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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 30, 2023

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1100)

[English]

BUILDING HOMES NOT BUREAUCRACY ACT

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC) moved that Bill C-356, An Act respecting payments by Canada and requirements in respect of housing and to amend certain other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, the Prime Minister admitted he was not worth the cost. He found out that I was holding a monster rally in a Liberal stronghold, and he panicked. His phones lit up as Atlantic Canadian Liberal MPs, bawling their eyes out, pleaded with him to relent to the pressure that the Leader of the Opposition was mounting to axe the tax.

The Prime Minister said that he was stiff in spine and that he would never back down, and the Liberal MPs from the Atlantic caucus said that they would oust him as leader and he would lose his job. What would that do for his ego? The Prime Minister said, in that case, that they would pull together a press conference that afternoon, try to time it right before the Conservative leader's great rally in Windsor, where a thousand people were scheduled to rise up against the tax, and they would promise to pause the tax until after the election.

Now Atlantic Canadians know that if they elect the Prime Minister, they will get a massive tax hike on their home heating oil. If they elect the common-sense Conservatives, they will have tax-free heat. That is a pretty simple choice. The Prime Minister has just defined the issue of the next election. They can vote for him and have a massive home heating tax, or they vote for common-sense Conservatives and we will axe the tax for everyone and forever. Who would you vote for, Mr. Speaker?

The Prime Minister sent out one of his Newfoundland MPs to say that the reason only some Canadians were getting a pause on the carbon tax was that other Canadians did not vote Liberal. Soon they will have a new income tax rate for provinces that do not elect Liberal MPs, a new sales tax rate and new tax rates everywhere

else. The problem with this bloody-minded divide-and-conquer tax strategy is that some Liberals seem to have failed to win over the Prime Minister's heart.

The Liberal MP for Sudbury does not get a carbon tax exemption. The two Liberal MPs in Thunder Bay, a very cold climate, do not get a carbon tax exemption. The Liberal member for Nickel Belt did not get a carbon tax exemption in those harsh, cold northern Ontario communities that use gas and propane. The extremely ineffective Liberal MP for Edmonton Centre did not get a carbon tax exemption. There is the loquacious, loud and never quiet member from Winnipeg, which they call "Winterpeg" because it is cold. The member for Winnipeg North, a man of many words but few actions, has failed to get a carbon tax exemption for Winnipeggers.

Apparently those people are forced to pay higher prices for their heat, because their MPs are so ineffective that they could not mount pressure on the Prime Minister to back down.

● (1105)

It is proven that he is not worth the cost, just like he has not been worth the cost for housing. After eight years, the Prime Minister has doubled mortgage payments, doubled the rent and doubled the needed down payment for a home.

Let us just review the housing hell he has caused since he promised to lower housing costs. It now takes 25 years to save up for a down payment in Toronto. Before the Prime Minister, a person could pay off a mortgage in that time. Families are now stretching out their mortgage terms to 90 years and 120 years, because interest rates on their exorbitant mortgages have stretched out the amortization. People used to pay off an entire mortgage 25 years in and then they could retire mortgage free.

Now, not only will they never be able to pay off their mortgage in their entire lifetime, but even if they hand their house and mortgage to their kids, they might not be able to pay it off in their lifetime. They would then have to hand the house to a third generation that would still inherit a mortgage. So much for the government taking on debt so Canadians do not have to.

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Under the Prime Minister, homes cost 50% more than they do in the United States, and a person can buy a castle in Sweden for the price of a two bedroom in Kitchener. Toronto is now ranked the worst housing bubble in the world by UBS Bank. Vancouver is the third-most unaffordable housing market on earth, when we compare housing costs to income, and Toronto is the 10th. Vancouver is now more unaffordable than New York, London, England and Singapore, which is a tiny island with 2,000 times more people per square kilometre than Canada.

Canada should be the cheapest place in the world, because, of course, we have more land per person than all but four countries on the planet. In other words, we have a lot of space, just not a lot of homes. In fact, we have fewer homes per capita than all other G7 countries even though we have by far the most land on which to build. In fact, we have fewer homes per capita today than we did eight years ago when the Prime Minister took office, promising more homes and more affordable homes.

If members want the best all-in-one measurement of the Prime Minister's performance on housing, look at the OECD, which compared housing costs to income, starting in 2015 to present, among all 37 OECD countries. How has the ratio of home prices to family incomes grown in Canada relative to the other 36 OECD countries? We are the second worst. In other words, housing costs outgrew incomes in Canada at a faster pace than in all but one of the other 36 OECD countries. This is a new problem that occurred after the Prime Minister took office and it is a problem that is unique to Canada. He cannot blame some prior government and he cannot blame other countries, because it is worse than Canada has ever been and worse than almost anywhere else in the world.

This is a made-in-Canada problem unique to the Prime Minister. Why? Because he has spent the last eight years building bureaucracy rather than building homes. He brags that he has the most expensive housing programs. He complains that when I was housing minister, my programs did not cost as much, and he is absolutely right about that. I had far more affordable housing programs. In fact, there were far few billions in my housing programs than there are in his programs, but we do not measure the success by how expensive we can be. We measure success by how affordable we can be.

He even made up a fact. He looked at a CBC headline, which is always a dangerous thing to do, and he said that when I was minister we only built 99 homes with \$300 million. I thought, "What the heck is he talking about?" I have a mind like a steel trap. I would have remembered if I had announced a \$300-million housing project, and so I checked into it. Here is what actually happened.

First, the program was created in 2008, a half decade before I even became the minister. Second, it did not spend any money. The program was designed to encourage private home ownership by first nations. It invested capital of \$300 million, but did not spend a penny. Because the money was invested commercially, it actually grew to \$380 million. Also, it was not 99 homes; 7,000 homes were built, purchased or renovated for first nations people.

• (1110)

It did not cost any money. It made a profit and it built, renovated and bought 7,000 homes. By the way, the entire thing is run by first nations themselves. No wonder the Liberals do not like any of that,

but forget the facts. If I had to deal with the bare body of facts in litigating the housing file, I do not know what I would do. I might have to hallucinate to come up with some other facts too. I might even get desperate enough to read CBC headlines as well.

In the meantime, let us talk about the real common-sense plan to bring in homes Canadians can afford. Let us talk about my bill, the building homes not bureaucracy act.

Principle number one is that it will require cities to boost home completions by 15% per year or they will lose federal infrastructure money. We give them \$5 billion a year in direct transfers. They can pretty much do whatever they want with that money. I am saying that this is going to be a housing incentive. We are going to start paying city bureaucrats the way real estate agents get paid, on volume. They get housing completed, they get more money. They do not get it completed, they get less money.

The bureaucrats will have to wake up every morning and think about how they can approve as many permits as quickly as possible so Canadians have a place to live. It is going to be very mathematical. I will require them to hit 15% more home building per year. If they beat that by, say, 10%, they get 10% more money. If they miss it by 10%, they get 10% less money. Maybe then the bureaucrats and the mayors will wake up everyday and think about how they can get it done quickly. Mayors would then be forced to move their offices right into the permitting room, a big open room with big screens. Permitting times would be on one wall showing the number of homes waiting, how many people are on hold right now and how many homes are being held up. Imagine if they had big screens in city hall and all the bureaucrats were busy motoring away, trying to get to a "yes" and getting things done. Would that not be incredible if we actually focused on results, rather than on building more bureaucracy? That is what my bill would incentivize.

Right now, by contrast, the current housing minister has come up with a program that works very simply. He calls up the mayors. He says to them that everyone knows housing is hell after eight years of the Liberal government. He asks if he can go to the town and take credit for homes that it were already going to build. He then will write a big cheque for it if the town does that. He shows up and notes that there was already a subdivision being built. If the town gives the minister credit for that, in exchange he will stroke a big cheque for \$40 million with which the government can build more bureaucracy. Then the bureaucrats will be happy, the politicians will be happy and everyone else will be miserable. That is what he has been doing.

We know that this is not leading to more housing construction, because housing starts this year are down 9%. Yes, he can show up and say, “Look at these 24,000 homes, which were already going to be built”, but the overall housing starts, the number of shovels put into ground, is down 9%. Two years after the so-called housing accelerator was created, not a single solitary new house has been completed; a \$4-billion housing program that does not build housing. My plan would create a strict, mathematical formula that pays for results.

The second principle is that we will require federally funded transit stations to be surrounded by housing so people can live right next to the bus or train. I have been right across the country and countless stations do not have housing. In fact, in Winnipeg, the gatekeepers actually stepped in to block 2,000 new homes right next to a transit station that was built for those homes. They had to get slapped down in the courts. What did the Liberals do? They gave more money to the incompetent politicians at Winnipeg city hall to block housing for the people who needed it.

I am going to put all the federal funds for transit stations into a trust. The city will not get the money for the transit station until there are apartments occupied all around the station. That way they will have to hurry up and approve the housing if they want to get that money. We will, again, pay for results.

Next, the bill would require that the federal minister of public works do a full inventory and come to the House within months to announce all the buildings that would be sold in order to build housing. The Prime Minister promised that eight years ago. In eight years, with all the 37,000 federal buildings, the 6.2 million square metres of office space, and the thousands of acres, how many homes has he managed to build on that federal land and in those federal buildings? I asked him and he did not know either. It is 13; not 13,000, not 1,300. My bill would make it mandatory by law that the minister come here with a plan to sell off 15% of all federal buildings and thousands of acres of federal land so that we can build on that land that is being used for nothing.

● (1115)

On the fourth principle, federal bureaucrats will have to get their act together as well. I was speaking with a builder who builds beautiful environmentally friendly homes and apartments in Atlantic Canada. He is in the process of building a carbon-neutral building right now. It will be the greenest apartment complex in the world. He had to wait two years for CMHC to approve the financing on that building.

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The benchmark is supposed to be 60 days, so here is how life is going to work around here when I am prime minister with what is in this bill. CMHC bureaucrats will have to hit the 60-day target within six months. If they do not, I am cutting their pay in half. If they do not do it within a year, I am firing the entire executive. It is right in the bill. That is life. If a barber does not cut hair well, they get fired. If a mechanic has an engine block fall out, they get fired.

In the real world, when people do not do their job, they do not get bonuses. That is not how life works under the Prime Minister for the senior, six-figure bureaucracy. This bill would put an end to that. We are going to pay for results, not for bureaucracy and the privilege of incompetent bureaucrats who make life miserable and costly for everyone else.

The building homes not bureaucracy act is common sense, the common sense of the common people united for our common home: their home, my home, our home. Let us bring it home.

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the thing I think the hon. member left out of his speech is that under his watch as the so-called housing minister, there were 800,000 fewer affordable housing units.

Why go to war with mayors over infrastructure? Infrastructure is the key to getting more houses built. Why would he cut that? Inevitably, he will see fewer homes getting built.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, this will have to be a case for *Unsolved Mysteries*. He claims that when I was minister, 800,000 homes went missing. What happened to them? Did aliens from outer space come and just pluck these homes? What has remained? Are the basements still there? Where did they go? These guys are unbelievable. It sounds like the member is having an LSD flashback or something.

Let us talk about when I was housing minister. Rent cost half as much. It cost \$950 to rent the average one-bedroom. Now it is about \$2,000. The average mortgage payment on a newly purchased average home was \$1,400. Now it is \$3,500, an increase of 150%. The average down payment was a very modest \$20,000. That was my record.

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We are not proposing to cut infrastructure money. We are proposing to link dollars for cities to the number of homes their bureaucrats and mayors allow to be completed. It is an incentive. Those who build more homes will get more money. That is the real world. That is common sense. Let us bring it home.

• (1120)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will tell the leader of the Conservatives exactly what happened to those 800,000 units: The rent went up from \$750 a month to over \$2,000. That is what happened. That is where those 800,000 units went. That is how the Conservatives lost affordable rental apartments for people who needed them.

In the bill the member put forward, there is zero mention of social housing or the need. The Conservative leader talked about Singapore. It has 80% social housing. What does Canada have? It has 3.5%. The Conservatives cut the co-op program and gutted social housing. That is why we have this crisis.

Why are the Conservatives not supporting communities in building social housing and co-op housing?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, people want more homes and more affordable homes; they do not want nationalized, government-controlled homes.

When I was minister, the average rent was \$950 and now it is over \$2,000 under the NDP-Liberal government. When I was minister, the average mortgage payment on an average newly purchased house was \$1,400. Now it is \$3,500. Housing was not just affordable; it was cheap when I was minister, and Canadians could afford to buy a house.

Under the NDP government in B.C., B.C. is probably the most unaffordable housing market in the world. The NDP government tried the Soviet-style experiment in the NDP's heartland of B.C. and we know the result. It is pain, it is misery and it is tent cities. We do not need a Soviet-style takeover of housing. We need Canadians to have a chance to own their own homes, and that is what they will have when I am prime minister.

[Translation]

The Speaker: I would like to once again issue a reminder so that we can start the week off right. When the member for Vancouver East has the floor to ask a question, I would ask all members to remain silent so that we can hear her, and I would ask her to do the same when her question is being answered.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to hear what the leader of the official opposition has to say. He seems to have a magic wand this morning. It is funny. We are currently examining a bill that he thinks will fix everything. He found new culprits to blame for the housing crisis: municipalities and mayors. That is the Conservative Party's approach. It is dangerous to accuse people who go to work every morning to try to improve things in their communities.

The Conservatives are talking about bypassing bureaucracy, but what they are proposing would do exactly the opposite. My colleague is talking out of both sides of his mouth. He wants to add new targets and objectives and he wants to make all the rules for

municipalities. I would like to remind my colleague from Carleton of the rules. Section 92 of the Constitution—

The Speaker: I do not want to interrupt the member, but his time is almost up. Would he please ask his question so that the Leader of the Opposition has enough time to answer?

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague this. Why does he not respect the Constitution? Why does he not respect provincial autonomy? Why does he want the federal government to dictate the rules of the game when Quebecers never asked it to?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the law dictates nothing to the municipalities. It does not dictate rules, only results.

The federal government is already giving \$5 billion to the municipalities. That means the federal level is already involved, and I simply want to match up those dollars to results. I do not want to pay the mayor of Montreal to prevent the construction of 24,000 homes, as she did. We are not going to give money to municipalities only to have them block housing construction. We are going to encourage them to build affordable and private housing that Quebecers can afford to buy.

• (1125)

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is good to be here talking about housing. The Conservatives talk a really good game. During question period and during the last 15 minutes, there has been passionate discussion of housing. However, when the rubber meets the road, they are nowhere to be found.

The Leader of the Opposition just glossed over his loss of 800,000 units of housing. When someone questioned him on it, he had the gall to answer with insults. The reality is that there was no action on housing in the decades previous. We find ourselves in a crisis that is decades in the making, but we are ready and are up to the task.

There is something the leader said that I do want to correct. He said that housing starts were down. Housing starts are actually up 4%: 20% in Toronto and 98% in the city of Montreal.

This is fundamentally an important issue for all Canadians, and what does the Leader of the Opposition want to do? He wants to go to war with municipalities. However, municipalities understand the crisis before them. It is one thing to come up here and pound a desk and say they are going to take away infrastructure money from municipalities. That does not work.

We need to work with municipalities. We need to focus on infrastructure, because infrastructure is what is going to get housing built. We cannot just take an empty field and plop houses down on it. The aliens the Leader of the Opposition talks about that took away housing are not going to deliver them on lands, on empty fields. There needs to be sewage. There needs to be water. There needs to be electricity. There need to be all of the services that are required. That is forgotten.

The Conservatives would rather have a big speech, puff up their chests, pound their desks and ignore the reality of getting housing built. It is about rolling up our sleeves. It is about getting the job done. They are not interested in that. They are just interested in slogans.

Their plan is to cut funding to municipalities and increase the tax on rental construction. The Leader of the Opposition spent the first few minutes of his speech talking about taxes. He left out the part where he is going to raise the GST on purpose-built rental construction. It is shocking.

I would like to point to a housing expert, Mike Moffatt, who said of the Conservative plan, “This is a sign that the federal Conservatives don't understand the urgency or scale of the housing crisis.” Again, they pound their fists. They yell. They scream. They jump up and down. They call members names. They heckle. However, they have no plan. They have smug comments and smug heckles, but no plan to actually get the job done.

They can look Canadians in the eye and say they will do it, but they are not going to do anything to do it. They are going to yell at people and cut their salaries and then starve municipalities of infrastructure funds. That is all they have. That is not going to get anything built. Their plan is to do less than what they were doing when they were in government, which is nothing. It is shocking that they want to take steps backwards on this file.

I look to cities across the country. I have met with mayors and municipal officials. I have met with municipal officials in my own community. There are infrastructure challenges. In the city of St. Catharines, sewer upgrades are required to get more housing built. We can approve a permit for a 20-storey building, but if there is no sewer capacity, we cannot build it.

I know it is not fun or sexy to talk about sewer capacity in this place, although some people may think it is very on point to be talking about sewer capacity in the House of Commons, but these are the important things that are required to get housing built. If the leader just wants permits to be approved, maybe that is a great thing, but if infrastructure money is not going to be applied and the federal government is not going to be there, then the Conservatives do not understand the depths of this crisis.

• (1130)

This is fundamentally a crisis not only of housing, but also of infrastructure. We need to do more, and we need to be partners with municipalities and provinces. The more partners we have, the more housing we can get built.

We are ready for this. The housing accelerator fund is already seeing results. We have had partners across the country. We have

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seen that, in Kelowna, Halifax, London and Hamilton, housing is getting built. We are making more housing legal in this country. The Minister of Housing is accomplishing this with as of right four units housing being built in these municipalities.

This will allow for greater housing built for generations in this community with the housing accelerator fund, and to also fund those infrastructure needs and those bottlenecks. Again, they talk a good game. We can pound our desks, and we can yell and scream, but the member did not mention the bottlenecks in our system and how he is going to accomplish that, apart from going to war with the mayors, which is something I do not think Canadians want us to do. They want us working together. They want us to come up with a plan for more housing and work together.

I genuinely look forward to more of these announcements and to see more municipalities step back from NIMBY policies, which have plagued municipalities across this country, and ask how we get more housing built. I know in my hometown, there are many ambitious councillors who want to see that work happen, and I am looking forward to hopefully making announcements there soon.

Over the course of generations, we have seen communities across the countries make decisions that actively restrict the ability of communities to build houses for their residents. It creates challenges for building livable communities, but the Government of Canada has stepped up to directly support more housing. We are actively working with all partners in the government and private sector to solve this generational challenge.

Again, we did not hear from the Leader of the Opposition how we are going to work together on housing. He is just going to yell at bureaucrats. He is going to get into fights with mayors. That is not how we get anything built in this country. I guess that explains his record as the so-called housing minister under the Harper government, when nothing got built and there were 800,000 fewer units of affordable housing when the Conservatives left office.

Through the national housing strategy, we have seen housing get built or repaired. We have had 126,000 units of housing repaired and 113,000 new homes. The Conservatives would tell us that they did not support that and they would not support that. They would already be 200,000 more units behind if they were in charge. Adding that to the list, that would have been a million units fewer of affordable housing if they had continued to be in charge and if the member had continued to be the minister.

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Things are changing. There is an understanding. We are going to continue to work with our municipal partners across the board, and that is why we have brought forward legislation to remove the GST on purpose-built rental housing. What are the Conservatives doing on that? A tangible thing they can actually do is help expedite this. They are stalling and delaying, and are not working with the government.

The Conservatives talk a good game, and I am sure there will be many more passionate speeches about how the Conservatives care, but when it comes to tangible things they can do, like voting for the affordability legislation before this Parliament, they are nowhere to be found. They are silent on the issue, and silent on any effort to actually approve homes. I get that their nature is to want to get into a fight. They want to yell, scream and hurl insults, and come up with slogans. I think their environmental plan is based on recycling slogans, but slogans do not get anything built.

Unfortunately, that is where the Conservatives are. We are ready to stand up and work with municipal and provincial partners. We are going to get housing built. This plan is half-baked at best. It is not going to work. We are going to get the job done.

• (1135)

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-356, and I have a lot to say about this bill. In my speech, I will try to address first the Conservative position and then that of the Bloc Québécois. If I have time, I will speak briefly on homelessness.

Bill C-356 reiterates the Conservative leader's rhetoric on the housing crisis. In his view, the municipalities are responsible for the housing crisis by tying up real estate development in useless red tape. Let us recall that the Conservatives were among the first to play politics on this issue by directly attacking municipal democracy when they stated, during their opposition day on May 2, 2023, that they wanted to penalize municipalities that do not build enough housing.

The Bloc Québécois has long held that those best positioned to know the housing needs in their respective jurisdictions are the provinces, Quebec and the municipalities. The federal government has no business interfering. Moreover, let us keep in mind that housing is the exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. Should our colleagues need a reminder, I invite them to refer to subsections 92(13) and 92(16) of the Constitution, which give the provinces exclusive jurisdiction over property and civil rights as well as matters of a local nature. The federal government therefore has no right to interfere.

Let us keep in mind the importance of municipal policy, the importance of this level of government and its closeness to the people. Municipalities know their areas and the actual needs of their citizens best. They are the ones that provide direct services and organize their living environment and their neighbourhoods.

When the Conservatives say that municipalities and cities are the ones that delay the process, that is nonsense. They call the phenomenon "not in my backyard". We believe that the Conservatives prefer to dodge public consultations that help obtain social licence

by communicating effectively with the neighbours of a given project. Instead, they prefer to give a free pass to real estate developers. To their mind, the public consultations that cities and citizens are calling for are a terrible scourge that harms everyone and blocks the construction of new homes. Nonetheless, the Conservatives should understand why public consultations exist; they exist particularly because we do not build just anything, anywhere, willy-nilly.

When it was elected in 2011, the Conservative government did not see fit to increase the budget to assist households still deemed to be inadequately housed, letting it stagnate at its 2011 level, or \$250 million a year. When it introduced its 2015 budget, that government chose not to extend the funding for social housing stock. Bill C-356 blames the entire housing shortage on municipalities, but this crisis would not be nearly as serious as it is now, if, under the Conservatives, the federal government had not withdrawn funding for the construction of social housing.

The bill aims to control municipalities. It is an irresponsible bill that denies any federal responsibility in the matter and confirms that the Conservative Party will do nothing to address the crisis if it comes into power.

It is also a bill that offers no solutions. There are lots of condos on the market at \$3,000 a month. What is lacking is housing that people can afford. That is where the government should focus its efforts. This notion, however, is completely absent from the Conservative leader's vision. Bill C-356 gives developers the keys to the city so they can build more \$3,000-a-month condos.

In short, the bill's solution to the housing crisis is to let the big real estate developers do anything, anywhere, in any way they see fit. The populist solution offered by the bill ignores the fact that people do not only live in housing, but also in neighbourhoods and cities. That means we need infrastructure for water and sewers, for roads, and for public and private services, such as schools and grocery stores. Cities have a duty to impose conditions and to ensure that their citizens are well served.

Bill C-356 is also disrespectful and divisive. Since 1973, under the Robert Bourassa government, the Quebec Act respecting the Ministère du Conseil exécutif has prevented Ottawa from dealing directly with Quebec municipalities. The Canada-Quebec Infrastructure Framework Agreement reflects this reality, stipulating that Ottawa has no right to intervene in establishing priorities.

What Bill C-356 proposes is to tear up this agreement. Considering that the agreement took 27 months to negotiate, Bill-356 promises two years of bickering, during which all projects will be paralyzed. In the middle of the housing crisis, this is downright disastrous.

• (1140)

If housing starts in a city do not increase as required by Ottawa, Bill C-356 proposes cutting gas tax and public transit transfers by 1% for each percentage point shortfall under the target it unilaterally set. For example, housing starts in Quebec dropped 60% this year instead of increasing 15%. If Bill C-356 were in place, this would mean a reduction in transfer payments of about 75%.

Bill C-356 goes even further, proposing that financing for urban transit be withheld if cities do not meet the 15% target it unilaterally set. This policy would result in a greater use of automobiles, since transit would only be built after the fact, not in conjunction with new housing developments.

Furthermore, the Bloc Québécois already has a wide range of proposals for solutions to deal with the housing crisis across Quebec and Canada. First, we welcomed the Canada-Quebec housing agreement signed in 2020. This agreement is valued at \$3.7 billion, half of which comes from the federal government. However, we lamented the fact that negotiations for this agreement spanned three years. Funds that should have gone to Quebec were frozen until the two levels of government found common ground. The Bloc deplores the federal government's constant need to dictate how Quebec spends its money. Quebec wants its piece of the pie, no strings attached. If it had gotten it in 2017, Quebec could have started the construction and renovation of several housing projects, including social housing, three years sooner. This definitely would have eased the current housing crisis.

Unconditional transfers would greatly simplify the funding process. The multitude of different agreements creates more red tape and delays the actual payment of the sums in question. The Bloc also reiterated how important it is that federal funding address first and foremost the needs for social and deeply affordable housing, which are the most critical. Here is what we proposed during the last election:

The Bloc Québécois proposes that Ottawa gradually reinvest in social, community and deeply affordable housing until it reaches 1% of its total annual revenue and implement a consistent and predictable funding stream instead of ad hoc agreements.

The Bloc Québécois proposes that federal surplus properties be repurposed for social, community and deeply affordable housing as a priority in an effort to address the housing crisis.

The Bloc Québécois will propose a tax on real estate speculation to counter artificial overheating of the housing market.

The Bloc Québécois will propose a reform of the home buyers' plan to account for the many different realities and family situations of Quebec households.

The Bloc Québécois proposes that the federal government undertake a financial restructuring of programs under the national housing strategy to create an acquisition fund. This fund would enable co-ops and non-profits to purchase housing buildings that are already on the market, ensure they remain affordable and turn them into social, community and deeply affordable housing.

The Bloc Québécois will ensure that Quebec receives its fair share of funding, without conditions, from federal programs to combat homelessness, while also calling for the funding released in the past year during the pandemic to be made permanent.

In fact, I floated these ideas during the last election campaign in a regional debate in the Eastern Townships. The groups really liked the Bloc's recommendations. However, they lamented the fact that both the Conservatives and the Liberals did not attend the debate. Their absence did not go unnoticed. When parties say they want to

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make housing a priority but do not show up for the debates, what message does that send?

I am going to take a few moments to quickly talk about homelessness, a phenomenon that is on the rise throughout Quebec and Canada. We are now seeing that homelessness is becoming regionalized. In 2018, 80% of homeless people were in Montreal, compared to 60% in 2022. I am seeing the effects of this in Granby, which is in Shefford, the riding I represent. It is having an impact. The increase in homelessness is caused by issues stemming from the financialization of housing and real estate speculation. All of that reduces the availability of affordable housing.

In conclusion, the Bloc Québécois will be voting against Bill C-356.

I would like to add one last thing. Families and seniors affected by the housing crisis need realistic solutions for social, community and deeply affordable housing that meets their needs. Granby and the broader Shefford community are already concerned about social housing and certainly do not need to be hit with another example of Conservative misinformation. Our communities are capable enough to handle this themselves.

• (1145)

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is faced with a housing crisis. The crisis did not happen overnight. In fact, it began 30 years ago. People cannot afford to buy or rent a home. Canadians are living in cars, and homeless encampments are popping up in communities big and small throughout the country. In Vancouver East, we have a permanent encampment. Earlier this month, the metro Vancouver homelessness count showed a 32% increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness since 2020, with 33% of those people being indigenous. Rent has skyrocketed. Young people have no hope of ever owning their home.

Predictably, the Conservatives are suggesting that helping wealthy investors and developers would solve the housing crisis for Canadians who cannot afford to buy or rent the very homes that these wealthy investors are putting on the market. It is no joke: The Leader of the Opposition talks about the elite and the gatekeepers; he should look in the mirror and at those around him. Half of those on the Conservatives' national council are lobbyists for big pharma, big tech, oil, anti-union corporations and, we can guess what else, real estate companies. The Conservative leader is the ultimate lackey for wealthy CEOs, whose main job is to help perpetuate corporate greed.

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The Conservative leader is not who he says he is. He wants people to believe that he cares about the housing crisis, people and their families and what they are faced with. If that is the case, why is he completely silent about the wealthy investors who are displacing renters by renovicting them so that they can jack up rent? The Conservative leader's housing bill does not even mention the very people who are in desperate need of a home that they can afford. The bill offers no solutions to those who are being renovicted so that wealthy investors can jack up rent and increase their profits.

As part of the Harper government, the Conservative leader had an influential role in the administration. He sat at the cabinet table. He was even the minister of housing. What happened during that time? Not only did the Conservatives gut housing programs, but they also cancelled the national co-op housing program; in addition, right under his nose, Canada lost 800,000 units of rental apartments that cost \$750 a month. While tenants were displaced, wealthy investors and corporate landlords stuffed their pockets.

What did the Conservative leader do? He cheered on the private sector: the people who are benefitting from Canada's housing crisis. He celebrated the fact that the Liberals gave special tax treatments to real estate investment trusts, whose business model is just to maximize profit. Even now, there is mounting evidence that wealthy investors are displacing tenants and jacking up rent. The Conservatives are still on the side of wealthy investors. We can talk about gatekeepers; it is gatekeeping for wealthy investors.

As Maya Angelou said, "When someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time." This is just another Conservative plan to line the pockets of their friends and insiders. While they do it, they also plan to kick municipalities in the shins by slashing funding that communities need. This is just what the Conservatives did before: They cut funding to housing programs, downloaded housing to local governments and then blamed them for not delivering the homes that people need. We should make no mistake: It was the Conservatives who cancelled the national co-op housing program and cut funding for social housing in 1993.

The Liberals, of course, are no better. After promising during the election that they would restore the cut funding, they then went and cancelled the national affordable housing program. Much to the glee of the wealthy investors and corporate landlords, both Liberal and Conservative governments let the private sector run the show for 30 years. Both parties relied on the private market to deliver the housing Canadians need, and we can see where it got us. Rents are up to \$2,600 a month in Toronto and to almost \$3,000 in Vancouver. Hundreds and thousands of people experience homelessness annually. Shelters are underfunded and over capacity.

• (1150)

I have met schoolchildren who are worried about their housing situation and women fleeing domestic violence who have to return to abusers because they are locked out of the market and the housing supports are not there for them. I have worked with families whose children were apprehended, just because they could not meet their housing needs; they could not afford the rent.

The wealthy investors and developers that the Conservatives want to give a blank cheque to are the same people who created a housing market that not even the middle class can afford to com-

pete in. When the Leader of the Opposition said people were living in a shack, it was actually regular housing that people live in. Across the country, financialized landlords are pursuing aggressive rent increases and displacing long-time tenants, including seniors on fixed incomes, as a business tactic.

Enough is enough. More for-profit solutions are not going to change the course. There is a glaring absence of any measures to ensure that homes built are actually affordable to everyday people in the Conservative leader's bill. There is zero mention of the need to build up Canada's social and co-op housing stock in the Conservative leader's blueprint to fix Canada's housing crisis. He wants us to believe that the wealthy investors will suddenly wake up and decide that they are not driven by profit anymore.

It is a delusional fantasy. It will not happen in a million years. There is zero common sense in that belief.

We have seen the results of the trickle-down theory of boosting for-profit housing over the last 30 years. The 30 years of underinvestment from Liberal and Conservative governments has resulted in the loss of over 500,000 units of affordable housing that would otherwise have been built today.

Conservatives and Liberals slashed programs that built and protected affordable housing in 1993, and the next Conservative government lost 800,000 units of low-cost rental apartments priced at \$750 a month. They allowed wealthy investors to buy up the low-cost rental apartments and jack up the rent to maximize profit.

The result is that Canadians are locked out of neighbourhoods they love, where their family, friends and jobs are. To be clear, housing prices also went up, not down, under the Conservative government. There is no question: The Liberals are no better. Canadians have lost another 250,000 homes under the Liberals. That is over one million homes lost while both the Liberals and Conservatives were at the helm. Neither party will even acknowledge the need to stop the loss of existing low-cost rental apartments to wealthy investors and corporate landlords.

Steve Pomeroy found that, on average, we have been losing 15 affordable homes to rent erosion for every one unit built. Hamilton is losing 26 affordable homes for every new one created. The NDP takes a different view. We believe in investing in people. We believe in putting people before profits. We are saying that we should keep the private sector's hands off public lands.

Doug Ford promised to deliver housing. He made backroom deals to carve up the Greenbelt, to make his developer friends even richer. He bulldozed local planning, only to backtrack months later. What does he have to show for it? He has three cabinet resignations, a criminal investigation by the RCMP and no affordable housing.

Unused federal buildings should be leased to non-profits to provide housing for people in perpetuity. It needs to stay in public hands. Instead of privatizing Canada's federal lands for wealthy investors and corporate landlords, they should be returned to the first nations, Inuit and Métis people that they were taken from. The legacy of colonialism has led to drastic overrepresentation of first nations, Inuit and Métis people experiencing chronic homelessness and living in tent encampments.

This has to stop. Lands should either be returned to indigenous peoples, the first peoples, or they should be kept in public hands through non-profits so that we can get that housing built for people. In terms of suggesting that we could rely on the market to address the housing crisis, we have already seen that play before. This is what the Conservative leader is advocating. Just now, he suggested that, oh my goodness, building social housing and co-op housing is a Soviet-style model. He should give his head a shake. He should actually go into the communities and check out the social housing and the co-op housing. They are models that are to be envied. That is what we have to do address the housing crisis, not just strictly rely on the market.

It is time for action, not more of the same.

• (1155)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Carleton, our next prime minister, for sharing his time with me on proposing his important private member's bill.

Those watching at home today will probably be familiar with our interventions during question period. Every day, our Conservative team stands up on behalf of everyday Canadians who are suffering after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government. Our job, of course, is to hold ministers to account and try—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Vancouver East is rising on a point of order.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I was here for the speech by the Leader of the Opposition. He did not mention, at any point in time, that he was sharing his slot with anyone, so I seek—

[Translation]

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Vancouver East for her intervention. However, I would like to reassure her that the member for Carleton is not sharing his time with anyone. It is this member's turn in the debate schedule for this bill.

The hon. member for Thornhill.

[English]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, our job here in the House of Commons is to hold ministers to account and to try to get answers to why so many things have gone wrong here in Canada. However, every day, members on the other side of the House get up and insist that Canadians have never had it so good, and that things

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are going so well in this country. It is as if they do not talk to anyone at home. To make their point, they bring meaningless, manufactured statistics that are supposed to show how great they really are. In fact, the statistics show how out of touch and clueless they truly are.

One of Liberals' favourite tactics is to talk about the global forces, other countries and wars in distant lands, to pass the buck from Ottawa to someone else, to somewhere else and to something else. We are talking about housing today, like we have been for many months and even years, but the Liberals still do not seem to get the message that the cost of a home in this country is just too high for anyone. Therefore, I am going to try to put it in terms that they would understand, showing exactly how out of control our housing crisis has become. I am going to take some prices and see what someone can buy here and what they can buy elsewhere, which has the added benefit of showing Canadians that this is a uniquely Canadian problem, at least in scope.

I will start in Toronto. A two-bedroom house covered in graffiti, in the Kensington Market neighbourhood, is on the market for \$2.8 million. The very same amount of money can buy a 20-bedroom castle on five acres in Scotland. It has 45 rooms, a movie theatre, a botanical garden, a pond and even a private beach, and it has the added bonus of being in a country with no carbon tax. If someone does not want to live in the big smoke, I can understand. In fact, I do not really understand why people do not want to live there, but I can understand why they would have their preferences. In Kitchen-er, there is another two-bedroom home up for a steal, \$1.8 million. Here is a spoiler alert: It is not a steal at all. It is a tiny property with a little backyard and hardly enough room to raise a family. It costs \$1.8 million, and if someone wants a bit more breathing room, maybe they could consider spending that \$1.8 million on a lake-facing castle on a four-acre property in Sweden. There would be much more space for everyone.

If people are still not convinced, let us go to Vancouver, where the member opposite is from, where a three-bedroom house sells for \$4.6 million. A buyer would also get to pay the highest gas prices in Canada and some of the highest taxes. They would get to drive to work in an open-air, government-supplied drug market, which the NDP-Liberal government supports. It is absolutely stunning. If they prefer more peace and quiet or maybe want a bit of a deal, there is an 11th-century castle in England up for sale for \$4.4 million. It comes with 32 acres of land and 22,000 square feet of living space, including 17 bedrooms. It is "an idyllic retreat" with farmland and even its own creek, with fishing rights included.

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I could go on and on: France, Honduras, Argentina or Wisconsin. The fact of the matter is that Canada's housing market is so broken, and the Liberals are the ones who broke it, with the help of the NDP, of course. Housing prices have doubled in just eight years. A mortgage payment has doubled. The average income needed to buy a home in Ontario is over \$175,000, which is much more than the average salary, as we all know. No amount of partisan spin can minimize the fact that it is now cheaper to buy a castle in Europe than a family home in Canada. If that does not convince the Liberals that home prices are unattainable to the average Canadian, I do not know what would. We have to ask, what are people supposed to do?

Nine in 10 of the young people looking to break into the market, pay off their student loans, start a job and maybe start a family do not believe they will ever own a home in this country. There are newcomers looking to Canada for opportunity and a life better than the one they left, like my parents did 48 years ago. Everyone else is struggling under repeated, double-digit increases in the cost of rent; it has doubled too in just eight years. It used to take 25 years to pay off a mortgage. In Toronto, it now takes 25 year to save up for a down payment on a single-family home.

● (1200)

The answer, of course, is that they cannot do anything, because affordability is too far out of reach. Despite working 50, 60 or 70 hours a week at multiple jobs and cutting back on the things they want, people are getting left behind. They are losing hope and giving up on the Canadian dream that was on offer even eight years ago. Things were not like this eight years ago, and they are not going to be like this when the Liberals are gone.

Our mission is to bring that back: to ensure that one can get a good home in a safe neighbourhood through hard work, dedication and savings, which is the way it always was in Canada, and to make Canada the place where we do not have to compare the price of an average home to that of a luxurious castle in Europe to make the point.

It is going to take a new government with a new vision to do that. We cannot and should not trust the same people who got us into this mess to get us out of it. Specifically, we should not trust the same people who paid \$54 million for a useless border app to companies that did not even do the work on the app, who lost track of nearly a million people, who have students living under bridges and in tents, who cannot bring themselves to put repeat violent offenders behind bars and who cannot do anything close to competently. Our party is the only one with a common-sense plan to put Canadians back in control of their own lives and return the promise of Canada that always was—

[Translation]

The Speaker: I am sorry to have to interrupt the hon. member for Thornhill, but the time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

**NATIONAL SECURITY REVIEW OF INVESTMENTS
MODERNIZATION ACT**

The House resumed from October 26 consideration of Bill C-34, An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a government that is incapable of destroying non-state coercive actors is as harmful to the cause of freedom as is a coercive state. We live in a time when our friends and our enemies are becoming more clear, our strategic resources and assets are under more threat to be taken over by foreign entities, and at a time when refining our future, growth, potential and lack of industrial policy will threaten Canada's economic future. Safeguarding the resources we have that will also attract good investments has become paramount not only to the success of our country but also to the success of our children.

After eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, numerous foreign state-owned enterprises have acquired interest and control in many Canadian companies, our IP, intangible assets and data. Billions of dollars of Canadian natural resources, ideas, IP, land and farms have left Canada and are being controlled by foreign entities. It reminds me of the story of the *The Giving Tree*, which I sometimes read to my children. After eight years, the Prime Minister and the industry minister have been like the giving tree, giving of Canada's industry, IP and land. In the story, there is a little boy who comes to a tree and asks for its leaves, and the tree gives him its leaves. Of course, in January 2022, the industry minister failed to follow his own guidelines when he fast-tracked the takeover of a Canadian lithium company, Neo Lithium Corp., by Chinese state-owned Zijin Mining Group without a national security review. Of course, we lost those leaves. It was one of the only companies in Canada that produced lithium, which is critical for producing batteries.

Huawei, a state-owned enterprise that feeds intelligence directly to China, was still working with many Canadian universities as of the summer. This is just like the boy who asked for the trunk of the tree and was given it. The government has also made commitments of billions of dollars to Volkswagen, Stellantis and other battery plants with literally all of the mined material composing the batteries coming from state-owned Chinese companies and not Canadian-owned critical minerals or mines. As we see, these are the branches of the tree, and the industry minister came to Canada with these branch plants. Taxpayer-funded dollars at Dalhousie University are funding Tesla IP and research, and the IP is all going back to California. As members can see, this is the stump of the tree.

As at the end of *The Giving Tree* story, when the little boy had asked for all of these items: the branches, leaves, trunk and stump, Canadians are left with nothing as all of these companies, foreign-owned and foreign-controlled, have left Canada, and we are left with only the roots. As Canada loses literally billions of dollars, IP and resources, the government and the giving tree of a Prime Minister are literally not worth the cost; these investments go elsewhere, and Canadians do not benefit from the outcomes. The future of our country, Canada, is in protecting our sovereignty, land, farms, natural resources, technological assets in IP while simultaneously attracting foreign investment that benefits Canadians and this country. It is imperative that we demand transparency and accountability from our government regarding foreign ownership and its consequences.

We must advocate policies that strike a balance between attracting international investment and safeguarding our national interests. We need regulations that prevent the unchecked outflow of intellectual property and ensure that our economic landscapes remain robust and sustainable for generations to come. We must be able to produce the stuff in Canada, getting international investment benefiting Canada and Canadians, creating powerful paycheques and GDP right here in this nation. With a new Indo-Pacific strategy aimed at countering a disruptive China, which includes military, domestic security and cybersecurity enhancements, we must ensure that we restrict the involvement of foreign-state-owned firms in some of our most critical sectors, including Canada's critical mineral sectors.

Conservatives looked at Bill C-34 and submitted amendments, including an amendment to reduce the threshold that would trigger a national security review from \$512 million to zero dollars for all state-owned enterprises, and I am glad the amendment went through. We ensured that the items reviewable under the national security review process would include acquisitions of any assets by a state-owned enterprise. Finally, we believe that decisions need to be made that would allow cabinet, not one minister alone, to make those important decisions as to what should be reviewed and what should not. No power should reside in one just minister. As famously said by Kanye West:

No one man should have all that power
The clock's ticking, I just count the hours.

● (1205)

The one thing that the Americans and the U.K. do differently with national security reviews is utilize all of their federal depart-

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ments in the process. The U.S.A. uses CFIUS, an international committee authorized to review certain transactions involving foreign investment. The U.S.A. gives the criteria that CFIUS considers, oftentimes directed by the President of the United States. In Canada, under the current bill, that power would be delineated to the INDU committee and the public safety ministers instead of making sure, at the very least, it is a cabinet decision.

That would severely hamper our national security. Why? In 2017, the Liberal government allowed a telecom company from B.C. called Norsat to be acquired by a company called Hytera, which is a Chinese-based, state-owned company. Hytera does not make any money. The Conservatives demanded, at the time, a full national security review. The Liberal minister of the day refused to do one and approved the acquisition.

Lo and behold, in 2022, Hytera was charged with 21 counts of espionage in the United States and was banned from doing business there. Only eight months later, the RCMP in Canada, shockingly, bought telecommunications equipment from Hytera to put in its communications system. The government says the change would streamline the process and give security and intelligence agencies more time to complete their reviews, but, as it currently stands, if the public safety minister only is responsible for those reviews, they would miss the mark, as they did with Hytera.

I have another example, more hypothetically. What if the industry minister was from Ontario and the public safety minister was from Manitoba and they were about to make a decision about a security review in Quebec? Would Quebec cabinet ministers not want to be guaranteed feedback and a say in cabinet? If we give that power to just one minister and take away the power of cabinet, ministers across the whole country would potentially lose providing their input into something as important as national security.

I have shared with my colleagues the satisfaction of seeing intangible assets included under this review. I wanted to mention this today because it is very important. There are alarming statistics about how much of our intellectual property leaves this country. The University of Waterloo said that 75% of its software engineering grads are being pilfered and leave Canada to go elsewhere. The U.S. has 169 times the IP production of Canada. Canada produces \$39 billion worth of IP a year, but the U.S. produces \$6.6 trillion. Not only do we need to develop and commercialize the IP, but through this legislation we also need to protect it. It is very important, as the economy of tomorrow is intangible and full of ideas, that we do all we can to ensure we protect the ideas that come out of Canada, and not lose them.

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We have the largest gaps in the world. The OECD has forecasted that Canada will have one of the worst-performing economies in the developed world in the next 25 years. Canada has not been able to keep up with the world when it comes to IP and a knowledge-based economy. Canadian policy is still firmly grounded in industrial-era concepts and is failing to develop national strategies for IP and data.

China developed 30,000 patents just last year in AI. Canada has developed fewer than 30,000 patents in all of our industries across all sectors.

The future of Canada needs to be protected in the airwaves, blockchain, AI, quantum computing, the sky overhead and the Arctic. It needs to be protected in our farms, food-processing plants, genomics, oceans and fisheries, as well as in developing Canadian LNG, which the world is desperately screaming for.

Going back to *The Giving Tree* story, unlike the government, figuratively and literally, the Conservatives would just plant more trees and protect those trees. When we give the world what Canada makes, Canadians make paycheques and Canadians benefit.

Let us agree to support this bill with the Conservative amendment to remove the power from one minister and make sure it stays in cabinet. Of course, in the future, a Conservative government will not only protect Canadian investment but build Canadian companies and attract investment to grow them.

• (1210)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the legislation would modernize the act. There has been so much change over the last 12 to 14 years that it dictates the government needs to do something, recognizing technological advances to AI and the importance of international interference.

What surprises me is that the Conservatives seem to be buckling down on the whole idea of not allowing the minister to have the authority. I am wondering if they would apply that principle to other areas of responsibility. What specifically is it? A consultation does take place with what I believe are other public safety ministers, though I am not 100% sure of that, but why is it the Conservatives do not want to see robust legislation that would enable a minister to take the action necessary in order to protect Canadian interests?

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, it is quite obvious: the minister has failed in the past and the minister is going to fail again. When it comes to national security reviews, we need to ensure we have all actors or all members who can participate in that review process be part of that process. I imagine the example of having a minister from Ontario, a safety minister from Manitoba and an industry in Quebec being looked at. I am not sure why the member would not want a Quebec minister or member of cabinet also being part of that conversation.

More importantly, in the past the minister has given away these resources. Neo Lithium is one example of when we gave away resources to make batteries. That was one minister's decision. We need to make sure it is the cabinet because we can have bad ministers.

• (1215)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of our amendments that Conservatives put forward at committee was voted down at committee. I wanted to ask my colleague about it. It was the amendment that called for the modification of the definition of state-owned enterprise to include any company or entity headquartered in an authoritarian state like China, for instance. It was voted down.

I wonder if he could comment on the importance of that amendment and why it should have passed.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, not only at the industry committee, but also at the ethics committee, we have had CSIS and other organizations talk about just what state-owned companies do in Canada. One of the witnesses said:

Chinese law requires that all companies and individuals co-operate with their intelligence establishment and hide that co-operation [under state-owned law in China]. That, combined with the Chinese regime's unrelenting cyber and human-source spying on our Parliament, political parties, government departments, universities and businesses, is reason enough to conclude that foreign investment from China must be subject to the most stringent national security test, regardless of what sector or industry the proposed investment may target.

We are in a new world now. We talked about the importance of identifying and ensuring a review of all state-owned Chinese corporations' involvement in Canadian companies. It is of utmost importance. I wish the other parties would take that matter as seriously as we do.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague to address something in the Canada Investment Act that he left out in his speech.

It is true that the Canada Investment Act includes a section on national security, but this legislation also includes a section that affects nearly every transaction for which the minister must assess whether it provides a net benefit to Canada.

First, I would like to know if my colleague is satisfied with the way this analysis is done on a regular basis. Second, does he not think that this section of the act could also use some modifications and adjustments to ensure that the transactions are carried out in the best interest of Quebecers, in my case, and Canadians, in his case?

[English]

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, net benefit review is extremely important. When we look at any kind of investment, state-owned or otherwise, we want to ensure that Canadians and Quebecers are getting the best part of that deal for that.

When we look at one aspect, being the Volkswagen and Stellantis deals that have come into Canada, certainly we are evaluating that now. As parliamentarians we look at the net benefit to Canada. It seems that they are investments that, as I mentioned, are more branch-plant investments that did not look at the benefits to our Quebec mining sector. That should have been included to ensure that, any time there was an investment into batteries, we had investments in those mines as well, so that would create more Quebec jobs.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak about Bill C-34 today. It has been said before that weak leaders create hard times. The bill is meant to deal with foreign interference and the lack of infrastructure. I am going to speak specifically about that lack of infrastructure in the north.

Point (b) in the summary says that the bill is meant to “authorize the Minister of Industry, after consultation with the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, to impose interim conditions in respect of investments in order to prevent injury to national security that could arise during the review...”

Again, I think it is pretty easy to make the case that this weak NDP-Liberal government, after eight years, and I would also include the members of Parliament from those territories, has put Canadians at risk in the north. It does not take too long to find articles that are really concerned about this. I will even quote from leaders who are actually in the north.

This is an article from just a week ago: “CSIS warning Inuit leaders about covert foreign investment in Arctic, documents show... The Canadian Security Intelligence Service has warned Inuit leaders that foreign adversaries could gain a foothold in Canada by offering to fill infrastructure gaps in the north.”

This is what this legislation says it is supposed to prevent from happening, and that is good, I guess, but, again, this NDP-Liberal government has been in power for eight years.

“We are making decisions every day that are currently not as informed as they could be about threats and considerations,” said Inuit leader Natan Obed.

I will read on.

“...CSIS documents obtained by CBC News show that the agency is trying to grow its presence in the North and deepen its relationship with Inuit communities in response to 'economic, strategic and military interests of foreign states in the North.’”

I go up to the territories quite often. It is quite a different perspective when one gets to the north, because when one talks to somebody in the southern parts of Canada, the north, the territories, is a faraway place. They do not really get how seriously the territories take this because, really, it is their front yard. They are seeing foreign activity increase right in their own front yards.

The article went on.

“Foreign interference is a significant threat, primarily from China and then Russia. Both desire access to natural resources in the Arctic, like minerals,” said one of the CSIS documents, released

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through an access to information request. “To date, however, [CSIS’s] presence in Canada’s north and Arctic has been limited.”

I will go on.

“...CSIS Director David Vigneault visited the region in 2022 and has had meetings with [local leadership]...His talking points for those meetings, released to CBC News, included questions for the leaders about partnering with foreign telecommunication providers. ‘CSIS’s interests in Canada’s north and the Arctic stem from our mandated responsibilities to address security threats, including foreign interference and espionage,’ the talking points say.”

On espionage in our Canadian north he said, “These take the form of activities such as covert foreign investments or partnership arrangements, efforts to interfere in decision-making at all levels of government, theft of research or data and interference in research agendas or funding.”

Lastly, Natan Obed said, “There’s still incredible infrastructure deficits in the Canadian Arctic, whether it be for airports, for marine facilities, or for just a network for shipping.”

I started off by saying that weak leaders create hard times. Indeed, this government has had eight years to really strengthen what I would say was a pretty strong approach. The former Stephen Harper government, in 2015, spent a lot of time and made a lot of investments in the Arctic and we just have not seen that continue.

This goes beyond what people think of security, as in the military, investments. Arctic sovereignty really refers to supporting northerners in the north, to make sure that they have good jobs, that they can have healthy families and healthy lifestyles, so they can reside in the north and do so in a strong position.

● (1220)

A way to erode that is to erode the economy. When we erode the economy, we erode those investments that are often made as a side benefit of infrastructure or of industrial development, such as roads, fibre optic networks and other really important infrastructure, which we all use.

This is about a previous action by the Liberal government when there was a moratorium placed on offshore oil and gas development in the Arctic. Bob McLeod, the then premier, who is the brother of the current NWT MP in the House, was not very happy about the decision the Prime Minister made to shut down all development in the north. The premier said there was billions of dollars of investment that simply got pushed off the table. Those investments would have also impacted, in large part, indigenous communities.

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The premier said, “we made the decision to unconditionally share 25 percent of resource revenues with NWT Indigenous governments. We are proud to be on the forefront of preserving Indigenous languages”.

However, he also states, and this is a quote specifically about the moratorium:

Restrictions imposed on our vital energy and resource sector—40 percent of our economy and source of middle class jobs and incomes for many of our people—are driving companies away, and with that go the jobs that sustain healthy families and community life. Staying in or trying to join the middle class will become a distant dream for many.

That was then premier McLeod speaking to Bill C-34. When we have weak economies in our territories because of Ottawa-knows-best policies, this is what happens. Infrastructure does not get built and that is what puts us in this precarious position. That was from the Northwest Territories.

I am going to go over to Nunavut. A recent article is entitled “Arviat South MLA blasts proposed amendments to federal mining law”. This is an MLA in Nunavut criticizing the current member of Parliament for Nunavut. The article states:

During three separate question periods in the legislative assembly on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, Arviat South MLA Joe Savikataaq asked Premier Akeagok and multiple ministers for their positions on [the MP for Nunavut's] proposed amendments to the Territorial Lands Act.

The article continues:

He said if adopted [the NDP MP's] plan would impede the growth of mining in the territory and make it harder to increase Inuit employment in the mines.

“Not everybody wants to be a Government of Nunavut worker,” Savikataaq said. “Her position is completely wrong for Nunavut.”

I say that in relation to what we are talking about today. If economies are not developing and they are retracting, this is what happens. Investments are not made. We are put into a position where foreign governments can have undue influence because the territories are so desperate to get this infrastructure that it puts our security and sovereignty at risk.

As it relates to the security aspect of it in the military, we have seen recent quotes from former Liberal MP and general, Mr. Leslie. The article is entitled “Canadian Forces in desperate need of new spending, procurement follow-through”. The follow-through is what needs to be done here. The government makes a lot of promises. I have said in the House before that it has promised billions of dollars to modernize NORAD, but only \$45 million has been spent. I have the documents from the estimates in front of me.

I will read from the article. It states, “Canada spends \$23.3 billion on the Department of National Defence, but Leslie said the department has a chronic problem with actually using the funds.” Leslie stated, “Over the last seven years, the Armed Forces has been allocated roughly that amount but it hasn't been able to spend it all. And the blame for that lies squarely with the prime minister and the minister of finance,” and I would add on the NDP members to my left. The article continues, “Leslie, recruited in 2015 as a star candidate to write the Liberals' defence and foreign policy platform, is now disillusioned with the government procurement abilities.”

I started off by saying weak leaders create hard times. This weak, NDP-Liberal government has created hard times for us in the north, and it needs to change.

• (1225)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I would like to thank the member for his interest in the north and the Arctic. I am not sure how genuine it actually is.

With respect to this act, the Investment Canada Act, when it comes to ensuring we are doing better at protecting individuals and the land, a lot of what we have to do in these pieces of legislation is prevent the acquisition of certain things. For example, in Nunavut there is a mining company that is not owned within Canada, and a lot of damage is being caused by this mining companies to our lands and our territories. What we need to do is make sure that there is free, prior and informed consent so that indigenous peoples can and will have a say in ensuring that legislation, such as the Investment Canada Act, can have a positive impact on them.

Does the member agree that ensuring free, prior and informed consent should also be included in acts such as these?

• (1230)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, I would go back to what I started off with saying, which is that the NDP is really the no development party.

I will quote an MLA from Nunavut, who said, “if adopted, [the member for Nunavut's] plan would impede the growth of mining in the territory and make it harder to increase Inuit employment in the mines.”

What the member for Nunavut is doing is preventing this infrastructure investment, the very thing the bill is talking about doing. It is encouraging investment so that the infrastructure gets built, especially in places where it is already lacking in the north. All the member is doing is causing less infrastructure development and less infrastructure to get built.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, in addition to discussing public safety, my colleague addressed the issue of national security by talking about the armed forces and commenting on that.

I would like to know whether he agrees that beyond the issue of national security, there is a blind spot in this bill, namely the matter of preserving our economic levers. I would like to know what he thinks because we have some head offices to protect.

How does this bill respond, or fail to respond, to my colleague's expectations when it comes to further protecting our economic levers?

[English]

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, the economic development we hope to see with this bill is through the prevention of foreign interference from really taking hold.

I have a quote with respect to another security issue, which states, “Russia is a persistent proximate threat to North America. And we know that China has growing capabilities and ambitions. I don't think the status quo is going to keep us safe”.

I do not know if the House fully knows this, but Russia has made claims to our sovereignty over the Arctic seabed we claim belongs to Canada. There are many resources attached to that territory as well. Russia reiterated those claims just in March of 2023. It is imperative that we have strong infrastructure and sovereign security in our north.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to build on the security aspect that the Investment Canada Act, as amended, would now provide, the additional security protections against foreign actors, such as China and Russia, that want to capitalize on Canada's technological advancements, our skilled workforce and the economy, which is really coming along compared to other nations and puts us at risk with respect to security.

Could the hon. member comment on how we are building our security through the amendments to the act that have come back to us?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, the answer to the member's question is that I am not sure.

The NDP-Liberal government, after eight years, makes a lot of promises. To use NORAD as an example, we have seen billions of dollars promised, but the last count I have is that about \$45 million has been spent. The government is great at photo ops and talking about getting things done, but delivery is a problem. Where has it been for eight years?

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to stand in this place and speak to legislation and, in this particular case, it is an honour to speak to the report stage of Bill C-34.

Before I begin, having just spent the weekend back in my riding and arriving this morning back in Ottawa, at different events and in lots of interaction with my constituents, since we are speaking about competition, I cannot say enough about the impact of the Prime Minister's decision last Thursday to limit the carbon tax, or actually take away the carbon tax, on home heating oil within Atlantic Canada and how much of an impact that is having on the residents whom I represent in Barrie—Innisfil, in a negative way. Many are questioning and wondering why the same application of an exemption to the carbon tax was not applied equally across the country.

I know the Prime Minister gave his rationale, but that is literally cold comfort to the people whom I represent, especially the seniors who are struggling to pay for groceries and to pay their natural gas bills. Many of them are sending me their natural gas bill, and the carbon price is oftentimes equal to the distribution charge of natural gas itself. There are families who are struggling to keep a roof over their heads, moms who are worried about paying the bills on a daily

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basis and, of course, single-parent families who are just struggling to make ends meet, buy nutritious food for their families and pay their gas bills, especially with winter coming up. It was quite the topic of conversation this week within my riding.

Quite frankly, I did not have an answer for any of them because the Prime Minister's decision was to exclude solely Atlantic Canada when the rest of us are still paying the carbon tax for home heating in particular, and those prices are going to go up. The cost of distribution is going to go up and the cost of the carbon tax is going to go up. People in the riding I represent are quite concerned about the inequity of not having the same benefit other Canadians have. I wanted to share that message because it is something I heard on the weekend in my many interactions with the people whom I represent in my riding of Barrie—Innisfil.

We are here today to speak to Bill C-34 at report stage with respect to the improvements, and some needed improvements, to the Investment Canada Act. It is important because we just finished, at the ethics committee, a study on foreign interference and the role that nations, particularly China and Russia, are playing as state-owned actors making investments into our economy for the purpose, quite frankly, of control, including controlling Canadian businesses, controlling Canadian minerals, controlling Canadian resources and controlling, in many cases as the hon. member just spoke about, some of our northern and offshore areas as well. Therefore, it becomes critically important for the government to keep a keen eye, and multiple eyes, in fact, on what is happening with foreign investment and the approvals.

Bill C-34 highlights a few simple things. Number one, there are numerous foreign state-owned enterprises who have acquired interest and control in many Canadian companies, intellectual property, tangible assets and the data of our citizens. We are finding more and more that this access to data and theft of data are not just to use it for nefarious reasons but to propagate disinformation and misinformation to create societal chaos, so we have to be mindful of that. The government, quite frankly, would do very little to protect our national economic and security interests with this bill, despite what we are hearing the Liberals say today and other days during debate, and certainly at committee.

We have to take sensitive transactions seriously, and we have failed to fully review some of the transactions, particularly as they relate to Chinese state-owned enterprises in the past. Later, I am going to be citing some examples of where we have put at risk not just Canadian intellectual property but also Canadians in general.

• (1235)

One can agree with some of the principles of this bill, and we certainly agree with some of the principles, but it does not go far enough to address some of the risks faced by Canadians. That is why we worked to pass significant amendments in committee to better protect Canadian interests and Canadian assets.

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When I look through the list of amendments that were proposed for Bill C-34, only four were passed at committee out of the roughly 13 we proposed. One that was accepted was on reducing the threshold to trigger a national security review from \$512 million to zero dollars for all state-owned enterprise investment made in Canada. Lowering that threshold was critical so that at least it would trigger and initiate a security review.

The other amendment that was passed would ensure that items renewable under the national security review process include acquisitions of any assets by a state-owned enterprise. Again, this is all about protecting Canadians and protecting our valuable assets, our businesses and certainly our interests.

The other one would ensure that an automatic national security review is conducted whenever a company has previously been convicted of corruption charges. If somebody had not supported that, I would have been surprised, quite frankly. It is one of the proposals at committee that were adopted.

The last would require the minister to conduct a national security review by changing the word “may” to “shall” to ensure a review is triggered whenever it is in the new threshold. This was quite frankly a no-brainer.

However, there were some amendments proposed that were not accepted at committee and rejected. The one that concerns me the most is the one that would require the minister to conduct a national security review by changing “may” to “shall” to ensure the review is triggered whenever in the review threshold.

One of the things we have to be mindful of is that anytime a transaction being proposed impacts the national security interests of our country, we have to make sure there is a review. One of the proposed amendments was to have a Governor in Council review of this so there is not just one eye on it, the minister's eye. It would go to the cabinet table so there are multiple eyes on it and multiple questions being asked, which is critical when we are dealing with sensitive national security interests.

Why is this important? As I said earlier, there have been situations in the past where companies have not had the type of review they should have. That has been widely publicized. A Chinese takeover deal in 2015 had been previously rejected by the Conservative government, but it was approved in 2015. This was based on Hong Kong O-Net Technologies Group as it related to a business here. Having multiple eyes on the review therefore becomes critical.

In fact, three years ago, a Deloitte study suggested to the government that we should not buy sensitive security IT from despotic regimes. That was in relation to a \$6.8-million contract to supply security equipment to Canada's embassies. This was Nuctech, which is known as the Huawei of airport security. Some may recall that this involved X-ray machines being supplied for use by the Government of Canada.

While there are some things to support in this bill, the amendments that were proposed by our Conservative colleagues in committee were reasonable and practicable and should have been applied to many aspects of the bill we are debating today.

• (1240)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I am going to ask the member a question similar to the one I asked the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies. When I asked him the question, rather than responding to it, he resorted to mud-slinging against me and using my constituents against me.

While indigenous peoples are doing what they can to protect our assets, we are being violated. Indigenous women are being violated for protecting their lands, for protecting their assets. Does the member agree that this act, the ICA, needs to be amended so that there is free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples when it comes to mining activities?

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I believe that all Canadian interests should be protected, including those of indigenous communities.

As I said earlier, the national security interests of this country become paramount as we debate bills like this. As Canadians, as stewards of our land, protecting northern resources and northern offshore resources becomes critical. If we are going to be serious about the protection of our national interests as they relate to foreign investment, there should be a fulsome discussion around the cabinet table to discuss all aspects of that. This would include the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations as well, because there are certain things that this minister could bring to the table. Let us not just leave it with one minister.

• (1245)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thinking of the timing of this study. We have not reviewed this act since 2009. The FDI reports show Canada as a premier destination for foreign direct investment and that our direct investment has really increased in the last few years, mostly as a result of the forward-looking trade deals we have with many countries. In fact, we are now the only G7 country to have agreements with all other G7 countries.

Could the hon. member talk about the strategic importance of looking at this act now, compared to where we were in 2009?

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, it is strategically important that we look at this bill, because we have seen strategic investment drop by almost 20% in this country. We have to ask ourselves why. We have also seen, for example, that in the United States, the investment increases have been the reverse of that.

There is no doubt that we have to look at the strategic investments. We have to look at the impact of what is going on as it relates to foreign investment. We have to understand why we have seen a decrease in foreign investment.

There was a reaction on the other side. Foreign investment should not be confused with government investment. We have seen a significant amount of government investment over the last little while, some of which is questionable, but with foreign investment, we need to have a national security review and all eyes need to be on it.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr  anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I recall very specifically that, during the 2019 election campaign, the leader of the Bloc Qu  b  cois, the member for Beloeil—Chambly, came to Shefford, to Valcourt, to present the Bloc Qu  b  cois's proposals regarding economic nationalism to protect our head offices. That is essential in Quebec. We have a completely different SME model, and Bill C-34 really overlooks that fact.

I would like my colleague to talk about the importance of protecting our economic levers.

[English]

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I am a Quebecker; I was born in Montreal. It should come as no surprise to the hon. member that my interests lie in the economic levers of the country, and that would include Quebec. It would also include northern areas of our country and offshore resources, those that are critical to the sustainability of our country. I am interested in all of Canada, not just one part of it.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise and contribute to the debate on Bill C-34 at report stage. It is a bill that has to do with empowering the government to consider foreign investments in Canada and foreign acquisitions and ask whether ultimately those investments or acquisitions are in Canada's best interests. It has been some time since the bill was revised. A lot has happened in the country and the world since 2009, so I think it is a good thing to be looking at these things and asking these questions once again.

There has been some talk and debate already, so I thought I would spend a little time addressing some of what has come before. We are talking about foreign direct investment and trying to figure out why, according to some, there is less foreign direct investment in Canada now than there was before, or why we are not doing as well as certain competitors at attracting foreign direct investment. When we are talking about that, one of the things to note is that over the last 20 or 30 years, if we look at the oil and gas sector as a target for foreign direct investment, we are noticing that a lot of foreign investors are scaling back their investment in Canadian oil and gas at a time when they are trying to scale back their investments in fossil fuels generally as part of a movement by many countries to try to address climate change, diversify energy generation and be less captive geopolitically to countries that are suppliers of natural gas and oil.

As such, Canada has seen a corresponding decrease in foreign direct investment in the oil and gas industry. Despite Conservatives liking to talk about how our allies want Canadian oil and gas, we are seeing a divestment. Also, Canadian banks have filled up that space, so it is not that oil and gas in Canada is not getting private financing to do what it is going to do. What it does mean is that Canada's financial industry is that much more heavily invested in

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oil and gas, as it picks up the slack that investors from other countries are leaving.

When we look at the global financial picture and where it is going, I think Canada has to watch that we do not end up having a financial sector that is overexposed to fossil fuels. When we look at what Conservative premiers have been doing, like Danielle Smith in Alberta, who is cancelling on a whim tens of billions of dollars in renewable energy in her province, it is to say no to a lot of foreign direct investment, say no to foreign direct investment that would contribute to lowering our emissions and say no to foreign direct investment that would help position Canada in the new energy economy that is emerging, whether Conservatives here would wish it or not. I think that is part of the larger conversation around foreign direct investment.

Let us say that those tens of billions of dollars of investment in Alberta were going ahead and that those foreign investors were interested in investing capital in Alberta to reduce its emissions but nevertheless maintain Alberta as an energy superpower. Let us also say the Conservative premier did not wantonly cancel all of that investment. What would that mean? Well, it would mean there is a role for the Canadian government to evaluate who those investors are and to ask whether they are investing in Alberta in a way that complements the national interests of Canada or are doing it for geopolitical reasons that do not ultimately serve Canada's interests.

If Russian oligarchs and the Chinese state are the ones interested in building up Alberta's solar and wind capacity, I think a lot of Canadians would rightly have questions about the motives of foreign governments that want to be owners of those things or that are closely tied to oligarchs who want to be owners of those things. It is right and good that the Canadian government should evaluate those kinds of investments in advance, make a determination about the Canadian public interest and then either authorize the investments or not.

We know that Canada's laws on foreign investment have been too weak for too long. New Democrats historically have argued for very strong oversight of foreign investment and foreign takeovers for exactly the reason that we are concerned about and very aware of the role that actors outside of Canada can have in coming to own some of our most strategic resources.

• (1250)

Those are all important things to bear in mind. I think this legislation does create more tools. One of the things that I know my colleague for Windsor West, who was quite involved in this file at committee, was very concerned about was that it should create better protection and sculpt the thresholds better to capture intellectual property. I was glad to see that an NDP amendment to that effect was passed.

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We know that the economy today is not the economy of 50 years ago, that it is a knowledge-based economy and that it is important to have thresholds that are not just designed for big capital investments, or physical capital investments, but that will also capture and alert government to potential investments or acquisitions by foreign actors of intellectual property. The real value of intellectual property is sometimes not in the right to that particular property itself, but in many of the kinds of spinoffs, licensing and various other things that do not show up on the traditional balance sheet that would be looked at under the current provisions of the act. Therefore, it is important to rejig the threshold so that the potential economic value of intellectual property registers appropriately in the screening mechanism. This can ensure that, where sensitive IP, very valuable IP or strategic IP is being contemplated in a foreign acquisition, merger or investment, the light goes on for folks in government who are supposed to be reviewing these things, and they give it a serious look.

Therefore, I give a shout-out to my friend and colleague from Windsor West for capturing what I think is a very important aspect of foreign investment review going forward and ensuring that it gets appropriate mention in the bill.

I have heard some Conservative colleagues talk a fair bit about China. I think China should be on our radar. We know that China is flexing its muscles on the geopolitical world stage, and it has been for some time. That is why New Democrats were critical of the foreign investment protection agreement that the Harper Conservatives signed with China. I think we should ask the question of how these changes to the Investment Canada Act will interact with that foreign investment protection agreement, particularly given that a lot of the proceedings that happened under the auspices of that FIPA are secretive and hard to access, and they do not permit the level of transparency that I think Canadians would expect to see.

There are other important questions around foreign investment that I think we need to be asking. It is important to have a long memory in this regard. In that way, we can evaluate the claims being made by some in terms of their concerns about how tightly government regulates foreign capital that comes into Canadian markets. We should know the history of those parties and what they have done in government, so we can evaluate their claims to be guardians of the Canadian economy. We know many Liberal and Conservative governments have allowed for the sale of important strategic resources. In a time when we are talking about reshoring and reintroducing industrial planning, changes to this act are an important part of that. However, changing the act itself will not matter if we do not have the political will on the part of whoever is in government to conduct those reviews in an appropriate way, to have a proper definition of Canadian interests and to be willing, where those investments do not make sense for Canada as a whole, to say no.

Of course, the track record of the current government saying no to things on behalf of Canadians and in the interests of everyday Canadians is not that great. I think about the Rogers and Shaw merger and the forthcoming decision about the RBC and HSBC merger. I think these will be important moments. The Liberals have already failed on Rogers and Shaw. An important moment coming up for the government on the RBC and HSBC merger is another

proof point for how willing Liberals are to say no to big corporate interests, whether domestic or foreign, in the name of Canadians' own best interests.

I look forward to that decision. I urge the government to make the right one. I think that will tell a fair bit of the story about whether these are just changes on paper or whether the government intends to adopt a culture of protecting Canada's best interest over corporate interests seeking to subvert important pillars of the Canadian economy for corporate gain.

• (1255)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in 2022, there was \$64.6 billion of foreign direct investment in Canada. That was up 13.6% over the 10-year average.

It is interesting to see that manufacturing, which I know is a big deal in Transcona and a big part of the Assistant Deputy Speaker's economy, was actually ahead of energy and mining. There was \$15.5 billion of foreign direct investment in manufacturing.

The green energy projects the member mentioned were number two in the world.

In terms of the importance of having security as a main part of what our review is, to attract even more than the 682 companies that have come to Canada to make investments, could the hon. member comment on the importance of us displaying certainty around our security provisions so that we can build even more from where we are now?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for sharing some hard numbers. I think that maybe our Conservative colleagues think that foreign direct investment is down because they only look at the oil and gas industry and mistake it for the entirety of the Canadian economy. Of course, Canadians are hard at work in many sectors, producing value. We want to see an economy where workers get to keep a larger share of that value, but it is certainly the case that Canada is doing well and performing well on many metrics.

I would say that, when we talk about the geopolitical situation and FDI, we should be careful to ensure that those direct investments, those foreign investments, are actually contributing to the Canadian economy in the ways we would like to see. I think that is why changes to this act are important. When we talk about reshoring and other things such as that, we are living in an important moment. I think the pandemic really exposed a lot of the weaknesses in our supply chains.

We should be asking this question: Is this a rush on Canadian assets before the door closes, as we get better at reshoring?

I would like to have a government that is more interested in getting the answers to those questions before acquisitions are made. To the extent that this act may help in that—

• (1300)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, there was an amendment at committee that would have required cabinet to be responsible, as a whole, for triggering a national security review, as opposed to just the minister. That amendment, for some reason, was ruled out of order.

Conceptually, does the member agree that it would be better to have that considered by the whole of cabinet, as opposed to a single minister?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I will not speak directly to that amendment. The member may know, because he is on committee with me at my usual assignment, that I was not the member at committee. I would, of course, defer to the excellent judgment of my colleague from Windsor West on particular amendments.

I would note that it is nice to hear a Conservative advocating for a little more bureaucracy. Of course, usually, they are not the ones who say that more people should be included in decision-making but that we should have fast, effective decision-making processes. I agree with being fast and effective, but one does sometimes need to consult more. This is a deficiency of the Conservative Party. I am glad to hear that at least one member is thinking twice about that.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, like my colleague, I recognize that mergers have an impact, but hostile takeovers by foreign companies are especially worrisome. I would like him to comment on that.

Bill C-34 is important and overdue. It is a welcome development, but it is incomplete because it does not actually resolve any of the issues. I would like to know what my colleague sees as the next steps. This is, of course, a good first step, but what will happen next? What can we do to better protect our economic levers?

I am thinking about the head offices in Quebec, in particular. As a Quebecker, I am obviously going to stand up for my province.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, for a long time, Canada has had Liberal and Conservative governments that believed if an investor wanted to spend money, it was a good thing. There was no need to ask questions.

NDP members know that some things are more valuable than money. That is why we have always supported the idea of a system focused on protecting our values and our institutions. This approach leaves lots of room for people to make money without compromising our values and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

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The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to speak to Bill C-34 for the second time. This bill amends the Investment Canada Act. It is well intentioned, but there is still a lot of work to do.

The bill reinforces controls and increases the powers of the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry regarding foreign investments in Canada. As we did at second reading of the bill last winter, Bloc Québécois members will continue to fully support any action aimed at better protecting Quebec's economy and Canada's economy against potentially detrimental foreign interests.

I will get right to the crux of the issue. We are debating today the amendments made by the committee. The bill is back in the House to be debated again, and I am glad that my colleagues on the committee were able to look at this closely and broaden the notion of sensitive sectors to include intellectual property and databases that contain personal information. We all agree that this improvement makes the bill stronger and that we should support it.

We also applaud the committee for rejecting the Conservatives' proposed amendments. Their proposal was intended to label every state-owned enterprise not run by our Five Eyes partners as hostile, which would have threatened Quebec's interests given that 40% of European investments in Canada are made in Quebec.

Let us take the example of Airbus, a French-German state-owned company that manufactures its A220 aircraft in Mirabel in partnership with the Quebec government. This project, which generates economic spin-offs for Quebec and Quebecers, would have been compromised by the Conservative Party when, in fact, it is a collaboration with democratic and transparent states but, most importantly, with allies.

There is also the question of coordinating with the U.S. system. The proposed new review process essentially mirrors what is being done in the United States. Its adoption is intended to increase our American partners' confidence so that they continue to consider us a reliable and preferred partner within their supply chains. It has to be said that trade with the Americans is very important, and I think this bill is a step in that direction.

In March, when the debates clearly indicated that Bill C-34 enjoyed the support of the House, the United States agreed to include Canada in its critical minerals supply chain, which was very good news. This is a sign that the bill achieved its goal and helped strengthen our partners' trust in us.

Without a doubt, Bill C-34 adds several useful weapons to our legislative arsenal. However, I must emphasize that these changes are still very incomplete. This is why the Bloc Québécois is asking the government to go much further in scrutinizing foreign investment in general. I am going to explain why.

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The bill we are studying covers only those investments that could affect national security. This category of investment is extremely sensitive, and targeting it is justified. However, when we look at the big picture, we see that it represents only a tiny portion of all foreign investment in Canada.

I am going to present a few statistics that will undoubtedly convince my audience. Of the 1,255 investment projects submitted in 2022, only 24 would trigger a review under the new rules proposed in Bill C-34. That is just a grain of sand on a beach. Barely 2% of all investment projects would trigger a security review.

The other 1,221 investments would remain subject to the old rules. These rules provide for a review to determine whether a project is of net economic benefit to Canada. However, a review is only carried out when a project exceeds a certain monetary threshold. That is the problem. I hope the government pays attention to this. Over the years, the threshold at which a review is triggered has increased considerably. Projects are getting bigger and require even more investment.

In the past 10 years alone, investment projects have more than tripled. The consequence of this aberration is that virtually all projects are rubber-stamped without additional review.

• (1305)

Getting back to last year's figures, of the 1,255 projects submitted, only eight were subject to a review under the Investment Canada Act. Eight projects out of a total of 1,255 were submitted for review under the act. That is less than 1%, although the review rate was 10% as recently as 2009. The holes in this safety net have become far too big for it to be effective. The measure might as well not exist; it would not make much difference. That is why we need to go much further.

I would like to draw a parallel with history. In building our future, it is always important to be cognizant of the past, in order to avoid past mistakes and learn from past successes. I would like to share with the House some snippets of history to illustrate why we need to do more to control foreign investment.

Since the Quiet Revolution, the Quebec government has established significant economic and financial levers. These tools have allowed it to pursue a policy of economic nationalism aiming to give Quebecers better control of their economy. This does not mean that Quebec is closed to foreign investment. We are open to it, of course, because it is a driver of growth and development. However, we believe we must support our own businesses to help them grow and seek to preserve our headquarters, which are significant decision-makers.

I will provide an example. In 1988, Bernard Landry, former premier of Quebec and leader of the Parti Québécois, campaigned to promote the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, which was signed with the United States and Mexico in the early 1990s. As we know, Quebec's strategy worked well when we explain economic nationalism and the protection of headquarters in terms of the large subsidiaries worldwide. Banking on the development of these businesses, we saw the growth of many flagships whose headquarters are in Quebec. The presence of these headquarters is significant. Structurally, businesses with headquarters in

Quebec tend to create jobs, attract talent, and promote sourcing from local suppliers, creating a virtuous economic cycle. Companies also tend to concentrate their strategic activities, such as scientific research and technological development, where their headquarters are located.

There are also reasons for adopting this legislation. There is no shortage of examples that demonstrate the harmful effects of ill-advised foreign investments on our economy. I will name a few. The loss of decision-making levers and headquarters condemns us to be a subsidiary economy, where foreigners decide for us. Everyone remembers Lowe's acquisition of Rona. Let us also consider the weakening of Montreal's financial position as a leading world financial centre; the total reliance of our businesses on foreign providers and on supply chains that are more vulnerable than ever; the possible land grabs by rich foreigners who have no interest in our social and economic priorities; and the loss of control of our natural resources, which are the greatest wealth our territory has to offer.

The Bloc Québécois strives to be a constructive partner, and as such, it has suggested three types of tangible changes for the government to focus on. The first is to lower the review threshold so that the government has the power to review more investment projects. According to the numbers, it looks at barely 2% or even 1% of certain projects. There is a huge gap to overcome for a bill to be able to ensure better security overall, but also better protection from foreign investments. The second is to pay special attention to strategic sectors of the economy, such as leading-edge sectors, land ownership or control over natural resources. The third is to develop a tighter process for transactions involving control over intellectual property patents. Intellectual property is the knowledge we develop. We need to protect that knowledge, including in the pharmaceutical sector. Some Quebec companies had molecule patents that were then purchased by major pharmaceutical companies and moved overseas.

National security is important, but we must not overlook economic security and long-term prosperity. Let us be clear. This is not about closing the door on foreign investment. Quebec and Canada must remain economically open to the world.

• (1310)

In closing, as Jacques Parizeau wrote in 2001, before China even became a member of the World Trade Organization, "We do not condemn the rising tide; we build levees to protect ourselves".

Unfortunately, the weakening of the Investment Canada Act has caused those levees to break.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the legislation is a form of modernization, given AI, technological changes and the global scene today. When we talk about trade agreements, Canada, this government, has been more successful at negotiating and signing off on trade agreements than any other government before us, quite frankly, and it is because Canada is a safe place to invest.

Would the member across the way not agree that updating the legislation is important given what is taking place around the world and the fact that Canada is a safe haven to make investments, which we have demonstrated through the different types of trade agreements we have been able to accomplish over the last number of years?

• (1315)

[Translation]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Speaker, I salute my colleague from Winnipeg North.

Bill C-34 is a step in the right direction, but it does not go far enough. Only 2% of the 1,255 projects would have been reviewed had the new law been in effect. That is manifestly insufficient. That is exactly what I said in my speech. This bill is a step in the right direction, but it needs to go much further. When we look at the review thresholds in this bill, they are insufficient, and most importantly, they do not cast the net wide enough.

I think that the government still has work to do. I hope it will listen to reason and ensure that its bill and law fit the current reality and cover more projects that will be analyzed with a view to both national security and economic security.

[English]

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the member would like to see the legislation updated. There was an amendment at committee that would bring in, subject to review, assets that were required by a state-owned enterprise. This was not the case before. For example, if we were going to buy the shares of a state-owned enterprise, that would be reviewable. However, if we were going to buy a single mine from a mining company, the asset itself would be reviewable, based on the amendment, if it were to pass in the House.

Does the member agree with such an amendment?

[Translation]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Speaker, I think I was rather clear in my speech.

The Conservatives' amendment involved rejecting any projects that do not come from the Five Eyes countries. That would threaten Quebec's economy.

I will give the same example I gave before. Forty percent of Europe's investments in Canada are made in Quebec. That means that a major part of Quebec's economy and all of the foreign investment projects would be automatically at the tipping point.

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Once again, I think that, yes, it is possible to find a balance in all this, but we completely disagreed with the Conservative Party's amendment.

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I missed the first part of the member's speech, so I hope he forgives me if he mentioned this.

The member sits on the science and research committee with me, which is looking into situations like this, where intellectual property and industry is leaving Canada because of foreign takeovers. I have talked to companies in the hydrogen tech sector, where, when they get to a certain size, they need some investment to expand to the next stage and the investment almost always comes from abroad, so the technology goes to China, the United States or Germany.

I wonder if the member could comment on that process and how this legislation could help that or what the government could do to help keep those technologies in Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague, with whom I have the privilege of serving on the Standing Committee on Science and Research, and I thank him for his work.

In committee, we are examining the issue of intellectual property. Right now, we are examining the issue of national security and research. Those are very important subjects. It is important to understand that the knowledge we develop here is of interest to people abroad, people who do not always have our interests at heart. If we want that knowledge to stay in good hands and not be used by entities that certainly do not have our interests at heart, then we need to protect it. In order to do that, we need to implement robust mechanisms. We need to support the economy, but we especially need to support research here.

Right now, the federal government is on the wrong track. It must start making major investments in science and research again so that we can prevent foreign companies from acquiring and using our local brain power.

• (1320)

[English]

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am grateful to rise in this debate about securing the future for Canadians. With your indulgence, this is also my inaugural speech.

As I first stepped into the chamber, Fania Wedro, or Fanny as she was belovedly known, was on my mind. The last I saw her, she had offered up a bottomless spread of her legendary blintzes. I loved Fanny and even as her body began to fail it was the intensity of her eyes I remembered. This was a woman of indomitable strength. She survived the Holocaust. She built a business and a family with her husband Leo. She founded the Canadian Magen David Adom.

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At the University of Calgary convocation where she received her honorary doctorate of law, the woman who was forced to shovel dirt over Nazi mass graves, which would have included her mother; the woman who escaped a fire-engulfed ghetto, taking refuge in empty pits; and hid in a forest for nearly a year, said this, “Don’t think that standing here before you is a 95-year-old woman. In front of you is a 14-year-old girl whose life was taken away, was left with no parents, no grandparents, no relatives, no one. And yet I had to go out into the world. And let me tell you...it’s a wonderful world. Spread light into the world. Cherish and respect your country.”

Shadows define the light. In her final days, as her new member of Parliament, I made a promise to Fanny that I would fight those who would tear our country down. I bade her farewell with a kiss on both her cheeks and, on her insistence, I took a blintz on the road. Fanny died days before her birthday, on August 27 this year.

As I stood at the entrance to this chamber, her memory was the blessing I carried here with me. Five days later, I watched this chamber be desecrated by the presence of a Nazi whose hate-filled collaborators were Fanny’s oppressors.

In the last 21 days, I have watched the world forget “never again”, replaced instead with the horrifying resurgence of the ancient hatred unleashed by tyrants determined to unravel our alliances: an anti-Semitic regime in Iran; the anti-Semitic pogrom at a Russian airport; Beijing’s anti-Semitic propaganda imposed on its people; mobs across our streets glorifying terror and death; trafficking in tropes and hearts having turned to darkness.

A soul I treasure deeply in Israel today reminded me recently that the opposite of love is not hate; it is indifference. Across every issue I have watched debated in this chamber, I do not see a determined government rising to this moment. I see indifference and the politics of division: the single mother who may not have a home come December, waking up to news that one part of the country would get relief from the carbon tax destroying her dreams, but that she would not; waking up to an indifferent government offering up electing Liberals as her answer rather than axing the hated carbon tax for everyone; the newcomer and young couple presented with performative announcements rather than shovels in the ground to build homes and generate jobs, unshackling the lives they wish to lead; and seniors who, after paying into the system for a lifetime, watch the invisible thief of inflation denying them the retirement they were promised and they earned. These are my neighbours. Across the country, our neighbours are hurting and, for them, the promise of Canada is broken.

As I stand here today, I represent a riding of people, including former MP Bob Benzen, a gentleman businessman, who goes to work every day for an energy sector under systemic attack by a government indifferent to the consequences of its decisions. Unlocking our resources and enabling investment is the single most important nation-building decision Canada could make today for the benefit of every Canadian.

The just transition legislation would kill directly 170,000 jobs. It would reward our rivals in Russia and Iran as they scale production, subvert sanctions and fund their war machine at discounted prices to Beijing. It would punish our friends who need more Canada.

At precisely the time when Canadian resources represent over \$3 trillion that would fuel, feed and secure the world; bring home paycheques for our people; build energy projects reducing emissions; build economic reconciliation with first nations; and rebuild our Armed Forces, the Prime Minister and his radical NDP-Liberals repeat Trudeau the father’s failed legacies such as the national energy program that former MP Bobbie Sparrow ferociously fought and rampant inflation of non-stop tax hikes. One retired prison guard in eastern Ontario told me that in his lifetime he had never seen the government give money for food since war time.

● (1325)

Do members remember what Preston Manning said when eulogizing his father, the premier who unleashed Canada’s energy sector? He said, “Do not let...[apathy] do to Canada what wars and depressions and hard times were unable to do. Continue to build.” I take heart in knowing it was not just democracies that won the wars of their age but that it was also Conservatives. It was Sir John A. Macdonald who fashioned and forged what today is among the oldest democracies on earth, upon ideas of freedom and ordered liberty rather than linguistic or religious division. It was Sir Winston Churchill who was recruited, after experiments with appeasement failed, to confront fascism with iron will while cautioning about an iron curtain in the age to come. It was Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and Brian Mulroney who pursued policies of peace through strength to defeat communism and reverse bad economic decisions.

I rise in Parliament from a seat once held by Preston Manning, who built the modern Conservative movement, and by Stephen Harper, whose Conservative government, even through global economic calamity, delivered a prospering Canada at peace with itself and confident in its future. Today, in Parliament, the leader of His Majesty’s official opposition, our Conservative leader, the next prime minister of Canada, has been described by Daniel Hannan, Lord Hannan of Kingsclere, as the most important Conservative in the world today because his is the leadership of conviction and not division.

Amid all the crime, chaos, drugs, disorder, economic anxiety and diplomatic disaster, I have been reflecting on what constitutes the kind of strength it takes to be the fighter my neighbours elected. In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis writes the following about government:

...it is easy to think the State has a lot of different objects—military, political, economic, and what not. But in a way things are much simpler than that. The State exists simply to promote and to protect the ordinary happiness of human beings in this life. A husband and wife chatting over a fire, a couple of friends having a game of darts in a pub, a man reading a book in his own room or digging in his own garden—that is what the State is there for. And unless they are helping to increase and prolong and protect such moments, all the laws, parliaments, armies, courts, police, economics, etc., are simply a waste of time.

If what Lewis described is the purpose of the state, then what Natan Sharansky later writes about is the resiliency of the people for whom the state serves. He describes a town-square test, one in which anyone can walk into the middle of the town square and say anything they want, however odious it might be. The test distinguishes between a society of freedom and a society of fear; between a country capable of fierce debates and one ruled by state control, social unrest, and mob rule; between true patriot love at the heart of national life and the indifference of financial and moral corruption destroying it; and between those who build and those who are determined to tear everything down.

In the past eight long years, we have seen an NDP-Liberal wrecking ball take aim at and undermine 175 years of democratic tradition, resulting in broken trust across every institution in this country. We have seen Parliament and its honour be desecrated, in a chamber where government and opposition are separated by three sword lengths to engage in the fierce debates defining their age, with words not war, and where parliamentarians are elected as servants, not as masters of the people. All this is as clouds of war gather across faraway oceans: wars in the Middle East, war in Europe and the steady drumbeat of war in the Indo-Pacific, wars now threatening to overtake our streets and requiring leaders of conviction to step forward, pursue policies of peace through strength and unleash the freest, most prosperous country on earth.

Let me rise today in Parliament, the home of our democracy, as its newest member from Calgary Heritage, with an answer to the mob of woke ideologists and their allied extremists rolling across this land. Let me rise with an answer to those people, foreign and domestic, who would undo our democracy, imperil lives, erase history and attack our freedoms. Calgary Heritage is the rock upon which the woke wave of tyranny will crash and fail. Calgary Heritage will be a strong voice in a chorus of voices restoring the promise of this great country. Our heritage, our inheritance, is the very promise of Canada itself. For all the single mothers, we are going to restore the promise. For the senior, we are going to restore the promise. For the young couple and newcomer, we are going to restore the promise. We will never give in, never back down and never surrender before the cancel culture rage. To my dear and beloved friend, Fanny Wedro, I will never forget my promise to her. We will spread light into the world, we will cherish and respect this country and we will restore the promise of Canada, for her.

● (1330)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not believe for a moment that Canada is as dark and bleak as some Conservatives would try to portray, and that Canada is a broken country. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

The member makes reference to seniors. The reality is that Stephen Harper did absolutely nothing for seniors. In fact, he tried

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to bump up the age of retirement from 65 to 67. The member talked about women, specifically mothers. It was the current government that brought in the \$10-a-day child care. I would encourage the member to read more than Conservative spin notes. At the end of the day, a lot of good things are happening in Canada, and one does not have to be as bleak as—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member for Calgary Heritage.

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar: Madam Speaker, that was partisan invective. I think it is always enriching to hear that in the chamber. We know that the member is a master of that in all his interventions. I have been here for only a minute, but I have been able to listen to his commentary. Sometimes I wonder what kind of fantasyland he is living in.

Former prime minister Stephen Harper left this country as a singularity among its peers. It was the fastest-growing economy on the planet. Its middle class was expanding while every other middle class in the world was retracting. It established trade deals with every region of the world, from Atlantic to Pacific, preparing us for the world to come and giving Canadians the opportunity to compete, invest and grow in stature in the world. He led a principled foreign policy that did not equivocate over simple issues of good versus evil. Let me just say that the former prime minister was a giant of our times and the best prime minister of my lifetime, and that I am grateful for his service.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I almost laughed when I heard about having good debates in the House and respecting democracy, because the Conservatives are some of the worst hecklers I have heard in the House.

The member spoke specifically about single moms. I also find it very disingenuous from a lot of Conservative males when they talk about struggling single moms. I actually was a single mom. In trying to provoke fear, the member just spoke about good and evil. This is the most toxic, violent place I have been in, in years, since the new leadership of the member for Carleton. I wonder whether my respected colleague can speak to some of the behaviours of the males in his party, its constant toxic masculinity and how he feels he can change that behaviour if he truly does respect democracy.

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar: Madam Speaker, of the 55,000 doors that my campaign members knocked on, 24,000 of which I did with a couple of friends, I had the opportunity to meet Canadians from all walks of life, Calgarians who are hurting and struggling under the yoke of NDP-Liberal tyranny. I have watched the NDP-Liberals spend the last number of years destroying their livelihoods, imposing a carbon tax on them that makes life completely untenable.

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For the women, seniors, newcomers and young couples whom I represent and serve, the savings that would be accomplished by axing the carbon tax alone would allow them to think beyond the next two or three months. It would allow them to think about the way they would respond to the inflationary pressures of the time. Mortgage payments are out of control. The cost of groceries and food is out of control. The cost of fuel is out of control. This is all because of the poverty-crushing, identity-trafficking, NDP-Liberal coalition government.

I am here proudly to represent the idea that every human being has inherent dignity and worth, and that in us, they have a fighter.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was reminded, during my colleague's speech, of one of my favourite Ronald Reagan quotes, "The nine most [frightening] words in the English language are: I'm from the Government and I'm here to help." Can the member comment on whether that is as true today of the Liberal government as it was of the Democrats when Mr. Reagan spoke of it?

• (1335)

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar: Madam Speaker, when government invents means to interfere in the lives of people, to control what they see and think online, and when government is sitting around wondering about ways in which it can try to solve problems for people, we usually see the expansion of the government doing things which are utterly unhelpful, ultimately. I appreciate the comments by my hon. colleague because I agree with him wholeheartedly. I think the best government is the one that gets out of the way—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Huron—Bruce.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to present here today with respect to Bill C-34.

Before I start, I want to recognize a couple of local baseball teams in my riding that won provincial championships. This summer, it was the Kincardine Cardinals 13U baseball team and the Kincardine Cubs senior team. In our region in western Ontario, there is some of the best baseball in the country and maybe in North America, so it is great that both of those teams won and brought titles back to Huron—Bruce.

I would also like to recognize Mary Hughes and John Westerman from Bayfield, who hosted a tremendous event Saturday night. They invited all the volunteer firefighters from Bayfield to attend. It was a random act of generosity, and it was great to be a part of that. I congratulate them and thank all the volunteer firefighters.

When we look at the purpose of the Investment Canada Act and the depth and breadth of the goals of Industry Canada, it is probably very helpful to go to the beginning of some of the ideas and innovation in Canada, which is at the university and college level across this country. However, as some members here today with whom I am on committee would know, we are studying a number of topics at committee, one of which is state-owned interference at the university level. If Canadians read the headlines from a year ago, they would realize that there are some very concerning activi-

ties going on in Canadian universities, mainly through the People's Republic of China and some of the universities that focus on its defence.

My point is that if we think of a young person in university today, studying very hard in engineering or something to do with computers, for example, they would finish their degree, maybe get into some research afterwards and work in a few labs. However, they are really working to come up with the next idea that is going to be a game-changer for Canada, and there are all sorts of federal and provincial dollars. There are hundreds of millions, maybe billions of dollars that are allocated through NSERC, CIHR and SSHRC, all in the hope that this will be great for Canada, for innovation and for the next generation of businesses in this country. It is a multi-year, multi-decade, lifetime's worth of investment, on behalf of the Canadian taxpayer through these organizations, in the young people, professors and researchers in our country. Out of all of those years of effort and partnerships with companies and so forth, there are good ideas and there are businesses that are started in this country. However, what is of concern today and going forward is the high cost of protection that is going to be required at Canadian universities that do the research.

At our committee last week, the SSHRC president, Ted Hewitt, announced that there is \$125 million, \$25 million a year, being allocated to universities to try to sift through all the applications to determine if there are safety risks to the research and whether the research is going to be brought back to the People's Republic of China and could be used against Canada or whether the idea could just basically be stolen. This is just the beginning of the high cost of protection and security in this country, which leads to looking at the Investment Canada Act and the benefit test, and many other items within the act. I will give one example, a little outside what we are looking at with Bill C-34, but in parallel: the recent purchase, within the last year, of Magnet Forensics located in Waterloo. If we look at the education and experience that those individuals have, and likely the grants they applied for with their business, whether through SR&ED, IRAP or any of the other taxpayer-led initiatives that provide ideas and support for these businesses, there is a lot of money that goes into this.

• (1340)

There is a lot of value being given to the Canadian taxpayer, including by the individuals who own the company and the workers who work there. However, the company was sold for \$1.8 billion to a private equity company in the States. The threshold for the transaction to be reviewed is \$1.9 billion.

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Now, I am not saying this is a coincidence. I know there is a different threshold being proposed through this bill for different transactions. However, this one was an American company; obviously, we have a trade deal with the United States, and that was the threshold if purchased by a private equity company.

After all those years of support, all those years at university and everything else that goes into it, including SR&ED and IRAP, it is sold for \$1.8 billion. I am happy for the founders. That is a great payday. However, if we think about it, eventually the majority of those jobs are going to head to the United States, and all those years are gone.

We have to ask ourselves this: Is that a net benefit for the Canadian taxpayer, the workers or the country that has provided all those dollars of support? We really have to question it.

I will give another example, and it is a company that I used to work for: Wescast Industries in Wingham, Ontario. At one time, it was the largest exhaust manifold supplier in the world, producing over 10 million manifolds a year. It was bought 11 years ago by Bohong Group, which is financed by the China Development Bank. The founders of the company, the LeVan family, were ready to move on. They needed a buyer. This one came forward.

However, I believe, if we look at it, that this acquisition should have been reviewed. It was much lower than the threshold, but if we look at the knowledge and the value that those jobs provided this country and my region, there is no way that the transaction should have been approved. Everybody in our area, of course, all the guys and gals I used to work with, knew what they were going to do. They were going to take all the ideas, skill and know-how back to their headquarters. Basically, when the bones were picked, they would shut it down and operate solely in China.

That is in fact what has happened over 11 years. That is a shame. It was a great place to work. There were so many people to get to know. There were thousands of employees across southwestern Ontario.

These are examples of where the Investment Canada Act and the net benefit test could do more. Specific to this bill, one great amendment that was accepted by the government was our amendment that set the level to zero for a review, when a company has connections or ties to being state owned. Therefore, everything would be reviewed, and we could look at it. This also lends itself to my belief that it should be more than just the minister. I realize that, in the beginning, it is not. However, at the end, the final decision should be from a cabinet that consists of members from all provinces and, hopefully, some of the territories, to really drill down and decide if it is a net benefit to the country. I think we will find that a lot of these acquisitions are not.

Another great example is one I made a note of. If members remember, a number of years ago, there was Retirement Concepts, which sold 20 or 21 retirement communities to Anbang Insurance. This should never have been approved. It was to nobody's net benefit in British Columbia. There is no way that a Chinese state-run insurance company should have been operating health care in this country.

I think we are coming to a close. I look forward to questions.

• (1345)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member is talking about decreasing the threshold. This was brought forward to committee, and it ultimately passed.

The government has said in the past that, if there are ways it could improve upon legislation, it is always open to good ideas. This can be compared with the former government, which never allowed amendments unless they were government amendments.

I see this as a positive thing. The question I have for the member is as follows: Given the very nature of Canada as being what most would say is a safe place to invest, because of the environment we are in, whether it is trading agreements or the dependency Canada has, in terms of wanting to expand where it can, could the member provide his thoughts in regard to why it is so important that we update the act?

Mr. Ben Lobb: Madam Speaker, it is important. Obviously, it has been over a decade since the act was reviewed, so that is great. However, the member sometimes gets mixed up on the trade deals. If we look back at the trade deals that have been approved in the last few years, they were all done by the Conservative Party. We took it right to the one-yard line. With the European trade deal, I know that the finance minister, who was the trade minister at the time, fumbled about 10 times before she got it into the end zone.

The member for Abbotsford, Gerry Ritz and Stephen Harper are really the people who did 99% of the work. Yes, the Liberals bobbled the football into the end zone, and they get the touchdown, but the heavy lifting was done by our government in previous years.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. It sounds like he really studied the bill. When we give speeches in the House, I think it is important that we truly pay attention to the bill's content in order to elevate the debate and have meaningful discussions.

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My colleague spoke at length about what he would like us to do to dive deeper into this matter. I would like to know what he would like the government to do when analyzing transactions. I have a specific case in mind. A few years ago, in my riding, Rona was sold. Because the purchase price was so large it exceeded the minimum threshold, the sale was reviewable under the Investment Canada Act. I wanted to know on what basis the Liberal minister at the time authorized the sale. I filed an access to information request, but the answer I got was that no records relevant to my request could be found. We wanted to know which analyses and studies the minister based his decision on. Apparently, he did not base his decision on any documents at all.

I want to ask my colleague whether he believes that due diligence is important when analyzing transactions.

[English]

Mr. Ben Lobb: Madam Speaker, that is from my neighbour, who sits right behind me. He is a decent fellow; he has not hit me in the back of the head yet, so I appreciate that.

The fines and penalties are increasing. It is so important for businesses to know that Canada is open for business, but if someone is going to do an acquisition, they have to go into the office and disclose what their intentions are with the Canadian business and how they would like to conduct themselves. To answer the member's question, today there is not enough of that done in the beginning. Then we get into these 11th-hour scenarios where it is not good for the business or the government of the day, and the wrong decision is usually made.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am glad my colleague mentioned Anbang. Retirement Concepts is a company operating a retirement centre in my backyard, basically, in Summerland. It was in trouble before Anbang, a Chinese-owned insurance company, got involved; that was approved, as the member said, probably mistakenly. Then, Anbang was taken over by the Chinese government. The NDP put forward an amendment to the bill before us that would trigger a review, with a previously okayed deal, if there was a subsequent takeover by a state-owned enterprise.

Could the member comment on that and why the amendment did not pass through at committee?

• (1350)

Mr. Ben Lobb: Madam Speaker, the member is not wrong. That deal should never have been approved. There is no way. I remember reading about the deal, and I thought it was bad. This is why it is so important that they come, in the beginning, to the office and disclose. That would give the government and the officials plenty of time, and it should be reviewed at committee, as well. We should give the committees more power.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to talk on the update to Bill C-34, an act to amend the Investment Canada Act.

When it comes to business investment, it is clear that, after eight years under the Prime Minister and the Liberals, the government is not worth the cost. Since coming into power, business investment per employee in Canada has actually dropped 20%. At the same

time, business investment per employee in the U.S. has actually increased 14%. It puts things into perspective in terms of Canada's dropping productivity and, as we go forward, the fear of declining prosperity in our country. What is more shocking is that, in the very final year of the Harper government, Canada's business investment, as a percentage of GDP, was actually higher than that of the U.S. After eight years of the government, we are at about 15% lower.

According to the National Bank of Canada, for the first time ever, business investment is now lower in this country than housing investment is. We can think about all the manufacturing, oil production and everything else. The investment is actually lower than it is in housing.

Manufacturing capital stock is the lowest that we have had since 1988. Two-thirds of our 15 main industries experienced declines in business investments under the government, including wholesale trade, accommodation and food services, utilities, professional services and manufacturing. All these numbers fell pre-pandemic; this is not because of the pandemic.

The Business Council of B.C. has issued a report on investment in Canada, calling it "Stuck in the slow lane". What better title is there for what is going on right now with investment in our country than being stuck in the slow lane? The report noted that, out of 38 members in the OECD, Canada is going to have the slowest economic growth over the next decades. We will have the lowest real GDP per capita growth in the OECD going forward. That has been brought up, I think, in previous speeches about Bill C-34 in this House. The report lists several reasons for this, among them, inefficient regulatory approvals. Does anyone remember Bill C-69? Of course, we have seen Bill C-69 ruled against by the Supreme Court. Hopefully, the government will recognize what the Supreme Court has said and eliminate Bill C-69; however, Bill C-69 was only one of many regulatory burdens added by the government that has chased away business investment in this country.

The Business Council of B.C. also noted punitive tax rates as companies grow; lack of relief for energy-intensive, trade-exposed industries under the carbon tax regime; and high internal trade restrictions. Something also noted in this report is that our anemic business investment would be all the worse if it backed Alberta out. Alberta has the highest per capita investment in the entire country. If we back out Alberta, our numbers are even worse. What do we get with the government? Every possible regulatory move, every possible attempt to strangle the growth in Alberta. Therefore, we have one province driving most of the business investment in this country, and the government is trying to destroy it.

There will be some members across the way, such as, perhaps, the member for Winnipeg North, who will get up to ask this: Are there not some things the government has done? Would we not agree that it is good? There are some things the government has done to spur business investment in Canada, such as green-lighting the purchase of ITF Technologies by a China-based company. This was a deal that the Harper Conservatives had kiboshed. The Liberals reversed it and allowed a China-based company to buy out ITF Technologies. ITF has done national security work with National Defence, and the government overrode the ban on a purchase by a China-based company. We should remember that China's national intelligence law of 2017 requires companies to "support, assist and cooperate with state intelligence work".

• (1355)

I will read that part again. It says Chinese companies "shall support, assist and co-operate with state intelligence work", and we have the government approving the sale of a technology company that has done work for National Defence. It waived the security review of the Chinese takeover of Vancouver's Norsat, despite Norsat being involved in communication tech for Public Safety Canada, the defence department and the Coast Guard. Norsat had also done work for the Pentagon. The U.S. and our Five Eyes allies asked us not to allow the sale to go through, but it did.

When not allowing the sale of sensitive tech companies, the Liberals are going out of their way to bring Chinese regime companies into our security systems, such as Nuctech, which my colleague from Barrie—Innisfil talked about. Nuctech is called the Huawei of scanners. It is a Chinese-based company partially owned by the Chinese state. It has been fined, charged and convicted around the world over various fraud, regulatory and spying issues, and the government went out of its way to give it a contract to bring its technology into every embassy we have around the country.

The CBSA, which is meant to protect us, for some reason basically jury-rigged the RFP to ensure that only Nuctech, ahead of two Canadian companies, one in Quebec and one in Calgary, got the contract. It wrote in the requirements the exact specifications of a type of scanner, down to exactly how many inches across and how many inches high, and guess what. Only one company in all of the world happened to have a scanner that was 33 inches across and 21 inches high: Nuctech. Oddly enough, PSPC warned the government not to buy it, and the CBSA went ahead anyway.

When this was exposed, the government said it would hire an outside consulting company to do a review. Apparently, McKinsey was not available at the time, so it hired Deloitte, and for a quarter of a million dollars, Deloitte did what had been done at the mighty OGGO. Of course, I cannot make a speech without mentioning the operations and estimates committee. Deloitte exposed the fallacy of buying equipment from Chinese security companies. For a quarter of a million dollars, it came out with a four-page report that basically said Canada should not buy sensitive IT technology from despotic regimes.

I went to the West Edmonton Mall that week with the report and randomly asked kids and adults, strangers, about this, and they all laughed. Not one person said we should buy sensitive technology from despotic regimes.

Statements by Members

I appreciate that the government is finally getting around to updating the issue with Bill C-34, but one major change the Conservatives would like to see is taking away the ability of a minister to make the final decision. We would like to see a minister bring it to cabinet so that cabinet is consulted. For an issue as important as our state security, too much power is left with the minister. The minister should be required to bring the purchase of a sensitive company elsewhere. Whether it is a mining company or a tech company, it should not be the role of the minister to decide. We have seen the government repeatedly bring bills to the House that would give ministerial power over such a thing, and we would like to see that change.

There were a couple of other amendments we brought up that were shut down, and I would like the government to reconsider them. One of them would modify the definition of a state-owned enterprise to include any company or entity headquartered in an authoritarian state. This goes back to my previous comment about the Chinese intelligence law that forces those companies to act and assist in concert with that regime.

I will just briefly bring up a couple of other amendments that we would like to see. One is listing specific sectors necessary to preserve our national security rather than a systematic approach. Another is exempting non-Canadian Five Eyes intelligence state-owned enterprises from the security review.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

ISLAMIC HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Islamic History Month comes to an end, I will be reflecting on it and indeed on history in general. My recent meetings with the Ismaili community at the Aga Khan Museum and Ismaili Centre allowed me to see first-hand the artistic, intellectual and scientific contributions of Islamic civilization throughout history. The celebration I joined with the Dawoodi Bohras community in our area also highlighted the overall human progress this Muslim community has made.

Statements by Members

Islamic history is rich and varied, like the histories of all faiths, cultures and peoples. The brilliance and creativity of all beings create this history. At times it is for the common good and at other times it is not, because as humans we are both amazing and flawed.

As we write this next chapter of our history and histories, I pray that we will all join hands and work for the common good. Let us show that we have learned from the past and evolved. As Canadians, we must reach out to one another with understanding and acceptance to ensure that our actions create a chapter that we can all be proud of.

* * *

CELLULAR INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a literal life-and-death matter for millions of Canadians: reliable and affordable cellular service.

Recently, a rural Leamington resident had to race several kilometres to get enough cellular signal strength to call the fire department. A Chatham resident's medical alert monitoring calls for his diabetic father keep failing because of no service.

The survival of remote communities, such as Pelee Island, is dependent on reliable service to face the dangers of weather, fire, lake flooding, health services and so much more. After eight years, why does the broken Liberal-NDP government provide rural Ontario with the second-worst and costliest cellular service in the world?

The CRTC needs to immediately review the integrity of Canada's cellular infrastructure and report to the House by the end of February 2024. Instead of dropped signals, Canadians would do better to drop the government since it is not worth the cost.

* * *

TECHNOLOGY ENTREPRENEUR

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a very successful technology entrepreneur, Marc Andreessen, recently published “The Techno-Optimist Manifesto”, which I believe every policy-maker should read. He is the same person who wrote “Why Software is Eating the World” in 2011, in which he foresaw the digital disruption that has since unfolded, underscoring the significance of software in redefining industries and shaping the contemporary business landscape.

In the manifesto he states, “there is no material problem—whether created by nature or by technology—that cannot be solved with more technology.... Our civilization was built on a spirit of discovery, of exploration, of industrialization”. He concludes with this:

We owe the past, and the future.

It is time, once again, to raise the technology flag.

It is time to be Techno-Optimists.

It's time to build.

[Translation]

HÉLÈNE ALARIE

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Hélène Alarie, the Bloc Québécois member for the riding of Louis-Hébert from 1997 to 2000, passed away last week.

Without ever raising her voice or losing her cheerful demeanour, Hélène was a calm but forceful presence and a trailblazer. In fact, she was the first woman agronomist in Quebec. While the pesticide industry was in its heyday, she promoted a kind of agriculture that was more respectful of the Quebec lands she loved so deeply.

As a member of Parliament, she championed the debate on genetically modified organisms and introduced a bill on mandatory GMO labelling at a time when no one had heard of GMOs before.

As vice-president of the Bloc Québécois from 2001 to 2007, she reminded us about the importance of rural and remote Quebec. After retiring, she took up the cause of the Scottish separatist movement, seeing the obvious parallels with Quebec.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to thank Hélène Alarie and offer our deepest sympathies to her loved ones and to everyone else fortunate enough to have known such a remarkable woman.

* * *

● (1405)

CELEBRATIONS IN CHÂTEAUGUAY—LACOLLE

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Châteauguay—Lacolle is celebrating its rich past, its pride in its present and its confidence about its future. The municipalities of Napierville and Saint-Cyprien are jointly celebrating their 200th anniversary, while Sherrington is celebrating its 175th anniversary.

What we are celebrating is our shared history of courage, solidarity and community spirit. The region's rich farmland, wonderful people and extraordinary history have shaped the country we live in today.

I want to thank everyone who has contributed to building this magnificent region and helping it prosper.

* * *

WORLD DAIRY EXPO

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the good fortune of living in one of the most beautiful ridings in Canada, Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier. The wealth and beauty of its urban and rural areas and its magnificent vacation spots are the envy of many, and the region is known for its dynamic entrepreneurs and devoted residents.

I would like to make special mention of an essential sector that is really part of our DNA: agriculture and livestock farming. Does anyone know where to find the best dairy cow in all of North America? It is in in Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, Quebec, Canada, in Cap-Santé to be precise.

On October 6, the judges of the World Dairy Expo proclaimed Shakira, a Holstein from the famous Ferme Jacobs, as the best cow of 2023. Congratulations to the Jacobs family.

Other award winners included Petitclerc Lambda Anny, who was the first-place yearling heifer. Congratulations also go out to the Petitclerc family from Saint-Basile.

I thank all of our devoted farmers. They are important to us.

* * *

OXI DAY

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in these difficult times and as Remembrance Day approaches, I would like to take this opportunity to mark October 28, 1940, and commemorate the incredible sacrifices made by Greece, a long-time ally of Canada, during the Second World War.

[English]

Starting on October 28, 1940, with the Greek rejection of Mussolini's ultimatum to occupy Greece with a loud no, or *όχι*, the entire Greek population fought against overwhelming first Italian, then German and Bulgarian, fascist and Nazi forces. They continued a courageous fight for four terrible years during the brutal occupation, suffering immense losses.

[Translation]

We must never forget Greece's contribution, far out of proportion to its numbers, to achieving our ultimate victory for freedom.

[Member spoke in Greek]

[Translation]

Long live Canada.

* * *

[English]

SUSTAINABLE FINANCE FORUM 2023

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to share some exciting news.

The Sustainable Finance Forum 2023 will be held this week on Wednesday, November 1 and Thursday, November 2 at the Shaw Centre here in Ottawa. In just a couple of days, we will welcome 500 participants at this year's forum to engage in many constructive conversations over two days. The program consists of 16 sessions showcasing the power of finance in helping to build a more sustainable, just and prosperous economy.

We can leverage our markets and mobilize capital to help solve many of our greatest challenges, from affordable housing to food insecurity to climate change and much more. With many renowned speakers and thought leaders coming together, this year's forum will provide an opportunity for policy-makers, innovators, financial

Statements by Members

institutions representatives and international experts to come together and explore ways in which we can align our financial system with our values and build the economy of the future.

* * *

CARBON TAX

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight long years, Canadians cannot afford any more of these NDP-Liberal fairy tales. The carbon tax, with no way of measuring its effectiveness, according to the commissioner of the environment, is the most expensive, punitive, ineffective and useless virtue signal in the history of Canada.

Last week, the Prime Minister finally admitted that Canadians cannot afford it when he announced that he would remove the carbon tax on home heating for Atlantic Canadians. Beyond the mirage of yet another false promise, in reality, the Prime Minister has committed to fully implement a quadrupled carbon tax in three years, after the next election. The Prime Minister is just not worth the cost. I am from Atlantic Canada, and I thought, what about the rest of the country? They cannot afford it either.

How did the Liberal government respond? It suggested that maybe the west should elect more Liberals. Good luck with that. Perhaps Premier Higgs from New Brunswick said it best when he said, "Just cancel their unaffordable carbon tax altogether."

Common-sense Conservatives agree and, in every part of the country, Canadians from sea to sea are asking to get off their backs and axe the tax.

* * *

● (1410)

MEDICAL ISOTOPES

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, I joined a panel in Toronto to talk about the Canadian Nuclear Isotope Council's Isotopes for Hope campaign.

The updated report, which highlights the significant progress achieved in just six months, includes federal funding of \$35 million for the Canadian medical isotope system, which I was proud to announce at Bruce Power in July of this year. Joining me on the panel was Chief Greg Nadjiwon of Saugeen Ojibway Nation, who talked about how this funding will provide the community with an equity stake in the production of lutetium-177 and has led to healing with Bruce Power.

Statements by Members

Canada is a leader in medical isotope development, supply and use. With the global market expected to reach \$33 billion U.S. in the next decade, Canada is in the unique position to participate in this growth. I thank James Scongack, chair of the CNIC, for his leadership and vision, and all of those working to save lives in Canada and abroad.

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[Translation]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this Bloc-Liberal coalition, last Friday's announcement is humiliating for Quebecers. The Prime Minister must stop ignoring Quebec and announce the full, not just temporary, withdrawal of the second carbon tax, a tax that adds 17¢ to every litre of gas.

This tax, which was supported by the Bloc Québécois, proves that it is costly to vote for the Bloc Québécois. The impact of this inflationary spending is proving to be disastrous for the population as a whole. As evidence of this, the increase in food bank usage is unprecedented.

My riding, Beauce, does not have public transit. Parents have to use their cars to get to work, to take their children to activities and, above all, to go to the grocery store to buy food for their families. Some 82% of food bank users are working people who can no longer make ends meet, and 35% of food bank users are children.

This Bloc-Liberal coalition is completely out of touch with reality. These carbon taxes are having a direct impact on Canadians' ability to feed themselves. It is time to bring back a common-sense Conservative government.

* * *

[English]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, even the Prime Minister is recognizing that he is not worth the cost and that his carbon tax will do nothing to help the environment. Last week he saw the poll numbers and desperately delayed carbon tax payments on home heating in Atlantic Canada, but I ask why it was not done across the country. The minister from Long Range Mountains admitted the exemption was not granted to other Canadians because they do not vote Liberal. She said that, if other regions wanted an exemption, then they should have voted for the Liberal government.

The people of Thunder Bay—Superior North voted for a Liberal minister. Where was their exemption? Clearly, the minister has been ineffective in advocating for those of us across northern Ontario. Only common-sense Conservatives have a plan to axe the tax for good and bring home lower prices. We are ready to pass legislation today, so we can take the tax off and keep the heat on for people across northern Ontario and right across the country.

[Translation]

WORLD ARTISTIC GYMNASTICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our Canadian gymnasts performed exceptionally well at the World Artistic Gymnastics Championships.

René Cournoyer, Félix Dolci, William Émard, Jayson Rampersad and Zachary Clay possess boundless determination, breathtaking talent and a tenacity that is propelling them to the top.

Three of our Laval gymnasts, Félix, William and Jayson, accompanied by their coach Adrian Balan, dazzled at the world championships in Belgium. They accomplished an extraordinary feat: Our men's team has now qualified for the Paris Olympic Games in 2024, a feat that has not been achieved since 2008.

We look forward to seeing our colours flying at the Paris Olympics. Laval Excellence's constant support of its athletes for over 15 years is an immense source of pride in the riding of Alfred-Pellan.

Three cheers for Canada and for our exceptional athletes.

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● (1415)

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I remember the story of my father, a Holocaust survivor. After arriving in Canada, he and my grandmother would hide under the table when they heard a plane because were they worried about being bombed. My grandmother and father were riddled with trauma. For my grandmother, it was because she was a survivor of the concentration camps, and for my father, it was because he was a child in hiding during the war.

My father became a peace activist. In fact, he lost a teaching job in the sixties after he refused to take off his peace button. I think of the families and children in Gaza right now, who will lose their whole family as a result of war, and of the Israeli children being held hostage, who will live with similar trauma as my grandmother and father.

I know, if my dad and grandmother were alive, they would be calling for an immediate ceasefire. They would not want anyone to endure what they had to in life. In honour of my father, Albert Gazan, and my grandmother, Gina Gazan, I call for a ceasefire now and the release of all hostages. I ask to not disrespect their legacies as Holocaust survivors to justify ethnic cleansing, not in their names.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL UNEMPLOYED WORKERS WEEK

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, October 30 to November 3 is national unemployed workers week, organized by the Mouvement autonome et solidaire des sans-emploi.

I commend this initiative, which rallies unemployed workers' rights groups from several regions of Quebec to remind the Liberal government of its many broken promises to reform the employment insurance system.

The new Minister of Employment recently said that he wants a resilient program. If so, there is only option: a complete overhaul of the unfair employment insurance system as it currently exists.

The Bloc Québécois has been calling for such a reform, and its tireless efforts in this direction will continue. In these uncertain economic times, the need for reform is clearer than ever. Reform is not just necessary, it is urgent.

In a spirit of solidarity, I wish everyone a good national unemployed workers week.

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[English]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the saying goes, desperate people do desperate things, and after eight years, this is exactly what we saw from the Prime Minister last week with his last-minute, desperate announcement on the carbon tax. In a typical Liberal fashion, his own minister admitted the exemption was not granted to all Canadians across the country because they did not vote Liberal. It begs the question of just how ineffective and out of touch the Liberal MPs are in Nickel Belt, Sudbury, North Bay and Thunder Bay that they could not get the same deal back home. Winters are pretty cold in northern Ontario too, and they should be treated the same way as everybody else.

Here is our common-sense Conservative plan: Take the carbon tax off all home heating for all Canadians. Let us be clear that the Prime Minister did not try this because Canadians are hurting. He only did this because he is hurting. After eight years, Canadians know he is just not worth the cost, and now with his latest plan, even he knows it too.

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CARBON PRICING

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our price on pollution incentivizes greener choices and puts more money back in families' pockets. We have heard from many on home heating oil. While they wanted to switch, they needed more time and support, and we listened. Now, home heating oil will be exempt from the price on pollution for two years.

We are giving free heat pumps to those earning below the medium income, plus \$250 to sign up. We are helping to get rid of the upfront costs of heat pumps for everyone else, and we are doubling the rural top-up to 20%. The plan saves people energy, and it saves them money.

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[Translation]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the Prime Minister has finally admitted that he is not worth the cost. How many years have I been saying that the carbon tax will do nothing for the environment and will hurt families?

I was just moments away from holding a massive rally in a Liberal riding to axe the carbon tax when the Prime Minister did a complete 180. However, he did not eliminate the second carbon tax, which applies in Quebec with the Bloc Québécois's support. Will the Prime Minister be consistent and eliminate the second carbon tax for Quebecers and all Canadians?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe the Leader of the Opposition is getting his words confused in French.

I would like to remind him that, today, at a time when climate change is affecting everyone around the world, in order to be responsible, a party that wants to form the government must have a plan to fight climate change and to help with affordability issues. Unfortunately, the Conservatives do not have a plan to address either of those issues.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all knew the Prime Minister was not worth the cost. We just did not realize he would admit it himself, but here is what it took. I was moments away from holding a massive thousand-person rally of common-sense Nova Scotians to axe the tax. The Prime Minister heard the news. He was huddled up in a ball in the fetal position sweating bullets as Liberal MPs pounded on his office door asking for some relief, but only some relief came, not for everyone everywhere.

Will I need to hold massive axe the tax rallies in every Liberal riding to finally do away with the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government has developed, and will be rolling out, a plan to deploy free heat pumps in Atlantic Canada and across the country. It will address the affordability issues, put more money back in the pockets of Canadians and actually help us to address climate change, which is something the opposition members seem to ignore on an ongoing basis.

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, so the Prime Minister admitted that he is not worth the cost by announcing that he would pause his carbon tax for some people on some fuels for some period of time. Then his rural affairs minister said that other Canadians could have had the same pause but for the fact that they did not elect Liberals. Apparently we are going to have different tax rates in different constituencies depending on how people vote.

Why is it that the Liberal MPs in Thunder Bay, North Bay, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie and other freezing cold communities are not getting the same break? Is it because their local Liberal MP is utterly useless?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly it is very important that we are addressing both affordability concerns and fighting climate change across this country. The heat pump program, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, if he had done his homework, would know, applies across the country. It actually will help to ensure we are reducing the costs of home heating, of oil heating, in every province and territory while continuing to address climate change in a thoughtful way.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is hot air in cold weather. Just today the snow started falling in cold Ottawa. Edmonton is also cold; it has Liberal MPs. Winnipeg is called Winterpeg for a reason. People there are forced to pay tax on natural gas. All of these cities have Liberal MPs.

The Prime Minister claims that he only backed down on the carbon tax for some Canadians because of the advocacy of terrified Liberal members, so is he really saying that Liberal MPs in the areas where this pause does not apply are totally useless and will never be able to defend Canadians heating their homes?

• (1425)

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows that Canadians who live in jurisdictions where a price on pollution applies get over \$1,000 a year from the Government of Canada to fight climate change. When it comes to the Conservatives, they want to take that \$1,000 out of the pockets of Canadians.

Our climate policy has resulted in 53 megatonnes being removed. That is the equivalent of 11 million cars a year. While they keep their heads in the sand and pretend that climate change is not real, we are going to fight climate change and we are going to help Canadians with affordability.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when a Liberal rural affairs minister says that if Canadians want a pause from the carbon tax, then need to elect a local Liberal MP, she has it exactly wrong. What they need to do is elect a common-sense Conservative government that would axe the tax entirely.

This is not only hurting the pocketbook of Canadians or forcing seniors to choose between eating and heating, now Saskatchewan, Alberta, B.C. and Ontario are asking for similar breaks. In fact, the Saskatchewan government is refusing to collect the tax on the utility.

Does the Prime Minister realize that he is not only bankrupting Canadians and leaving them in the cold; he is actually dividing our country?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a resident of Ontario, I remember the last time that our province elected a common-sense Conservative government. Look what it did to education. Look how it gutted health care. Look at what happened with Walkerton.

We know, as Canadians, what happens when we elect common-sense Conservatives. They gut programs, they hurt Canadians, and they are certainly not there when it comes to fighting climate change or supporting Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, tens of thousands of businesses say that the Canada emergency business account has put them in jeopardy. The pandemic hurt them. Inflation is hurting them. Interest rates are hurting them. Forecast consumption by Quebec and Canadian consumers is hurting them.

We requested an additional one-year extension. We requested some form of accommodation from the banks. We requested a credible point person who would be available for these businesses.

Is the government ready to act?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is listening to small businesses. The first deadline to qualify for forgiveness was the end of 2022. Small businesses asked for our help. That is why our government extended the forgiveness repayment deadline to January 18, 2024. We also announced a full one-year extension of the term loan repayment date until the end of 2026.

Our government is always there for small businesses.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about real businesses, real entrepreneurs, real jobs. We are talking about a real economic impact on the Canadian and Quebec economies. Everyone, including every single province, is saying that the current extensions and deadlines are insufficient and that businesses are in danger of closing down.

This is serious. It is more serious than the fictions some people here are spouting. These are real jobs, real businesses. This measure is a helping hand that would cost next to nothing.

Oral Questions

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we set up the Canada emergency business account to help businesses and organizations during the pandemic. We extended the forgivable deadline by one year, postponing it from 2022 to 2023. We postponed it by a few more weeks to give businesses time to make adjustments and continue to benefit from this forgivable portion. Loans will not be called in this January.

Members must not scare organizations and businesses unnecessarily.

* * *

• (1430)

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week's announcement on home heating only benefits Canadians who live where Liberals need to save their seats.

All Canadians need some relief when it comes to the cost of home heating. That is why New Democrats proposed taking the GST off all home heating. It would help all Canadians. It is a measure that Liberals and Conservatives have both opposed.

When will the Liberals stop playing games and bring in relief for all Canadians this cold winter?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I would say that folks in the chamber need to do their homework. This program actually applies across the country. The doubling of the rural top-up applies across the country. The heat pump program applies across the country. It applies to all folks who are challenged by the cost of home heating oil.

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Doug Ford and the Greenbelt are the perfect example of the Conservatives' housing strategy: sell public land to their rich developer friends. The Liberals' record after eight years is no better, with record-high rents, renovictions and the worst housing market in the G7. These two parties are looking out for the people profiting from the housing crisis, not the people suffering from it.

When will the government announce measures for building not-for-profit housing?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my hon. colleague that I was opposed to what the Ford government was trying to do in the Greenbelt in the greater Toronto area. Sadly, the Conservatives across the way supported it.

We are here to protect the environment across the country. In the past month alone, we have signed agreements with the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Nova Scotia to protect one million square kilometres across Canada. That is an area four times the size of Great Britain, and we have still have a lot more to do.

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal-NDP government is finally saying the quiet part out loud. It admitted that its carbon tax makes life more unaffordable and does nothing to help the environment. However, only certain people get relief: those who happen to live in places where Liberal polling numbers are the worst. Everyone else gets told that their vote does not matter and that the Liberals do not care.

If the Liberals can take the carbon tax off for some Canadians, why can they not take it off for all Canadians?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said a number of times, this program applies across the country in every province and territory of this country. We have developed a solution with respect to home heating oil that will put more money back into the pockets of Canadians. It will continue to fight and reduce emissions. It will address both the climate issue and challenges with respect to affordability.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister can rely on his prepared talking points all he wants, but that was not quite how the Minister of Rural Economic Development spun it yesterday. She told Canadians that if they wanted to be exempted from Liberal carbon taxes, they had to vote Liberal. My neighbours in the GTA have a question for the minister. There are 24 Liberal MPs in Toronto, 11 in Peel, seven in York and 10 of them are cabinet ministers.

If this is the largest concentration of Liberal ridings in Canada, why are they still paying a carbon tax?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, home heating oil is a challenge not just for Atlantic Canadians, but for many in rural Canada. That has been the case for many years, but it became more forceful in the last couple of years as the price of home heating oil skyrocketed. It went up 75% in 2022.

I would say we have come up with a solution that will enable Canadians to do the right thing with respect to fighting climate change. It will actually put more money in their pockets. It is a good solution for the climate. It is a good solution for the affordability of Canadians in Atlantic Canada, and everywhere across this country.

Oral Questions

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has finally admitted the carbon tax makes heating homes more expensive and he is pausing the carbon tax in Atlantic Canada, and we know why. It is because the minister, the member for Long Range Mountains, said Atlantic MPs forced the Prime Minister to do it.

What the Prime Minister is saying after eight years is that if someone is a Liberal MP from Brampton, Toronto, Mississauga or Thunder Bay, their voice does not matter at all. They cannot have any change. They are effectively useless.

Will the Prime Minister stop playing politics with the carbon tax and just axe it?

● (1435)

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a member of Parliament from Ontario, I know that Ontario families get over \$1,000 a year for fighting pollution. I guess that Ontario MP wants to take that \$1,000 right out of their pockets, which is exactly what he is advocating for. Instead, our government is committed to making sure that we help Canadians not just fight pollution, not just fight climate change, but also deal with affordability.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, now we have just been treated to the great carbon tax fable: first, it was revenue neutral; second, we get more money than we pay into it; third, it fights climate change. It does none of those things. What it does, and what the Prime Minister has admitted by pausing the carbon tax, is that it makes it more expensive for everyone. The real tragedy is for Canadians outside Atlantic Canada. Why? It is not being paused, and most people heat their homes in Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, B.C. and Quebec not with heating oil. It does not apply across the country.

Will they stop playing politics, picking winners and losers, dividing Canadians and axe the tax?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct the record. When we came into power in 2015, projections in emissions growth in Canada were growing and, in 2030, we would be 80 million tonnes above our 2005 levels. We took that out of the atmosphere and we reduced emissions by another 50 million tonnes. That is the equivalent of removing from our roads more than 20 million vehicles. That is one of the things we have done in the last eight years, and we have done so many more things to fight climate change.

We have the best record of all G7 countries, which is something that never happened, not once, under the Conservative Party for 10 years.

[Translation]

The Speaker: Before I give the floor to the hon. member, I urge all hon. members to wait their turn before speaking.

The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday, the Prime Minister looked at the polls as our leader arrived in Nova Scotia. He started to panic.

What did he do? He temporarily suspended the carbon tax in the Atlantic provinces.

His environment minister said yesterday in an interview that he was not willing to help out Canadians in other provinces, not even back home in the minister's and my home province of Quebec. That is humiliating for Quebecers, who also bear the brunt of the carbon tax. Quebecers also have to buy food and fill up their cars.

Will the Prime Minister announce a complete, not just temporary, suspension of the second carbon tax that applies to Quebec?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would invite my hon. colleague to watch that episode of *Les coulisses du pouvoir* again. I am actually happy that he watches Radio-Canada, because his party wants to slash CBC/Radio-Canada's funding. He should watch that interview again, because what I said was that we are there to help people.

All the measures that we have implemented, from dental care and child care to fighting climate change, are things that the Conservative Party of Canada is opposed to.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as for the tax, I watched the show not once, not twice, but three times, and it was clear what the minister said. He even said that, as long as he is environment minister, there would never, ever be any further changes to the carbon tax elsewhere in Canada. He essentially confirmed that there will be no other pauses as long as he is in that role. It remains to be seen what the Prime Minister will do with that.

For now, I would also like to say that the Bloc Québécois, which supports the carbon tax, says it does not apply to Quebec and wants to drastically increase it.

At the end of the day, what is this government doing?

● (1440)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that if he watched the show once, twice, or three times, maybe he should have practised his question once, twice, or three times. It is not entirely clear what he was asking. I think he was talking about carbon pricing.

Carbon pricing is in place across the country, from coast to coast. We have made sure there is a fair mechanism for all Canadians. We support Canadians in the fight against climate change as well as on the issue of affordability.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government cannot let 250,000 businesses go bankrupt without trying to save them.

Everyone is asking the government to defer repayment of the CEBA loans for another year without losing the subsidy. All the premiers agree on this, including the premier of Quebec and the premiers of the other provinces, as well as the National Assembly, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the Association Restauration Québec. The federal government's inaction is leading us to a wave of bankruptcies.

When will the government finally offer SMEs an adequate deferral of repayment?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, nearly 900,000 small businesses had to shut down during the pandemic. What did we do? We created the Canada emergency business account, or CEBA, to help small businesses keep their doors open.

What are we doing? We are providing additional flexibility so that businesses can repay their CEBA loans. What will our government continue to do? We will continue to listen to and support small businesses across the country.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the federal government's flexibility. Businesses had until December 31 to repay the loan without losing a subsidy that is saving them from bankruptcy. Are my colleagues aware of how much more time Ottawa has given them? It has given them 18 days.

The Liberals gave 18 days to businesses that have been fighting for three years to pay off their pandemic debts. Eighteen days is what they call flexibility. The survival of 250,000 businesses is at stake.

When is a real payment deferral coming?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada emergency business account was offered during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was an interest-free loan for a term of two years or more, depending on the date, a portion of which can be partially forgivable as long as repayment is made in a timely manner. The loan can also be extended without the need for immediate repayment at the start of next year, and can be extended again until 2026.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is not true that the government is flexible or financially responsible.

If the government were responsible, it would do everything in its power to prevent 250,000 businesses from going bankrupt. If it were responsible, it would understand that businesses pay faster when they are up and running than when they are bankrupt. If the government were responsible, it would know that the employees of these businesses are more profitable when they are working than when they are on employment insurance. If it were responsible, it would again defer the repayments and would assess every business's account to find personalized solutions. That is what it means to be responsible.

Is the government not willing to try?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to be there for small businesses.

Oral Questions

We extended the deadline for small businesses from last year to this year. Since they asked for more assistance, we are giving them more refinancing flexibility. We are giving them more time to access the loan forgiveness and a one-year extension of the CEBA loan repayment deadline.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an election must be in the air because the Prime Minister has announced his re-election campaign: Vote Liberal, and in three years they are going to quadruple the carbon tax on home heating, gas and groceries. After eight years, the Prime Minister is in a panic mode because he knows his NDP-Liberal government is not worth the cost.

Now we have a Liberal minister from Long Range Mountains in Newfoundland and Labrador admitting that only Canadians who vote Liberal will get an exemption from the carbon tax. What about the Liberal minister from Edmonton Centre or the Liberal MP for Calgary Skyview? Were these MPs so incompetent and so out of touch that they could not secure an exemption to the carbon tax for Albertans?

• (1445)

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that carbon pricing works. It both reduces emissions and puts more money in the pockets of middle-class families. We made a decision to attack a highly polluting source of fuel, home heating oil, in a different way so we could get rid of it faster. We are doing this by making a record investment in heat pump technology, which is not only going to reduce emissions at a household level, but it is going to save families thousands of dollars every year. This is sensible policy. It is good for the environment, it is good for the economy and it is good for the households not just in my riding but right across the country.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax works only if it is politically expedient.

The Prime Minister's carbon tax exemption does not help 97% of Canadians who are already struggling to put food on the table and heat their homes. Now we have a Liberal minister from Newfoundland and Labrador telling Albertans that the only reason they are not getting an exemption is they did not vote Liberal.

Are the Liberal minister from Edmonton Centre and the Liberal MP for Calgary Skyview not defending Alberta families? Are they not defending the 81% of their constituents who rely on natural gas to heat their homes and will not get a carbon tax exemption?

Will those Liberal MPs from Alberta stand in the House, defend their constituents and admit their Prime Minister is not the worth the cost?

Oral Questions

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I guess that member did not hear the minister earlier when he said that home heating oil was exempted right across the country. Furthermore, his constituents in Alberta are getting over \$1,000 a year in a climate rebate to help fight climate change. If that member and any other member from Alberta really wants to stand up for Canadians, why do they not stand up to Premier Danielle Smith, as they are trying to gut the pensions of Albertans?

On this side of the House, we are going to stand for Canadians right across the country when it comes to their pensions, when it comes to affordability and when it comes to climate change. The Conservatives are reckless and not worth the risk.

The Speaker: Really, I would seek the co-operation of all members to please hold their comments so that the Speaker can hear the questions, but also so that the person who had asked the questions can hear the response.

The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, that desperate Prime Minister, in total free fall, finally admitted that his carbon tax is punishing Canadians. The Prime Minister also announced in his re-election platform that to vote Liberal in Yukon would mean quadrupling the carbon tax on home heating. This weekend, the minister from Newfoundland admitted the exemption did not apply to all Canadians across the country, including all Yukoners.

My question is for the Liberal member of Parliament for Yukon. Will he step up, stand up to the Prime Minister and demand that the carbon tax be permanently removed for all Yukoners?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said a number of times, this program and the heat pump program actually apply in every province and territory across the country. I would also suggest that while, yes, disproportionately there is more heating oil in Atlantic Canada, we are focused on ensuring we are addressing pressing needs in every part of the country, including by providing significant funding for abandoned oil and gas wells in Alberta and British Columbia.

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CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians right across the country are struggling with the cost of home heating, and Canadians right across the country want to be part of fighting climate change. While the government sweetened the heat pump rebate for Atlantic Canada, the rest of Canadians are stuck with a lengthy bureaucratic application process that would only get them one third of that dollar amount. It does seem like those Liberals care more about rural Canada when they hold seats there than they do about helping everyone across the country.

Will the minister stand today and commit to increasing the federal heat pump rebate for all Canadians?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important that folks actually do their homework. There is an existing heat pump program across the country that provides grants of \$10,000. It enables people to get a cheque within three days. It applies just as much in British Columbia as it does in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Last week, we announced we were increasing that by another \$5,000, so long as provinces actually step up to be part of the solution. Therefore, the answer is yes.

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● (1450)

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today Air Canada announced obscene quarterly profits of \$1.2 billion. At the same time, another passenger was forced to drag themselves off an Air Canada flight, because the necessary wheel chair and staff were not in place. It is degrading and a violation of human rights.

Under the Liberals' watch, Air Canada has been allowed to mistreat Canadians while making billions in profits. When is the minister going to do his job and make sure travellers with disabilities never face discrimination again?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was horrified to learn how Rodney Hodgins was treated by Air Canada. Like every Canadian, Mr. Hodgins deserves to be treated with dignity and with respect. My office called Air Canada; it is investigating. Air Canada apologized to Mr. Hodgins. That is the very least it can do. Persons with disabilities deserve equal rights and access when travelling. Canadians expect Air Canada to do better, much better.

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HEALTH

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, members of this House voted on my private member's bill, Bill C-252, which aims to prohibit the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children aged 13 and under. While the Bloc and the NDP voted in favour of this initiative to protect the health of children, the Conservatives voted against it, once again demonstrating that the health of Canadians is always their last priority.

Could the Minister of Health please speak to the importance of the child health protection act?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my thanks to the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel for championing children's health. When we take a look at the absolute, unfortunate tsunami of chronic disease and illness that is coming as a result of childhood nutrition not being where it needs to be, we know that one of those leading problems is advertisers going after children to push, unfortunately, unhealthy products that are going to have injurious effects on their health.

I am so proud of this House that we took action. I am so proud of this member for introducing this private member's bill. I am utterly confounded as to why the Conservatives would stand against it. It is imperative we do everything we can for children's health.

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CARBON PRICING

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an obvious, desperate Prime Minister admitted his carbon tax is punishing Canadians and making life unaffordable. After eight years he finally proved to himself last Thursday that he is not worth the cost. His only strategy at this point is not about climate. It is about protecting his Liberal MPs. In Sudbury, in Nickel Belt, 55% of homes are heated by natural gas, yet for these struggling Canadians they get no exemption from heating their homes.

The Leader of the Opposition has proposed to axe the tax in all forms of home heating for every Canadian. Will the Prime Minister agree with that?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier I spoke about our record in terms of greenhouse gas reduction which, no thanks to the Conservative Party, we have been able to do over the last few years.

However, let us talk about the record number of electric vehicles that are being deployed, with 10% of sales now in Canada for electric vehicles, something the Leader of the Opposition does not even believe in. He thinks it is a myth. Whereas 10 years ago, one in 25 vehicles sold in the world was electric, today it is one in five around the world.

We are catching up to the rest of the world, no thanks to the Conservative Party of Canada.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight long years, the NDP-Liberal government is so arrogant that it does not even try to hide its corruption. The minister from Long Range Mountains openly admitted that Canadians who do not vote for Liberals will be punished with higher taxes. She insulted Canadians and gave a slap in the face to her coalition partners. What about the NDP MP for Timmins—James Bay?

Can the minister tell us why their NDP partners are so incompetent and ineffective they could not get a tax break on home heating for people suffering in northern Ontario?

• (1455)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to address affordability. That is exactly what we are doing with the heat pump program to ensure that people are actually saving money. It is also im-

portant that we are fighting climate change in a thoughtful and substantive way.

I do find this question a little bit odd, coming from the only member in the House of Commons who voted against the Paris Agreement.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister once said that a Canadian is a Canadian. After eight long years, now he says some Canadians are more equal than other Canadians. The NDP-Liberal government is so desperate to cling on to power it will pay any price. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost of national unity.

Will the Liberals introduce legislation today, listening to the Leader of the Opposition, and axe the tax on all home heating for all Canadians?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure how many times I need to repeat in this House that the program applies to all Canadians, all provinces and territories across the country. We are addressing a particularly acute issue with respect to home heating. Most folks in this chamber should be aware that this has been an issue for a number of years. We are doing that by accelerating the deployment of heat pumps that will save people money and will continue to help us to address climate change. That is a responsible, thoughtful way to approach public policy.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. The Prime Minister finally admitted that his carbon tax is unaffordable for Canadians, but instead of removing the carbon tax for all Canadians, the Prime Minister chose to further divide this country by only helping those who voted for him. The Liberals are saying that Manitobans did not deserve the tax relief because they did not vote Liberal. Unfortunately, Manitoba elected four Liberals.

Why did the Manitoba Liberal minister from Saint Boniface—Saint Vital fail to get a carbon tax exemption on home heating for Manitobans?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again the member opposite clearly was not listening to the minister when he said that home heating oil exemptions apply right across the country. What is more, folks in Manitoba get a rebate from the price on pollution. Not only are we helping Canadians to fight climate change, which I remind my colleagues is an existential threat to our well-being, we are also helping them with the high cost of living.

Instead of taking their money away, Conservatives should be joining us in ensuring that we can all provide more supports to Canadians.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our farmers are still suffering from this summer's catastrophic weather. According to a survey by the Union des producteurs agricoles, precipitation ravaged no less than 60% of Quebec's market gardens. Respondents lost a third of their revenues in the midst of an inflationary crisis. Worse still, more than half of producers think that this damage will continue to affect the 2024 crop.

What we need is emergency assistance for horticultural producers and deferral of the emergency business account loan repayment. When is the government going to take action?

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and to the Minister of Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our thoughts go out to everyone across the country affected by the extreme weather and forest fires of recent months. Farmers, producers and ranchers exist on the front lines of climate change. We recognize that the devastation caused by extreme weather and forest fires across the country has made this a difficult time for many of them. We continue to be there for them. We continue to work together to ensure that we are meeting the needs of farmers.

• (1500)

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the government quite grasps the urgency of the situation. For producers of root vegetables, 64% of lands were damaged by rain. For strawberry and raspberry producers, it is 73%. For pea producers, it is 88%. This will affect food prices if the government does not intervene, and everybody will be impacted.

We need emergency supports and a one-year extension of the emergency account repayment deadline, and we need them right now. When will the minister understand that?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remind my hon. colleague that we unveiled the very first national climate change adaptation strategy in Canadian history last June. The strategy was praised by the Insurance Bureau of Canada, among others, who called it brave and bold. We are working with all stakeholders, including in agriculture, and with our provincial, territorial and municipal partners to implement solutions to help Canadians, businesses and corporations face the impacts of climate change.

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CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second carbon tax affects Quebec, and it is having a catastrophic impact on the lives of our constituents. Our food banks are overwhelmed and that includes Frigos pleins, Comptoir Le Grenier and L'Essentiel des Etchemins in my community. One in 10 people are using food banks.

After eight years under this government, with the assistance of the Bloc Québécois, everything is broken. It is costly to vote Bloc Québécois. The announcement that the Prime Minister made on Friday is not enough. He must abolish the full tax everywhere.

When will the Prime Minister announce that the tax has been completely eliminated?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a bit difficult for me to speak after this member who, for many years, was part of a government that was the first in North America to implement a carbon tax, the Government of Quebec. She was part of the government that did that.

An article in this morning's edition of La Presse said that Quebec had a record rainfall of 265 millimetres, the most rain it has seen since 1940. The impacts of climate change are real, particularly in the agricultural industry. They are driving up the cost of food. This summer in Quebec, there was \$150 million in damages in the agricultural industry alone. Everyone pays for that.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years with this Bloc Québécois-backed government in power, parents are struggling. They have to cut back on everything, including meeting their children's needs.

I do not know why people on the other side are laughing; there is nothing funny about what I am saying. A family in Lévis says they have to pay almost twice as much for food because of inflation. Voting for the Bloc Québécois is costly. They want to drastically increase the carbon tax. The second carbon tax applies in Quebec and hurts our people.

When will the Prime Minister abandon his carbon tax throughout the country?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am having a little trouble keeping up with my Conservative colleague. She was there when they introduced the carbon exchange. She defended it and voted in favour of it in cabinet.

Does she change her mind every time she changes leaders, or every time she changes parties?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Colleagues, I would like to hear the question from the Member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bloc Québécois members have once again wholeheartedly supported the Liberal Party.

Nearly 900,000 Quebecers turned to a food bank last month. After eight years of Liberal governance, that is what happens. The Liberals want to bring in a new tax, with the enthusiastic support of the Bloc Québécois, which wants to drastically increase that tax.

The Prime Minister, who is taking a nasty beating in the polls, announced last week that he is going to give Atlantic Canadians a temporary break.

Will the Prime Minister rise here and announce that he will give all Canadians a permanent break?

• (1505)

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can tell my colleagues that there is a price on pollution and that pollution is costly.

With the measures we have put in place, we will speed up the fight against climate change. We have a plan and we are taking concrete action to put more money in taxpayers' pockets.

Our plan is agile. Our plan is flexible, unlike the Conservatives, who should be ashamed of themselves for wanting to continue polluting.

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CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before becoming an MP, I had the opportunity to go to several countries with flawed tax systems. In other words, seniors, young people and the unemployed were left behind. I saw them in the streets.

I know that the Conservatives would like to take an axe to our tax system, but we are not going to go backward.

I would like the minister to tell us how the Canada Revenue Agency is helping countries strengthen their tax system instead of taking an axe to it, like the Conservatives would do.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Revenue Agency shares its expertise and knowledge with many developing countries in different ways.

We support the Tax Inspectors Without Borders initiative by making our experienced tax examiners available. We welcome technical missions, such as those from Ghana and Ivory Coast that will come visit us at the end of the year, and we participate in two forums by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. What is more, the commissioner presides over one of these forums.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the plummeting, panicking Prime Minister admitted his carbon tax is punishing Canadians and making life more unaffordable. Liberals just announced their re-election platform: Vote Liberal and quadruple the carbon tax on home heating oil after the next election.

The Liberal minister from Newfoundland admitted this exemption was not granted to Canadians across the country because they do not vote Liberal. Rum bottle politics is back.

When will the Prime Minister stop with the band-aids, cure the problem he caused and axe the carbon tax?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asked us to cure the problem. The problem we are trying to cure is pollution from home heating oil. By making the investments necessary, we can replace home heating oil furnaces with heat pumps. They are cleaner, they create jobs in our communities and they save thou-

Oral Questions

sands of dollars every year for families that live in my community and his.

The member has described before, on this chamber's floor, heat pumps as fairy tale programs. People who live in our communities are going to save thousands of dollars. That is no fairy tale.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, heat pumps increased the cost demanded for electricity in Nova Scotia, but the NDP-Liberals have brought back rum bottle politics: Vote Liberal and get a free quart of rum or vote and get a free heat pump. However, here is the catch. The Liberals promised to quadruple the carbon tax after the next election. Nova Scotians are not fooled by this bait and switch.

The Prime Minister is not worth the cost. When will the Prime Minister stop with his band-aids, cure the problem he caused, which is the carbon tax, and axe it?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with great respect to my hon. colleague, I think he has missed the point of this program entirely. He is concerned that people will pay a higher price after the pause has ended and the price comes back into effect. If people install a heat pump, they will not pay it at all and that is the point.

We are making the investments necessary so people can replace a more polluting system with a less polluting system. Since he has mentioned coal, we are working to eliminate that from the grid in Nova Scotia too, which is going to help people in both of our communities.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, folks back home are wondering how much tax they will pay if they vote Liberal in the next election.

The Liberal MP for Long Range Mountains suggested that they want to be a government that listens to the concerns of Liberal ridings. Her and her costly colleagues voted 24 times to increase the carbon tax to 61¢ per litre.

After eight years, the NDP-Liberal government and the Prime Minister are not worth the cost. Will they stop the mass confusion and tell Atlantic Canadians how much carbon tax they will pay if they vote Liberal in the next election?

• (1510)

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we could say it for the fifth time and I do not think the answer would get across.

Oral Questions

The bottom line is that we on this side of the House tried to find a way to make sure that people square affordability with wanting to fight climate change. Both are very important right now. Both are very important to people in Atlantic Canada and very important in my constituency. I think we have found a way to do that.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, homelessness is on the rise across the country. Sadly, this is a reality facing too many veterans, who have bravely served our country.

Everyone deserves to have a safe and affordable home. It is vitally important that we do everything in our power to help our homeless veterans.

Can the Minister of Veterans Affairs tell us what action the government is taking on this crucial issue?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the health, safety and well-being of our veterans is my top priority. We take the situation very seriously. That is why our government is investing in a new program to combat homelessness when it comes to veterans. This program will provide rent supplements and support services, as well as important research to really determine the reasons why veterans are homeless.

Canada's veterans have been there for our country. We have to be there for them and we will.

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GROCERY INDUSTRY

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as grocery prices continue to be sky high, 1,500 students, faculty, staff and alumni are relying on the campus food bank every week at the University of Alberta. The demand has quadrupled over the past two years. The Liberals are nicely asking CEOs to lower prices, and that obviously is not working. The Conservatives are fine with those CEOs getting richer while students and workers are forced to turn to food banks.

Why will the Liberals not tackle corporate greed so that students and workers can afford to eat, or does the government only believe that Canadians who vote for them deserve to eat?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that at a time when Canadians are struggling with affordability, food prices are too high. That is what we have heard right across this country. That is why our government called the five largest grocery chain CEOs to Ottawa and worked with them to create action plans, which they are implementing to lower and stabilize food prices for Canadians. This is important work, we are tracking their progress and we will have more to report soon.

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, every time we ask questions about the Governor General's indecent expenditures, government members act outraged and offer a half-hearted denunciation, but nothing is ever done to change the culture within that institution. The Governor General spends thousands of dollars in meals, alcohol, luxury hotels, travel and cleaning services. Let us consider the fact that, over the course of a single flight, she spent close to \$1,000 in lime and lemon slices. I cannot make this stuff up.

I will ask the question again: Does the government intend to cut the Governor General's \$33-million budget? Obviously, she does not seem to be able to manage taxpayer dollars responsibly.

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Governor General does important work on behalf of Canada, here at home and around the world. Obviously, we expect all public office holders to spend every dollar respectfully, carefully and conscientiously with due regard for all Canadians.

● (1515)

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, given the government's massive and embarrassing about-face last week, I seek unanimous consent for the following motion: That, in order to support all Canadians struggling with the cost of living, particularly with winter fast—

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: I hate to interrupt the hon. member, but unfortunately I am hearing noes already.

If members are seeking unanimous consent, I ask that they negotiate to get unanimous consent so we can continue to use the time of the House efficiently.

* * *

[Translation]

FOOD SECURITY

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I believe that if you seek it you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the House (a) take note that 872,000 Quebecers used food aid in 2023 and that 2,000,000 Canadians, including 640,000 children, also used a food bank in March 2023 alone;

(b) take note that 71% of organizations working for food security in Quebec ran out of food in 2023; and

(c) call on the government to do more to fight food insecurity, while respecting the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member 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)

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the rule book governing the procedures of the House is very clear in Chapter 11:

...it has always been a fundamental rule of questioning Ministers that the subject matter of the question must fall within the collective responsibility of the Government or the individual responsibility of one of its Ministers. This is the only basis upon which Ministers can be expected to answer questions.

Earlier in question period, the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke asked a question regarding the conduct of the member for Timmins—James Bay, who is an NDP member and not a member of the government. There are a couple of things that I think bear hearing out on this point.

The first is that as per the rule that I just cited—

An hon. member: Debate.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, this is not debate. This is an issue that pertains to the rules around question period. I note that the Conservatives, not that long ago, attacked the Speaker to say that the sanctity of question period is supreme. Presumably, then, they would also be concerned with treating the rules of question period with the respect that something with that level of sanctity deserves. In fact, it was not that long ago that we had a similar question directed to the government about a position of the NDP, and you rightly ruled that nobody was to answer that question because it was not a question about a government policy.

That is the issue that has to do with the rule. I think this is also the product of a long-standing phrase that has been allowed in this place that is misleading. It is misleading for anyone who understands the Westminster parliamentary democratic system. A confidence and supply agreement, or another party sometimes voting with the government, does not make a party part of a government. It is not a coalition.

I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that the casual abuse of that misleading phrase in this place is now leading to members disregarding some of our important rules about question period and leading to disorder in the House. I would beseech you to consider the use of that phrase in this House, which is false, and to perhaps come back with a decision on that.

The Speaker: I believe I will be able to make a ruling on that immediately, but I understand that there are two other members who seek the attention of the Chair and of this House.

The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

Speaker's Ruling

• (1520)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me say at the outset that I completely understand how devastatingly embarrassing it is for the member to be lumped in with the scandals and corruption of the Liberal government. However, that is not our problem, because it was his caucus that decided to enter into a formal agreement with the government.

There are many things we could call that. One of them is a coalition. If he does not like the fact that it is a big “c” coalition, we can say that we are using the small “c” coalition term for that, but the fact of the matter is that NDP members entered into this decision. They pledged to their Liberal partners that they would prop up the government no matter what and they have been doing it.

While he is hearing complaints from his constituents, I would suggest that rather than getting up in the House of Commons and raising spurious points of order, he talk to his leader and pull out of this costly coalition.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. While the preceding intervention had absolutely nothing to do with the point of order, mine will.

I would draw to your attention, Mr. Speaker, that during question period, a question was also asked of the member for Yukon, who is not a member of cabinet. I support the intervention by my NDP colleague that questions are supposed to be of the government regarding government business. We are starting to see a trend away from that. I really hope you can intervene. I seek clarification on this.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank all members for their contributions to this point of order.

I would like to thank the member for Elmwood—Transcona for raising an important point and the appropriate point of order. I am going to also offer a bit of a distinction with respect to the issue raised by the member for Kingston and the Islands.

To respond to the member for Elmwood—Transcona, the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke raised a question that made reference to a third party. This often happens in questions, or even in answers, from hon. members. It is something I would consider fair game. In the end, when the member actually got to the point of her intervention during Oral Questions, the question she did ask was relevant to the affairs of the government. That is the reason why I let the question stand.

With regard to the issue that the member for Kingston and the Islands has raised, again a fair point that a question was asked of a member who is not a member of the government, strictly speaking, nor a parliamentary secretary, a minister did stand, and I cannot remember which minister it was, in his or her place to answer that question. Therefore, if the minister chooses to respond to the question, I will let that happen.

Routine Proceedings

As members know, in a previous ruling from this Speaker, a question was once asked that was not on government business and no one stood to answer it. I therefore moved on to the next question. Let us continue this.

This gives me a great opportunity to remind all members on all sides of the House that perhaps the most effective questions and answers are the ones that are asked directly and are responded to directly.

I thank all members for their attention.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, entitled “Support for Clean Technologies in Canada to Reduce Domestic and International Greenhouse Gas Emissions”.

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

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the official opposition will be tabling a dissenting opinion in response to this report, recognizing, of course, that climate change is real, that we must deal with it and that human beings contribute to it, so we must take responsibility for it and take concrete action.

As the member for Carleton, the Conservative leader and leader of the official opposition, said during a speech in Quebec City last September to 2,500 Conservative supporters from across the country, we will address the issue of climate change through effective, pragmatic measures that focus on cutting-edge technology and green energy. We will also give the green light to green energy and proudly maximize Canada's full potential in terms of knowledge, natural resources and energy.

• (1525)

[English]

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

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, presented on June 12, be concurred in.

We are talking about the national housing strategy report, which was done by our human resources committee and delivered in June 2023. We should know that the national housing strategy is a program the Prime Minister announced with great fanfare in 2017, as I have said in the House before.

He and a number of his colleagues stood in front of a big building under construction and talked about how this strategy, which was going to be about \$40 billion, would be a life-changing, transformational strategy. The federal government was back in the hous-

ing business, and it was going to be a really big deal. It was a 10-year plan.

It is still a 10-year plan. The numbers were ballooned to \$82 billion, and at the time of the study, it was going to change the world, which was all well and good. We know the Prime Minister is particularly good at these photo ops and announcements with quite a rhetorical flourish.

We received the study in June 2023. Just before that, we had spoken with the former minister of housing. We asked the minister of housing, a couple of different times, if he would describe the housing situation in Canada as a crisis. He could not use that word. What we heard from the minister at the time was that housing was a challenge, and there were some problems and difficulties, but he could not use the word “crisis”.

I would also like to inform the House that I will be splitting my time with the member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Fast forward to a few weeks ago, there is a new Minister of Housing, and there is a renewed sense that we need to do something about the housing situation in Canada. The new minister, when asked if Canada was in a housing crisis, a year after the previous minister, acknowledged that, Canada is in a housing crisis. He used the word himself.

When I asked him at the time if, in 2015, eight years ago, and 2017, when the Prime Minister announced this life-changing, transformational national housing strategy, Canada was in a housing crisis. He would not use the word “crisis” when it came to that. He said we had some challenges. There were some difficulties, but he would not describe it as a crisis at the time the Liberals launched this national housing strategy, this \$82-billion, 10-year program.

We heard from the CEO of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which is the agency responsible for delivering the national housing strategy and all the programs therein. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is also responsible for insuring a lot of mortgages in this country, millions of mortgages. It does a lot of research on the housing situation in Canada. We have heard a lot from it about the fact that we are in a crisis and that Canada needs to build, in total, about 5.8 million homes by 2030 to restore some semblance of affordability in the housing market.

It is important to acknowledge at this point that the most homes that Canada has ever built in a single year was in 1976 when building a home was a little easier. Homes were not nearly as complex, but 270,000 units were built that year. The average today is about 240,000. We would need to ramp up the building of homes to about 745,000 units per year to meet that affordability target that the CMHC itself says we need to do.

Routine Proceedings

What was this national housing strategy supposed to do? We know, from the reports and from listening to the CEO of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, that this national housing strategy was to remove 530,000 Canadian families from core housing need, reduce chronic homelessness by 50%, protect 385,000 community housing units already in existence, provide 300,000 households with affordability supports, repair 300,000 existing housing units that needed repair and create 100,000 new housing units.

With the \$82 billion, we are just over halfway through the program, which begs the questions of where we are at and what it has accomplished.

• (1530)

Even the CMHC would acknowledge that we have a long way to go, and it would acknowledge that in part because its own research has told us that the situation is worse than ever. At the time that the Prime Minister announced this strategy, we had some housing challenges. Today, it is a crisis.

We now know that, after eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, rents have doubled. We also know that, after eight years of the Prime Minister, house prices have doubled and mortgages have doubled. Frankly, despite the grand proclamations of the Prime Minister and the constant patting of themselves on the back for all the great work they are doing with this national housing strategy of \$82 billion, it seems as though the Liberals are starting to catch on that just saying they are going to do good things with photo ops and announcements is not really solving the problem.

As it turns out, now the Liberals are announcing new things and new ideas, including things like removing the GST from purpose-built rentals. They are finally catching on, but I worry it might be too little, too late because, in the midst of all of this, in the midst of a housing crisis getting worse and worse, the government has been spending money like it is going out of style. It borrows excessively. The Liberals stand behind this whole business that they were there for Canadians during COVID, but we know that a couple of hundred billion of that borrowing had nothing to do with COVID supports, and that is having an impact on inflation.

In fact, Tiff Macklem, the governor of the Bank of Canada, has said that inflation in shelter prices is running above six per cent. Part of this, he says, is due to higher mortgage interest costs following increases in interest rates. However, it also reflects higher rents and other housing costs, and these pressures are more related to a structural shortage of housing supply. He also said it is going to be easier to get inflation down and make housing cheaper if monetary and fiscal policy are rowing in the same direction.

Therefore, we know that announcing with great fanfare an \$82-billion 10-year comprehensive plan to solve the housing challenge of the time, fast forward to today, has turned into an absolute crisis in the housing market and, frankly, a crisis that is, in part, created by the inflationary pressures that the government, and its excessive spending, is putting on the market.

Now we have this report that says that, yes, it is bad. We have work to do. That is effectively the message. Even Ms. Bowers acknowledged that it is going to be very challenging to meet the tar-

gets. We know why. The Governor of the Bank of Canada has told us that the inflationary spending of the government is just making it harder. Every nickel it spends is making it harder.

The members of the government do not seem to understand that we need to get out of the way and not only incentivize the private sector, but also bring down the inflationary deficit spending and axe the carbon tax, which is making everything more expensive. We need to reduce the taxation burden. We need to reduce the taxation of deficit borrowing on the backs of Canadians so that they can afford to eat, heat their homes and maybe even have a home one day.

Nine out of 10 young people in this country have given up on the dream of ever owning home, and the responsibility for that falls squarely at the government, its inflationary spending and its reckless way of borrowing billions of dollars. The government says it is going to borrow money so Canadians do not have to, but its members do not realize that the money being borrowed by the government is being borrowed on behalf of all Canadians. It falls to all of us to pay it back. Therefore, we have a situation today where a government will borrow billions of dollars to give Canadians a few hundred dollars to help them pay for things that, because of the government's borrowing, now cost thousands more dollars.

We have a situation where our government is now so desperate that it is playing politics, so it is axing the carbon tax in some parts of the country where the Liberals' poll numbers are really bad, but not in the rest of the country, as we found out, because people there did not vote Liberal. That is the problem. People have to vote Liberal if they want to get treated better by the government and if they want the government to relieve them of the pressures of its inflationary spending.

• (1535)

The national housing strategy can be described as a failure. The Conservatives have written a dissenting report on this, and we need to recognize that the government is simply not getting the job done. Even though its members have great talking points and photo ops, they are making life more expensive every day for Canadians. Canadians know that, despite their promises, the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the constructive criticism that the member opposite has levelled at the national housing strategy. However, I think it is important to highlight the fact that we actually have a strategy and that, for almost 30 years, municipalities asked consecutive federal governments for housing assistance. They did it individually as municipalities, and they did it collectively, through organizations such as FCM. For 30 years, the federal government, including government formed by the member opposite's party, decided not to make those investments. Therefore, the national housing strategy represents an answer and a response to those stakeholders who have asked for assistance.

My question to the member is this: Why did it take so long for the member opposite and his party to recognize that it is important to invest in municipalities and non-profit associations to help our most vulnerable population?

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, I would simply acknowledge that our party understands the importance of investing in municipalities and infrastructure. However, the difference is that Conservatives will require results for that investment. If municipalities are seeking billions of dollars in federal infrastructure funding for things such as transit and transit improvements, we will require them to be on board and at least make sure that the land around those stations is upzoned and ready to go for high-density residential. That is good for public policy, the fiscal policy of the municipality, the planet and housing.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I like the member, but, gosh, his speech was science fiction. The Conservatives, under the dismal Harper decade, lost more affordable housing units than we have in the last quarter century. It was the worst government ever for affordable housing, with 800,000 units lost. That is 800,000 Canadian families thrown out in the streets because Harper, and the member for Carleton working with him, decided it was more important to throw tens of billions of dollars through the Harper tax haven treaties than it was to actually invest in housing. They did not invest in housing. They blew it all up. Between them, the Liberals and the Conservatives lost one million affordable housing units over the last 17 years.

We saw the disrespect that Conservatives have for actually building housing with the Doug Ford government. They took an incredible amount of land out of the Greenbelt, which would be used for profiteering and for the rich. I have to ask my friend this: Do the Conservatives now repudiate those decisions made by the Doug Ford government?

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, there was an awful lot to unpack there. I think that if anybody is engaged in science fiction, it would be the NDP, because it keeps supporting a government that does not seem to understand the damage it is causing to Canadians.

The fact of the matter is that government makes more money on housing than anyone else in the whole phase, at 33% of every housing unit in this country, on average. Thirty-three per cent of the cost of a house is government. All we are saying is that we need to get government out of the way, get more housing units built and hold other levels of government to account for federal infrastructure spending.

• (1540)

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board's data, from 2006 to 2015, the prices in Toronto for homes doubled under the Harper government. They went from roughly \$300,000 to \$600,000, yet the Harper government did not put a plan in place to mitigate the drastic rise in housing prices.

Two years into the Trudeau mandate, there was a strategy put in place. This has been looking for ways to take on the challenges that we have today.

My question to the member opposite is this: Why did the Harper government not do anything when prices doubled under the Harper government's term?

The Deputy Speaker: I want to remind the hon. member that we cannot use the names of sitting cabinet ministers and prime ministers and that we stick to their actual titles in the House of Commons.

The hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, I would reiterate for my hon. colleague what his own minister of housing said just a few weeks ago at our committee: At the start of the current government's term, in 2015, the housing situation in Canada was not in crisis. People could afford to buy a home and find a place to rent. Eight years later, house prices have doubled, rents have doubled, people cannot find a place to rent, interest rates are skyrocketing and mortgages have doubled. It was not a crisis when Prime Minister Harper was here. It is a crisis today, thanks to eight years under the Prime Minister.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal government, Canada is in a housing crisis that the Prime Minister and the NDP-Liberal government are responsible for creating based on their decisions and policies. They want Canadians to forget how bad housing has become during their time in government. Red tape, bureaucracy and soaring costs have slowed down builders' construction of new homes when Canadians need them most.

Since 2015, house prices have doubled in Canada. Monthly mortgage costs have more than doubled and are now over \$3,500 a month. It takes over 60% of Canadians' income to cover the cost of owning a home. The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Canada's 10 biggest cities is \$2,314 a month, compared to \$1,171. Nine out of 10 young people in this country who do not own homes believe they never will.

Routine Proceedings

According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, housing starts are dropping dangerously across the country. Housing starts are down 25% in Ontario and 10% in Toronto. In my home province of British Columbia, Vancouver is down 17% on a seasonal basis. Before the current government, it took 25 years to pay off a mortgage; now it takes 25 years just to save for the down payment.

We increasingly see stories in British Columbia of people returning to the rental market because they cannot afford their mortgages. According to UBS Group, Toronto is ranked as the world's worst housing bubble; and Vancouver is the third most unaffordable housing market on earth. We built fewer homes last year than we did in 1972, when our population was half the size; however, we see \$27 million in bonuses at the CMHC, while it fails to fulfill its own mandate of affordable homes.

Conservatives have offered a plan to help Canadians in the building homes not bureaucracy act, a private member's bill tabled by the leader of the official opposition. If made into law, this common-sense bill would require big, unaffordable cities to build more homes and speed up the rate at which they build homes every year to meet our housing targets. It would reward municipalities eliminating costly gatekeepers and roadblocks based on the number of housing units completed, not just started. It would ensure that more housing units are constructed around public transit stations. It would cut the bonuses and salaries of those at CMHC if it is unable to speed up approval of applications for housing programs to an average of 60 days. It would list 15% of the federal government's 37,000 buildings and all appropriate federal land to be turned into homes people can afford. Finally, it would remove GST on the building of any new homes with rental prices below market value.

Removing the GST for rental with prices below market value is of particular importance; this would help build more affordable and attainable units for residents in my community and across the country. The Liberal members opposite know that, under their GST plan, the exemption will be used to construct luxury apartments instead of affordable units. It is simple: Canadians need homes, and builders want to build them. However, the Liberal government's failed policies are stopping them every step of the way, which has led to higher inflation and higher interest rates.

When builders are struggling to start new housing construction, the Prime Minister increases the cost to build by not having a softwood lumber agreement, making the cost of wood used for construction higher in Canada. His deficit spending has increased inflation and caused high interest rates. The Canadian dollar being consistently low compared with the U.S. dollar means that all the goods purchased for home construction, whether raw materials or refrigerators, cost more for Canadians. We can easily go across the border to the U.S. and find comparable houses at half the price.

Interest rates are higher than ever in a generation, which means higher debt costs and less money to put toward construction costs. Over 60% of the price of a home in Vancouver is due to delays, fees, regulations and taxes. Why would any person want to build new homes when the high debt costs, increased construction costs, fees and regulations seem to be never-ending? It took the government eight years to roll out its accelerator fund as part of its national housing strategy, but there is no clear, direct correlation between

this fund and the total objectives of all its programs to build the 3.5 million new homes needed in just seven years, by 2030. This is the number the CMHC has given that would make housing affordable once again in Canada.

● (1545)

That is the legacy of the Liberals' national housing strategy. Today, my Conservative colleagues and I had the opportunity to question the president and CEO of the CMHC at the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, or the HUMA committee. My colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka explained that, according to the Governor of the Bank of Canada, inflation and shelter prices are running above 6%. Part of this is due to mortgage interest costs, following Canada's increases in interest rates. Because of the structural shortage of housing supply and higher rents, inflation is becoming a more persistent issue in Canada.

The president of CMHC explained that in order to achieve housing affordability in Canada, we need an across-the-board increase in housing supply. He also said that CMHC recognizes that the private sector is the biggest player in supplying and building affordable housing in Canada; Canada requires private sector capital, and governments must create economic conditions that incentivize this private sector investment in housing; and innovation and addressing the skilled labour supply will help create these conditions.

Instead of demonizing the construction industry and all private sector housing providers for the lack of affordable housing, government must be focused on lowering the cost and time to build through reforms at the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, ending the inflationary deficits that are driving up interest rates.

In meeting number 48 of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, in the study on the national housing strategy, the chief economist at CMHC said the following:

Routine Proceedings

The “financialization” of housing is a word we hear a lot. The reality in Canada is that about 95% of the rental market is provided by the private sector, so financialization is something that exists by design in our rental market.

Conservative members believe that the private sector is not only critical but also essential to solving the housing crisis. No government can spend its way out of a housing crisis, but the government needs to provide incentives and, most importantly, taxation regimes and policies that will help keep costs and interest rates down.

At the HUMA committee today, my Conservative colleague from Simcoe North asked the CMHC president how much additional cost will be imposed through the NRCan and the National Research Council's national building code. She said that the CMHC is doing a study on this and it may have an impact; this building code has been around for about three or four years now. However, CMHC is also just now doing this study.

These are costs that are borne by the developer or the homeowner, if they are the developer, of the home or the units. Ultimately, the owner of the unit will pay the price. Some studies are suggesting that this code will cost \$30,000 to \$50,000 a unit.

The Liberals' record on housing has resulted in rents that have doubled, mortgage payments that have doubled, an ongoing and worsening housing supply gap and housing starting to decrease. In addition, the Liberals have no idea whether the billions spent on reducing homelessness has made any difference. The government is simply not worth the cost.

Therefore, I would like to move the following amendment:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word “That” and substituting the following:

“the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, presented on Monday, June 12, 2023, be not now concurred in, but that it be recommitted to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities with instruction that it amend the same to include reference to recent Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation data indicating housing starts are decelerating quickly, with housing starts in Vancouver on a seasonal basis down 17% in just the last month, in Toronto housing starts in September have dropped 10% when comparing September 2023 with September 2022, Canada's national numbers show an 8% decrease in September 2023 compared to September 2022, and on a provincial level, Ontario and British Columbia continue to be hit hard, and September 2023 saw a 24% drop in Ontario housing starts, with British Columbia showing a 26% drop from September last year, roughly 4,000 less homes than were begun last year in just Canada's two least affordable provinces; and accordingly, that it recommend that the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities take responsibility for the extent of the failures of the National Housing Strategy, the scale of the housing crisis, and the Liberal record on housing since 2015, and further recommend that the government bring in measures to address the housing crisis including measures similar to the proposals contained in Bill C-356, Building Homes Not Bureaucracy Act.”

● (1550)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The Deputy Speaker: The amendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

● (1555)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. I am looking at some numbers. This goes right to the member's own constituency. I know she does not support the government's policies dealing with housing but there is the 651 Cambridge Avenue project. From what I understand there are going to be 75 units, not to mention the commitment for the housing accelerator fund to provide millions of dollars in Kelowna—Lake Country toward the construction of 950 homes.

The member is exceptionally critical of the government and the government's policies of developing homes. Would she be prepared to be straightforward and honest with her constituents in her comments by saying whether that means she does not support these government-supported initiatives?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, we have to look at what the results are as to why we are in this housing crisis. The results speak for themselves. People are paying twice as much for rent than they were eight years ago when the government took over. They are paying twice as much for houses. As I mentioned in my intervention, it takes as long right now to save for a down payment as it did to save for one's home. Those are the results of the government. The results speak for themselves.

It is incredibly challenging for people. I talk to residents in my community all the time. They have multi generations moving back in together and adults still living in their parents' homes. It is incredibly challenging for people and those are the results of the government after eight years.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. The Conservatives act as though they are the saviours of the housing crisis, but of course they are and were part of the problem that created the housing crisis. They cancelled the co-op housing program in 1992 and severely cut social housing funding. In fact, we just heard the leader of the Conservatives today talk about social housing and co-op housing as though it was a Soviet-style model of delivery of housing.

My question to the member is this. If they really want to actually address the housing crisis like they claim to, why are they not taking on wealthy investors who are jacking up rent, renovating people, displacing people and rendering them to the streets?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the member is aware of this, but there are rent controls in certain provinces in this country.

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The fact of the matter is that people cannot even afford to rent the most simple of places. We have people living in tents. We have people living in RVs in parking lots. The affordability crisis is really affecting people. They cannot even afford food, let alone housing. It is driving people even further into this housing crisis because everything costs more, including the government's tax increases and the inflation that is happening, leading to interest rates that are where they are.

Everything is becoming more expensive, and it is literally driving people into places where they cannot even afford basic necessities. Those are the results of this NDP-Liberal government over the last eight years.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague who also sits on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

I am trying to understand the motion. This is a committee report on the national housing strategy. We got information directly from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC, and the strategy. The report contains some 15 recommendations. Certainly, some observations can be made. Has the national housing strategy worked? If not, why?

Instead of recommitting it to the committee, the motion should say that the recommendations have not gone where they needed to go, namely to the government, so that it can take note of them and deliver results.

We already have another report on financialization. We heard from CMHC again today. I want to try to understand why this report that the committee produced has to be recommitted, through this motion, to committee instead of being approved by the government.

As it stands, I disagree.

• (1600)

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, this is one of the most, if not the most, important topics we are dealing in Canada right now. It is really important we get this right.

I would encourage the member to read the Conservative dissenting report that we have tabled, which brings out some disparate views that we heard during the committee testimony. It is really important that we spend more time focusing on this very important issue.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, typically, it is a pleasure to be able to rise and address the House on the issue of the day. We all know that this was not supposed to be the issue of the day. This is the Conservative Party once again playing a political game on the floor of the House of Commons, preventing legislation from passing. The Conservatives do not really have anything to say about the legislation, so instead they bring in a concurrence motion to try to frustrate the government's ability to pass legislation.

That has somewhat been lost so far in the discussion that we witnessed after question period. Housing is, no doubt, a very important issue. I do not question that at all. In fact, when it comes to housing, when I was first elected back in 1988 to the Manitoba legislature, I was the housing critic along with the party whip at the time. I can say that even prior to that point, I had an active interest in housing and in non-profit housing in particular with the creation of the Weston Housing Co-op, and in working with associations like Blake Gardens and Gilbert Park to a certain extent after I got elected, on the Gilbert Park aspect of it. I had an interest in infill homes and the importance of having governments engaged in dealing with housing issues, from suburban new homes to inner-city housing problems of dilapidated homes that needed to be torn down, to vacant lots that were available and to housing renewal programs to improve the housing stock. Therefore, the issue of housing is not new to me at all. I am very familiar with it and I am very comfortable with respect to the way that the Government of Canada in the last number of years has approached this issue.

Before I get into some of the details of that issue, the reason we are debating once again another concurrence motion has not been lost on me. We all know that there is a finite amount of time here in terms of debate. The Conservatives always cry over there not being enough time for debate when it comes to government legislation. They constantly do that. They will whimper away. They will cry and say they want more debate, that we are limiting debate and bringing in time allocation. The Conservatives do not want to sit late nights; they have demonstrated that. They have shown that they will adjourn debates even before the day is over, but they will whine and cry that there is not enough debate on government bills. At the same time, they will prevent government bills from being debated. Then they will say that today's choice is housing, so they dig in and find the issue of housing and say that here is a super important issue. Yes, it is important, but every issue that the Conservatives bring to the floor through the concurrence debate they will claim is an important one. However, the primary purpose is not to debate the issue at hand; it is to prevent the debate on government bills.

Again, let us look at the amendment that has been brought forward and that the Speaker just finished reading. What is the essence of the amendment? The Conservatives want to bring it back to committee. I wonder if the member who moved the motion even brought it up at the agenda. We are going to have three hours of debate on this motion. Did the Conservative Party even raise the issue of having this debate at the standing committee? I would not be surprised if it did not. Actually, I would think that the members know full well that everything we are going to be debating for three hours here could have been very easily done in the standing committee. However, the problem with doing that is that it would have obligated the Conservatives to come up with some other excuse or to allow the debate on what was supposed to be debated today, which was Bill C-34, the investment Canada bill. The Conservatives talk a lot about foreign interference, but when the rubber hits the ground, they are slipping and sliding all over the place.

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• (1605)

At the end of the day, there is a very strong correlation between foreign investment and foreign interference, and what we have seen is the Conservative Party now using the issue of housing as a way to allow the debate to continue. The Conservatives are making it very clear that if we want to see that legislation pass, like many other pieces of legislation, the government will ultimately have to bring in time allocation. We have to wait until we can get support from an opposition party in order to be able to bring in time allocation. Conservatives will tell people outside the chamber that they are concerned about foreign interference, but if anything, all they do is cause a filibuster and put up roadblocks to prevent good legislation from ultimately, in this case, going to committee, where it can actually be debated and talked about in great detail and brought toward amendments. The current government, unlike the previous government, is actually open to amendments if they are good ones, even if they come from the opposition side.

The Conservatives did the same thing in regard to the Ukraine debate and on many pieces of legislation. One would think they would be a little more sensitive in terms of the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement. If we can pass legislation, I believe it is in Canadians' best interest, like a lot of the legislation we are bringing forward. The debate the Conservative Party wants to have today, in terms of housing, could just as easily have been done in a standing committee; in fact, the amendment is suggesting that it be done and brought to a standing committee of the House.

If only we were able to use the government business portion to deal with government bills, maybe we would not have so many whining and crying Tories saying we are bringing in time allocation and not allowing enough time for them to debate government legislation. I would argue they cannot have it both ways. They cannot bring in all of these different filibuster types of motions and then go to Canadians and say that we are not allowing them to debate bills. That is what they are doing, and to make it even more of a challenge, when we as a government say we want to provide more time and sit until midnight, the Conservatives are the first ones who jump up, yelling and screaming, and say no to that. How many times have we seen Conservatives stand up in their place and say, "I move now, seconded by so-and-so, that so-and-so be heard to speak"? It is not so the person can speak; instead of debating, it actually causes the bells to ring. That is what I mean by Tory games. That is really what this is: a reckless Conservative Party of Canada that does not understand the value of being more productive on the floor of the House of Commons. That is really quite unfortunate, because we all collectively pay the price.

I talk about housing because I, as I know my colleagues do, take the issue of housing very seriously. Even at times when the opposition is doing nothing but focusing attention on character assassination, we continue to be focused on the issues that are important and relevant to Canadians, whether it is inflation, interest rates or the cost of housing.

I go back to 1993, when something was felt here in Ottawa at the time, by every political party inside the chamber. Whether they were Reformers, Conservatives, Liberals or New Democrats, every political party back then advocated that Ottawa's role in housing should be marginalized. I remember it well because I can remember

debating, in the north end of Winnipeg, why it was important that Ottawa play a role in housing in Canada, why we should ensure, within the Constitution, that Canada, as a national government, plays a role.

• (1610)

Whether it was back then, when there was no political will, it seemed, from any political party to recognize the value of a national government's playing a role in housing, or today, my opinion has never changed. When one thinks of housing as an issue, one would probably have to go back to the world wars to find a prime minister who was as keen on developing a housing strategy. In fact, that is what this report is about. The Conservatives want to criticize the national housing strategy. They are saying, in essence, that we should not have one. They are being critical of the money we have invested in the national housing strategy.

I do not know the exact numbers today. If I were to speculate, I know that when I was the housing critic, we had somewhere in the neighbourhood of 20,000-plus non-profit housing units. Those housing units, in places like Gilbert Park, which I have represented for many years and still do at the national level now, provided affordable housing. That is not the only option out there; there are other forms of affordable housing that are important to support. When one thinks of the raw numbers, of a direct grant that goes toward a block of housing units, the federal government spends literally millions, going into the hundreds of millions of dollars every year, supporting non-profit housing from coast to coast to coast. The national housing strategy took that into consideration in terms of providing the assurance of multi-year budgeting potential. It provided the finances to ensure that a large portion of the non-profit housing stock can actually be maintained through capital improvements.

When the Conservatives start criticizing the national housing strategy, they need to factor in the tens of thousands of homes in the regions of Canada that are, in fact, being supported through the strategy, directly and often indirectly also. They want to have that kind of a debate. They want to hear some of the numbers. I would suggest that, at least in part, the motion that was brought forward makes some sense, in the sense that it is a great issue for a standing committee to deal with.

Think in terms of the alternatives to housing that are government-owned and government-operated, either directly or indirectly, through different groups or the municipalities or provinces but supported in good part by federal dollars. Think outside that box. Think of housing co-ops. Before I was elected as an MLA, there was the Weston Residents Housing Co-op. It was a way in which we were able to help revitalize a community and, at the same time, provide affordable housing for many people. I think of Willow Park and Willow Part East. Willow Park East might be the oldest housing co-op in Canada and possibly even in North America. Housing co-ops, I believe, are a wonderful opportunity for people to have joint ownership. There is a huge difference between a housing co-op and, let us say, an apartment block. I always say that in a housing co-op, someone is a resident, not a tenant, because they own. They have collective ownership of the property, so they have a lot more in terms of opportunities. For the first time in years, we now have a government that has been supporting housing co-ops and wants to see the expansion of that area.

• (1615)

What about non-profit groups? One of the most successful non-profits we have in the country today is Habitat for Humanity. In the province of Manitoba, it excels. It has probably put in more infill houses than any government program that I can recall offhand. In the province of Manitoba, it is about 500 brand new homes in communities, whether in Winnipeg North, The Maples, Point Douglas or everywhere in between. It is making these homes available to people who would never have had the opportunity to get homes. The federal government supports Habitat for Humanity because we recognize the important role that non-profit agencies have when it comes to housing.

We have taken a litany of budgetary actions that have provided opportunities for the federal government to play a strong leadership role in housing. The Conservatives say that the housing market is what it is today because of the federal government. I hate to think what it would have been like if Stephen Harper were the prime minister today. There are challenges, but it is wrong to say that it is all about Ottawa and the Government of Canada. I have news: It is not going to be the Government of Canada that resolves the issue, in terms of providing money. The Government of Canada has a strong leadership role to play, something the current Leader of the Opposition and Stephen Harper never provided when they were in government. We are at the table. We are working with municipalities and provinces, developing programs and encouraging the type of builds we need. That is why we have the rental support for new units to be built, anticipating tens of thousands of new units to come on stream over the coming years as a direct result of the federal government's initiative of getting rid of the GST on new builds.

Some provinces are now piggybacking on that particular policy. It is maybe four or five provinces to date. I hope the Province of Manitoba does likewise. It would ensure additional units being built in the future. It is not just Ottawa. In some provinces, the housing crisis is more severe than in others. We feel the pain in all areas. That is why the desire of the government is to try to assist and support local municipalities, not to take a big stick and whomp them over the head, saying that this is what they have to do. It is working with municipalities and working with the provinces. It is recognizing

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ing that non-profit groups also have a role to play. I believe it takes a team. The private sector obviously has to play a role; in fact, it will be playing the largest role in terms of overall construction.

The federal government is at the plate in many different ways, whether with the national housing strategy or with implementation through numerous federal budgets, to be there to support Canadians on the important issue of housing. We will continue to be there because we understand that it is an issue Canadians have to plow their way through, knowing that the federal government has their back and that it is doing what it can as a national government to ensure that the issues of affordability, the number of homes and renovations are all being taken into consideration.

• (1620)

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to that lengthy speech. It was long enough that the member for Kingston and the Islands probably could have put out about three polls on Twitter.

When I listen to the member, I always come back to thinking about the disastrous Trudeau legacy of the seventies and eighties. These guys get a little confused sometimes between the disastrous Liberal legacies, but the legacy of the seventies and eighties led to an economic crisis, a housing crisis and a unity crisis. During the member's speech, he talked about the situation with housing in some provinces being more severe than in other provinces. The other thing that the most severely affected provinces have in common is that none of their residents were given a break on the carbon tax in the recent announcement by the government. It applied to only one part of the country.

After the comments of the Minister of Rural Economic Development over the weekend, I want to know, and my constituents and Canadians want to know, if the member can assure us that housing funding under the Liberal government will not be allocated on the basis of Liberal electoral outcomes.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member had a flashback to the seventies, and he is right that there were some concerns in the seventies. Canadians, back in the early seventies, were concerned about things such as inflation, housing and affordability. I believe Pierre Elliott Trudeau did a wonderful job, and I am not alone in that thinking. Why? It is because he continued to win majority governments afterward.

People cannot say that about Pierre Elliott Trudeau during the situation with the issues of affordability, housing and inflation. Pierre Elliott Trudeau continued to form majority governments afterward because Canadians knew they could trust the Liberals and could not trust the Tories with their hidden agendas.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, even if Bill C-34 passes, modernization of the Investment Canada Act will have to continue. Part of the legislation arising from Bill C-34 also concerns national security.

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How will the government address the lack of provisions on proper analysis of economic benefit?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Bloc wanting to talk about Bill C-34, because at the end of the day, foreign interference does matter. It matters a great deal to Canadians. When we think of the position Canada is in, whether it is with regard to trade agreements or being a safe country to invest in, we are talking about the modernization of the Investment Canada Act.

Like the member opposite no doubt, I would like to see the bill go to committee. We could have done that today. It is going to take co-operation from the Conservative Party in order for that to happen. All signs are that it will not happen because the Conservatives want to filibuster and prevent the bill from passing. The member, as other members do, has concerns and would like to see it go to committee so those concerns can be addressed. I hope the Conservatives will at some point act and support Bill C-34 going to committee.

• (1625)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member is not incorrect to say that the Conservatives' play is to disrupt this House. They do that all the time. I have been here for eight years, and I have seen them do this consistently. Nothing changes. This is the game they want to play.

I want to ask the member about the housing crisis. The truth, of course, is that part of the problem with the housing crisis is that both Liberal and Conservative governments relied on the market to deliver the kinds of housing people needed. What we know after 30 years is that it does not work. People need the government to invest in social and co-op housing. The Liberals walked away from that in 1993. The Conservatives walked away from the co-op program in 1992.

Will the member call on the government to invest in social and co-op housing like we used to, not what is happening right now under the national housing strategy, which is minuscule in terms of the amount of housing that needs to be developed to address the housing crisis? Will the member commit to that?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that I will continue to advocate for the benefits of housing co-ops. I personally believe in them. I have had this discussion with many of my colleagues, and so many in this chamber, in particular my Liberal colleagues, are big advocates of housing co-ops.

As the member points out, governments have been lacking when it comes to housing co-ops, but not this government. We have incorporated the promotion of housing co-ops into our budgets, and hopefully will see more of them getting under way. I will continue my advocacy for them.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that the individual who moved this motion, the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, has seen a significant number of investments in his riding with regard to affordable housing over the years. I will read the numbers to the House, as I think it is important.

In the riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka, the national housing co-investment fund helped provide 99 units for a total of \$23.3 million. For the on-reserve shelter enhancement program, there were 17 units for \$3.7 million. For the rapid housing initiative, there was \$2.6 million for seven units. For the SIF and legacy programs, there was \$6.7 million to assist with 321 units.

These are just five projects that have been started in the riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka through this program, yet he is now critical of it, and they have just put forward an amendment to basically wipe the entire report clean of any further investments. This program, which he voted against, has seen significant investments in his riding.

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary has an explanation as to why the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka would be so against a program that has delivered a lot to his riding.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, the member highlights something that fits a word we can find in Webster's dictionary: hypocrisy. This is from both the mover and seconder of the motion, after major announcements noting that literally hundreds of homes are going to be built because of government assistance, at least in good part. Here in the Ottawa bubble and inside the bubble of the chamber, they are being super critical of what we are doing as a government and saying how bad we are for doing these things, but when they go home to their ridings, they are probably trying to get in the pictures and are celebrating.

Consistency is an issue whether we are in our home ridings or here in Ottawa. I suspect they might be a little embarrassed about it.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have to agree with my colleague that it is insane how expensive houses are these days. I was in Kelwood going up to the park at a local Legion. It is a community of 150. There was a young mom with a young family who was talking about the cost of housing in a small community like that in rural Manitoba, so I totally get that this is a very important subject.

I have a question for my colleague. To address the cost of housing and heating a home, has he asked the Prime Minister for a carbon tax exemption for home heating like our Atlantic colleagues did?

• (1630)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, personally, when representing Winnipeg North, I have constantly advocated for ensuring that we continue to have a healthy rebate for the price on pollution, the carbon tax. I am pleased to say that a vast majority, estimated at over 80%, of the residents of Winnipeg North get more money back through the rebate than they pay for the carbon tax or the price on pollution, however one wants to put it. This is not a number drawn out of nowhere. It came out of the parliamentary budget office, which is apolitical.

I stand up for my constituents, and ensuring that they get that healthy rebate is something I will continue to advocate for. I would hope the leader of the Conservative Party would not take that rebate away.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni, Small Business.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my kind colleagues whose energy motivates me when I am speaking.

Bill C-34 was supposed to be on the agenda today, but the Conservative Party decided that we would instead discuss the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, which has to do with the national housing strategy.

I think it is worthwhile debating report concurrence motions because they give the reports some visibility. The committees work hard on the report studies, and that was especially true when it came to housing. This is not the first report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. We conducted an extensive study on the urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy. We now have another study that mainly involves the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC, because it is the one that administers the national housing strategy programs. We wanted the CMHC to report on the results of the national housing strategy, which was put in place by the Liberal government in 2017 and runs for 10 years.

Is this the right time to be having this debate? Should we have been talking about something else? In any case, we were ready to keep talking about Bill C-34, but the Conservatives decided for other reasons to have this debate on this report.

During the study leading up to this report, CMHC employees came to testify in committee. We wanted to be able to study an important program that concerns the current infrastructure and seeks to reduce chronic homelessness by 50%. The Auditor General was harsh because we were unable to determine the targets.

All that to say that it is important that we discuss this report because that will allow us to see where things stand, to take stock of the situation. No one here disputes the fact that there is a housing crisis. We talk about it often. The cost of living and the issue of housing is top of mind for everyone. In committee, we tried to de-

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termine whether the situation had been corrected and what else could be done in terms of the amount of money invested in federal programs that are administered by the CMHC. This is part of the key recommendations of this report that the Conservative Party is asking us to study today. The majority of parties adopted this report in committee. The Conservatives have presented a dissenting opinion. That is their right.

What matters most to us in the Bloc Québécois is that the 15 recommendations in this report be implemented and that the government be held to account because CMHC is being asked a lot of questions. Let us consider the example of homelessness in this report. It is rather inconceivable that we have a strategy to fight homelessness and yet we cannot assess chronic homelessness rates any more than we could when this report was released. Even today, when CMHC and Infrastructure Canada appeared before the committee, we were told that the situation is stable. It is rather worrisome that we have reached this point.

One of the strong recommendations in the report reads as follows:

That in order to reach the Government of Canada's own target of reducing chronic homelessness by 50% by 2027–2028, that the Government of Canada show leadership by taking a whole of government approach, in collaboration with provinces and territories, to ensure wrap around services and other supports are made available to the those in need, and report back to the committee no later than December 2023 on a plan on how the government will achieve this goal.

• (1635)

This report contains some strong recommendations that call on CMHC and the government to take action. Although CMHC administers the national housing strategy, the government is still responsible for establishing the programs and objectives. It is investing \$82 billion in the strategy through various programs. Given the housing crisis, we expect results. In collaboration with Quebec and the provinces, the program's objectives must be able to support supply and demand for social housing and affordable housing.

The committee asked CMHC some major questions. The report includes 15 recommendations. I will not read them all. We told CMHC that it must report on what is not working. Why have targets not been met? One could argue that the national housing strategy is a failure. It is a failure because the real needs centre on social housing and affordable housing. The most vulnerable members of society and low-income people are most affected by the housing crisis. The expectations are clear. Programs need to be more agile and more responsive. People should not have to wait for months, much less years, to get housing.

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The federal government decided to take action and invest. It has the authority to spend money. There is no need for it to drag its feet for years before handing money over to Quebec and the provinces so that they can take action. Who is primarily responsible for housing in a given region? It is Quebec and its municipalities. The federal government decided to set up programs through its national housing strategy. We had to wait three years for an agreement. That makes no sense. As for the latest acquisition program, which was just adopted in 2022, we had to push the federal government and ask when was going to pay the \$900 million earmarked for Quebec. Quebec demanded it. If the federal government wants to support housing, it has to be more flexible and tweak the conditions so that there can be real results. Many solutions have been put forward. It is interesting to hear all the witnesses in these studies. The government could act quickly.

As my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert has often said, some doors and housing units are boarded up. The national housing co-investment fund includes money for low-income housing that could be renovated. CMHC is freezing funding because renovation costs are higher now than they were then. We must take action. The process is taking a long time. We are talking about seven units and 300 units. It is not up to the federal government to do everything. However, if it decides to take action, it must take into account the fact that Quebec has the expertise and it is important to act much faster.

Some programs have made a difference, including accelerated housing programs. They were dedicated specifically to co-ops and non-profit organizations. Anyone could apply. It was faster. This produced results. Some things are working. CMHC was clearly called out in this report, which contains 15 recommendations.

I think it is important to talk about this today for one reason. When we do studies in committee, sometimes we delve more deeply into issues there than here in the House, unfortunately.

● (1640)

By all accounts, sometimes it is for strategic reasons that parties decide to talk about these things. In this case, we are talking about the housing crisis. I am not saying that the Conservatives are acting in bad faith, but sometimes we debate certain things without having the same objectives.

If everyone agrees that there is a housing crisis, we should be able to agree on what to do to ensure that the programs do not leave 10,000 homeless people in the street in Quebec. That is where we are.

Today, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation may come tell us that we will be short 3.5 million housing units by 2030. In Quebec alone, we will need 1.1 million. We can go ahead and build housing, increase the supply and provide an incentive by eliminating the GST, but will that have any impact on the cost of housing for renters? This will take time, and a lot of housing will need to be built.

In these programs, the concept of affordability is also debatable. Is \$2,200 a month affordable for a person with an average income? It is not. In the national housing strategy programs, the definitions of affordability are not the same.

Now that the national housing strategy has been around for five years, is there a way to adapt and to look forward, taking into account what we are dealing with? Is there a way to take real action to avoid speculation, to do something about the financialization that is negatively affecting social and affordable housing and to invest in a way that enables non-profit organizations to buy properties on the private market? There are all sorts of solutions. Talking about it is useful, if we follow that up with action.

If the government shelves the committee reports and there is no accountability before the deadlines we set, that would be worrisome. That is why it is useful to discuss this report. Would it be useful to refer this report back to the committee? I would say no. However, I think that it would be useful for the government to account for what the committee and its witnesses are examining. The government also needs to recognize the real players who have knowledge and skills in the area of housing: our cities, our municipalities and Quebec.

The federal government decided to invest money with the objective of increasing the social and affordable housing stock. Now it must ensure that its actions complement that objective and that it does not impose conditions. That will go a long way to resolving the housing crisis.

● (1645)

[English]

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too sat through the committee meetings, and the testimony was very consistent across all stakeholder recommendations. We heard from those in the non-profit sector that they needed more support from the national housing strategy. We heard from those in the private sector that they wanted to see more initiatives such as the removal of GST on purpose-built rentals. We also heard from stakeholders who said they wanted more support, contrary to the comments that were made by the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka and the member for Kelowna—Lake Country, who said today in the House that we should scrap the strategy we have and spend less on the housing file.

I wonder if the member opposite, who also sat through the same committee meetings that I did, can make any sense of those comments, which are contrary to everything we heard from stakeholders at committee.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to try my hand at interpretation at this time of the day. All I understood was that there was some question as to whether the national housing strategy was the right measure, and whether it had accomplished its mission after five years.

Personally, I would rather ask the government the following question. There are five years left in this strategy. When we returned to the House of Commons in September, the housing crisis was already bad. The government wanted to respond by introducing Bill C-56, which aims to abolish the GST on the construction of rental housing.

The government is spending \$82 billion on the national housing strategy, which includes several programs. That said, a strategy is meant to be adjusted when it is not working. I would have expected the government to ask itself how it intends to resolve this situation or help resolve it over the next five years by supporting Quebec and its municipalities when it comes to social and affordable housing. That is how it is. I do not expect them to throw the baby out with the bathwater, but I do expect them to make major adjustments to the strategy so it can achieve its objectives.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this evening's debate. My question for the member for Thérèse-De Blainville is this: What should the federal government do? Eighty-two billion dollars is being invested in the construction of supposedly affordable housing. What would she like the federal government to do better in order to quickly build housing that meets the public's needs?

Ms. Louise Chabot: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is that the money must be handed over to Quebec and the municipalities because the federal government is not the one that will be doing the building. Who knows best what the needs are? The people on the ground do. We have to ensure that this money gets to the right places quickly, with a lot more flexibility and a lot fewer conditions. That is my solution.

[English]

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear the debate on housing today. Some members have said today that housing is not important, but perhaps they were doing other things.

We probably have the biggest housing crisis this country has ever had and that our generation has ever had. Those of us who have served on municipal councils know quite well that this issue is complex, but it does come down to municipalities that see a lot of Nimbyism and what we call BANANA for “build absolutely nothing anywhere near anything”.

When we look to solving those, we have to look at incentives for municipalities to help them approve more projects more quickly. In my municipality of Belleville, they have a targeted growth rate for homes. They track this from the provincial tracking, which means a foundation has to be in the ground. They are down 28% from where they want to be, meaning we are not seeing builders being able to put buildings in. There are a lot of reasons for that. There is a lack of skilled trades. There is the fact that interest rates are so high that builders are not going in.

Does the member support initiatives that help get municipalities on board with building more homes, tracking homes that need to be built and ensuring that we give municipalities incentives to try to build homes?

• (1650)

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Mr. Speaker, I know what not to do: Tell the municipalities what to do and how to do it and decide to penalize them because they are not using the conditions that everyone would like. That is absolutely the last thing to do. I listened to the Conservatives and the Liberals point the finger at the municipali-

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ties, but for the municipalities, the issue of infrastructure and the development of this type of housing is important.

I will give an example. In its new housing policy, the City of Montreal has a firm rule: 20% social housing and 20% affordable housing. Do members know what the private market does, even when there are incentives to build such housing? It chooses not to build affordable housing or social housing, opting to pay the fines instead. Instead of lecturing the municipalities, let us give them the means to do something about this so that the money granted under the national housing strategy can truly make a difference.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I, too, was at that committee and listened to both the representatives from CMHC, as well as various experts on the issue.

One of the issues that shocked me was to hear the now former CEO of CMHC saying that the government's goal of ensuring that housing is a basic human right is aspirational. Of course, we also know that the government's own track record has been missing the mark in addressing the homelessness crisis, as well the overall affordability crisis in housing for people in Canada.

One of the things that both the Liberals and Conservatives refuse to acknowledge is the financialization of housing. Would the member support the call for the government to say that we have to stop the loss of affordable housing units to the private market, where they come in and buy up low-cost rental apartments, then jack up the rent and renovict people, displacing people and escalating the housing crisis?

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Mr. Speaker, I agree with most of what my colleague just said. Housing really should be seen as a right, just like food. Food and shelter are basic needs and every individual's right.

We have a collective responsibility as a society to ensure that everyone has a roof over their head, that everyone has safe, decent, quality housing. That is our collective responsibility. However, as long as housing is seen through a monetary lens, a market lens, we will not reach that goal because the market is there to make a profit.

We must not vilify the private sector. We need construction. However, we need to build housing that is actually affordable. We are falling far short on that front because a completely different approach is needed.

If there is a direction that should be taken, it is the one we have been calling for, the one that I think my colleague and I agreed on: If we want to address the current housing crisis, we need to be able to recover private markets and provide housing through non-profit organizations and housing co-operatives. We need to acquire these markets to ensure affordability.

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● (1655)

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to enter into this debate around the issue of housing, housing affordability and, more to the point, the housing crisis that exists in Canada. From coast to coast to coast it does not matter what community someone is from, whether big or small, there is a housing crisis. Encampments are popping up pretty well everywhere. In my own riding we have the largest encampment in the country. It is effectively a permanent encampment.

We have to think about the issue at hand and see how we can solve the issue. The Conservatives, of course, are peddling the idea that we should continue on with business as usual, that is to say, rely on the market to address the housing crisis. The Conservatives have been turning a blind eye to the fact that the housing crisis, in large part, was caused by their own party when they were in government, when they walked away from supporting communities in building co-op housing and social housing programs. They cut funding severely when they were in government. As a result, we lost a lot of housing units that would otherwise have been built. On top of that we also lost a significant number of units when the private sector came in to purchase existing low-cost apartments.

Colleagues should know that under the Harper administration, with the Conservative leader at the helm and as a part of that cabinet, Canada lost 800,000 units of affordable housing. The Leader of the Opposition earlier had responded to that by asking where the units went and if aliens came and got them. He should know what happened. The rents went up. The rents used to be under \$750 per month for those 800,000 units. They were lost because the private sector came in, swooped up those units, jacked up the rents and displaced people. That is what happened and that is, in large part, a cause of the crisis we face with the housing situation. One would think that the Conservatives, if they were thoughtful and truly cared about people, would actually say that is enough and that they will not allow that to happen any more because housing is a basic human right.

We want housing to provide homes for people, not to be used as an investment tool for people to make more and more, bigger and bigger profits at the expense of people who need housing. However, we are not seeing that at all. I think that is because the Conservatives themselves are the biggest gatekeepers of all, gatekeepers for wealthy investors. They want to keep the status quo. I think about 50% of the Conservative caucus, if not more, have real estate interests. That is what they are interested in. They are protecting those very people who can make a profit and helping them to make a greater profit at the expense of the people who need safe, secure, affordable homes.

Now I want to say this about the Liberals as well. They sure as heck are not any better. The Chrétien government actually campaigned in 1993 to end funding cuts in housing, but did they do that after the election? True to form on the part of the Liberals, they campaigned on one thing and then they did another. In 1993, after they formed government what did they do? They actually cancelled the entire national housing strategy. As a result, we lost more housing. In total, I have to say that we lost some 500,000 units of social

housing and co-op housing that might otherwise have been built had the programs not been scrapped.

In addition, under the Liberals that we lost another 250,000 units of housing. It was the same situation as when we lost 800,000 units under the Conservatives. Those units, where the rents were \$750 or less per month, disappeared and then rents got jacked up. People have been suffering.

It was also the Liberals, by the way, who brought in special tax treatments for real estate investment trusts so that they could actually displace people and jack up rents. That has helped to contribute to this housing crisis.

● (1700)

The Liberals know that, and they continue to allow that to take place.

Neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives want to take on the profiteering of housing or say to these wealthy investors, “no more”. Neither of them want to say that the investors have to stop displacing people and that they will not allow for that to happen anymore. The NDP is the only party that is calling for that, and we have been for some time, so that we can preserve and hold on to the affordable housing units for the community.

In fact, what the NDP wants to do and has called on the government to do is ensure that there is an acquisition fund for the non-profit sector and for community trusts, so they can get into the market, buy the housing that comes onto the market and hold it in perpetuity for the community. That is one critical piece of addressing the housing crisis, but the Liberals are not calling for it and not doing it, and neither are the Conservatives. They are beholden to wealthy investors. They are blind to this crisis, where this action is so desperately needed, and they will not take action.

Just for the record, for every one unit that is being built, we lose 15 affordable housing units in this way. We cannot build fast enough to supplement the units. Now, to be sure, what we have to do is build more subsidized social housing and co-op housing. Canada's total social housing stock and co-op housing stock is sitting at 3.5%. Compared to other G7 countries, we are at less than half, and we wonder why we have a housing crisis.

The Conservative leader got up here and called building social housing and co-op housing the “Soviet-style takeover of housing”. Oh my goodness. Should governments build social housing for people who need housing? What a horrible thing.

Quebec is a province that has done very well in ensuring that there is community housing for Quebecers. Is that a Soviet-style government? I think not. In British Columbia, we had 16 years of Liberals, but really Conservatives, who took government provincially and caused a huge erosion in social housing and co-op housing development in British Columbia, but the NDP pressed on. We are now back in government, and the NDP government is doing everything it can to build social and co-op housing. Even at that, it is only sitting at 6%.

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More needs to be done. There is no question about it. The NDP is calling on the Liberal government to invest in social housing and co-op housing like it means to, like it actually wants to address the housing crisis. Right now, we are building about 5,000 or so units of social housing and co-op housing. That is not nearly enough, and we need to increase that number substantially to get housing needs met. In fact, Scotiabank Canada is saying that at the very minimum, to just get into this situation, we need to see 1.3 million units of social housing and co-op housing in Canada. Others housing experts are calling for 20% of the total stock.

This is what the NDP is calling for: We need to see the government increase the numbers to at least meet the Scotiabank number, but I would argue that we need to do much more than that if we want to address the housing crisis. That must be coupled with the need to address the financialization of housing and say “no” to the private sector, whose goal and objective is to make greater profits at the expense of the people who are in greatest need.

I heard the government members talk about the co-op program. They talk as though they love co-ops. They talk as though they are investing in co-ops. Let us just be clear: The NDP did push the government to come back with co-op housing. It did announce in budget 2022 a co-op housing program of 6,000 units. Of course, the government actually took money from another housing initiative to do that. I am just going to set that aside for a minute.

• (1705)

Even with that promise, where are we at? The government has not even signed the agreement with the co-op sector to get the co-ops delivered. That is just still sitting there. It is all talk and no action. Speaking of co-ops, the Liberals say they support co-ops, but guess what? With the GST exemption bill, the government explicitly says co-ops should be excluded from getting the GST exemption. We need to shake our heads and ask what the government has against co-ops. The NDP absolutely intends to put forward an amendment to change the bill so co-ops would be incorporated and included so they could be part of the partnership in addressing the housing crisis.

I want to touch for a minute on the fiasco of what is going on within CMHC. Maybe things will change now; I do not know. Let us hope so. Let me put this on the record. There are so many non-profits that have come to me, as the housing critic, asking for help and for urgent intervention. What has happened is that so many of them made the application under different streams, and the bureaucracy within CMHC is unbelievable. The processing of applications is unbelievable. People need to hire consultants to put in an application. Even if they do, CMHC does not even have the wherewithal to process those applications expeditiously.

In the meantime, what is happening? We are seeing interest rates go up, and they are going up exponentially. By the time the community group actually gets the equity all in place and goes back to CMHC, the interest rates have gone up. CMHC tells the group that interest rates have gone up and then sends the non-profit back to raise more money. This is like an endless treadmill that these groups are on. Is it any wonder projects are dying and cannot get done? They become unviable. One thing the NDP has said to the government is that it needs to be able to provide stability to the

non-profit sector. Interest rates need to be held and to not keep jumping up such that the sector can never meet the equity gap. What the government should and must do to address the housing crisis and work in collaboration with the non-profits is to hold the line. It needs to hold interest rates so people know what they are, and they should be below market. The government should not be trying to make money from non-profits. We are partners. In part, yes, the government should provide grants, but it does not all need to be grants and cash up front. It can be done as a combination of both money and a stable but low interest rate for the non-profits so they can get housing developed. This is what we can do. That is how we can get housing done.

I know CMHC will provide loans to non-profits, but it bothers me that it would actually provide mortgage insurance and low-interest rate loans for the private sector with pretty well no return to the community. How is that possible? It is getting a government benefit. It should be made to provide a return back to the community. It does not get a free ride. This needs to end. Yes, we will partner with the private sector, but as long as there is a return back to the community. This is what needs to be done as well. The Liberals will not entertain that, and the Conservatives absolutely would not even consider that, because really they are just a bunch of lackeys for the wealthy investors. That is not how we solve the housing crisis.

I also want to raise the following issue with respect to the housing situation. Right now, indigenous people are at least 11 times more likely to be unhoused. In my own community, the most recent homelessness count done in Metro Vancouver shows that 33% of the people who are unhoused identify as indigenous, even though only fewer than 5% of the overall population are indigenous people in the community. That said, what is wrong with this picture? Generations of colonization have caused this problem. The NDP has called on the government to invest in indigenous housing for Inuit and Métis people as well.

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• (1710)

We were able, in budget 2022, to get the government to invest \$4 billion over seven years for distinction-based housing, and then it put a minuscule amount of \$300 million for urban, rural and northern for indigenous, by indigenous housing, but \$300 million is not going to do it. We have called for, and continue to call for, the government to make significant investment in a for indigenous, by indigenous urban, rural and northern housing strategy for Inuit, Métis and indigenous people away from home communities. We did get that in budget 2023. In total, the NDP fought for and received 4.3 billion dollars' worth of investments in a for indigenous, by indigenous urban, rural and northern housing strategy. That sounds like a lot of money, and we are happy we did kick open the door to have that investment made, but is that enough? It is not going to be enough. I hope the government will not rob Peter to pay Paul, because what the government also has to do is partner with provincial and territorial governments in a separate agreement, especially through bilateral agreements, and add dollars to the pot so we can address the housing crisis effectively.

We also need to make sure the Métis nations are supported. I just met with some of their members last week, and they presented a plan that talks about building the infrastructure and housing for Métis people. The government needs to invest in that as well.

The housing crisis has been made by government policies over all these years. There has been underinvestment, walking away from investing in housing, and just passing the buck to local governments, provincial governments and territorial governments. It is not good enough. The government needs to step up and take responsibility. I know that the Prime Minister has said housing is not his responsibility. Let me just say that housing is everybody's responsibility. It is the federal government's responsibility, the provincial and territorial governments' responsibility, and the municipal governments' responsibility, and we need to work in partnership with the private sector, as long as there is a return back to the community, and with the non-profit sector, the faith community and so on.

I also want to raise another issue with respect to housing. It is so important for everyone to understand that the business-as-usual approach is not going to address the housing crisis. The wealthy investors and developers are not going to wake up and decide they are not really interested in maximizing profit. They are not going to do that. That is what happened over 30 years when successive Liberal and Conservative governments relied on that as an approach to addressing the housing crisis. Look at where it got us. The Conservatives want to just blame the Liberals. Do members know what? They are both to blame. Their solutions today are deficient. We need to invest in people and put people before profits. That is how we can address the housing crisis.

Finally, I want to say this: The Conservatives just want to kick municipalities and blame them, when it was the Conservatives who offloaded housing responsibility to local governments without resources and supports in place. They do not get to kick their partners. Yes, they can engage in negotiations with them and talk about the different things they want to achieve. However, blaming local governments is also not the solution. I get it; there are councils that will just say "not in my backyard". That is not acceptable, and we

do need to call that out, but we cannot just say, "Hey, local government, fix this or else." We are in this together; we need to understand that. It is everyone's responsibility to get the job done.

I know I am running out of time, but I have a few more things I want to add to this debate. Can I get unanimous consent to finish my speech?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. deputy House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I just need clarification. The speech finishes at a set time. Does the member mean going to the end of the set time? If so, certainly she would get consent from me.

• (1715)

The Deputy Speaker: I will allow the hon. member for Vancouver East to clarify what her request means.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I am talking about going beyond my set time. I am running out of time and I am asking for unanimous consent so I can finish my speech. I just have a couple of points left to finish off.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there agreement?

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, then let me close with this. That is enough with the gamesmanship. Let us put people before partisan politics. Let us invest in people. Let us build the social housing. Let us stop the profiteering from housing and say no to investors who are renovicting people and then jacking up the rent.

Let us have the government take responsibility. Housing is not an issue that can be passed off to others. We need to take responsibility. The federal government needs to show leadership, particularly in ensuring that there is a housing plan for international students and for migrants who are here. It is the responsibility of the government to work in partnership with provinces, territories and different entities and agencies. It must not blame newcomers for the housing crisis. There is no one else to blame except the government. It must take responsibility.

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Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, I participated in the same study, and I am glad the member opposite ended her speech on the core issue of the financialization of housing and its impact on tenants. We heard a lot of testimony from stakeholders in terms of renovations and demovictions and what happens to an individual facing those situations in the private market. One of the recommendations in the report deals with the Government of Canada's immediately investigating financial resources for tenants who may be caught in those situations and a fund that would be provided to municipalities, provinces and non-profit organizations that advocate for tenant rights. I am wondering whether the member can speak to the importance of the recommendation that seeks to provide support to individuals caught in those situations.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, there are two aspects to that question.

One, of course, is that the Liberal government needs to take action and say no to wealthy investors, real estate investment trusts and corporate landlords continuing to sweep up affordable, low-cost apartments and then renovicting and displacing people. We need to say no to that and put a moratorium in place.

The second piece in the member's question is about providing a fund to support tenants. Of course that should be done. The recommendation is for the government to review this. The government should just do it, because right now, as we speak, people are getting renovicted. Let us not just think about it anymore. Let us not walk around the block on the issue anymore. We should take action now.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has formed a partnership with the Liberal government, so she has to take some accountability for the housing crisis.

The current mayor of Toronto and the former NDP leader of the opposition lived in social housing when they should not have been allowed to, given their incomes. Can the member please explain to me who is accountable for that? If we are going to create these opportunities for individuals who cannot afford the cost of rent, how can we be accountable to the people who should be in those units?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, just to be clear on the record, the NDP is fighting for people. We did get \$8.3 billion invested in indigenous housing, for both distinction-based and urban, rural and northern communities. We did get the government to invest in the accelerator fund. We did get the government to invest in co-op housing and a variety of other measures. Is it enough? Absolutely not. Are New Democrats going to push for more? Everyone can bet we are.

With respect to the mayor of Toronto, let us be clear. It is my understanding that she and the late Jack Layton lived in co-op housing. People in co-op housing in that sector were actually paying market rent because a lot of times, these housing projects brought in a balance of one-third, one-third and one-third: one-third market, one-third subsidized and one-third below market. They were doing what most people would want to see: a successful model of co-op housing, ensuring that we build communities that have a mix of incomes in those projects.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her presentation. I wanted to raise one point. From 1960 to 1994, the federal government supported social and community housing in Quebec. Then it withdrew, leaving it up to the Government of Quebec to manage this file. This is typical of many files. The federal government imposes its conditions without necessarily respecting what is being done in Quebec. Then we get stuck with managing those expenses.

Does my colleague understand the importance of respecting Quebec's jurisdictions?

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, Quebec should be respected. All provinces and territories should be respected. Local governments should be respected. We need the federal government to show leadership and invest in housing.

When the federal government walked away, Quebec and British Columbia were the only two provinces that continued to ensure that social and co-op housing were being developed and would be there for the community. I commend Quebec for doing that.

However, what do the Conservatives say? They say that investing in co-op housing is a "Soviet-style" of housing. I mean, to me, that is absolutely shocking. I look at Quebec, and I do not see Putin there. I see people who care about the community and who are building the housing the community needs.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her powerful message today and for her fight on housing on behalf of our entire caucus.

We in the NDP have pushed the Liberal government, as my colleague pointed out, to invest in urban indigenous housing and northern housing, but we have also been very clear that the Liberal government is nowhere near where it needs to be when it comes to investing in first nations housing and on-reserve housing. Many of the first nations I represent are facing an acute housing crisis. I would say that all of the first nations face a housing crisis, but for remote communities it is particularly acute. We are talking about overcrowded housing and mouldy homes. We are talking about absolutely inadequate housing.

We know that successive Liberal and Conservative governments have failed first nations when it comes to housing. We know that the current Liberal government loves to talk about reconciliation, but reconciliation ought to mean investing in housing and addressing the housing crisis on first nations. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on this front.

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Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her advocacy for the community, not just on the housing front but on every aspect of the rights for indigenous peoples. She has been there fighting for them.

I have to say that I remain disappointed with the government's lack of commitment in ensuring that housing is a basic human right, no matter who one is or where one comes from, right across this country. Indigenous people suffer on many fronts due to Canada's colonial history, and housing is one aspect of that.

We also know from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and its report recommendations that one of the significant reasons indigenous women and girls are subject to violence is the lack of housing. From that perspective, if there is to be true reconciliation, there needs to be investments commensurate with need for indigenous people on reserve and off reserve. No matter where they are, that housing right should follow them, and we should honour the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

• (1725)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the issue of co-op housing, I just want to say, and I will address this a little in my speech, that I have not heard this term the Conservatives have been using in referring to it as “Soviet-style” housing. I have not heard that, and I would like the member to explain it to me.

Co-op housing is clearly very productive and one of the best uses, in my opinion, when it comes affordable housing. In co-operative housing in Kingston, we see a wide spectrum of individuals living there with respect to their socio-economic background and their ability to pay rent, such as people who pay well below market value, people who pay market and people who are contributing in different ways. Clearly the co-op model is very successful.

However, I am not aware of the Conservatives using that terminology. Could the member explain that to me so that I can understand it better?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, that exchange was this morning between me and the Conservative leader, after his speech when I asked him a question.

I was saying to the Conservatives that the government needs to substantively invest in social housing and co-op housing. I cited some examples because the Conservative leader said that Singapore is a leader that we should look to with respect to housing. I reminded him that, in Singapore, 80% of housing is social housing. By the way, he also mentioned France as a model that we should be looking to. France actually provides 17% of its housing as social housing. The Conservative leader's response was that he did not want to see the government taking over in the delivery of housing because it would be “a Soviet-style takeover of housing.”

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

I will start where that last question left off. I find it very unfortunate to hear that the Leader of the Opposition would make such a claim when it comes to co-operative housing. As I indicated in my

question, co-operative housing, at least from the limited experience that I have had in seeing the operations of it, is clearly one of the best ways of delivering affordable housing.

If my Conservative friends need some education on it, I welcome them to come and tour Kingston Co-operative Homes in Kingston with me. We have different individuals living together. Some are paying market rent. Some are paying below market rent. Some are contributing in hours toward the co-operative.

For the co-operative to be successful, it genuinely needs people contributing to it in different manners. We need people paying market rent. We need people who are contributing in other ways, like through the hours being contributed to the co-op. It is wildly popular, at least from my perspective, as a form of delivering affordable housing.

I heard the member who spoke before me make the comment that the federal government is not advancing co-operative housing. That is incorrect. I took some time, after I first heard her make that comment earlier, to look into this, and the truth of the matter is that this government is making the largest investment to promote and expand co-operative housing in over 30 years, with \$1.5 billion to expand and promote co-ops. Included in this investment is the launch of the new co-operative housing development program. Not only are we putting money into this, but we are developing a program for co-operative housing specifically.

It truly is one of the best forms of affordable housing, from my perspective. My first introduction into politics, before I was even a city councillor, was when the City of Kingston put together an affordable housing development committee. Ironically enough, that was set up as a result of the provincial government in Ontario having to go it alone in supporting housing and building affordable housing because at the time, the Harper Conservative government had completely abandoned any investment there.

Let us go back and talk for a second about that, because I find it very interesting. Usually when a concurrence motion comes forward, I speak at great length as to why Conservatives do that. We know why they are doing it. They are trying to delay the government's agenda. Even my NDP colleague pointed that out earlier. It is a matter of fact. If members want to hear why, they can review one of my previous speeches on this to get all of the details.

I will focus my comments more specifically on this particular committee report. The mover of the motion, the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, was very critical of the government. He was very critical of the government investing in affordable housing, but a number of projects have already happened in his riding. I will tell members about those projects again: \$23 million from the national housing co-investment fund, \$3.6 million from the on-reserve shelter enhancement program, \$2.6 million from the second stream of the rapid housing initiative, \$6.7 million from the SIF and legacy programs and \$2.7 million through the various different subsidies going into his riding. A lot of money has been spent in Parry Sound—Muskoka.

I cannot help but wonder how the Conservatives invested in his riding when they were around. Of course, Tony Clement pops into my mind. One of the most notorious things about Tony Clement, for all of his contributions to the House, is that unfortunately part of his legacy is the building of a gazebo. That gazebo was from redirected money. According to the Auditor General, he had misled the House in indicating where that money was coming from.

• (1730)

The other one was a fund set up regarding what was the G8 at the time. It was a \$50 million fund that was intended to go toward projects that had to do with the G8, which was taking place in Canada at the time. Somehow, Parry Sound—Muskoka ended up building a gazebo in the member's riding with money that was not intended to go to that. I do not know if the G8 leaders went and sat around the gazebo, and that was one of the events, but it clearly was not a project that was intended. That is not to say that Stephen Harper did not invest in infrastructure in the riding of the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka; he certainly did. He invested in gazebos, which were apparently more important than actually building affordable housing.

As we look to and specifically talk about the work we are doing, the government has put forward policy and real money behind building housing and expanding housing opportunities throughout the country. There is no doubt that there is more work to be done. That is obvious, and it is something that continually gets brought up in the House.

The concurrence motion we have, which was sent to the Minister of Housing, received a reply from the minister. I read the reply while we were entering into this debate. If they took the time to read the reply, members would probably not be surprised to see that there are a number of initiatives the report had identified that the minister and the government agreed with. Specifically, these relate to supporting vulnerable populations. The minister agreed with the committee on the critical importance of prioritizing the needs of vulnerable populations through the national housing strategy's program.

He indicated:

Though the [national housing strategy] addresses needs across the housing spectrum—including the need for more housing supply overall—housing for those in greatest need is identified as one of the priority areas for action of the NHS. When it launched in 2017, one of the NHS goals was to reduce chronic homelessness by 50% by 2027-28. Budget 2022 went further and committed to ending chronic homelessness by 2030. This will require an all of government approach. Much of this work is undertaken in partnership with the provinces and territories ... through bilateral agreements under the Housing Partnership Framework....

When we talk about housing and solutions, as I have heard from some of my Conservative colleagues during this debate, it is not just about the federal government but also about how we work with the various different partners and municipalities specifically. We would love to work with provinces, but at least in my province, we know that there is very little interest from Doug Ford's government in doing that. That is why we are seeing the government actually going right into communities. This is the federal government dealing directly with mayors and city councillors, talking about how we reduce the Nimbyism, as was mentioned earlier by one of my Conservative colleagues, and deal with the fact that there is too much red tape in the process of building more housing. Ultimately, we

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see real agreements coming forward and real action being taken directly with municipalities. We have seen where a number of municipalities are coming to the table. Most recently, last week, there was Brampton, but there were a number before that as well,

Conservatives offer nothing in this regard. As a matter of fact, all they are doing is taking the housing accelerator program that I just announced as a partnership with municipalities and trying to rebrand it as though it is something they would do. It is literally something we are already doing. The idea here is that the municipalities will deal directly with the federal government, which will reduce red tape, encourage growth and encourage more housing. As a result, the federal government will help them to make sure the process can happen even quicker and faster through various different monetary incentives.

I really hope that, after we get to the end of this debate and vote on this, we can get back to the government legislation we were supposed to debate today before the concurrence motion was brought forward.

• (1735)

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, never in our history has Canada been so short on housing, has rent been higher or has it been more expensive to buy a house. Never has housing been further out of reach for regular Canadians.

How can the member stand up in the House of Commons with a straight face and declare a victory over housing or any kind of success whatsoever on behalf of his government?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I do not disagree with any of the challenges that he pointed out. All those challenges are real, and I spoke about them in my speech. I am not sure if he was listening, or if he came into the chamber just moments before I concluded. Perhaps he was listening out in the lobby, and that would be good.

I never said that we were declaring a victory. As a matter of fact, I talked only about the various programs put in place to work to create solutions. There will never be victory on this. He is talking to somebody who has been involved in affordable housing since 2005. I have seen the waiting lists in Kingston go up and come down. This is something that we will always be working on. I will never stand up and declare victory, because I know there is always more work to be done.

The problem is that the Conservatives, for all their talk, do not actually put forward any kind of plan. They have not said what they are going to do, other than rebrand what we have already done, which is the housing accelerator fund.

I know the member is going to get up and speak soon. I do not want to hear more complaints about it. I want to hear what they are actually going to do. They can debate me by telling me why my policy is not good and why theirs is better, but they have to actually talk about a policy. The problem is that they do not have one.

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Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I grew up in co-op housing, so I know how important it is. Back when I grew up in the era of non-market housing, we were actually building non-market housing, at about 25,000 units a year. This was before the Liberals pulled out of the national housing strategy and then the Conservatives carried on with building nothing.

Right now, we are at 3.5% non-market housing. Europe is at 30%. Can members guess where we are at 30%? It is for REITs, the corporatized ownership of residential housing. We should not have that. Long Beach Auto in my hometown of Tofino is closing its doors because the owner cannot find staff housing. His brother-in-law, Ryan, who owns Mobius Books, says his biggest challenge is homeless people everywhere. It is impacting small business.

The free market is having a free ride. While the Liberals are claiming victory, are they going to finally step back in and make up ground on non-market housing in this country?

• (1740)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member gave a bit of history there. He forgot the part where the Liberals, in the mid-2000s, actually tabled a plan. I know about this because I was on city council at the time. We were excited about it, but then Stephen Harper ended up getting a majority government. The member may have to remind me as to how that happened, but I think we all know.

The point is that we have seen it come and go several times. That is fair enough; I am not going to argue that. I think there is lots of blame to go around, but at the end of the day, we have plans that we have put in place. We are working with municipalities. We have been investing. Will it ever be enough? Probably not, but we can always strive to do more. That is what is important to us as policy-makers: to always push to do more.

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my friend and colleague emphasized the importance of working with municipalities, provinces and everyone in the sector. The Leader of the Opposition has taken the approach of blaming municipalities, municipal councillors and mayors, who are our partners in this space.

Could he elaborate on why it is so important, as a former mayor and municipal representative, to work with municipalities, rather than blaming them for the challenges we have nationally?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, it is because, at the city council and the mayoral levels, people could not care less who is in government in Ottawa. They are looking for a partner. They are looking for programs to work with the government on to make communities better.

Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition has no interest in that. All he is interested in doing is picking fights in various municipalities by threatening people. That is not what we are going to do. We want to work with municipalities. As a former municipal leader, I know that is the better way to do it.

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always great to rise to speak on behalf of my constituents of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, and it is always great

to rise on the topic of housing, something that is near and dear to my heart.

I am one of probably a handful of people in the House who have lived in social housing, and that was through the 1970s with my family. I have that perspective of being a tenant. My perspective of living in a social housing unit is probably a lot different than my mother, who had two small kids in tow when we moved into the unit on Oriole Crescent.

It is important, when we talk about the financialization of housing, that we focus on what many have talked about today, and in other debates, and that is the perspective of the tenant and the challenges they face in trying to make ends meet in a very challenging market. That has happened historically. We have heard that through the decades. We have seen the rise and fall of interest rates. We have seen housing challenges with supply issues. Those challenges, of course, are back today. There is no denying that we have a crisis today.

Being a municipal councillor for so many years, I had the opportunity to serve on our municipal non-profit. CityHousing Hamilton was the largest non-profit housing provider in the city of Hamilton. We managed 7,000 of the city's 14,000 affordable housing units. I worked with an incredible team, including people such as Tom Hunter, Sean Botham, Leanne Ward, and Adam Sweedland, who is the CEO now, who are the front lines in providing support.

As my friend and colleague just mentioned, for those who are on the front lines providing support to tenants who are in need and those looking to find an affordable place to live, there is really no issue of who the government is or what political stripe they are. What housing providers are looking for, in this case for units that were owned and managed by the municipality, is financial support and policies that protect tenants, as well as policies and legislation that would make investments in housing.

When I think back to my time serving for over a decade on our municipal non-profit, and for the last seven years before my election here, I served as its president, I look at the challenges that we faced at CityHousing Hamilton, and the other housing providers that we worked in consultation and co-operation with. They were people such as Jeff Neven at Indwell services and his team, who provide incredible support, not just in Hamilton but in southern Ontario as well. There are the organizations such as Mission Services with Carol Cowan-Morneau and her team there, including Sue Smith and others, who do tremendous work in assisting some of our most vulnerable Canadians and Hamiltonians.

Another organization is Good Shepherd. I had the opportunity to speak to Brother Richard the other day at the ONPHA Conference in Toronto. At the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association Conference, Brother Richard was talking about projects Good Shepherd has on the horizon.

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All of those groups and organizations look to all three levels of government for support. As has been referenced earlier today, and I have relayed this point many times in the House, for 30 years, non-profit housing providers have been left to their own devices. Back in the 1990s, the federal government decided to exit the sector. They passed on and downloaded that responsibility onto the provinces.

In the province of Ontario, when that was downloaded, Mike Harris and the common-sense revolutionary guard in the Legislature decided to pass those services and the costs for social housing on to municipalities. Municipalities have struggled to not just provide quality services for those services that were downloaded onto them, but they have struggled to get at the affordability housing wait-list. Those units I mentioned earlier, thousands of them, were passed on to city hall with the keys and no resources attached.

Here we had thousands of post-war units that were providing support for tenants, a safe place to call home for many, and the municipality was then left to its own devices in trying to incorporate the costs of repairing and renovating those units in their municipal budgets, which is unheard of. It happens nowhere else in Canada, except the province of Ontario, where a Conservative government would see fit to download those services to the municipalities.

● (1745)

As members of CityHousing, we had to find unique ways to make ends meet. We were land rich and cash poor and looked to our holdings of land to provide opportunities for development. We went out to the private sector and found unique partnerships to try to encourage the private sector to build on properties that we owned and to provide new units. The units people were living in were post-World War II units, for instance, where the windows were leaking, the roof was leaking and maybe the elevator did not work in a medium- or high-rise building. We needed partners who had resources, and we allowed access to our lands in order to provide density and new units, trying to get at that 6,200- to 6,400-unit wait-list we had.

When I look at the national housing strategy and what it does, it is providing support to housing providers. I just listed a handful of many dozens in the city of Hamilton. The national housing strategy was a game-changer. Municipalities, since the early 1990s, had asked consecutive federal governments for resources for renovation and repair. Many of the units that stakeholders and housing providers managed in the city of Hamilton could not pass a property standards inspection because of the state of disrepair. They asked for resources to get at the wait-list. Some of our most vulnerable Canadians sit on that list, including seniors and persons with disabilities. We know that indigenous people make up a greater percentage of those on the wait-list than the general population in Canada does. We looked for ways and means to renovate, repair and build units on our own, but we just could not make it work.

The national housing strategy, when it was announced early in the first mandate, was a game-changer for municipalities. It was a program that provided opportunity and hope for housing providers that there would be resources and that we would not have to continue to try to make ends meet on our own.

I look at the investments that have been made. I will use Hamilton as an example. The co-investment fund meant that we had tens of millions of dollars in federal resources available to get at our oldest units, to get at energy efficiencies, to reduce greenhouse gases and to make our units more accessible for people with disabilities.

I look at the rapid housing initiative. It pulls people out of encampments and seeks to address the issue of women fleeing domestic violence. The rapid housing initiative, of course, came at a perfect time. It came during the pandemic, when municipalities were struggling to build new units with supply chain issues. When I look at the resources that were passed along there and look back to my participation on our board, I would say that irrespective of what one's partisan stripe was on city council or who participated as board members for a municipal non-profit, we were just thankful that a government recognized the need and recognized that municipalities and housing providers had their challenges.

I look to the Canada housing benefit. It provides a portable rent supplement to people who are looking for a market unit to live in. It also provides a top-up for them to go out and find an affordable place to call home.

I look at the housing accelerator fund, which we have talked about extensively here, and the assistance it is providing in working with municipalities as our partners and working with stakeholders in municipalities across the country. Instead of casting blame on municipalities, small-town mayors and councillors, we are working with our municipal partners.

What I have heard is interesting, because many of the people on the opposite side of the House in the Conservative Party are former municipal representatives. Every time the Leader of the Opposition gets up and chastises the gatekeepers, this fictitious bogeyman entity to blame for the housing challenges we have, members who were municipal councillors get up and encourage him to do more and say more to chastise municipalities.

It is important to recognize the inroads we have made with the national housing strategy. It is a fluid document. Members are going to continue to see changes. The GST waiver is an important initiative that we just announced. They are going to see movement on the co-op file. They are going to see other initiatives that have been called for. I am hoping for an acquisition strategy at some point in time. We know our rural partners need additional supports.

● (1750)

For me, these are all important initiatives and they prove that the federal government is listening to the stakeholders. It proves that we are providing those investments contrary to what we have seen for the last 30 years.

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Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was listening to my colleague from Hamilton, and the history lesson that we just got was interesting. The member talked about downloading, but he failed to recognize that it was the Paul Martin-Chrétien government that cut \$25 billion to the provinces, and he was blaming the provincial government of the day under Mr. Harris for downloading it and causing all of this disruption to the housing market.

I remember those days when friends of mine who are plumbers could go out to City Hall at 8 a.m. and have a permit to get to work by noon. Now, they are waiting six to eight weeks.

The member was talking about this bogeyman, the gatekeepers, but he sounds like a gatekeeper. Could he please address the fact that it started at the top with \$25 billion taken out of the provinces' hands for these types of services?

Mr. Chad Collins: Madam Speaker, I would be happy to speak to that.

I have been very consistent. I said "consecutive federal governments", and so I think all parties are to blame for the federal government's exit.

I also mentioned that for 30 years municipalities asked for support, including from the previous government. It was our government who stepped into that space for the first time in 30 years with a national housing strategy and \$82 billion worth of support for everyone in this sector, including the private sector.

So, when the member opposite starts to talk about the lack of support and who is to blame, the Conservatives have no one to blame but themselves. They had their opportunity to provide a strategy and they did not.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague the following. In his opinion, how many additional housing units will we be able to build if the amendment proposed by the Conservatives is adopted? Will it really improve the situation of families in Quebec and Canada who are struggling with housing problems?

[English]

Mr. Chad Collins: Madam Speaker, I think the report speaks for itself in terms of the recommendations.

I mentioned just now that the national housing strategy is a fluid one, and we are going to continue to see changes. Unfortunately, what we have seen from the other side of the House are delay tactics. There were delay tactics at committee to get the report here in terms of finding consensus on recommendations. There have been delay tactics with other housing initiatives and votes that we have had in this House. So, my answer would be that I think we are going to continue to see this pattern of behaviour continue, with obstruction and delays, trying to prevent the government from moving forward with legislation that is going to help Canadians.

• (1755)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Liberals try to pat themselves on the back and say that everything is great, but all we have to do is go outside and we will find homeless people everywhere. It is not working.

We lost 800,000 units under the Conservatives. They failed to deliver. In fact, they said that they were going to commit to making sure there was housing for 50% of homeless people within a decade. That is not good enough. The member before him started talking about how they will not be able to house everybody.

What we need is a wartime-like effort with a commitment and a timeline so that we actually do build housing for everybody. However, someone at home is listening to this government saying, "Sorry, we cannot promise that we are going to make sure you have a roof over your head." What kind of country do we live in?

Will my colleague and his government put forward a plan with a timeline to ensure that every Canadian in this country has a roof over their head? We need a wartime-like effort. We need it urgently. It is impacting everybody.

Mr. Chad Collins: Madam Speaker, I attended committee again today, and we had CMHC representatives there as well as representatives from infrastructure who manage our Reaching Home program, and we talked about the inroads that we have made.

For me, the most pressing issue of all the issues related to housing are encampments, and I think we need to provide additional assistance. However, it is a great first start in terms of the resources that we provided to those who try to get people out of encampments and into transitional supportive housing. We need to do more of that. I think that is the most pressing issue for those people who are living rough and do not have the services in order to deal with their mental health issues, in many cases, or addiction issues, and it is an all-of-government approach. I think I have been very consistent, as has the government, in terms of working with partners in this space to serve that population.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, it has been really interesting to sit in the House today and listen to Liberal speaker after Liberal speaker declaring victory on the housing situation, talking about all of the fantastic things they are doing right now and announcing new fancy program title after new fancy program title. We have seen, over the last eight years, ever-larger announcements in terms of spending, but never as part of the conversation do we get to actual outcomes. By "outcomes", I do not mean the fancy titles or the big numbers; I mean actual homes being built for Canadians.

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It has been eight years that the government has been in power, and it is now in partnership, coalition or whatever we want to call it with the NDP. We have never, ever, been so short of homes in this country. Rents have never been higher than they are right now. The cost to purchase a home has never been higher than it is right now. It is harder for Canadians to get housing than it has ever been in our history. Today it is harder than ever, after eight years of the Liberal party's being in government, yet speaker after speaker has come out there and, with a straight face, declared victory and made ever bigger pronouncements.

I do have to point out that I will be sharing my time with the hard-working member for Peterborough—Kawartha, and I thank my colleague beside me here, who snuck a little note in. Some might have noticed that, and every colleague of the House knows what that is like.

The interesting thing about this is that it has never been worse, but the only time it was even close was in the disastrous Trudeau years of the seventies and eighties. Many, but not all, members of the House remember the disastrous Trudeau legacy. We had a housing crisis, an inflation crisis and an economic crisis. We had a unity crisis. Does that sound familiar? Sometimes it gets a bit confusing when I talk about the disastrous Trudeau legacy, and some Liberal members from time to time bounce up and get defensive of their own government right now, another disastrous Liberal government. I understand the confusion, but if we remember those days, the real difficulty around them and the real tragedy around what happened in the seventies and eighties were not just the 14 deficits in 15 years that led to that unbelievable economic pain for families. Many of us remember it; we have just heard another member talk about how difficult it was during that time. However, we were not trading short-term pain for long-term gain; we actually had long-term pain as well, so it was short-term pain and long-term pain, because in the mid-nineties, from 1995 to 1997, another Liberal government had to pay the price for all of the deficits we ran up.

We ask this question on a regular basis in the House: How much interest is the Government of Canada going to be paying today on the debt it has run up over the last eight years? We never get an answer from the Liberals, but the answer is that it is in the \$44-billion range, and the suggestion is now that, because of interest rates, that number could be higher. We pay the same on interest, on nothing, as we pay in the Canada health transfer right now in this country, after eight years of a Liberal-NDP government. We are throwing away between \$44 billion and \$50 billion a year on interest payments that we could be spending on other things that are important. We could be unlocking the potential of our housing sector if we just got a handle on our economy.

The Liberal answer, if they had that money, might be to just spend \$50 billion, do a big announcement and call it something fancy, but we would say on this side that our leader today did a fantastic speech as he introduced his bill, Bill C-356. I would highly recommend that people check out his speech on social media: on X, Facebook or YouTube. His message is resonating with a growing number of Canadians. There are many points in the speech that people can reference. If people want to get a bit of hope and a bit of wind in their sails as they are trying to deal with crisis after crisis that they have seen befall them because of actions undertaken by

the NDP-Liberal government of the day, they should read Bill C-356 and watch the speech the Conservative leader, the future prime minister, made today. I guarantee them they will find some hope in that speech.

● (1800)

However, we are dealing with the issues we have right now, and we could be dealing with this issue for two more years. It was very interesting today to hear NDP speakers. Many of them are very passionate about these issues and have very different views of the world than I would have. They have very different ideas than we have over here on how we achieve results for Canadians. It was very interesting to hear them speak so critically of the Liberal government and meanwhile every single day they vote to keep the government in power. As bad as an incompetent Liberal government is, it is even worse to be the party that is voting consistently to keep its members in power and is propping them up day after day.

I will touch on another thing that is kind of interesting. Over the last few days, when we talk about the economic situation, these things all connect together of course as we deal with the devastating economics. As we learned from the Trudeau debacle of the seventies and eighties, everything is connected and eventually there is a cost.

Over the last couple of days, we have had this conversation around the carbon tax. Apparently there are places in this country where Liberals hold seats but they are worried they will not hold them for very much longer. We found out that those Liberal members of Parliament have a lot of influence over their government, because the government is so scared it is going to lose those seats as it looks at the polls. It not just Atlantic Canada; it is other places too.

The Minister of Rural Economic Development told the entire country, in an interview, that the reason people are getting a break in one part of the country on the carbon tax is not because it makes environmental sense or even because it makes economic sense but because it makes political sense. If someone votes Liberal, they will be rewarded with tax breaks, but if someone is in a part of the country that does not vote Liberal, they do not get those same rewards.

As we are having this conversation, I started thinking about where this goes next. Is there going to be another interview next weekend that is going to talk about a housing program, for example, that is going to benefit municipalities that vote Liberal? I do not think the NDP has this kind of power, but does it maybe extend to NDP ridings too? I do not think NDP members have been strong enough negotiators to work that into their deal, but perhaps. These are reasonable questions Canadians might have. Where does this end?

The Liberal Party is clearly panicking. It is clearly plummeting. It is in a free fall right now and making decisions that, in a normal context, would not make any sense. It has been making those types of decisions for the last eight years, which has brought us to where we are right now, but Canadians are waking up to this.

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My hope is our NDP colleagues start to see this as well and that at some point in time we have an opportunity to have a confidence vote in this Parliament, like we have on a fairly regular basis. Maybe this confidence vote would be different. Maybe rather than just saying with words that they do not have confidence in the government, because we all understand that, they will actually vote that way on behalf of their constituents. Maybe we can have these debates in a meaningful way, get this country back on track and have these debates during potentially an election time even. That is how dire the situation is right now.

As I wrap up, I really look forward to questions. I hope in the questions coming from the Liberals' side maybe they will ask us about Bill C-356. I have some points I can get to if they are curious to know answers to some of the challenges we have.

• (1805)

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to read Bill C-356 and it sounds a lot like our housing accelerator fund. I guess the best form of political flattery is political plagiarism.

I have had the opportunity to look through the last several housing plans from the Conservatives. They have talked about money laundering, about making land available through the Canada lands initiatives and addressing amortization periods. They have talked about everything except providing support to people: seniors, persons with disabilities, the people who sit on affordable housing wait-lists.

My question to the member opposite is: Why?

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, it would be hard to accuse me of not standing up for the rights of people with disabilities or vulnerable Canadians in this House.

The Liberals fearmonger about cuts all the time. The only time that significant cuts were undertaken, unbelievable, mind-numbing cuts, was under a Liberal government, when 32% was cut from the Canada health transfer and the Canada social transfer in two years under a Liberal government because of the disastrous Trudeau economic legacy of the seventies and eighties, 14 deficits in 15 years.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I find it quite ironic when Conservatives rise in this House and blame the NDP when they are responsible for losing 800,000 units when they were in government.

Also, they have not negotiated or gained any housing in the whole eight years I have sat in this place. New Democrats have been trying to get housing built. If we were in government, there would be much more. We would have a plan to make sure that everybody has a place to live. We were able to negotiate over \$7 billion for indigenous people.

All I hear about the Conservatives' plan is to sell 6,000 public buildings and 15% of federal public lands. We know how that works. We saw Doug Ford in Ontario do it with the Greenbelt. He lined the pockets of a handful of developers for billions of dollars, \$6.8 billion.

What is my colleague going to do to make sure that does not happen with federal lands and buildings if that is the Conservatives' plan?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1810)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have been hearing talk back and forth. Some people seem to want to answer questions when it is not their time to answer. Some people want to ask a question when it is not time. I would ask them to wait for the proper time.

The hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin.

Hon. Mike Lake: First of all, Madam Speaker, let me say that I have a lot of respect for the hon. member and the work that he does. He and I disagree on a lot of things, but I have a lot of respect for his passion and commitment to people.

The member talked about the influence that the NDP has had on the government and pointed to some things that he calls results, but if we look at the reality, the situation in housing in this country has never been worse. After eight years of the government, the situation for Canadians regarding housing has never been worse, and Conservatives look forward to turning the tide on that.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, I am looking for what the plan is. If the plan is to put pressure on local governments to create density, what are the Conservatives going to do to ensure that a large part of that housing is going to be non-market housing?

Right now in this country, there is 3.5% non-market housing and 30% corporate ownership of housing, something I am sure the Conservatives are very supportive of. Europe has 30% non-market housing, but if we go to Europe, we will not see homelessness.

I want to work with my colleague. He is a friend. I respect a lot of the work we have done together on mental health and addictions. I want to hear what the Conservatives' plan is so that we can find some common ground in this place. That is really what is needed right now from all parties. I think there is a willingness, but we have to find a pathway to get there.

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, the reality is that even in the member's second question, he uses lingo and terminology that does not talk about results. We need housing. If the government is going to transfer money to municipalities for housing, it would be reasonable for the government to hold those municipalities accountable for actually creating housing. That is what Conservatives are going to do.

I do not have enough time to give any more background on the Conservative leader's speech. I would just encourage Canadians to find it online and watch it.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the constituents of Peterborough—Kawartha. It is always a big honour to stand in the House of Commons to speak on their behalf.

Without a doubt, the biggest issue facing Canadians right now is housing. If anybody would argue that with me in the House, I would definitely die on that hill. It is the number one issue across the country.

Tonight, we are talking about the Liberal national housing strategy. This report came out of the HUMA committee, which I sit on, so I was part of it, and I want to go through a couple of things.

The report says the Liberal-NDP government “announced their national housing strategy in 2017, with great fanfare”. I guess it was not the Liberal-NDP government at that time. It was just the Liberal government. It went on:

The Prime Minister even went so far as to call the [national housing strategy] “transformational”. The [national housing strategy] is supposed to:

- Remove 530,000 Canadian families from housing needs.
- Reduce chronic homelessness by 50%.
- Protect 385,000 community housing units.
- Provide 300,000 households with affordability support.
- Repair and renew 300,000 existing housing units.
- Create 100,000 new housing units.

But here is what has happened since 2015 under the Liberals and their [transformational housing strategy]:

- House prices have doubled in Canada....
- Monthly mortgage costs have more than doubled to over \$3,000 per month.
- The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Canada's 10 biggest cities is \$2,213, compared to \$1,171.
- Nine out of ten young people in this country who do not own a home believe they never will.
- It now takes over 60% of Canadians' income to cover the cost of owning a home.
- According to the OECD (2023), Canada has the largest gap between home prices and incomes among G7 nations.
- Canada has the fewest number of homes per capita in the G7.
- The CMHC is predicting that housing starts will decline by up to 32% this year.

That is the situation we are in. I am 44 years old, and never before in my life have I seen a housing crisis like this.

Today, at committee, we had the opportunity to welcome back members of CMHC and Infrastructure Canada. For people who are watching at home, Infrastructure Canada oversees a program called Reaching Home, the program that is supposed to fight homelessness. What I am about to tell members happened today at Parliament in Ottawa. The bureaucrat from Infrastructure Canada said that it had seen “tremendous results” with the money from this program. Tremendous results in homelessness, I would say.

We are less than a mile from the ByWard Market. Anybody who has come to Ottawa in their life knows that was the place to go. There was BeaverTails. It was where they went when they visited Parliament Hill. When people come to Parliament Hill now, they do not even recognize it. That is the situation across this country. In my community of Peterborough—Kawartha, there are tents; encampments; homeless people, families and seniors; and homelessness. However, we have seen tremendous results.

I am just going to do a quick google here. I am not sure what tremendous results they are speaking of, but here are just a couple of headlines from the last month. “Metro Vancouver homeless count up 32%”. “Homeless encampments at ‘all-time high’ in Ot-

tawa”. The Ottawa article goes on to say, “According to data from Brown's department, city staff have responded to 375 encampments so far this year. That's way up from 343 during all of last year and 248 in 2021. In 2020, the first year with comparable data, there were just 65.”

Going from 65 in 2020 to 375 in 2023 means tremendous results. It was shocking and unnerving to hear the justification that they are doing a great job when all we have to do is go to any downtown in this country to see otherwise.

• (1815)

I asked people on Facebook to write and email me because it is critical that we listen to our constituents. There is obviously a disconnect from reality. We see it. We see the political game. We saw that this past weekend with the carbon tax. First they were saying, “The carbon tax is great. It is wonderful. It is really helping everything”. The Conservatives have been sitting over here for years saying that it is not working and it is not a good plan. Now they are saying, “You know what, we might be losing seats. We'd better change our approach”. This is about political science, not about humanity.

I want to read this to the House because it really summarizes the Canada that the Prime Minister has created. My constituent wrote:

Hi Michelle, I don't normally get involved in politics or ever even wrote to a politician. But the issue around addiction and homelessness is really starting to frustrate me. And the reason is I live in the south end of Peterborough and we are constantly having issues with people trying to get into our cars. Yesterday we had someone walk right up our driveway in front of my wife and go into our backyard and snoop around before leaving. On multiple occasions we have had people sleep in our kids mini houses in our backyard and my wife sees them when she goes to work at 5:30. As a parent of two young kids we can't even let our children play in our own backyard for fear of people coming back there and we don't know what these people will do. The fact that they now do it right in front of us and that we can't do anything is a bit worrisome. I don't know the solutions I just wanted to share a bit of my story so hopefully something can be done about this. So kids can get back to being kids and not have any fear of who or what is in there toys or if there toys will even be there when they want to use them because someone else has stolen them. Thanks for reading and hopefully something changes through all levels of government.

That is one of thousands of emails I have. They are an indication of the country we live in. It is chaos. It is a public safety nightmare. At the core of all of this is housing.

Routine Proceedings

There is the Reaching Home program, which is supposed to help with homelessness. According to the website, “Reaching Home has 4 regional funding streams that provide funding to communities to address local homelessness needs.” We did the work to go online to see how to access these funds, and as of October 27, the designated communities funding stream is closed, the indigenous homelessness funding stream has no way to apply, the rural and remote homelessness funding stream is closed and the territorial homelessness funding stream has no way to apply. That, my friends, is what we are talking about when we say “bureaucracy”. That, my friends, is what we are talking about when we say “gatekeepers”. They talk about these programs that no one can even access.

Let me mention another little thing about the Reaching Home strategy. It is all fine and well to have access to programs that no one can access, but there is no plan for treatment and recovery in any of this. There is a very wishy-washy, wraparound support system and them saying, “Yes, we are going to offer supports”.

I challenge any member in the House to find out if somebody in their local community has had timely access to the supports they need to get out of addiction, to get out of abuse, to be successful, to leave the environment they are in, because it is certainly not in here. If someone wants success in this country, they have to help people, and “wraparound supports” is a really nice term, but it means nothing if nothing is in place. There is nothing in this country under these Liberals, and after eight years of Justin Trudeau, that is designated and that focuses on treatment and recovery—

• (1820)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member mentioned the Prime Minister by name. She knows she is not supposed to do that. I am sure it was an error. I would just ask her to be careful.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister, the reality is this: homelessness is the worst that it has ever been. I, along with my Conservative colleagues, came here to fix it. That is why I ran. We have to do something. This national housing strategy is just more paperwork. Every expert has said that we need the private sector to close the gap. We need more supply, yet the Liberals and NDP punish people who want to build homes.

I ask everyone watching to please vote Conservative and please pay attention. We need more houses built in this country, and we are the only party that would do it.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would note that the member has never been supportive of any of the programs that the federal government has done with respect to building affordable housing throughout the country, yet in the member's very own riding, when a project with federal dollars that she voted against was announced and the groundbreaking ceremony occurred, she tweeted out, “Step by step, brick by brick. Very happy to support this project!!” I am curious whether the member can inform the House how she was supporting the project, because it clearly was not by supporting the monetary measures that went towards it.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, it is interesting. One of the biggest problems we have in the House is that the Liberals often will say that they are spending their money. What is lost, so often

forgotten, is that they do not have any money; they have taxpayers' money, and that is the reality. That is why there is record-high inflation. That is why there is a homelessness problem. There is reckless spending by a government and a Prime Minister that have never had to balance a budget. There is reckless spending by a Prime Minister who does not know that it is not his money.

I will share another little point that happened today in committee. The Auditor General's report said that the government spent \$1.3 billion to reduce homelessness, but could not tell whether it had reduced it at all. Of that \$1.3 billion, \$708 million went to social distancing and masks. I am sorry, but when people live in a tent, they do not need those things; they need houses built.

• (1825)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, nowhere in the world has the free market solved an affordable housing crisis. We know that under the Conservative watch, we lost 800,000 units. We saw REITs and corporate ownership of residential housing go through the roof. We saw housing prices double. Today, we still hear of no plan from the Conservatives. All we see are things like what happened in Ontario with the Greenbelt.

I want to hear from my colleague. Do the Conservatives have a plan, and do they support co-op and non-market housing and social housing as a solution to the free market disaster we are seeing when it comes to housing in this country?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, the reality is that when there is an affordability crisis, the first thing people stop doing is giving to charities. The first thing people stop doing is being able to have extra cash. Social services and social programs are funded best when we have a healthy economy. Tell me what is happening in this country right now when we have historically high usage of a food bank, the highest ever. We will get houses built only when the private sector can do that, and then we would have a healthy enough economy to have social services money. Build for that. That is the reality, and we have a government right now that does not respect taxpayers' money.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

The question is on the amendment.

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

*Adjournment Proceedings***ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS***[English]*

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, we would request a recorded vote.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, a recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 1, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

*[English]***PETITIONS****FALUN GONG**

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I visited with some Falun Gong folks on the weekend. Falun Gong is a traditional Chinese spiritual discipline that consists of meditation, exercises and moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion and tolerance.

In 1999, the Chinese Communist Party launched an intensive national persecution campaign to eradicate Falun Gong. Hundreds of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners have been detained in forced labour camps, brainwashing centres and prisons.

Canadian lawyer David Matas and former Canadian secretary of state David Kilgour conducted an investigation. They concluded that the Chinese regime and its agencies throughout China have put to death tens of thousands of Falun Gong prisoners and their vital organs have been seized. The European Parliament passed a resolution condemning organ harvesting in China.

The petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to pass a resolution to establish measures to stop the Chinese Communist regime from systematically murdering Falun Gong practitioners for their organs, amend Canadian legislation to combat forced organ harvesting, and publicly call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

● (1830)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to present a petition, once again, on behalf of the constituents of Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa.

I rise for the 20th time to present a petition on the rising rate of crime. The people of Swan River have lost faith in the NDP-Liberal government's soft-on-crime policies, which allow violent repeat offenders to be on the streets instead of behind bars. Businesses are struggling to deal with the constant crime and chaos.

Petitioners are calling for jail, not bail, for violent repeat offenders. The people of Swan River demand that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on-crime policies that directly threaten their livelihoods and community. I support the good people of Swan River.

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

*[English]***SMALL BUSINESS**

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to rise today on a really important issue that is impacting small businesses throughout Canada.

Throughout the pandemic, small businesses closed their doors to protect public health and the people in our communities. They are the unsung heroes that are not talked about enough in the House or in this country. Obviously, many of them took a major hit financially.

I have some stats from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. It cites that 60% of small businesses are still struggling with pandemic debt. In fact, the average pandemic debt is \$126,827. Forty-seven per cent of small businesses are operating with sales that are below normal, and 19% are at risk of closure. This is a significant number of small businesses, which are one of the economic drivers in our communities. Many workers are employed by and rely on small businesses to succeed.

My colleague, the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, has been pushing the federal government to extend the CEBA loan for one more year, for the full-fledged, forgivable portion. We have been calling for a CEBA extension. Right now, 250,000 businesses are at risk of closing their doors.

As New Democrats, we understand the critical need to support small business. We are glad to see the Bloc join in our call for a full-fledged extension to the end of next year. We are glad to see the Greens support our call to action.

However, can we guess who is missing in action? It is the Conservative Party. We cannot find the Conservatives when it comes to this critical ask that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has identified as critical to supporting small business.

I am just going to read a note from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. It is part of their petition. They are asking people to write to the government. The petition says, "18 days isn't an extension. It's an insult." That is what the federal government just offered small business when it comes to the CEBA loan.

Adjournment Proceedings

Then, if they can, they have to go back to the bank where they got the CEBA loan. They have to come up with a deal by March and have the bank take over the loan, or they will lose the forgivable piece. Then they have to pay huge interest on top of that to the bank that finances them. This is absolutely an insult to these small businesses and those that closed their doors to protect our health.

I went on a business walk with Jolleen Dick, the executive director of the Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce. We went into Flandangles Kitchen and Gifts in Port Alberni. I was talking to Chris Washington. Not only did Chris close her doors to protect public health, but she also kept her employee going. She went out and got a job so that she could pay her employee the difference on the wage subsidy. She has paid \$10,000 a year for the last two years toward the debt, but she cannot afford to meet the deadline. She is on her way back up, but it is not fair to punish Chris Washington and Flandangles Kitchen and Gifts, which not only closed its doors to support public health but also supports our community.

Wildflower Bakeshop and Cafe is in the same boat. They paid \$5,000 toward their loan. In fact, the mayor of our community, who owns a restaurant, told me that there is not a restaurant she knows of that has been able to pay back the CEBA loan.

I am asking the government this: Will it extend the full CEBA loan to the end of next year, with the full one-third nonrepayable portion, to December 31, 2024?

• (1835)

[Translation]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question, which is very important to our entrepreneurs and SMEs across Canada, including back home in Montreal and across Quebec.

[English]

I would also like to thank the member for Courtenay—Alberni, who worked with me back in the pandemic on many supports for our entrepreneurs and small businesses. It was thanks to a lot of collaborative work in the House between members on behalf of small businesses that we were able to put in supports that were absolutely critical in ensuring that entrepreneurs could keep their doors open at a very difficult time.

It was actually a lifeline for small business, having the CEBA program and the loans that were provided. Our government is taking action now in order to provide greater flexibility to small business owners who are finding it difficult to repay those loans. I appreciate the member opposite raising some concerns with the flexibilities we have put in place.

[Translation]

The Canada emergency business account, which was created as part of our overall response to the pandemic, has helped maintain economic stability and keep small businesses afloat, while keeping workers in the workforce. Our government is committed to supporting SMEs, and our commitment to this program is emblematic of our unwavering support for businesses and workers.

More than one million more Canadians are employed today than before the pandemic. This tells us that the plan we put in place during the pandemic has worked. We have recovered more jobs than we lost in the first months of the pandemic. Both the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the International Monetary Fund predict that Canada will have the strongest growth in the G7 in 2024.

[English]

CEBA alone provided about \$49 billion in emergency support to over 900,000 small businesses across the country, including non-profits that were absolutely essential in supporting Canadians during the pandemic and continue to support Canadians today. These businesses and not-for-profit organizations have been and continue to be the backbone of our communities. They provide good-paying jobs. They also provide essential services to Canadians.

I am here to reiterate our government's unwavering commitment to support those small businesses. We have recognized, of course, and I have taken many of these calls, as has the Minister of Small Business, that businesses, particularly small businesses, have seen some challenges in repaying those important loans.

[Translation]

We understand the requirements and complexities involved in a small business. Recognizing that the end of the year is a particularly busy time for small businesses, we are extending the deadline for repayment to qualify for partial forgiveness of the loan in an amount not exceeding \$20,000 to January 18, 2024.

We are also offering businesses the possibility of obtaining partial forgiveness of their loan until March 28, 2024, provided they apply for refinancing through their financial institution.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, I am urging this government to act. My colleague and I did work together. I really appreciate the fact that, when we kicked and screamed as New Democrats to support small businesses, to fix technicalities at an urgent time for small businesses, we were able to fix some of those problems. However, right now, we are not done yet.

A lot of these small businesses are just starting to recover. I am urging the government to not abandon them now. They are looking for an extension to the end of next year, not two or three years from now. They closed their doors for public health. There are 250,000 businesses that are at risk. We are asking the government to finish the job, support their recovery and give them a little bit more time. They deserve it. Small businesses and the workers in our country are the backbone of our economy.

● (1840)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my NDP colleague's arguments. As I was saying earlier, we have brought in flexible measures to help SMEs make the necessary repayments, and we have spoken with financial institutions. Financial institutions are in contact with SMEs, and SMEs must negotiate with them.

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Furthermore, we have offered businesses the possibility of partial loan forgiveness until March 28, 2024, as I said earlier. We have a range of measures to help SMEs. We have cut taxes for SMEs twice. We have also worked with our partners at Visa and Mastercard to reduce credit card fees for SMEs. We will continue to work hand in hand with SMEs.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:41 p.m.)

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