport Authority.

The challenge with that is that once it stands alone, it is standing alone. There are very few opportunities for revenue generation. Who creates the safety and security policies for our ports and airports? It is the government, and it transfers very few dollars to these ports and airports to maintain them, whether it is regarding their safety or security.

That is, again, why I am frustrated with Bill C-33. We always want our goods and people to be transported via safe, secure and sound modes. However, what we have seen is that the government views our ports and airports as cash cows, not as the economic engine generators they truly are. There are so many things we could do.

We are the highest-cost jurisdiction in the world for aviation fees, which is why Canadians pay some of the highest costs for airline tickets. It is why cargo aircraft or passenger carriers that come in have to pay some of the highest costs just to land here and transport goods. If we made things a little easier for people to come to Canada to conduct business, imagine how great we could be. That is the Canada I want to live in.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is an issue with the bill about creating a bunch of new advisory bodies and a bunch of new committees. Going back to other bills the government has implemented where new committees and new advisory panels have been struck, quite often we see a stacking of the deck, with a bunch of Liberal insiders on the panels. At the end of the day, it is delaying things and causing issues in trying to get projects completed and built.

I know that people in Saskatchewan desperately need a port modernization strategy so we can get our products out of the Prairies. We are landlocked. We need the ports. These advisory panels generally do not do any good in helping the people in our situation. I am wondering if my colleague has any thoughts about that.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, if we were to do things the right way, we would not need these advisory panels. Local airports and port authorities are made up of experts within the industry: experts on the financial side of it, community members, and people who have experience running businesses with the challenges they have. It is a regulatory environment. Our government sees them as cash cows, not the economic engine generators they truly can be, and it picks winners and losers.

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Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of my community of Kelowna—Lake Country.

Before I begin this evening, I would like to thank all the firefighters and first responders who are keeping my community safe, as well as all firefighters across Canada. Firefighters run toward and into danger and put their own safety at risk every day. As a daughter of a firefighter, I also know how hard it is for families with the worries they have. I want to thank them for commitment and for keeping people safe.

I will be splitting my time with the member of Parliament for Calgary Shepard.

Today I rise to speak on Bill C-33, a substantive piece of legislation that I am sad to say is missing the mark on a significant opportunity to strengthen our ports and rail lines with regard to supply chain functionality and security issues. I have had several shadow ministry roles that have involved supply chains within Canada and trade, which means that I have spoken to hundreds and hundreds of organizations, both big and small, that either rely on a functioning rail and port system or are involved in keeping our supply chains moving.

I have spoken with a wide variety of industries, from winemaking to RV rentals, all of which have been financially challenged by the sluggishness of the Liberal government in looking at ways within the authority of the federal government to ensure our supply chains are moving.

Canada's economic security and food security should be a priority. When supply chains break down or are not functioning at full capacity, all Canadians are affected. Costs go up, and Canada loses credibility with our trading partners.

Small businesses ultimately pay the biggest price when supply chains break down, as they have fewer resources. When it comes to strengthening our supply chains, this legislation has missed the mark. The Chamber of Shipping said that the legislation misses out on addressing the root causes of supply chain congestion and that the additional powers only address symptoms of congestion and could aggravate managing cargo efficiency.

This legislation also does not address the relationship between shippers and rail companies, and there is nothing about rail service reliability.

The legislation before us is more interested in increasing the powers of the Minister of Transport inside the boardrooms of our port authorities than actually strengthening the ability to move goods around and in and out of our economy or in addressing safety. It burdens our Canadian ports, particularly the smaller ports, with inefficient and anti-competitive red tape and increases in cost, which will always be passed on to consumers. It undermines the arm's-length independence with which ports are supposed to operate, with the federal government inserting Ottawa-knows-best politicians in board level decision-making.

I would like to go into more detail on my point regarding the issues this bill raises in complicating the governance of port authority boards.

The Minister of Transport, when he first spoke about this bill, said:

These measures involve providing the Minister of Transport with the ability to designate the chairperson of the board from among the board members and in consultation with the board. This measure would ensure Canadian port authorities and our government are aligned on how we deal with the increasing complex economic, social and environmental issues facing our ports.

He said, "aligned with the government". What does that mean? Does it mean aligned with government ideologies, aligned by designating? As the minister said, "designating" is a word that basically means appointing. Is that Liberal friends? We have seen these kinds of actions before, with the Liberal government appointing Liberal friends, have we not?

Anyone who is on one of these boards should be offended that the transport minister and the Liberal government do not think that they are smart enough or capable enough to choose their own board chair out of the group of people sitting around the table. These are independent boards, and the Liberals are bringing politics to these board tables. It is basic board of director governance that members of a board should choose who the board chair is.

● (2305)

The minister also said about the legislation that it is:

...a requirement for Canada port authorities to undertake a review of governance practices every three years. These reviews would evaluate the effectiveness of board governance practices, such as assessments of conflicts of interest and record-keeping practices. The results of these assessments would be shared with Transport Canada and would inform future policy measures as needed.

As such, a Liberal minister would judge a non-government organization on corporate governance. The Liberal transport minister would be mandating receiving assessments of conflict of interest from these organizations. The Liberal ministers are not exactly known for good conflict of interest judgment. I do not know if the minister has ever been involved in a governance review. I have been involved in more than one, so I can say that it can easily take up to a year to do a proper review, analysis, report, potential restructure and implementation. The government wants the port authorities to do these every three years.

The minister is presuming to be an expert on fulfilling board of director and executive fiduciary duties and would analyze board governance every three years. Though looking at governance should be a practice of any board, mandating through law that port authorities need to do this every few years is burdensome. I ask, to what end?

The Liberal Minister of Transport in Ottawa thinks he knows best how to run a port, so I would like to note that the member for Chilliwack—Hope, when he spoke on Bill C-33, pointed out in his original rebuttal to the minister that it was that minister who chose to ignore the recommendations of port users when they have put forth board nominees. That minister ignored the recommendations of western provinces when they put forth nominees, yet the minister insists on sticking his hands into the board he knows little about.

Port authorities are supposed to be at arm's length from the government, and the red tape of reporting requirements, advisory committees and ministerial selections of executive management would cut against the efficient operation of our ports. It would reverse the arm's length aims of the Liberal government of the 1990s when it wrote the Canada Marine Act, but that is not surprising, as many Canadians have become aware that the Liberal Party of today is no longer the one they once knew.

As I said earlier, I am disappointed this opportunity to act to better the functioning of our ports and railways has been sidelined by red tape and backseat driving. What good there is in updating safety and security protocols is overshadowed by regulatory burdens that consumers will ultimately feel.

The focus of any update to law should be on safety and on economic prosperity, in particular with this piece of legislation. I should also point out that the government's updating of interference or tampering rules means nothing if it does not enforce them. A lack of accountability and an insistence on control have been defining hallmarks of the current Liberal government, leaving Canadians with less money in their pockets and poorer public services. The Ottawa-knows-best approach is how the current Liberal government governs, so on Bill C-33 the Association of Canadian Port Authorities simply said that more government is not the answer.

I fully support improving the security of Canada's transportation system, including ports and marine facilities. I support increasing safety and strengthening our supply systems. However, the legislation before us would do little for these and would create a real Ottawa-knows-best top-down approach by adding burdensome red tape and costs that would ultimately be passed on to Canadians.

• (2310)

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Lori Desrochers and Pamela Fraser are two people whose family members perished in separate instances as workers for CN Rail. These deaths were not investigated by an impartial government or police investigation, but were investigated by CN Rail's own private rail police and corporate risk management.

Since then, these families have received no justice, and CN Rail has faced no consequences. In a press conference on October 20, 2022, Lori Desrochers and Pamela Fraser called on Prime Minister Trudeau and Mr. Poilievre to take a stand to protect—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Back it up. Just do not use names.

The hon. member for Hamilton Centre.

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• (2315)

Mr. Matthew Green: Mr. Speaker, we have not heard anything from either the Prime Minister or the want-to-be prime minister.

Now, do the Conservatives support railway corporations being able to avoid being held accountable for the death and injury of their workers by investigating themselves—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to say in reference to the individuals who lost their lives that my heart certainly goes out to their families. I cannot imagine what the families have been through.

What we are talking about here today is this piece of legislation and there are a lot of misses by this legislation. We are talking about Bill C-33. Certainly, in my intervention I mentioned a few times that this legislation should have been about safety and economic stability. Instead, this legislation is about corporate governance and control by the government to insert itself at the board table of port authorities. That is really one of the biggest focuses of this piece of legislation.

There is a real miss here with where this legislation could have gone and that is really unfortunate.

[Translation]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

The Conservative members from Quebec, specifically the member for Mégantic—L'Érable, are calling for additional rail safety measures.

Does my colleague not see that Bill C-33 includes a safety and security framework that would make it possible for the people of Mégantic to have their bypass?

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, there are some good pieces in this legislation. Some in there deal with safety, but there is a lot more that could have been done. That is where the real miss is with this piece of legislation. There are some parts that do help in some way.

There have been years and years of consultation, as well as eight years of the Liberal government. To come with this piece of legislation that really has so many gaps is really a miss and it is really unfortunate.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the objectives that the Minister of Transport gave in his introductory speech on Bill C-33 was to combat inflation caused by supply chain disruptions, yet it seems to do very little of that.

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I was at a round table discussion with marine operators and they said the new regulations are just going to make things more expensive for them and that this does not tackle inflation at all.

I wonder if my colleague would have a comment on that.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, I really do not know how this legislation ties into tackling inflation at all. I mean, we saw inflation go up again a month ago. We also saw interest rates rise just yesterday. What the government is doing is not working.

I do not know what is in this legislation that has anything to do with bringing down costs or bringing down inflation. If anything, it will add to costs because it is adding more of a burden to companies with all of these new committees. They are going to have to do governance reviews every three years as well, so I am not sure how that is going to bring costs down.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be able to join the debate at such a late hour and to contribute my thoughts on Bill C-33 for my constituents back home. Again, I always want to thank them for sending me here to represent them, and I know they expect us to provide good work and feedback to the government.

As I said earlier in the debate, if it were up to the member for Winnipeg North, none of us would ever speak. He thinks we are delaying the bill when we are really just providing some feedback to the government at a stage of the bill before it possibly heads to committee. This is a bill that would amend these seven different pieces of legislation: the Customs Act, the Railway Safety Act, the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, the Marine Transportation Security Act, the Canada Transportation Act, the Canada Marine Act in a different portion and another act to which it would make consequential amendments.

This type of legislation would be an omnibus bill, but it is themed in a certain manner. One always knows something is up when legislation has a title like “Strengthening the Port System and Railway Safety in Canada Act”, which definitely means that the government is not strengthening anything. It is just making everything more complicated. The marketing people must have gotten to the legislative drafters on this one and included it here.

I share many of the same concerns other Conservatives have expressed on this piece of legislation. I will refrain from commenting on the marine portions, because I happen to be from a landlocked province. Our views of the oceans are very limited, as in zero, unless we go online. I will not comment on those.

I will comment on the fact that this piece of legislation would be establishing new advisory committees, which I believe could be a source of more consternation and frustration in ports and other places. I note that no tenants are to serve on them directly. There is no dispensation made to ensure that happens.

There are going to be issues with supply chains. There is nothing in this legislation, as the member for Langley—Aldergrove just said, that would actually address that. The reason we know this is that some of the largest groups out there that represent stakeholders who care about supply chains or manage them in some way have said so very clearly. The Association of Canadian Port Authorities, which will be my only marine reference, said that more government

was not the answer. The Chamber of Shipping said that the legislation misses out on addressing the root causes of supply chain congestion, and additional powers only address symptoms of congestion and could aggravate managing cargo efficiently. Those seem like the people one would want to go to and make sure they are on-side with legislation before one brings it forward and claims it would help supply chains to get better, which is what we heard from members on the government benches.

I will give the government credit for one thing. Thankfully, this is not a spending bill. That is good news for taxpayers back home, although consumers will likely pay higher prices once the legislation goes through because of the extra red tape and all the extra measures being introduced. It is not in all parts of the bill, but significant parts of the bill would likely increase costs.

In that spirit, I do have a Yiddish proverb, which is, “If a problem can be solved with money, it is not a problem, it is an expense.” Thankfully, this would not be a new expense for taxpayers. This particular bill, as I said, would not be directly spending new monies that we simply do not have, with a \$60-billion-plus deficit already on the books and the doubling of the national debt over the course of the pandemic by the Liberal government. Taxpayers back home in my riding cannot afford to put more things on the national credit card. They are already on the hook for over \$4,000 per family household.

I want to take a different tack, as I said I would. CP is actually located in my riding, and I visited it on March 2. Its headquarters are in an old community called Ogden, named after one of the former senior employees of CP. The community has had a storied history. It has gone through a couple of redevelopments. There used to be a tram that went over the river, and it would ferry employees back and forth. It does not exist anymore. However, this particular part of the city has a lot of history.

The command centre for Canadian Pacific is there; Canadian Pacific is CP now and actually merged with Kansas City Southern, or KCS, in a \$31-billion deal. It is a really big railway company. It is located in my riding, and it is a big source of employment. Its career fairs are always very well attended because it is a good employer to work for. It provides excellent pay and good working conditions. It is a unionized work environment, and the union fights hard for its members, while management negotiates, much of the time, in good faith. The command centre and the training centre are there. The simulator train is there, which is very cool, and I will talk about that as well.

● (2320)

The hydrogen fuel cell train is also there, and I missed it on my tour. I just did not have enough time to get to it. I understand that other members, like the member for Edmonton Riverbend, actually got to see the brand new future of cargo train services in Canada, the hydrogen fuel cell train.

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Let us talk about the command centre. I have represented my riding for almost eight years now, and I had never been to this command centre, which was open throughout the whole pandemic. It is basically what one would imagine. It looks like it is in the 22nd century. There are screens everywhere. People are working to make sure that trains, as they are moving across Canada and parts of the United States, are on the correct line. The number one thing the employees talked to me about was safety: making sure the trains were safe and were on the rails, and that any problems were addressed as quickly as possible. That is the whole idea behind this command centre: to make sure it can ship goods across the country and ensure the safety of the workers, the safety of those in the command post and the safety of those in the communities they are serving, because safety, as they kept repeating, is the number one priority.

They invest a lot of time and effort, especially on the training side, to make sure their employees can provide that guarantee. It is hard work to have to pay really close attention to what is going on. They know exactly what is on each train, where each train is coming from, and, if there are trains from other companies on their network, where they are and where they are moving. The command centre was an impressive place to be and to see people are on shifts when they are working, switching out and switching in employees all the time, just to make sure nobody is working while tired. There was a lot of live communication going on, directly with people in the field. This is a sector of the economy that is drastically changing. It is a 24-7 business.

In the riding of Calgary Shepard, there is also a huge shunting yard that was meant to be switched out and moved outside the city. That never actually happened. It was never negotiated.

The training centre is a very cool place as well. It is a unionized environment where, again, the number one rule is safety. People were very concerned about that as we were walking around. The centre builds everything. Young electricians were coming in, and before CP, now CPKC, actually agrees to send them to the field, they have to rewire and wire everything. They put them on this huge board, all around the training centre. If they make a mistake, they take it all down and make them do it all over again. Again, they talked about safety. They wanted to make sure that if they go out into the field, they can fix anything that is broken so the equipment is maintained, 24-7, as well as possible. It is not perfect, but it is as good as they can possibly do it. One can definitely tell that the people who work there, who do the training, take a lot of pride in their work and in the record of the company as well. They know it is their colleagues, their fellow employees, who are working for the company. They are trying to make sure they provide a safe work environment.

Being on the simulator train was really one of the coolest parts. As members of Parliament, we all get to do these things, experience what it is like in different jobs. I actually got to drive one of these trains. It really feels like one is inside one of these giant trains and that it is moving down the tracks. It can be sped up or slowed down. I had a conductor showing me what it looks like, what it feels like, to be in one of these trains. The weight of the machine as it is moving can be felt. It is a totally simulated environment, and a lot of people go through.

• (2325)

This is the equipment that people are trained on before they are sent out into the field. It is hours upon hours of training. I do not remember the exact number of hours they have to do before they are sent out on a train, but it is a lot. It is many more than in the United States. Again, they said that if they are going to put someone behind one of these big machines, they want to make sure they are ready for anything. In fact, routes they will be taking will be simulated as many times as they need, until the route is done without any mistakes. If one does not control the machine, it will actually automatically start to slow down. That is the active monitoring of whether someone fell asleep or whether they are actually paying attention. It is amazing what types of safety mechanisms are put into place.

I wanted to talk about this, because CP has been a pretty good corporate citizen in the riding of Calgary Shepard. I only have one CP cenotaph in my riding. I do not have a legion hall. I do not have other Remembrance Day memorials to go to, but CP has put on a memorial service every single year for the residents of the area. They have invited everybody to attend publicly. Usually, when they could, though the pandemic kind of prohibited them, they invited people for hot chocolate, tea, and cookies inside the halls, and they let people tour the different wagons and train services. In my riding, my experience has been that CP has been a good corporate citizen. I wanted to share that with the House, just to show that safety is in fact its priority and that they do quite a good job of it.

• (2330)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member, particularly for his comments in regard to one of our major railroads, which of course, is headquartered in his riding, and the training facilities he spoke of. He opened his speech by talking about the plethora of different areas this is trying to cover, and I wonder if he could just expand a little more on the areas he was referring to in his opening comments, as to the number of different areas this bill is trying to cover and if he sees that as any kind of a detriment or not.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, let us go over some of those detriments inside this bill and try not to go into too many on ports, but there are quite a few issues with the ports that will be affected. There are additional ministerial powers that will limit local decision-making. That is not a good idea.

Additional regulatory requirements will add cost to stakeholders, which, again, will be passed on, like I said, to Canadian consumers.

It is also going to reduce anchorages adversely. Some stakeholders will be impacted. There are a lot of issues here with local decision-making being taken away and handed to the executive. I generally believe that is a bad idea, and it is reflected in many stakeholders expressing that publicly and declining to support the bill.

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Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, a lot of people are often surprised to hear that, in my downtown riding of Spadina—Fort York, we also have a port. We had a scare recently because the port authority also includes, within its domain, Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport, and there was a bomb scare. One of the challenges right now, with the different jurisdictions, is being able to put together an emergency management plan. I heard this yesterday when I was in the riding, at a meeting with the Bathurst Quay neighbourhood.

I am curious to hear my colleague's thoughts on how, perhaps, the government could do better in working with other orders of government to ensure and protect the safety of every community that is home to a port, railroad and so on.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, the member brought up a good point.

Again, I think we should prefer local decision-making that is informed by a national body to have wider information such as a national security list. It gets intelligence from our foreign allies, our international allies, who might provide or tip us off about events or activities that are being planned.

That could then help local decision-makers adjust locally, in how much police enforcement might be necessary or how firefighting services could be improved, and also ensuring some basic operational things such as communicating on the same wavelengths and having each other's contact information. That is some of the basic preparation for emergencies that local port authorities, airports, all of them, could profit from in having that local decision-making placed first, where they know whom to go to and whom to communicate with when they need extra support.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on one of the hon. member's comments. It is a bit tangential to the bill tonight, but I noticed that he said that he has no legions to honour our armed forces in his riding.

I want to extend an invitation. I just took a look at my last November 11 schedule. There are eleven in my riding. I was able to attend three of them and had surrogates for the other eight. I would invite my hon. friend to come my way and help me honour our veterans.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. There used to be a legion hall in my riding, not too far from my constituency office. Unfortunately, it closed down many years ago.

For the longest time, although I have the second-largest riding by population size in Canada and the largest riding in Calgary, it did not even have a high school in it. It just so happens that I represent a very large area of many suburbs in Calgary, including old suburbs, places like Erin Woods and Ogden and Dover, as well.

I will come to his riding if he invites me.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to have such a lively audience here tonight in the chamber just past 11:30 p.m. It is fantastic to have a lively House of Commons. I really appreciate it.

We are here to talk about strengthening the port system and railway safety in Canada act, Bill C-33. This bill is important to me.

The reason is that Saskatchewan, the province where I am from, is completely landlocked. We need our ports. We need railway access. Those are two hugely important fundamentals to the province of Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan, in 2022, had over \$81 billion in gross domestic product for this country. That is a fantastic output and a fantastic number. Saskatchewan does a fantastic job. It definitely punches above its weight, especially for a province that has roughly 1.2 million people. We do a great job. Obviously, agriculture and the energy sector are the main drivers of the economy where I am from.

I want to talk more about the agriculture side. In Saskatchewan, particularly southwest Saskatchewan, where I am from, we grow the vast majority of the pulse crops that the world relies upon, particularly the lentil crop. It is exported all over the world. Whether someone is growing organic crops or otherwise, we grow what the world wants and what the world needs.

The only way we can get those lentils around the world to all the countries that have such a high demand for them and for the protein they provide is through rail. When I look through this bill, I see it is trying to do some things around safety. It is trying to do some very important things around modernizing our ports. It is trying to strengthen our ports.

If we look at where our ports rank across the world, we see that we are right at the bottom. I am sure my colleague from Provencher, with whom I will be splitting my time, will want to touch on that later, so I will be sure to leave a few points for him to get to as well.

Access to ports and access to rail are so important. We have CN, we have CP and we have some really fantastic short-line rail operators. Our short-line operators are actually leading the charge on safety in the railway system. In fact, one of the owners of one of the railway companies reached out to me recently to send me an email regarding some of the statistics that the short-line operators have in Saskatchewan around safety. There are zero incidents, month over month. There are zero incidents.

They are running a high-quality rail line, taking care of their employees, providing great jobs and providing a service to the farmers, the producers and the shippers in Saskatchewan, and they are doing so while respecting the safety of the workers and providing high-quality service. That is what they are doing.

The email I got was from the Great Sandhills Railway. Our Saskatchewan caucus recently met with Great Western Rail, another fantastic short-line operator in our region that does a fantastic job of providing that service to farmers. It does so safely, while providing the fantastic jobs that are required to be able to meet that demand.

I was just messaging one of the exporters in my riding. They export farm equipment around the world. They export to 28 countries across the world. It is a farm implement dealership in a small town in Saskatchewan. It ships to 28 countries. How does it do that? It ships through the ports in Halifax, Montreal, Vancouver and, I believe, Prince Rupert.

Earlier today I heard my colleague from British Columbia talking about what the port of Prince Rupert actually means. It is the closest port to the Asian markets. The ports in Halifax and Montreal are some of the ports in North America that are closest to the European markets. They are very important access points.

One of the issues that they are dealing with in Vancouver is that it takes 12 days to get a container through. Montreal is closer to 10 days, and in Halifax, it takes 14 days to get a container through. Sometimes they are waiting over a month to even get a container. Trying to get access to the things they need to ship their products is not being addressed by this bill.

• (2335)

There is mention in the bill about setting up advisory panels and empowering the minister to set up authorities to deal with a variety of issues. However, the one thing that is not included as one of the issues that they would deal with is the actual production of the ports and making sure that they are getting results for producers and shippers. The bill would not require rail companies to make sure that they are providing the fullest service to shippers.

For example, CN does not do any business with Hapag-Lloyd. When we are sitting in Saskatchewan watching a train go past one of the many intersections that we have, we see Hapag-Lloyd's name on many containers. It is one of the more popular company names that we see going across Saskatchewan when we see sea cans going down the rail lines or on a flatbed truck, but CN does not deal with it.

How is that going to work for exporters in a landlocked province trying to export products? They also have to import pieces so they can build the product they are trying to make and then export. However, one of the biggest players, CN does not even deal with it, and there are other companies CN does not deal with as well. This is severely limiting the options for people trying to export a product, but the bill does not deal with that. These advisory panels that the government is looking to set up would not deal with that. It is not a priority for this government.

When we hear other colleagues talking about the bill needing to be withdrawn and strengthened, and that the government needs to do more, I would suggest that these are some of the things that need to be looked at in the bill. Why is it not a priority for the government to try to make sure that we get the best result for our exporters who do such a fantastic job?

All across this country, we care about the environment, reducing emissions and reducing greenhouse gases. We do that all across this country and across party lines; everybody cares about that. We have innovators in the prairie provinces that make world-class products, and they do so in a manner that is environmentally sustainable. These are products that people in the rest of the world need. If they had the technology, if they had the products that our farmers in

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Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta have, they would be able to reduce their emissions as they harvest their crops in other regions of the world. They need what Canada has to offer, and without a robust port system, without a robust rail line, that cannot happen. I see that one of the advisory panels would actually deal with climate change, but do members think that it would bring this element of it up? No, not a chance. This will not be part of what the panel would talk about.

My hope is that the government, if it is going to appoint these advisory panels, will actually talk to the shippers, exporters and manufacturing companies; the people who are trying to get their far superior products out to the world market. The government should talk to them when it is talking about how it is going to achieve some of the things that these boards are going to do. It should make sure that there are actually people in industry, who are involved in taking real and meaningful actions on these boards to make sure that we can actually get things done in a timely manner, to benefit our country and the rest of the world, and do so in a sustainable manner. That is the power that a robust rail line and port system could have in this country, because Canada has what the world needs and wants.

We grow the products, we manufacture the goods and we export them. Some of those things have to get refined and brought back yet again, which is crazy; we could do much of that here in Canada. However, in order to do any of that, regardless of where we are at, we need a robust rail and shipping system, and we do not have that, but we could.

We have had a trans-Canada rail line for over 100 years. It has been around for a very long time. It was a huge marvel to get that project done. However, we still have not reached the full potential that a valuable resource like that could have. We need to utilize it. The bill before us should be strengthening and building that up. It should be focused on lifting the entire country up so that we can use those ports, especially for landlocked provinces. We have not just what the world wants, but we have what our country needs, if we could even just get our goods out to the provinces and out to the edges. We have what is needed.

I hope that the government will take these considerations to look at the bill and make a serious version of it so that we can actually accomplish what needs to be addressed.

• (2340)

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me first take a moment to congratulate the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands for his earlier speech with respect to interoperability and the support that he had from his colleagues with respect to that private member's bill. As someone who spent 20 years of his life looking at copyright law, I think it is a great initiative and a great bill. Interoperability is critically important.

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When we took over government in 2015, we had a CETA and a TPP agreement that was dead in the water. At the time, I was parliamentary secretary for trade. We put work into reviving those two agreements, as well as signing a new North American Free Trade Agreement, given the new Trump administration at the time.

Would the member not agree that those trade agreements, as well as the investments we are making in the Port of Vancouver now with this bill, are meant to precisely address the kinds of issues he spoke of, without presuming to know what the best solutions are for improving the rail system and for improving the port system? I think we all agree. We share his concern, and we agree that this is what has to be done. Would the member not agree that the bill would do precisely that by calling on experts to give us the best advice to improve the rail system and the port system as we move forward?

• (2345)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, in short, unfortunately the answer is no.

My private member's bill, which deals with interoperability, could actually help deal with some of the issues in the rail line system. It is going to help pave the way to be able to do that, so we have some commonality there.

When it comes to the trade agreements, my colleague from Abbotsford was somebody who negotiated a lot of those and got deals signed. Unfortunately, due to delays, maybe from some of the other countries and whatnot, the Conservatives did not get them fully implemented. Yes, the government finished some of those off, but it made some changes to them that we do not necessarily agree with.

The big point about the Port of Vancouver in particular is that it is the third-worst port in the world. Prince Rupert is the ninth-worst port. These are ports that could have huge potential. They could be in the top 50 ports in the world with no problem. They could be, and they should be. The potential is there for them to be able to do that. I do not see anything in the 108 or 109 pages of this bill that would actually make sure that those ports go from being at the bottom of the pile to the top of the pile.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned the ports that are close to our export markets. There are five ports in Canada, namely Prince Rupert, Vancouver, Saint John, Halifax and Montreal, that are licensed to take containers in.

Recently, a number of us in Ontario toured a port in Picton where the owners have applied to be licensed to receive containers because it is closest to the city of Toronto, which is the largest market for our incoming containers. The owners have asked for no federal money. All they need is a licence. They are willing to pay for any CBSA costs required to clear containers, yet they are unable to achieve a licence.

Bringing containers in closer to the city before moving from ship to rail reduces emissions and reduces transportation costs. Would my colleague not agree that this would be a logical, environmentally sound reason to offer a sixth port closest to our biggest market for incoming containers?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. That is the common-sense approach that we want to see from a piece of legislation like this. As I mentioned in my speech, my hope is that, if the government follows through and sets up some of these advisory committees, it will not just stack them with activists but will actually stack them with people who are working on the ground, who have boots on the ground and are trying to find solutions for a positive change, not only in production but also for the environment and for our sustainability, and who would make sure that we get the best deal for Canadians going forward.

They should also be trying to not only get those sea-cans shipped but also have them available to be used yet again for the next load, trying to get things done and dealt with in a timely manner. One of the problems we have is trying to get access to those cans so we can use them again and get products in. Then we could also send more products back out. What the member has proposed here would be a way to help speed that up and get a better result for Canadians.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, could the member expand a bit more on what impacts the transportation system had on the grain handling in 2013 and 2015 and how that impacted the farmers? That grain did not hit the marketplace in Vancouver until a year and a half later. Could the member comment on what negative impacts that had on farmers and on how this act would not react to that or solve those kinds of problems?

• (2350)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest problems at the end of the day is that it is always the producer who absorbs the costs. The shipper will pass the costs on to the handler, who passes them on to the producer, the farmer. Farmers are always price-takers; they cannot pass costs on to anybody. However, everybody always passes the buck and passes the dollar on, and it is the farmers and the producers who end up paying for it. When we saw those massive delays, the costs kept piling up, but who ended up paying more? It was the farmers.

The quality of the grain that was being shipped was lessened; this was because of how much longer it took to get it somewhere so that it could be refined, dealt with and turned into the goods we need to consume. However, trying to get things dealt with in a timely manner is not addressed in this bill.

Again, there are many upgrades that need to happen so that we can avoid catastrophes like what happened in 2013 and 2015.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to Bill C-33 this evening.

My folks always taught me that nothing good happens after midnight, and I want to remind the handful of my colleagues who are still with us and the fewer still who are awake that it is only 11:50 p.m. and we will be wrapped up by midnight. What better way to spend the waning minutes of our evening together than with another speech on legislation that the Liberal government has brought forward?

This legislation was an opportunity. We have had two reviews: the Railway Safety Act review and the ports modernization review. We had a chance, and we still do, actually, to do something about the issues at our ports. We have critical issues with our supply chains and border security. However, with this legislation, as with many other bills, the Liberal government has missed the point. It does not matter what the problem is; the Liberal government only seems to ever have two solutions. It only has two clubs in its bag. One is to spend more money and the other is to add more government, or a combination of both, actually; there is probably a third option.

Rather than do what is best for Canadians and for businesses, the Liberal government always does what is best for itself. It seems that the best thing for the government is always more government, more power, more control. The bigger government gets, the more pervasive it gets and the hungrier it gets, until it desires to control every aspect of the economy, industry and people, and the very words we say and the very thoughts we think. It is this need to control that has led, at least in part, to the multiple crises we are facing today, including issues with our supply chains, railroads, ports and border security.

Let us go back a couple of years. Governments across the country, including the Liberal government, put in many restrictions during COVID that shut our economy down. They rigged their economies so that wealthy Liberal insiders and big businesses were able to get richer. The big box stores could stay open while mom-and-pop businesses and local businesses across Canada were forced to shut their doors. They borrowed and printed hundreds of billions of dollars and pumped this new money into the economy, creating unnecessary debt and fuelling inflation, which is now resulting in higher interest rates and an affordability crisis.

Through these policies, the government consolidated dependency on government and made government, rather than industry, the central driving force of our economy. Fast-forward to today, and the same disastrous economic policies, policies that the government continues to double down on, have led to crippling inflation, a cost of living crisis for Canadians and higher interest rates, and we are on the verge of a housing crisis.

These same COVID-era policies have crippled our government's ability to execute and provide the most basic functions of government, and the same disastrous policies have pretty much destroyed our supply chains. This is a Canadian problem now, and it is a problem the Liberal government has created through its policies. Government has caused it. It has been perpetuated on us, and it will continue to be that way.

As I said before, the government always seems to have two solutions, more money or more government, or a combination of the two. That brings us to Bill C-33. When I look at this legislation, a few words keep coming up in my mind. First is "government gatekeepers", and the other words are "more red tape". The legislation provides a lot of measures to make it easier for government to control things. What it does not do is make things work better, smoother, faster or more cost effectively, while still focusing on safety.

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Let us start off by looking at our ports. The legislation adds new layers of red tape and reporting requirements that will make us less efficient and less competitive. There is no great shock here, but smaller ports will be hit harder than the big ones. Whether it is mom-and-pop businesses during COVID or our ports, with the Liberal government, the little guy always gets whacked and loses out. The Liberal government has stacked the deck against the common folk, because it thinks Ottawa politicians and bureaucrats know better than the people on the ground.

New regulations will add to the cost of doing business, which means businesses will have no choice but to pass on those costs to consumers who already cannot afford what they are paying now. Advisory committees and ministerial interference will mean that the ports have less of a say in their day-to-day operations and fewer opportunities to make operational changes that might actually make things more efficient.

The people who know best are usually the people on the front lines. These are the ones who are most impacted by day-to-day operations and often have the best perspective. However, in the minister's plan, those who are tenants of the ports do not even have a seat at the table and have no representation on the advisory committee.

In short, this bill fails to establish that decisions are made in the best interests of our economy and supply chains, choosing instead to keep our ports tangled up in red tape and confusion.

● (2355)

Again there was the potential here, an opportunity for parliamentarians and stakeholders to work together. As for border enforcement, we are all for that. If it is about streamlining, making things run more smoothly and more cost effectively, Conservatives are all over that. If it is about getting cheaper goods, particularly food, to Canadians faster, where is the "yes" button? Instead, we see the government adding more gatekeepers. In the case of our ports and borders, the Liberal government adds more gatekeepers.

The bill is a missed opportunity to provide for the certainty and clarity needed to modernize our ports and supply chains and, by extension, to ensure stability of prices and availability for Canadian consumers.

I would like to shift gears briefly and talk about another aspect of the bill, and that is the provisions for rail safety.

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First of all, there is the hypocrisy of the government that went so far as to enact the Emergencies Act on a group of peaceful truckers who just wanted to be able to do their jobs. We can juxtapose that with 2020, when we had groups of individuals blockading our rail lines, setting them on fire and blocking ports, all in violation of a court order, and holding up a construction project that 20 elected first nation councils had approved, a project that should have brought 9,500 jobs, many of them to our indigenous people. Instead the protests cost Canadians 1,500 jobs and the government did nothing, absolutely nothing. The hypocrisy that it would now bring in a redundant new offence for tampering with rail lines is so disingenuous.

This is not an authority problem; it is an enforcement problem. We have measures in the Criminal Code that deal with this exact subject. The police already have authority to lay charges in the case of all these rail blockades. They just needed to be able to do their jobs, but instead their political masters hamstrung them with laws that go after the wrong people, like Bill C-21, for example. The Liberals do not go after the gangs that bring in illegal guns; no, they go after farmers and law-abiding firearms owners.

When it comes to taxes, Liberals do not go after the super-rich who are hiding their money in offshore tax havens; they go after the small business owners and then call them tax cheats. They are always going after the wrong people. Driven by their ideology, they go for what they think is the low-hanging fruit, the easy pickings, like law-abiding citizens, because public perception is more important to them than public safety. This is why any new enforcement measures included in this bill will ultimately fail: It will be because there is a lack of political will to enforce the existing laws.

Whether it is the economy, our ports, supply chains or law enforcement, we do not need to spend more money and we do not need more government; we need government to get out of the way.

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of talk in this House about crime. I know that my constituents have been greatly affected by the illegal exportation of vehicles overseas. This piece of legislation would amend the Customs Act and give more authority for the screening of containers. Right now, it seems like everyone wants a free-for-all, but when we get to question period, they all want us to do more in making sure that people are protected and that their vehicles are not stolen.

There are some good objectives in this piece of legislation and there is a need for government to provide oversight when it comes to dangerous goods and stolen vehicles leaving our country. What would the member have to say about that?

• (2400)

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, crime is certainly a problem. From my perspective, the Liberal government has not pursued crime as diligently as it should. Stolen vehicles are a real issue, and we currently have legislation in place that could deal with that. It is a matter of enforcement and empowering our law enforcement and CBSA officers to do the job that they have the ability to do. They just need to be given the direction to do it.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the Governor of the Bank of Canada confirmed this week what many have long suspected, which is that the carbon tax increased inflation. The bank has also been forced yet again to increase its key interest rate to 4.75% in an attempt to try to get a handle on inflation. The prime rate is now a staggering 6.95%, the highest it has been in over 20 years. If the financial markets are to be believed, analysts predict that the Bank of Canada will have to continue to increase interest rates. This is hurting Canadians.

In previous questions, given the very real and tough financial situation Canadians are facing, I asked that the government consider temporarily lowering the proposed carbon taxes. However, instead of thoughtful deliberation, I am often met with a barrage of indignation about not caring about the environment. It is as if the only two positions available on the issue are these: I love and support the Liberal position, and, thus, I am clearly a person who cares about the environment. Otherwise, I do not blindly support the Liberal position, which apparently makes me an anti-science, right-wing loon stick. Mr. Speaker, give me a break.

I care about the environment just as much as any Liberal does. However, I also care about Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet. I care about people not being able to buy a home in their lifetime and not having to wait 25 years before they can save enough for a down payment. I care that people are unable to put food on the table.

More than a quarter of a million people visited the Daily Bread Food Bank. This is the highest number of visits in its 40-year history. Does that not give the government pause? Is there really no one who is saying, "Hold on; something is not working here"?

Before the parliamentary secretary jumps into her grocery rebate talking point, the money that they talk up, which is Canadians' money that the government is giving back, is honestly not going to go very far these days. Given the state of food inflation, it is not going to buy more than a couple of weeks' worth of food for a family of four, if that.

The Governor of the Bank of Canada attributed 0.4% inflation to the carbon tax. I did some quick math to see what that 0.4% inflation will cost Canadians. I want to put it in perspective on a matter that I think matters for a lot of people right now: housing.

According to the CMHC, the average mortgage in the first quarter of this year was \$320,298. Thus, the carbon tax's 0.4% in inflation is costing Canadians \$1,281 per year in interest. When people are having to live paycheque to paycheque, that extra \$107 per month in housing costs can mean someone having to skip a meal.

Canada Day is less than a month away, and to help Canadians celebrate it, the government is adding yet another carbon tax: the clean fuel regulation. Aside from these never-ending taxes and interest rate hikes, the government also continues to be oblivious to tax cascading on gasoline. I for one did not campaign on the taxing of taxes. In the face of inflation-ignited economic pressures and staggering costs for Canadians, how, in good conscience, can the government continue to pick the pockets of consumers at the gas pumps?

I do not think it is right. Therefore, I call upon the government again to axe tax cascading. I also ask that it seriously reconsider its economy-debilitating and inflation-producing carbon tax policy.

● (2405)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it infuriating, in light of the week that we have had, to hear the member opposite, who ran on carbon pricing when he ran to be elected as a member of Parliament in downtown Toronto, say that he thinks it is appropriate to be in this place and arguing against a price on carbon pollution, which is one of the most effective mechanisms for fighting climate change.

What we do know from what we see right across this country is that climate change costs. It costs when we see people being evacuated from their homes. It costs when we see the costs of food production going up because of droughts and floods. Quite frankly, I would think the member opposite may want to reconsider his position and what he thinks of the long-term future for our country. We are at an important inflection point.

We know that carbon pricing is the most cost-effective way to address climate change. Compared to other alternatives, such as more regulations or big spending, experts agree that carbon pricing is, in fact, the least expensive of the options. We have seen carbon pricing work all over the world. In Europe, emissions are declining across industries thanks to carbon pricing.

The member opposite may not realize it, but even in our home city of Toronto, we are seeing industries making the important changes to the way that they heat and cool their buildings, and to the way they fuel their industry because of carbon pricing. It is having an impact right now so that we can avoid future natural disasters, which are only going to keep happening if we do not take action now.

I would ask the member opposite to think carefully when he talks about not taking action on climate change or when he says that he thinks he can parse out the different costs. Climate change is costing us. It is costing us every day.

There is something else that Canadians will see in July and that is the climate action incentive. In fact, none of the money stays with the government. It is not a tax. The Supreme Court of Canada

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decided that point. The money is returned to Canadians to offset the costs. Eight out of 10 Canadians will receive more from the climate action incentive than they will have paid in increased costs due to carbon pricing. It is a way to make polluters pay.

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Mr. Speaker, here we go again. Someone is with the Liberals if they care about the environment, but if they do not, they are a right-wing nut, right? Hunger kills people too. Long-term issues are important, but in the immediate term, there are people who are going hungry. There are people who cannot afford a home. It pains me. Frankly, I do not understand the lack of compassion and empathy.

Like me, she is a Toronto MP. In our communities, where housing costs are in the millions of dollars, that inflation is the equivalent of, on average, \$310 a month more that Torontonians have to pay.

I ask my colleague to please have some compassion for people who are struggling. I am not asking for it to be eliminated. I am asking for it to be temporarily reduced to provide relief for people who are struggling to make ends meet.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, I am going to say it again because maybe the member opposite did not hear me. Not taking action on climate change costs us. It costs us in increased food costs when there are droughts and floods impacting our farms. It impacts us when communities have to evacuate or have their homes destroyed by wildfires, as we are seeing in our communities. It costs us when we have to have firefighting resources directed to try to save those communities. Climate change costs us and we must all in this place take every action that we can to fight climate change. Carbon pricing is the most cost-effective way to do that.

● (2410)

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, tonight, climate-fuelled wildfires continue across the country, almost 15 times the 10-year average for this time of year.

Upward of 126,000 people across the country have been evacuated because of these fires. We know parents who are keeping their kids home from the playground because the air quality is so bad. Earlier this afternoon, I was pressing for an end to fossil fuel subsidies. I am glad to be back in the House, now after midnight, to keep pressing for solutions, real climate solutions, such as public transit, for example.

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For us in Ontario, transportation is the largest source of emissions, at 32%. While electric vehicles may be part of the solution, they also have many drawbacks, including contributing to more sprawl and poor land use planning decisions, the embodied carbon of manufacturing EVs, the rare metals needed to manufacture them, and the fact that owning a car remains out of reach for many in my community.

Canadian transit riders, by comparison, are disproportionately low-income workers. They are women and people from racialized communities. Many cannot afford to drive, and 64% have no access to a car, among those who take transit.

It is why, prior to this year's budget, I was pressing for the governing party to invest more in public transit, specifically recognizing that municipalities like mine are being forced to raise fares while, in some cases, simultaneously cutting services due to a lack of sufficient investment from higher orders of government, not that there is none, but that it is insufficient.

Specifically, groups across the country such as Environmental Defence and the Canadian Urban Transit Association were sounding the alarm at the time, warning that transit systems are at risk of falling into a death spiral without critical operational support that had run out since the worst of the pandemic. Sadly, the budget missed the mark, with no new transit funds committed.

This is what Nate Wallace, program manager for clean transportation at Environmental Defence had to say: "It is very disappointing to see that this budget does not include much-needed funds to support transit systems now."

Truthfully, to me, it is a shame that we are even talking about this. If we were responding to the climate crisis at the scale required, we would not just be talking about emergency operating funds. We need to be talking about going a step further, and I believe that the parliamentary secretary may agree with me on this, that we need federal funds so we can scale successful efforts to reduce fares altogether.

One example was started by a friend of mine, Dan Hendry, co-founder and director of Get on the Bus, who piloted a program in Kingston, Ontario, that provided on-bus training and free transit passes to high school students specifically. What was the impact? High school ridership increased from 28,000 rides in 2012 to close to 600,000 rides annually, which is exponential growth in ridership among high school students, by providing training and free bus passes.

Municipal leaders in my community are now looking at this model, and I would love for them to do it. I want young people in the Waterloo region to have better options. However, municipal leaders are having to discuss this without the benefit of federal funds to subsidize it.

My question is this: Will the governing party step up for these emergency funds and go further, recognizing the crisis we are in?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, public transit is dear to my heart. In fact, I do not own a car myself. I actually think an impor-

tant part of public transit is including active transportation infrastructure, which is why I am so proud our government created the first national active transportation fund.

Support for transit means greater quality of life for Canadians, and our government has made the largest investment in public transit in history. Since 2015, we have provided over \$20 billion in federal funding to support public transit projects in communities across Canada.

To ensure Canadians continue to benefit from transit options, the Government of Canada has introduced the permanent public transit program. I cannot underline the importance of that enough. It is permanent funding. It provides federal funding to support projects that deliver expanded urban transit networks, affordable zero-emission transit options, transit solutions for rural communities and additional active transportation options.

The permanent public transit program provides \$14.9 billion over eight years, including \$3 billion per year ongoing starting 2026-27. This commitment builds on the support already available for transit across the country from existing federal programs, support that has been crucial during the pandemic as ridership has seen significant declines.

The investments we are making in public transit will also reduce greenhouse gases through a commitment to support zero-emission transit options. That is why the Government of Canada is investing \$2.75 billion through the zero-emission transit fund to help transit and school bus operators fund new vehicles and necessary supporting infrastructure as they transition their fleets.

One exciting part is this also helps to create jobs in some of our communities. For example, the City of Toronto has purchased buses that are manufactured in Winnipeg, so there is another piece to this as well.

Outside urban areas, we are helping to get Canadians moving through the \$250-million rural transit solutions fund, the first federal fund to target the development of locally driven transit solutions for rural, remote and indigenous communities.

The Government of Canada's continued investments in transit will help provide options for Canadians. Our investment in public transit is helping to provide an essential service to many Canadians, generate billions of dollars in economic benefits and help Canada meet its climate targets as we approach 2050.

Adjournment Proceedings

● (2420)

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Now that public transit ridership in communities across the country is rebounding, the Government of Canada is supporting a strong and sustainable comeback. Through the safe restart agreement announced in 2020, our government committed to an investment of up to \$2 billion to support municipalities with COVID-19 operating costs. We also committed to an investment of an additional \$2.4 billion in funds to match provincial and territorial funding to support local transit authorities in cities and towns across Canada.

This investment is helping our cities and towns to keep their transit systems running so Canadians can get to work and home to their families safely. For example, in British Columbia the safe restart agreement committed an additional \$540 million in federal transit funding to support local transit authorities across the province.

The transit investments we are making will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, provide health benefits and better serve disadvantaged groups, including women, seniors, youth and people who have low incomes. Public transit is very important. We are continuing to support it, and we will continue to do so.

● (2415)

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I really appreciate, and I expected it this evening, that I do not need to convince the parliamentary secretary about the importance of transit, as a transit user herself.

It means we can have a more adult conversation about what needs to be done in the midst of the crisis we are in. Again, I recognize and appreciate the funds that have been allocated in the past on transit but also want her, and the governing party, to recognize that this is not sufficient.

First, it is not sufficient in terms of emergency operating funds that organizations across the country have been calling for and were not delivered. Second, it is not sufficient to ensure we can actually reduce fares to increase ridership at the pace required for young people, for example, to start habits of using transit from a young age and continue doing so in order for us to shift the curve on the climate crisis and address the transit and transportation emissions we know we have.

How will she continue to advocate within the governing party to see the investments increase at the pace this crisis requires?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite and I can agree public transit is very important, and it is important for all the reasons he listed, including the fact that it helps people to get around. It is better for emissions. It is better for clean air in our communities and frankly it allows for a certain amount of freedom, particularly for young people who are too young to even have a driver's licence. It is very important we have a strong public transit system.

That is why it is really important to recognize all of the investments our government has made to date, including, and I will reiterate this, the permanent public transit program, which was introduced in 2021. It provides \$14.9 billion over eight years, including \$3 billion per year ongoing starting 2026-27. That is how we are going to continue to support public transit.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, back in March, I travelled with committee members of the indigenous and northern affairs committee to my riding in Cambridge Bay, Kugluktuk and the Northwest Territories in Yellowknife. We met with many of my constituents and with Canadian Rangers in both of my communities. We went to the joint task force north headquarters office in Yellowknife as well.

We heard from my constituents, especially Canadian Rangers, who are extremely proud to serve and keep the Arctic secure for Arctic sovereignty. Canadian Rangers wear their uniforms with pride when they do their operations. They outlined some issues with being Canadian Rangers. When I asked my original question back in March, my question related to one of those issues, which included how long it takes for their reimbursements after they have completed operations. That was three months ago. Some have waited as long as six months to be reimbursed for their time and for repairs.

One of the images shared during these visits showed that the Canadian Armed Forces must be using horse carriages to get from Yellowknife to Ottawa to submit the paperwork to Ottawa, with Ottawa using that same mode of transportation to send the cheques back to the communities. Part of the response to my question was, "The CAF has recently streamlined the compensation process. This will expedite the process for Rangers to receive their reimbursements." Can the government please describe exactly in what way the process has been streamlined and by how much time the process has been cut so that Canadian Rangers do not have to wait months for their reimbursements?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during this time of increasing strategic competition and uncertainty in the global security environment, we in this House and Canadians across the country can take heart in the important work of the Canadian Rangers. Canadian Rangers contribute to the sovereignty and defence of Canada. They work in some of the most difficult-to-reach regions of our country. They help safeguard our northern, coastal and remote communities in the wake of natural disasters, and as we saw during the COVID-19 pandemic, they delivered groceries and chopped firewood for neighbours in need, among many other crucial tasks.

Canadian Rangers are an essential part of our military's operational capability too. They support search and rescue in parts of the country that fellow CAF members cannot access as quickly. They train with their colleagues to maintain a state of readiness. They are approximately 5,100 personnel strong, working in and around approximately 200 communities, and they know the land better than anyone.

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As part of this government's commitment to supporting them, the Minister of National Defence recently announced up to \$3.7 billion over the next 20 years to provide operational clothing and footwear to the Canadian Armed Forces, including Canadian Rangers. This is on top of our \$34.4-million investment to equip the Canadian Rangers with more than 6,000 new C-19 rifles manufactured in Kitchener, Ontario, by Colt Canada.

We know that Canadian Rangers use some of their own gear on the job, including some snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles and small boats, and we know there have been some challenges in reimbursing equipment damaged during approved military activities. I want to reassure this House and all Canadian Rangers that the Canadian Armed Forces have recently amended their compensation policy, and the leadership is looking at other ways to ease administrative challenges. We expect that this will help speed up reimbursing those claims and will ensure that equipment is repaired or replaced as efficiently as possible. We know the process can be further improved, and I am confident that they will get it right.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, I very much appreciate that very informative response. It does give me hope that Canadian Rangers will get their reimbursements sooner.

Another issue brought up with the process of reimbursing Canadian Rangers is how difficult it is to get repairs completed. The main reason is that most Nunavut communities do not have access to direct mechanics in their communities. Canadian Rangers must use limited bandwidth to find the right parts to fix their vehicles, describe them to the mechanics in the south and finally order them and have them delivered by airmail.

What will the government do to make it easier for Canadian Rangers to get their vehicles repaired so they can continue with their important operations to maintain Arctic sovereignty?

• (2425)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, I rise once more to reiterate that the Canadian Rangers have been a vital part of the Canadian Armed Forces for the last 75 years and to express our sincere gratitude for the critical work they do.

We know that efforts are under way within the Canadian Army to improve the reimbursement process for Canadian Rangers who file an appropriate claim for lost or damaged gear. We know that the military is looking at additional ways to streamline this process, for example, by amending the documentation requirements, which will make it easier for members to file a claim. The Canadian Rangers deserve no less.

Thanks to the Canadian Rangers, the present and future of Canada's northern, coastal and regional security are in good hands.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[*Translation*]

Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:26 a.m.)

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